



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Macclesfield College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Mathematics and science](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Business administration, management and professional](#)

[Information and communication technology](#)

[Sport, leisure and tourism](#)

[Hospitality and catering](#)

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

[Health and care](#)

[Visual arts and media](#)

[English, languages and communications](#)

[Literacy and numeracy](#)

[English for speakers of other languages](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

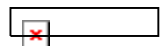
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

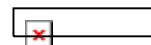
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

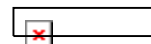


Name of college:	Macclesfield
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Wendy Wright
Address of college:	Park Lane Macclesfield Cheshire SK11 8LF
Telephone number:	01625 410 000
Fax number:	01625 410 001
Chair of governors:	Peter van der Feltz
Unique reference number:	130621
Name of reporting inspector:	Margaret Swift
Dates of inspection:	25-29 November 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

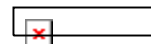


Macclesfield is a medium-sized general further education (FE) college, which serves the boroughs of Macclesfield and Congleton in East Cheshire. It draws some students from the surrounding areas of Derbyshire and Stockport. The main college site is one mile from the town centre of Macclesfield. The college also operates from 40 community locations across both boroughs. In 2001/02 there were approximately 800 full-time students and approximately 4,000 part-time students funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college offers a broad range of provision in 11 of the 14 areas of learning recognised by the LSC for funding purposes. Courses on offer range from entry level to higher education (HE). The range of provision has been extended in the last two years to meet local demand and to promote progression. In addition to full-time vocational and general education courses, the college offers courses in community locations, mainly in information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, and literacy and numeracy. A significant amount of adult education is offered in partnership with the local education authority. The college does not hold any work-based learning contracts but does deliver off-the-job training under subcontract. It also provides training in the workplace for a number of local employers.

The college serves a predominately rural area. There are five local high schools and one independent school in the Macclesfield area, and five other high schools in the college's catchment area. All these schools offer opportunities for post-16 study. Unemployment in Macclesfield is 1.1% and 2% in Congleton, which is significantly below the national average of 3.4%. Less than 1% of the population are from minority ethnic communities.

The college's mission is "to provide accessible, high-quality further education and training, which promotes lifelong learning".

How effective is the college?



The college's provision in engineering is outstanding. It is good in business administration, management and professional; ICT; hospitality and catering; hairdressing and beauty; and visual arts and media. Provision is satisfactory in mathematics and science; sports, leisure and tourism; health and care; English and languages and communications; and literacy and numeracy.

Key strengths

- much good teaching

- high pass rates on many courses

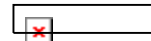
- effective support for students
- good links with employers
- effective assessment
- good teaching, learning and attainment for adults
- good standards of much students' work
- clear strategic direction
- good financial management.

What should be improved

- retention rates in some areas
- use of information learning technology (ILT) in teaching
- recruitment in some areas
- work-based assessment on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes
- some accommodation.

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
Mathematics and science	Satisfactory. Pass rates on the access to HE courses are high. Retention rates are low on General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) courses and pass rates are low in GCE AS sciences. There has been effective team work in mathematics to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The use of ILT is underdeveloped. Good assessment practice helps students to progress. Quality assurance arrangements in science are not effective.
Engineering	Outstanding. Teaching and learning are very good with an effective range of practical and theoretical activities. Pass rates are excellent on many courses. Retention rates are very good, well in excess of national averages. The standard of students' work is high and progress is good and effectively managed.
Business administration, management and professional	Good. Pass rates are good on most courses, some significantly above national averages. There are good progression routes both on to other college courses and into employment. Involvement of employers in assessment of NVQ business administration students is poor and there is insufficient real work experience for full-time business administration students.
Information and communication technology	Good. Teaching is of a very good standard. Learners are very well motivated and have realistic expectations and aspirations for themselves. The range of courses provided in community centres effectively widens participation. Pass rates are good. The retention rates on some courses are at or below the national average.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. The courses in sport, leisure, and travel and tourism are managed satisfactorily. Some provision has recently been introduced to meet local demand. Staff are well qualified, work well as a team and provide good support for students. There are some accommodation problems that restrict the full range of activities being developed. Pass rates are good on some courses and there is good teaching in travel and tourism.
Hospitality and catering	Good. Retention and pass rates on most NVQ programmes are good. Lessons are well planned and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively integrated into practical workshops. Attendance and pass rates in key skills are poor. There are declining enrolments.
Hairdressing and beauty	Good. Although pass rates on most courses are good, retention and

therapy	pass rates on the beauty therapy NVQ level 2 course are poor. There are good teaching and effective learning in most lessons. The standard of written work in holistic therapy courses is good. There are good specialist resources, which are well equipped and maintained. There is some uncoordinated planning of training for some students in hairdressing.
Health and care	Satisfactory. There is much new provision this year. Teaching and learning on most courses for adults are good. There is, however, inadequate challenge in many lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Retention and pass rates are good on most part-time courses but pass rates on the diploma in childcare and education are unsatisfactory. Support for students is good and carefully targeted to meet the needs of individuals.
Visual arts and media	Good. Good standards of work are achieved by adults. Pass rates are satisfactory or better on most courses. Retention rates were poor and declining on many courses in 2002. Teaching is particularly effective when staff work with individual students. Some theory teaching is unsatisfactory. Students effectively learn practical skills and techniques and receive good support from their teachers. There is a good range of specialist accommodation.
English, languages and communications	Satisfactory. Retention is generally good. Pass rates vary; some were below national averages. Teaching is good on most courses but some teaching lacks challenge and pace. There are limited resources for modern foreign languages and ILT is underused. Students receive good support from their teachers.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Pass rates for most students are satisfactory but retention rates are unsatisfactory for students attending literacy and numeracy programmes. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some students fail to attend learning support sessions. Thorough mechanisms are in place to identify learners' literacy and numeracy needs and good support is provided.

How well is the college led and managed?

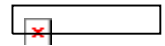
Leadership and management are good. Progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The reliability and accessibility of college data has improved significantly. Most courses are well managed and the rigorous and comprehensive quality assurance systems are well established. Internal communications are good. Targets for the recruitment of students aged 16 to 18 have been met by expansion of vocational courses on offer. Part-time provision has been further extended into the community. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good and a strong emphasis is placed on widening participation.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college is socially inclusive. There is a small pre-vocational course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who

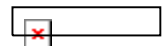
attend main stream courses. Links with the local community are strong. The college is involved in a number of partnerships with local schools, the local education authority and the Cheshire Partnerships. The college has more than 40 centres in the community where courses are offered. Recent initiatives have led to courses being offered in wards in local communities with high deprivation. The target to increase participation from these wards by 2% has been exceeded in most cases. Approximately 9.5% of the adult population of Macclesfield participate in FE. The college has a successful access programme that has an increasingly balanced gender profile. Support for childcare, transport and equipment is offered through the learner support fund. Most of the college's facilities are accessible to wheelchair users, with lifts to the first floor. All specialist rooms are accessible, with only a small number of temporary classrooms being inaccessible. The college has produced a thorough written policy to promote race equality.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. Effective links with schools and good initial guidance help prospective students join the college. The guidance centre is a central feature of the college and staff ensure students are aware of all the services available to them. There is a well-planned tutorial programme and tutorials are effective in most areas. The results of initial assessment of students' literacy and numeracy are used effectively and most students identified as needing support receive it. Careers advice and guidance are good.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

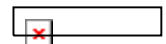
- good support from enthusiastic and friendly staff
- friendly atmosphere in the college
- good variety of teaching activities
- being treated like an adult
- opportunity to do lots of extra courses

- good quality of food and canteen facilities
- meeting new people from different backgrounds
- good access to resources and ICT facilities.

What they feel could be improved

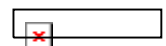
- car parking
- access to sports and social facilities
- number of books in the library
- timetabling arrangements.

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 (local LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	61	33	6
19+ and WBL*	73	20	7
Learning 16-18	57	35	8
19+ and WBL*	74	22	4

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards

1. In 2001 overall, the college's pass and retention rates were at or above the national average. In 2002, many curriculum areas had pass rates well above national averages, with significant improvements shown in some areas. Retention rates have been maintained in most areas where pass rates have improved. Retention rates for key skills are good; pass rates are around the national average. Overall attendance during the inspection was 80%, which is above the national average. The average number of students in lessons was 9.1.

16 to 18 year olds

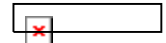
2. Most students aged 16 to 18 study full time. They take a wide range of vocational qualifications and there is a small provision for general education qualifications. The proportion of students completing their studies in 2001 was approximately the same as the national average at levels 1 and 3. At level 2, a high proportion of students complete their studies. In 2002, retention rates were above the national average at all levels but there were still pockets of poor retention on some courses in mathematics, leisure and tourism, beauty therapy, and visual arts and media. In 2001, the proportion of students who gained their qualifications at levels 1 and 2 was above the national average, but just below the national average at level 3. In 2002, pass rates at levels 1 and 3 were above the national average and were in line with the national average at level 2. High pass rates in 2002 were judged a strength by inspectors in most curriculum areas.

3. The standard of students' work in most curriculum areas is good. Most students make appropriate gains in knowledge and understanding. Standards achieved in lessons are good, particularly in practical lessons. Most students make satisfactory progress in developing their ICT skills and some use these to good effect; for instance, in art the students effectively use the Internet for their research, and in hospitality, students use ICT to develop menu design skills. Students with learning difficulties are prepared for effective participation in the community and develop the skills of working in groups or independently.

Adult learners

4. Most adult learners study part time, either in the college in the day and evening, or out in community centres. In 2001, retention rates for adults were at or above national averages for levels 1, 2 and 3. Retention rates at all levels had improved in 2002 and were well above national averages. Pass rates for adults in 2001 were at or above national averages for levels 1, 2 and 3. In 2002, pass rates had improved and all were above the national average for each level. There is good teaching, learning and attainment on adult courses. The standard of work by adult learners on part-time courses is very good and particularly good in art.

Quality of education and training



5. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 175 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 66% of lessons and satisfactory in 28%. There was a small proportion, 6%, of unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching was particularly successful in engineering, ICT, and visual arts and media. The few lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory were spread across most of the curriculum areas. The grades awarded for learning were broadly similar to those for teaching. Overall, adults are taught better than students aged 16 to 18. On many courses, however, there was a mixture of these two groups. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, which was undertaken by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in May 1998.

6. There was some variation in the quality of teaching depending on the level of course. The highest proportion of good or better teaching was at level 3 and the lowest proportion at level 1. Teaching and learning were of a high standard in practical lessons. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was in theory lessons. Of the tutorials observed, 73% of them were good or better. At venues in the community, teaching was good.

7. In all curriculum areas, teaching is well planned with detailed schemes of work and structured lesson plans. Learning objectives are clear and are shared with the students. In the lessons that are good or better, students are fully engaged in a broad range of appropriate activities, a variety of teaching methods are used and the differing needs of students are met. Most teachers are adept at identifying the best way to motivate individual students. Some teachers use their recent and relevant industrial experience effectively in their lessons; in engineering, some training delivery was inspirational. Many teachers effectively checked students' learning and used positive feedback to reinforce learning.

8. In the less than satisfactory lessons, teachers failed to provide learning activities which stimulated the students and some lessons lacked challenge. Some teaching lacked pace and teachers failed to engage the students in the lesson. There were examples of ineffective group work. The teaching of theory in some curriculum areas was unsatisfactory and not sufficiently linked to practical work. Teachers did not always check students' understanding and learning at the end of lessons.

9. Teachers are knowledgeable and well qualified. A high proportion of full-time teachers have a teaching qualification and many have recent industrial experience. There is an effective professional development programme, which includes opportunities for industrial updating or additional qualifications. Many staff have assessor and verifier qualifications but there are not enough qualified assessors in sports, leisure, travel and tourism. Teachers have good opportunities to acquire the new Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) training and development qualifications. There are 21 learning support assistants who have a wide range of experience in supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

10. Resources for learning throughout the college are good. The multimedia learning resource centre, which includes a Learndirect centre, has a comprehensive range of books and ICT-based resources. The centre is open at convenient hours for students, including Saturday morning. There is a high level of usage by students of the ICT facilities. The services within the resource centre for wheelchair users and visually impaired students are good. The facilities in many of the specialist

classrooms are of a high standard. For example, in the hair and beauty salons and the electrical installation workshop and catering kitchen, and in ICT, art and design, the equipment is of industry standard. The ratio of one computer for every four students at the main site is high. However, there is a shortage of laptop computers for outreach work. The ICT equipment is well maintained and good technical support is given to staff and students.

11. Some accommodation is poor or inappropriately used. In sports and leisure, modern foreign languages, and engineering, there are noisy, poorly controlled heating systems and ill-fitting windows. Some rooms are in need of redecoration or are not large enough. The sports hall requires major refurbishment. The fitness centre is sometimes used for lessons, creating potential hazards. There are inadequate car parking facilities. The well-used refectory is welcoming and provides a wide variety of food at reasonable prices. Most areas of the college are accessible to wheelchair users but there is restricted wheelchair access to the training restaurant.

12. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. There is an effective process for initial assessment that identifies students' current levels of achievement in literacy, numeracy and key skills, and their preferred learning styles. The results of the assessments are used to inform teachers about students' additional support needs and to help them to plan lessons and set realistic targets in students' individual learning plans. The short-term targets within individual learning plans for students on the foundation programmes, however, are not sufficiently detailed. Marking of work is thorough and teachers provide constructively critical comments for students, enabling them to improve their standards. Students' progress is systematically recorded and regularly reviewed. Internal verification and moderation processes are good. Lead internal verifiers meet regularly to share good practice. Annual audits of internal verification are conducted, but some actions resulting from these are slow to be addressed. The principal routinely reviews external moderators' reports and areas for improvement are usually acted upon promptly. Insufficient use is made for assessment purposes of students' activities in the workplace in business administration and hospitality and catering. Parents and employers are well informed about students' progress. Teachers monitor attendance closely.

13. Pass rates on key skills in 2001/02 were close to the national average. The college has recently changed its policy for the delivery of key skills, which are now embedded in vocational lessons. Some curriculum areas have a well-developed integration strategy, but others are just implementing the new policy. Staff have received training and are well supported by the key skills specialists. In many curriculum areas, students' progress in key skills is satisfactory, but it is too soon to judge the overall effectiveness of the new strategy.

14. Despite low recruitment on a few courses, the college has maintained a wide range of full-time and part-time general and vocational courses that meet students' needs. Market research is successfully used to identify demand and to develop new courses. The college has successfully addressed the need to strengthen opportunities for progression although there are still a few gaps. For example, there are clearly mapped opportunities for progression in foundation and engineering programmes, but there are no vocational options in science and no General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics courses in the community. The enrichment programme has expanded but there are low levels of participation in some areas. The college runs only one sports team and offers few opportunities for participative leisure activities. Links with partner schools have been successful, for example, in broadening the choice of GCE AS and GCE Advanced levels (GCE A levels) and developing foundation level programmes with schools. The college has responded well to the needs of employers and has provided 1,600 study opportunities for employees. The college meets the needs of the community by a wide range of courses in its 40 outreach centres, including in rural villages. A mobile unit takes ICT training to students in isolated locations. The college has recognised the need to strengthen its work-based learning provision.

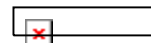
15. Students are well supported. The college has given a high priority to strengthening its support and guidance services, and students make good use of them. Prospective students are well informed about college courses and are given specialist guidance interviews where required. All curriculum areas offer a range of taster days to prospective students at local schools. The guidance centre is a central feature of the college and all students are introduced to, and encouraged to use, the facilities from the start of their courses. The centre is staffed by well-qualified and experienced

staff who work closely with Connexions personal advisers. Information about enrichment opportunities and careers and support services is available and students make good use of the expertise of staff and the well-stocked careers library. An 'amber warning' system for identifying students at risk of leaving their course early is showing signs of being effective in improving retention. There are some areas where the system is not effective in bringing about rapid improvements.

16. All students have regular tutorials with a personal tutor. The recently developed, clearly documented tutorial framework helps tutors to support students' academic progress. The well-planned tutorial programme includes induction, study skills, health and safety, equal opportunities and careers. Tutors have had extensive training in the delivery of effective tutorials and in raising awareness of referral agencies and barriers to students' progress. Most curriculum areas have effectively embedded tutorials into their programmes, but the students' experience of tutorials is not consistently good in a few areas. Full-time students use a personal organiser containing helpful information and documents for action planning and progress recording. Part-time students have a diary that contains similar information. Counselling is readily available from a full-time counsellor. Students receive financial support for childcare and transport where needed.

17. The majority of students identified as needing learning support receive it, either in their group, or in discrete sessions. A wide range of support is provided, from assistance with literacy, to complex extensive support delivered by specialist staff using, where appropriate, a good range of equipment. Additional support is provided for all students on entry and foundation level programmes. The inclusive learning manager monitors the effectiveness of learning support, and the college recognises that the deployment of learning support assistants would benefit from a more systematic approach.

Leadership and management



18. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers have set a clear direction for the work of the college. Provision is good or better in the majority of the curriculum areas inspected. Pass and retention rates have improved over the past four years and in many cases are now above the national benchmarks. The overall quality of the teaching and learning is good. Although it is planned to reduce the GCE A-level programme, targets for the recruitment of students aged 16 to 18 have been met by expansion of the vocational courses on offer. There is a strong commitment to make provision for the diverse range of needs of young people and adults throughout the local community. HE provision is also increasing. Five secondary schools in the Macclesfield area offer their sixth form students a wide range of GCE AS/A2 subjects.

19. Since the last inspection, the college has implemented a number of improvements. The college management structure has been revised to strengthen curriculum leadership and quality assurance. Operational management is provided by five heads of school, each supported by a quality assurance manager. The college has a clear sense of purpose and is effectively led by the principal and the three directors with responsibility for learning and quality, information and planning, and corporate services.

20. The college has a clear and effective planning cycle. College managers review the previous year's outcomes in December. The cycle begins with a strategic planning conference in February at which governors and the college managers consider national priorities, local and regional skills needs, and the previous year's outcomes. Following a period of staff consultation, operational statements and school and business development, plans are agreed. The strategic plan (2002-05) identifies a number of priorities and key areas for development.

21. Most courses are well managed. Course teams meet regularly to review their courses. They monitor recruitment, retention and pass rates, and judge performance against national averages.

Overall, the management structure is effective. Lines of communication within the college are good. There are full staff meetings at least twice a term to keep teaching and support staff well informed of policy changes, events and day-to-day matters. The principal and other managers visit team meetings for briefing and general discussion. The staff bulletin is distributed widely. There is a regular cycle of planned meetings. For example, the senior managers, comprising of the principal and the three directors, meet weekly. The college management team, comprising senior, middle and business support managers, meet at least twice a term. A wide range of college committees address specific issues.

22. Rigorous and comprehensive quality assurance systems are well established in most curriculum areas. Clear and challenging targets are set. Progress is regularly monitored at course team level and by quality assurance managers based in each school. Management reviews undertaken each term ensure that action plans are reviewed and updated, leading to improvements in the performance of the college. The college has introduced a quality and planning calendar for the year which details the tasks, the people responsible, and the desired key outcomes required to achieve continuous improvement. The academic board effectively reviews standards. One initiative considers the features which made the three highest performing courses successful and the action plans of the three least successful courses. Follow-up staff development sessions enable the staff to share good practice.

23. The reliability and accessibility of the college data have improved significantly since the last inspection. Managers make extensive use of the data as a basis for decision making and monitoring. However, some course team leaders do not make sufficient use and analysis of the data. For instance, on some GCSE courses, staff are unaware of national benchmark data and are unable to make accurate judgements about students' achievement. A lack of ownership of centrally held data results in a lack of rigour in scrutinising data and making judgements. There is no historic analysis to determine value added factors in students' achievements through comparison of final examination results with qualifications on entry. All full-time first-year students aged 16 to 18 have been given minimum target grades and their progress will be monitored against these targets.

24. The college has developed an effective strategy for improving the rigour and effectiveness of its judgements on teaching and learning by revising its observation procedures and introducing a new team of observers. Lesson observation grades now form part of staff appraisal. However, the grades awarded by inspectors for good or better teaching were lower than the grades the college awarded itself. The process is effective in mapping future staff training needs and managers ensure that training development plans derived from appraisal lead to improvements in teaching and learning.

25. The college's promotion of equal opportunities is good and its commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in many ways in its approach to inclusion. Strong emphasis is placed on widening participation. An equal opportunities committee chaired by the principal meets monthly. All full-time and many part-time staff participated in equal opportunities and race equality training in the last year. There is a detailed equal opportunities action plan that identifies priorities for attention. The college runs an equal opportunities competition each year for students, and samples of the 90 entries from a wide range of students were exhibited in the foyer during the inspection week. There is extensive and expanding outreach provision and most of the schools of study provide courses at foundation level. This enables students with learning difficulties who have followed a pre-vocational programme to obtain appropriate accreditation on vocational programmes.

26. The college has produced a thorough race equality policy and implementation plan. Data relating to recruitment and achievement are analysed for gender, disability and racial origin. The principal leads a countywide college group which has developed a common 'template' for their race equality policies. Lesson plans include a section for differentiation and response to students' individual needs. There are detailed references to equal opportunities issues in the student and staff handbooks.

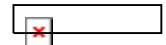
27. Governors are well informed and play a key role in monitoring targets and determining the priorities and direction of the college. They are aware of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body meets three times each year. Attendance is generally good. Five committees concentrate on specific issues and allow governors to focus on their areas of expertise. For

example, the teaching and learning standards committee takes an active interest in curriculum policy and receives detailed analyses of students' performance. Governors participate actively in the annual standards review undertaken by the academic board. There is good attendance at college events to celebrate student success.

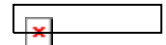
28. Annual self-assessment is well established in the college. The self-assessment report clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses and provides supporting evidence. Action plans, with specific responsibilities and timescales identified, are drawn up to address weaknesses revealed in the grades given for areas of learning. There is some variability in the rigour and effectiveness of self-assessment by course teams. Self-assessment is less well developed in some business support areas which have yet to develop rigorous service standards. The 2002/03 self-assessment report shows a close relationship with inspection findings. The inspectors agreed with most judgements in the self-assessment report.

29. The financial management of the college is good. Governors receive relevant, timely and accurate financial information. Teaching resources are generally good; class sizes are low on some courses. Links with employers and local community organisations are excellent. The college works well with the adult education service and the local LSC. Liaison with local high schools has improved significantly and the college has a fruitful partnership with one school to provide GCE A-level science options and humanities.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Mathematics and science



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on access to HE courses
- good teaching in mathematics
- good assessment practice helps students to progress
- effective team work in mathematics.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates on GCE AS courses
- low pass rates on GCE AS sciences
- underdeveloped use of ILT
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements in science.

Scope of provision

30. The majority of the courses offered in mathematics and science are academic courses at levels 2 and 3. There are currently 46 students following GCE AS courses in biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics. Ten students are currently studying on GCE A-level courses in chemistry and mathematics. A local high school, through a partnership arrangement, delivers the GCE A-level and AS science courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are 79 students, both full-time 16-18 year olds and adults, enrolled on GCSE mathematics. The college does not provide vocational or GCSE courses in science. There are 59 full-time adult students on the access to HE course. The mathematics team also delivers application of number and mathematics for students studying on vocational courses.

Achievement and standards

31. Overall, achievements in mathematics and science are satisfactory. Pass rates in GCE AS mathematics are improving and were high in 2002. However, retention rates on this course and on other GCE AS courses are declining and in 2002 were low compared to national averages. In GCE AS mathematics, less than half of the students that started the course were retained, and of those that started, only 39% gained a qualification. There has been a small increase in numbers of students progressing to the GCE A2 course in the current year, but rates of progression are low. Although numbers were small, all students who sat the GCE A2 mathematics examination in 2001/02 achieved a pass.

32. Pass and retention rates in GCSE mathematics are close to the national averages. Of the 88 students who started this course in 2001, 24 achieved a pass at grade C or above. The access to HE course recruits well and pass rates have improved steadily over the past three years. There are good progression rates to HE from the access course. In 2001, pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 were below national averages, whilst those for adults were significantly higher. Attendance levels are satisfactory and the majority of students are punctual. In most lessons, the attainment of students is satisfactory or better.

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

	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	102	82	88
		% retention	78	83	74
		% pass rate	61	32	37

GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	17	31
		% retention	*	71	48
		% pass rate	*	42	80
GCE AS sciences	3	No. of starts	*	13	19
		% retention	*	85	74
		% pass rate	*	55	50
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	43	40	49
		% retention	63	65	65
		% pass rate	50	88	96

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

33. The majority of teaching and learning is good or better. In mathematics, the teaching is well planned to take account of the needs of individual students. Lessons are conducted at a good pace with a variety of activities that allow students to consolidate their learning and teachers to check progress. In one algebra lesson for adults who had recently returned to learn, the teacher introduced the topic using a set of questions to test previous knowledge and skills. This was followed by a game in which students matched cards with equivalent expressions. Students produced a poster, which acted as a useful reminder about the order of operations. All students contributed to the useful discussion about the topic. The students, many of whom had not studied mathematics for some years, were then able to demonstrate their growing confidence by answering questions orally and from a well-presented worksheet.

34. In science, good relationships between teachers and students have been established, which helps to motivate students to learn. However, lesson planning was less effective in this area. Learning outcomes were unclear or not met. In practical work, students were not always made aware when they were making errors in their measurements. The practical activities did not provide challenge or opportunities to develop higher level skills.

35. Although the mathematics room has been equipped with four computers, they are not in regular use and the limitations of space make it difficult to use them effectively. Students are not fully aware of the helpful mathematics intranet site, so it has had little impact on learning. There are few references to the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning in schemes of work or lesson plans. The team has not been able to exploit the potential of the software to support the needs of groups comprising students following different qualification aims.

36. Resources in mathematics and science are satisfactory. In mathematics, staff are well qualified. There is a mathematics room, which has been given a clear subject identity with colourful, informative posters and biographies of famous mathematicians. The written resources to support learning are of high quality. However, the room is small and inhibits the range of activities that can be undertaken. The science laboratory is also too small for effective practical work with larger groups. The library has a good range of books.

37. Assessment practice in the area is good. Work is set regularly, marked rigorously to awarding body standards and returned promptly. Comments provided by the teachers in mathematics are helpful to students in understanding where they have made mistakes and how to improve. External moderator reports show that the college has good internal moderation procedures. However, some marking in science is not rigorous and comments are less helpful to students. Recording and tracking of students' progress are thorough and help students and teachers to have a clear picture of current attainment levels. All students have initial diagnostic tests in literacy and numeracy, but in

addition, mathematics students have a subject-specific test to identify individual learning needs and barriers to their making progress in key aspects of the subject.

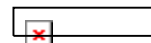
38. The college has maintained a broad range of GCE AS courses through a partnership arrangement with a neighbouring high school. There is good recruitment to the access to HE course and all students on this course study science and mathematics modules. In previous years, the college has offered vocational science courses, but these have failed to recruit. There are no GCSE science courses on offer, or GCSE mathematics in the community. Students participate in enrichment activities, for example, visits to the Jodrell Bank radio telescope or completion of a health and safety certificate.

39. Good support is provided through tutorials. Progress is reviewed regularly through the tutorial system and targets are set and monitored. There is good subject support for students through the drop-in mathematics workshop. Students are sometimes unaware of the demands of the GCE AS mathematics course. The college has recognised the need for more effective interviewing and provision of pre-entry advice.

Leadership and management

40. There is good teamwork in mathematics. The mathematics team has made strenuous efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and has developed effective schemes of work that aid lesson planning. The course review process in mathematics is thorough. On all courses, targets for retention, pass rates and attendance are set, and progress against them is monitored regularly. However, data provided by course teams for the course reviews are not always accurate. There has been good professional development for full-time staff. Good practice is shared. In science, the arrangements for monitoring the quality of the GCE AS delivered through collaborative arrangements are not adequate. Support for part-time staff has not been fully effective and lesson observations have not been carried out.

Engineering



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- very good retention rates
- very good teaching and learning
- high standard of students' work

- good student progression
- effective links with industry.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in computer-aided design.

Scope of provision

41. The college offers engineering courses in first and national certificates and diplomas, NVQ levels 1 and 2 in performing engineering operations, NVQ level 3 in aircraft maintenance, and an advanced award in computer-aided design (CAD). Higher national courses and a foundation degree provide progression into HE. The college is working in collaboration with four local high schools to develop level 1 provision. The college specialises in aerospace engineering and full-time programmes are designed to prepare students for apprenticeships in the aerospace industry. There are 174 students studying in this area.

Achievement and standards

42. There are excellent pass rates on most engineering courses; many have pass rates exceeding 90%. There were low pass rates in CAD in 2000 and 2001. Most courses have retention rates well above national averages. First certificate and diploma, national certificate, NVQ level 3 in aircraft maintenance and CAD have all seen 100% retention rates.

43. Students are attentive in lessons and are very interested in what is being taught. The standard of their work is high. Actively encouraged by their teachers, students are able to apply ICT confidently and to great effect to support their work. Standards of practical work are high, particularly the work of second-year students. NVQ level 3 students produce excellent portfolios. These contain an effective range of work-based activities and clearly display the progressive achievement of industrial skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First certificate in engineering	2	No. of starts	*	11	11
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	92
First diploma/GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	33	15	17
		% retention	85	80	72
		% pass rate	57	100	92
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	64	39	79
		% retention	86	87	95
		% pass rate	84	97	96
National certificate in	3	No. of starts	12	21	12

engineering		% retention	91	95	100
		% pass rate	91	100	100
National diploma/GNVQ advanced	3	No. of starts	49	39	41
		% retention	80	64	50
		% pass rate	93	88	90
NVQ aircraft maintenance	3	No. of starts	13	10	16
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

44. Teaching is good in most lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and very knowledgeable about their subjects and encourage their students to achieve. They effectively vary their teaching methods to stimulate the interest of students. Lessons are carefully planned and supported by detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Wherever possible, teachers make use of their industrial experience to enhance the learning process. Excellent use is made of aero engines and components during teaching. An example of this is where a teacher was delivering a theoretical session on gas turbines and used part of a turbine fan blade in the classroom as a visual aid. Later, students were taken into the adjacent workshop and asked to identify component parts on an actual aero engine. This practical example gave students a better understanding of the theory. Students who are learning the theory of flight have the opportunity to operate a wind tunnel and a smoke machine to improve, in a practical way, their understanding of the theory.

45. Skilful questioning by teachers encourages contributions from students, both to recap on their previous learning and to stimulate thought on current tasks. Teachers encourage responses from students by providing positive feedback. Teachers promote a disciplined approach to learning. Students respond to this and state that they enjoy learning in a disciplined environment. Effective use is made of group work. In some groups, students are given the role of team leader for a particular project. This increases their confidence and sense of responsibility. Teachers support students well, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of what they need to do to progress.

46. Staff have considerable industrial experience. The majority of staff are qualified teachers, and those who are not are working towards a teaching qualification. Teaching materials and equipment adequately meet the learning needs of students across the curriculum area. Workshops are housed in ageing accommodation but best use is made of the facilities to promote and support learning. Improvements have recently been carried out to meet the health and safety requirements of provision for students aged 14 to 16. Students in the engineering school use the ICT facilities in the college's resource centre. There are not enough computers in classrooms for students to use during lessons.

47. Assessment practice is rigorous and accurate. Forms of assessment are continuously reviewed by course teams and monitored by internal verifiers to ensure a wide variety of assessment strategies are used. External verifiers' reports commend the extensive range of assessment techniques, the high quality of students' work, and the excellent links with sponsoring companies. Good tracking systems are in place, which are used by all members of staff to monitor the progress of students. Students are given individual feedback, both orally and in writing, after each assignment. This ensures that they are aware of their progress and understand what they need to do to improve their performance. The school of engineering internally verifies the assessment of level 3 NVQs offered by a local employer. This activity is thoroughly recorded and verification is rigorous. The standard of students' portfolios is high.

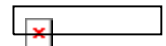
48. There are very good opportunities for progression from level 1 to level 4. An NVQ level 1 has recently been introduced to provide opportunities for students completing entry level vocational programmes. First certificate and diploma students also gain a level 2 NVQ. Level 3 programmes prepare students for apprenticeship programmes and these students also gain a level 2 NVQ with their national diplomas. Students can progress to higher national programmes in aerospace engineering and a foundation degree programme has recently been established.

49. Induction is well planned and effective. Team-building activities are challenging and exciting, with a sense of competition. There are visits to places such as Manchester airport, Manchester's science and industry museum and RAF Cosford. Tutorial support is well planned and students have a tutorial each week. Attendance levels are high and exceed the college target of 90%. A good monitoring system for attendance and lateness is in place and all actions are followed up quickly. Personal tutors are alerted to any problems and take effective action. The school has a nominated learning support co-ordinator who works closely with specialist college staff to provide suitable support to meet the needs of individual students. The co-ordinator also monitors students' progress and provides support to other members of staff.

Leadership and management

50. Management in the school of engineering is effective. Staff set high standards for themselves and their students. They work effectively as a team. The school has developed very strong links with industry through staff delivering specialist courses to meet specific industry needs. Staff keep up to date and develop their skills and professional practice. Teams meet regularly to monitor students' progress, oversee teaching and learning, and ensure the effective administration of the courses.

Business administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- good analysis of individual learning needs
- good progression routes into FE and employment
- very good support for part-time staff.

Weaknesses

- poor involvement by employers in the assessment of NVQs

- insufficient real work experience for full-time administration students.

Scope of provision

51. The college offers a wide range of courses in business, administration, management and professional studies. Courses are offered at levels 2 and 3. Full-time courses are offered in business, administration and accounting. A wide range of part-time courses is offered during the day and evening in education, marketing, personnel, supervisory management, public relations, accountancy and administration. A new course in managing in the FE sector was introduced in January 2002 for college staff who want to become managers. The higher national certificate in business and a foundation degree in business management are also offered on a part-time basis. There are 79 full-time and 420 part-time students on courses in this area.

Achievement and standards

52. Retention and pass rates are at or above the national average for most courses. Pass rates on the GNVQ business and the professional development award in supervisory management have been consistently good. Students' work is of a good standard and this is reflected in external verifiers' reports. The work is thorough, reflects working practices and challenges the students. Some students keep a weekly log of their progress to discuss with their personal tutors. Individual targets are set for all full-time and part-time students and there are effective systems for the tracking of students' progress. There are good progression routes for students. The Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) students progress from foundation to intermediate level, and some progress to AAT level 4.

53. Assessment is well planned on most programmes. Assessment tasks are relevant to the courses and are challenging. The feedback teachers give to the students is of a good standard and highlights the strengths, weaknesses and areas for further development for each assignment. Assessment decisions are recorded and used to plan students' progress effectively. However, employers are not involved in the assessment process for NVQ business administration programmes. This leads to missed opportunities for assessing students and lack of unit achievement. The college business suite does not provide sufficient opportunities for administration students to experience real office work. Most tasks undertaken by students are simulations.

54. Students' progress is slow on a small number of courses. Some students do not achieve their qualifications within the set time. Some of the ICT facilities that were located in the business section have been removed in order to create more teaching classrooms. This has affected the full-time students as it has put more pressure on the learning resource centre and access to the computers is not always available, slowing down their progress.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ business administration	2	No. of starts	19	41	33
		% retention	79	77	86
		% pass rate	86	81	84
GNVQ/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	15	17	9
		% retention	56	65	89
		% pass rate	86	82	78

Professional development award in supervisory management	3	No. of starts	11	11	8
		% retention	60	82	71
		% pass rate	100	93	100
Teaching certificate stage	3	No. of starts	41	31	42
		% retention	88	100	100
		% pass rate	94	68	95
AAT intermediate NVQ	3	No. of starts	49	51	55
		% retention	84	80	93
		% pass rate	71	54	79

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

Quality of education and training

55. The majority of teaching and learning is good or better. All lessons were well planned and teachers provided stimulating learning materials. The students experienced a variety of teaching and learning methods, and many of the students were quick to engage in the learning activities. Students demonstrated enthusiasm for the subjects and a willingness to discuss and analyse. In some classes, students evaluated their own learning. In most sessions, the students demonstrated good use of technical language. This was used in the correct context at the appropriate level for their programme. The students were able to relate theory to the real world of business. In the better lessons, the students were confident, articulate and made good progress. For example, in one lesson, students' perceptions had changed during the session itself. Students could explain what they had learnt in specific detail, for example, the advantages and disadvantages of different management styles and the impact of different management styles on a business organisation. They could use this learning in their own work. In a small number of classes observed, the teaching methods used did not enable the students to make good progress. Students were not encouraged to discuss and analyse issues and they were not encouraged to use their previous experience and learning to enable them to progress.

56. All students have an initial assessment and the results are used to identify the skill level of students and any additional support required. Students' learning styles are identified and are used effectively by the teachers. During induction, students are set targets, which are monitored through their individual progress files.

57. The staff are well qualified, most of them having degrees. All staff have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. Staff have good access to professional development to update their knowledge and expertise. The teaching rooms all have ICT access and there are portable projectors and whiteboards for staff to use.

Leadership and management

58. Managers have a clear ownership of the college's aims and objectives. Staff development is positively encouraged and all staff can join a course of study at the college. The staff appraisal system does not identify personal training and development needs at the initial stages, but during the discussion stage, these are fully addressed. There is very good support for part-time staff and they are well managed. This enables new staff to settle quickly into the college and become effective teachers. Fractional staff are appointed a mentor.

Information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- very good teaching
- good learning and attainment
- good pass rates on most courses
- very good resources to support learning.

Weaknesses

- poor recruitment, resulting in underdeveloped provision at level 3
- underdeveloped curriculum links with Learndirect.

Scope of provision

59. There is a good variety of computing and ICT programmes for both students aged 16 to 18 and 19+ learners. Of the 1,660 ICT learners, 74% are adults. Full-time students follow GNVQ foundation and intermediate, AVCE and GCE AS courses. Short and part-time courses offered to adults include Open College Network (OCN) introduction to computing modules, new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and CLAIT plus, European computer driving licence (ECDL), computer maintenance, visual basic and City and Guilds qualifications. A number of part-time courses are available during the day and in the evenings at community centres in the college's catchment area. There are four centres that provide drop-in facilities during the day for local residents. The college also responds to the training requirements of local businesses.

Achievement and standards

60. Pass rates on GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses are significantly above the national average. On the foundation course, 75% and 88% respectively of students have achieved in the past two years, against a national average of 62%. Achievement is also good for short and one-year part-time courses for adults. Retention rates on full-time foundation and GNVQ intermediate courses have been at or slightly below national averages over the last three years. Retention rates on other courses have been satisfactory.

61. Students demonstrate knowledge, concepts and ideas that are relevant to their level of study,

and some were observed working well above the level which might be expected of them. Some tutors set very high standards for their students, based on the knowledge that they are achievable. Most students are actively engaged in the learning process. Students are confident and focussed on why they are studying and the benefits that it will bring. Many learning materials have been developed which enable learners to work at their own pace and level. The materials are of a good standard and enhance the overall learning experience. The standard of students' work is good and most are on target to achieve their qualification. Students also work to their highest potential level in their key skill lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	615	536	587
		% retention	86	89	84
		% pass rate	68	77	65
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	11	13	14
		% retention	64	62	57
		% pass rate	86	75	88
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	15	23	29
		% retention	73	74	72
		% pass rate	82	53	91
IBT	2	No. of starts	115	119	165
		% retention	89	85	90
		% pass rate	56	66	74
ECDL	2	No. of starts	16	116	222
		% retention	90	82	88
		% pass rate	88	75	84
AVCE ICT	3	No. of starts	21	17	24
		% retention	68	50	65
		% pass rate	67	71	85

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

Quality of education and training

62. Teaching and learning are very good. Class management of groups, many with a wide range of age and ability, is good. Formal schemes of work are sufficiently detailed, as are lesson plans, which have clear indications of learning outcomes. Skilful questioning and good use of praise encourages responses and builds the confidence of learners. Questions are used both to check previous learning and to stimulate thought on current tasks. Activity booklets and materials are appropriate, and enable learners to work at their own pace. Differentiated materials are available to cover a wide range of ability, experience, background and language.

63. The college has a high ratio of computers to students. Staff are well qualified and experienced in their subjects, and many staff are involved in some form of continuous professional development. Staff have a wide range of experience and most are educated to degree level, with many having a professional teacher-training qualification. Staff demonstrate up-to-date knowledge of the workplace, and are aware of current thinking and practice. The college provides a wide range of support

facilities and services. This includes the library, careers advice, counselling and welfare support, and a good learning resource centre. Students are aware of these and make good use of all the services. Support staff are knowledgeable, informed and helpful, and staff and students value the level and quality of this technical support. The quality of equipment in classrooms is good, with all learners having access to the Internet. Computer projectors, whiteboards and overhead projectors are available and well used.

64. Assessment is good. Assignments are well planned, carefully structured and challenging. Most assignments cover topical issues. Work is promptly marked with detailed commentary as to strengths, weaknesses and what can be improved in the future. Students' progress is tracked and recorded. Assessment schedules are included in the course schemes that students are given, including submission and return dates. Many tutors get students to e-mail their work to them, and return the documents with comments on accuracy, sufficiency and whether the work meets the qualification criteria. Assessment criteria and expectations are clearly described.

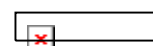
65. The range and distribution of provision enables wide access to learning and progression between levels. The college operates from a significant number of community venues that assist social inclusion, widen participation and promote lifelong learning. Most of these venues are excellent, with good facilities, and are welcoming and supportive for learners who have been out of education for many years. Formal entry requirements are not necessary for students who start an ICT course for beginners. Days and times of attendance are offered to suit learners who may have other responsibilities or commitments. There are good links between levels 1 and 2, but there is little provision at level 3, which restricts further progression. A recent initiative to recruit applicants directly to a level 3 course met with little success and the course did not start.

66. Students are initially screened and additional support is offered to those with identified learning needs. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported through the provision of large visual display units (VDUs), specially adapted keyboards and light readers. All students receive a college induction that ensures they are aware of all facilities and entitlements, and prepares them for their chosen course of study. Tutors have a profile of their students' needs and take responsibility for monitoring the progress of learners and agreeing action plans with them. There is a system in place to identify students at risk of leaving the course early. Tutors observe and record a variety of behavioural indicators and those considered most at risk are placed on 'amber alert' and receive additional support. All students have a mix of group and individual tutorials. Students who leave to take up employment before completing their qualification receive insufficient advice as to how they may continue with their learning. Opportunities for enrolling on appropriate part-time, distant learning or Learndirect courses are missed.

Leadership and management

67. The programme area is well managed. Efforts are made to identify issues, both local and those which might arise out of policy changes. The needs of students are put first, with focus on retention, achievement and attainment. Significant investment has taken place recently to improve facilities. Management style is positive and constructive, and inter departmental relationships are good. The importance of effective communication is recognised and structures have been developed to facilitate this.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- good teaching in travel and tourism
- good support for individual students
- high pass rates on many vocational courses
- well-planned curriculum development.

Weaknesses

- poor accommodation
- ineffective actions to address poor attendance and punctuality
- low retention rates on some courses
- insufficient monitoring of work experience for NVQ students.

Scope of provision

68. The college offers a range of courses in sport, leisure, tourism and travel. There are 92 full-time students. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18. Leisure and recreation programmes are offered at GNVQ intermediate, national diploma and AVCE, and at NVQ levels 1 and 2. Travel and tourism programmes are offered at AVCE and national diploma level, and at NVQ level 2. Most students are on sports programmes. Many short vocational courses are offered in community sports leader award, first aid, health and safety at work, national pool lifeguard, football coaching, travel agents certificate, British Airways ticketing, and cabin crew award. Five adults participate on the 'taking off into travel' programme as part of the learning gateway. Students on the NVQ programmes participate in work experience for four hours each week and other students have one week of work experience each year.

Achievement and standards

69. Pass rates are high on the national diploma travel and tourism and GNVQ leisure and tourism courses. These have been consistently above national averages for the past three years. For the newly introduced AVCE programme, the 2002 pass rate was 100%, although retention was low at 70%. The majority of short vocational courses offered as additional qualifications also show good pass rates. The pass rates on the travel agents certificate and the British Airways ticketing courses

have been significantly higher than the national averages. Success on the football coaching award has been high at 100%, with no students leaving the course early. Other courses, such as national pool lifeguard and community sports leader awards, have had very poor results. Action has been taken to address these issues.

70. The college has recently reviewed its provision in this area and has made significant changes. Current students are now able to participate on the NVQ level 2 in operational services, AVCE travel and tourism, and national diploma sports award. Poor retention rates for the past three years on AVCE leisure and recreation caused concern. Of the current group, 14 students started the course but only three are still on the programme. This programme is now being phased out. Student, employer and local community needs have been identified and used to focus the provision towards employability outcomes. The development of relevant and industrial vocational courses has been well received by the students and is adding value to their learning experiences.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
British airways ticketing	1	No. of starts	37	28	10
		% retention	78	96	80
		% pass rate	72	93	88
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	21	21	16
		% retention	76	50	69
		% pass rate	38	90	70
Travel agents certificate	2	No. of starts	32	25	20
		% retention	78	92	70
		% pass rate	92	96	97
Football coaching award	2	No. of starts	*	18	20
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
National diploma travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	12	16	21
		% retention	75	63	67
		% pass rate	89	100	100
AVCE leisure and recreation	3	No. of starts	*	*	10
		% retention	*	*	70
		% pass rate	*	*	100

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

71. The quality of teaching and learning in travel and tourism lessons was good. Staff use a variety of teaching methods and effectively involve students in discussions. Most staff have recent and relevant industrial experience which they use effectively in their teaching. The use of presentations and discussion groups enables students to fully participate in lesson activities. Students' contributions are used effectively to build up their understanding. A good range of resources is available for each lesson and these are well used. Students' learning needs are addressed through pre-selection of groups and some differentiated learning materials. Some handouts are not used

effectively and are not sufficiently challenging for the more able students. In some lessons, use of ICT equipment greatly aided the students' knowledge of management issues and significantly improved their progress towards completing their assignment.

72. Practical teaching on the sports and leisure programme is satisfactory. Individual coaching during practical lessons is enriched through the use of professional external staff. All staff provide good one-to-one support for students during and after lessons. Most staff have relevant professional and teaching qualifications. Most lessons are planned well and students demonstrate good progression. However, some sports and leisure lesson plans are not adequately focused on learning outcomes. Activities are sometimes scheduled which do not link in with the specific aim of the lesson. In some lessons, the students were unsuccessful because of weak and often rushed explanations of tasks, or because of the introduction of a task that was too long and complicated. A detailed report of students' progress and abilities is written at the conclusion of each lesson. However, the report is not always used effectively to plan appropriate learning activities. For example, in one class, six students were clearly identified as not working effectively in groups, but the lesson was predominantly delivered through group work. There are good working relationships between staff and students. Students feel very well supported and are positive about tutorials.

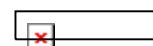
73. There are insufficient good-quality facilities on the college site to promote effective learning. The sports hall is inadequate. It is poorly equipped and cold. Continuous mechanical noise impairs all lessons held in the hall. Students have difficulty listening to instructions and teachers are required to shout in order to be heard. Learning is affected by the poor conditions of the building. Sharing the facility with other groups is also detrimental to learning. Lighting and heating levels for some activities are not adequate. There is insufficient allocation of this facility to sports programmes to meet the needs of all students. The fitness area is regularly used as a classroom; this presents a safety hazard for large groups of students. Most travel and tourism lessons are taught in mobile classrooms that are not well decorated or adequately heated.

74. Poor attendance and punctuality are not effectively dealt with. Whilst the overall attendance is satisfactory, some students repeatedly miss important parts of their course. For example, four students who should be attending ICT lessons have not attended since the second week of the course. Communications between staff have not led to a satisfactory outcome or to any significant action being taken to address the problem. Many students are absent for consecutive lessons. These students are put on the 'amber light' disciplinary system, but this is having no effect in changing their pattern of attendance or lateness.

Leadership and management

75. The department lacks overall leadership. All staff report to the sixth form centre manager but are responsible for individual programmes. Roles and responsibilities of staff are clear. There has been an extensive period of high staff turnover, which has now stabilised. New staff have been recruited with relevant industrial experience. Students on the NVQ course are not adequately monitored whilst in their workplace. There is insufficient knowledge about the practicalities of working in a leisure facility to appropriately manage the learning occurring in the workplace. Only two staff are qualified as assessors and the assessor and internal verifier have yet to start assessment work. Insufficient attention is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Some new and inexperienced staff have yet to be observed.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most NVQ craft and supervisory courses
- well planned lessons
- effective integration of learners with disabilities and/or difficulties into practical workshops
- effective assessment and internal verification
- **good employer links.**

Weaknesses

- declining enrolments in hospitality and catering
- underdeveloped work-based assessment for part-time students
- insufficient opportunity for progression into higher level courses.

Scope of provision

76. The college provides NVQ and short courses at levels 1 to 3 in food preparation and cookery, food and drink service, and restaurant supervision. There is a continuing trend of declining enrolments. At the time of inspection there were 116 students enrolled on courses, the majority at levels 1 and 2. Seven students were enrolled at level 3. Students can attend the same courses on a full-time or part-time basis.

77. The college is delivering a new customer service course at a local company for eight employees. Short-course provision includes the British Institute of Innkeepers Licensees' Certificate. Full-time hospitality and catering students are able to attend food hygiene courses during induction. There are limited opportunities at the college for students to progress directly from industry into higher level craft or management courses. For example, some part-time students are enrolled on to level 2 courses when their normal employment is in a supervisory capacity for which a level 3 course would be more appropriate.

Achievement and standards

78. Retention and pass rates are high on most NVQ food preparation and cookery, food and drink service, and hospitality supervisory courses. Attendance rates are high in part-time food preparation

and cookery courses. Attendance and pass rates in key skills are poor. In response, key skills have been recently integrated into the curriculum to help improve this trend. Lesson plans for level 1 and workbooks for level 2 lessons include vocational exercises to develop communication and application of number. At level 3, students demonstrate good evidence of using ICT to develop menu design skills and to produce restaurant standards checklists. However, students' action plans do not systematically highlight their key skill development needs.

79. Assessment and internal verification are effective. Students' portfolios of evidence have been compiled to awarding body standards. Regular assessments take place on a continuous basis, and practical activities and theory workbooks have been well marked and signed by qualified assessors. Internal verifiers have sampled the work of assessors and the process is effective.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ food preparation and cookery (one year)	1	No. of starts	22	26	19
		% retention	95	88	84
		% pass rate	45	87	100
NVQ food and drink service (one year)	1	No. of starts	14	18	10
		% retention	92	83	80
		% pass rate	92	87	100
NVQ food preparation and cookery (one year)	2	No. of starts	16	18	22
		% retention	81	78	77
		% pass rate	54	79	94
NVQ food preparation and cookery (two year)	2	No. of starts	*	*	10
		% retention	*	*	89
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NVQ hospitality and catering supervision (two year)	3	No. of starts	*	14	9
		% retention	*	93	67
		% pass rate	*	70	83

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

80. Lessons are well planned and most teachers identify appropriate methods to motivate individual students to learn. In the best theory lessons, practical activities are used effectively to help students remember sequences in a process. Level 2 students are able to practise lay-up techniques without the pressure of deadlines or customer expectations and in food preparation, students are encouraged to evaluate and explain the quality of finished dishes and styles of presentation. Level 3 students display good standards in their work which is evidenced in their portfolios and in practical sessions, where they supervise students at levels 1 and 2 using standard checklists that they have developed themselves. Students are able to confirm their competence and understanding by explaining various working practices and processes in detail.

81. Good use is made of the 'chef's tool kit'; a workbook for part-time students that provides recipes and activities for the qualification at level 2. The majority of part-time students have jobs in local catering establishments but opportunities to be assessed in their normal places of work are not

used. In addition, there is very little evidence of work completed in industry and signed by a supervisor in their portfolios of evidence. Because of declining enrolments at levels 2 and 3, level 1 students are set inappropriate tasks. In one restaurant session, students working at level 1 were struggling to provide silver service, a set of skills that are not included or required for their qualification.

82. Students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are integrated into the realistic learning environments and they successfully develop level 1 skills, as well as having the opportunity to progress further. Students who have progressed are able to prepare fruit and vegetables as well as serve customers at the table at a level 1 standard.

83. There are good employer and industry links. The college has collaborated with a local company and is to deliver customer service vocational qualifications entirely in the workplace. The college is also working in partnership to train and develop assessors and to deliver group theory sessions. In addition, there is a discrete group of school meals employees from another local organisation undertaking a food preparation and cookery qualification delivered at the college. A number of chefs from local hotels and restaurants also work with students to produce menus from their establishments in the college training restaurant.

84. Some catering students are able to attend the Wednesday afternoon sport sessions. Other students take part in educational visits to Europe and attend national catering and hospitality events during the year. Entry level students take part in a supervised weekly keep-fit session at the local leisure centre.

85. Support for students is effective. Tutorials are well planned and take place regularly. In an entry level tutorial, students were encouraged to develop their communication skills by discussing amongst themselves positive aspects about themselves. One-to-one sessions are also held to discuss individual students' progress in the vocational aspects of their course. Students produce action plans in tutorials, which are closely monitored by their teachers. Support for students on level 1 courses is particularly good.

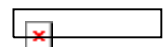
Leadership and management

86. The management of the curriculum area is satisfactory. Course reviews and evaluations inform the curriculum area's self-assessment process. Lesson observations undertaken by college staff have led to some improvements in students' learning. However, there is still insufficient contact between some specialist teachers and the course team as they attempt to embed key skills into the curriculum for full-time and part-time students.

87. There is an advanced practitioner and an IT champion in the curriculum area to help continuous improvement of the learning experience for students. Students, particularly on entry level courses and at level 3, are regularly using ICT. There is ineffective monitoring of some new part-time teachers but the college has recognised this.

88. The implementation of the equal opportunities policy is effective in this area. Close attention is paid to equal opportunities issues, for example, ethnic and speciality menus are promoted throughout the year.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- pass rates are good on most courses
- much good teaching
- good written work on holistic courses
- good specialist resources
- effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on the NVQ beauty therapy level 2 course
- uncoordinated planning of training for some students in hairdressing.

Scope of provision

89. There are approximately 108 students on full-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Full-time provision includes hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies. There are approximately 199 students on part-time courses. Courses include beauty specialist, body massage, advanced nail techniques, aromatherapy, reflexology, Indian head massage, manicure and nail art, barbering and hairdressing. The provision has grown considerably over the last three years in terms of range and recruitment. As a result, there has been an extension of the specialist resources. The section offers flexibility in attendance patterns to meet the needs of the students.

Achievement and standards

90. Pass rates are high on most courses, with 100% pass rate for the beauty specialist diploma in 2002. Retention has significantly improved on a number of courses, with a rate of 100% for manicure in 2002. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that there are poor retention and pass rates on the beauty therapy NVQ level 2 course. Average attendance in most classes is high, 100% most weeks. Punctuality is also good. Students on all programmes work well together in practical lessons and demonstrate a high level of professionalism. The standard of the students' written work is good, particularly in assignments and case studies on holistic courses. Evidence includes a wide range of drawings and photographic examples, good use of ICT and Internet-based research. Students take pride in their work, portfolios are well organised and a good standard of portfolio building is evident. Students participate in college and national competitions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	*	3	26
		% retention	*	67	77
		% pass rate	*	100	95
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	30	36	37
		% retention	87	72	54
		% pass rate	62	92	60
Holistic therapies	3	No. of starts	13	17	22
		% retention	69	94	86
		% pass rate	100	94	84
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	16	15	18
		% retention	88	87	83
		% pass rate	79	100	87
Beauty specialist	3	No. of starts	17	18	10
		% retention	88	56	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Reflexology diploma	3	No. of starts	26	23	43
		% retention	58	57	81
		% pass rate	100	100	94

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

91. Most teaching is good or better and is effective in meeting the needs of individual students and the requirements of awarding bodies. Students learned well in most classes and were interested and motivated by the teaching and the enthusiasm of the staff. Students found the linking of theory and practical sessions helpful in enabling them to remember complex techniques. To accommodate different learning abilities, a range of teaching methods was used. In some lessons, unnecessary note-taking distracted students from the main focus of the lesson. Some students spent long periods writing, whilst balancing folders on their knees. Feedback was regularly given, both individually and collectively at the conclusion of lessons, although in some lessons, there was poor use of the whiteboard for recording key points. Individual progress was recorded carefully. Key skills are fully integrated into the curriculum. Staff have developed assignments to incorporate the evidence required and most students have a good understanding of evidence collecting. Students on holistic therapy courses are collecting evidence for the wider key skills. Good quality learning booklets are used effectively by students on all courses. Study skills sessions, which have recently been introduced, support students in the development and presentation of assignments, enabling them to accomplish higher standards. Students rigorously implement the health and safety policy in all sessions.

92. Hair and beauty staff are well qualified, have recent industrial experience and regularly update their skills. The resources are good and meet the needs of the learners. All salons are situated on the ground floor with good access for people with restricted mobility. The three salons in hairdressing and beauty are situated in a specially designed suite with an additional, self-contained holistic therapies salon in the main building. The salons are modern and attractively decorated with good equipment that reflects industry standards. However, there are no nail stations. The learning

resource centre is in close proximity to the suite and is well used by the students, but there are insufficient textbooks for the students to borrow.

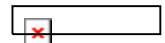
93. Students are well supported and there is effective monitoring of their progress. Most students have a clear understanding of course requirements and know the stage they are at with assessments. They have their own diaries in which to record targets. Students at risk of dropping out of a course are closely monitored by the 'amber alert' system and offered extra support. Students are encouraged to be realistic and honest about their training and they speak candidly in tutorials. There is a good internal verification system. External verification reports are good and any action points raised in them are addressed immediately.

94. The staff have reviewed the provision in relation to the NVQ hairdressing level 1 course. The focus is on students achieving sooner in the course and on early leavers receiving certificates for the work that they have completed. Students on full-time courses can enrol on to additional courses. There is a wide range of additional training opportunities through enrichment, manufacturer workshops and visits to external events. There are good relationships with industry. Local employers are invited to an industrial liaison evening in order to meet students for work placements. The college has recently become an accredited centre for the new specialist awards. There is also an evening event for parents and family members to meet staff and review progress.

Leadership and management

95. Staff are highly motivated and have contributed fully to the development of the area. Weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report have been addressed effectively. There are representatives from the area on college-wide meetings and staff are aware of the aims of the college. Progress against targets in department action plans is reviewed each trimester. Good practice is shared in beauty and holistic therapies, and there is effective standardisation across the curriculum and course delivery. There is uncoordinated planning of training for some students in hairdressing, with insufficient assessment. There has been a lack of support for some staff in helping them to understand awarding body and assessment requirements.

Health and care



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning on most courses for adults
- good retention and pass rates on most part-time courses
- effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rates on the diploma in childcare and education
- insufficient challenge for students in many lessons.

Scope of provision

96. The college offers the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate and diploma in childcare and education as full-time courses. Part-time courses include the national certificate in early years, introducing childminding, and courses in counselling. Large numbers of full-time and part-time students enrol on short first aid at work courses, and introductory and certificate programmes in health and safety. Several new courses were introduced in 2002, including the CACHE foundation certificate in caring for children, a full-time course for students aged 16 to 18, part-time courses at level 2 and 3 in childminding, the level 3 CACHE certificate of professional development, and NVQs in care at level 2. There are 76 full-time and 80 part-time students on the early years courses.

Achievement and standards

97. The retention and pass rates on most part-time courses are good. The national certificate in early years had 100% pass rate in years 2000 and 2001. Pass rates over the last three years in first aid at work have been consistently above the national average, and the certificate in counselling has pass rates above the national average. There have been good pass rates on the introducing health and safety course. However, the certificate in health and safety has had some poor results. On the diploma in childcare and education course, the pass rates are unsatisfactory and last year were 17% below the national average. The retention and pass rates on the CACHE certificate in childcare and education have risen from below the national average in 2001 to achieve 100% retention and pass rate in 2002.

98. Students' work is well presented with good use of ICT and creative skills. At level 3, students reference their work well and link theory to practice. The NVQ work shows a good level of knowledge of the communication skills used in care work. On counselling courses, there is some work of a very good standard. Many students from the diploma and certificate courses in childcare and education succeed in gaining employment working with children.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First aid at work	1	No. of starts	202	191	167
		% retention	99	99	100
		% pass rate	95	98	99
Introducing health and safety in the workplace	1	No. of starts	222	191	148
		% retention	100	99	100
		% pass rate	91	93	93
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	*	11	7
		% retention	*	73	100
		% pass rate	*	100	86
CACHE certificate in	2	No. of starts	*	8	11

childcare and education		% retention	*	63	100
		% pass rate	*	80	100
National certificate in early years	3	No. of starts	8	19	*
		% retention	88	84	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	16	19	13
		% retention	75	95	77
		% pass rate	75	89	70
Certificate in health and safety in the workplace	3	No. of starts	64	191	138
		% retention	92	93	96
		% pass rate	71	41	62

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

99. Teaching and learning are good on most courses for adults. The best lessons make reference to specific theorists and make good links to practice. There is often good use of resources. In one very good lesson, the teacher had designed a set of written learning materials to facilitate group work. These contained a range of information and activities, which helped the students to develop their ideas about children's use of language through nursery rhymes. Most lessons are well planned, based on well-constructed schemes of work. The individual needs of students are identified through a comprehensive initial assessment of basic skills needs and learning styles. Most teachers pay good attention to the individual needs of the students. However, in many lessons there is inadequate challenge for students. Teachers receive students' responses but often do not give additional information to stimulate further thought and exploration of the topic. Occasionally students are left to do work in the lesson and the teacher is very passive. This does not develop their independent learning. In one lesson, students worked on a task linked to child development. The teacher did not encourage students to think of different approaches or enable them to learn more about children's development. Teachers do not always take action when students lose concentration or are slow to settle to their work. At the end of lessons, teachers often do not review the learning that has taken place.

100. Most classrooms used by the care courses are satisfactory and have suitable furniture and teaching aids. There is one room frequently used by early years students which has a reasonable range of creative materials and is set out like part of a nursery school, with children's books in a simulated library corner. However, wind noise and draughts affect the room. Other classrooms have few learning materials. There is access to computers in many classrooms but good use is not always made of these in lessons. All teachers have a teaching qualification and two newly appointed members of staff have up-to-date vocational experience.

101. Assessment of work in early years is satisfactory. Written feedback on students' work is constructive and, in the better examples, tells students how to improve. On counselling courses, the teacher has detailed notes of her observations of the students' skills practice and taped work. The students use these to review their progress throughout the course. There is a promising system in place on the NVQ course for the assessment of the students' work using a college-based NVQ assessor. The system for the tracking and verification of the candidates' work is in place but as yet it is too early to make a judgement about its effectiveness.

102. Provision has been extended recently to better meet the needs of employers and the local community. There is a range of external links, which result in educational visits and visiting speakers

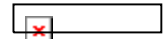
to enrich the students' learning. There is a varied enrichment programme for students but many do not attend because their timetables for college and work placement do not leave space for these activities.

103. Support for students is effective. All teachers have detailed profiles of students. These show a high level of consideration for the emotional and social needs of the students, as well as their learning needs. Teachers make good use of this information in lessons to support students' learning. On the diploma in childcare and education for adults, there is a buddy system where a student with a particular skill or strength will pair up with a student who needs to develop these. Teachers have offered flexible attendance and extra tutorial support when students' personal circumstances have been difficult. There is an effective system for identifying students who are at risk of leaving and appropriate help is given quickly. In tutorials, the student and teacher work together to identify any issues which might affect learning and achievement. There is a work placement officer who deals with all student issues related to the workplace.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are effective and there is a common approach to course leadership. An advanced practitioner was appointed in August 2002 to act as a mentor to teachers across the vocational area. Staff development is planned and delivered but is not always timely. The advanced practitioner has not yet been able to grade her observations because she is awaiting training. Heads of schools monitor and review retention, achievement, and teaching and learning three times each year in meetings with the principal and the director of learning and quality. Actions are identified with target dates for completion. However, at school level the approach is not so rigorous or consistent. Meetings between the head and team leaders take place on an informal basis but are not routinely scheduled. There are no written records of the meetings.

Visual arts and media



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

Strengths

- good standards of work by adult students
- good one-to-one teaching and support
- particularly effective learning of practical skills and techniques
- effective monitoring of academic progress and pastoral issues.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in 2002 on many courses
- some unsatisfactory teaching of theory.

Scope of provision

105. The college provides a small number of full-time courses in the graphic and visual arts, from intermediate to advanced and higher levels. The provision includes an established one-year pre-degree diploma in foundation studies. Numbers on this have declined considerably in the current year and the media course failed to recruit. A gateway to art and design course combines five different qualification aims and is targeted at adult students seeking to return to work. There are plans to introduce foundation level provision in the next academic year. There is a large programme of part-time adult and community learning courses, most of which are funded by the local education authority. Specialist part-time courses include photography and soft furnishing. At the time of the inspection, there were 80 full-time and 90 part-time students. Of the 170 learners, 58 are aged 16 to 18. A few part-time day and evening students have progressed from adult and community learning (ACL) provision on to full-time courses.

Achievement and standards

106. Pass rates on most courses are improving and several are above national averages. There were pass rates of 100% on the AVCE and the one-year national certificate in design. Pass rates on the pre-degree foundation course are consistently around 90%, although this is slightly below the national average. Pass rates on most courses improved considerably in 2002. Retention rates declined in 2002 and on almost half of courses they were below national averages. In AVCE art and design, and foundation studies in art and design, retention rates were more than 10% below national averages. Retention rates for part-time students on the foundation course were significantly better.

107. The standard of practical work achieved by adult students is good. For example, in photography, students' printed images are technically proficient, as well as showing some creative flair and imagination in their composition. In a soft furnishing class, students, some of whom have not sewn or used a sewing machine before joining the class, achieve a high level of skill in making a cushion with self-piping and an enclosed zip. The standard of most students' work is satisfactory. Not all students are able to take good notes to reinforce their learning. The portfolio work of most students is of a good standard. Students are able to use a variety of sources, including the Internet, for their research. The progression to higher level courses is satisfactory. Generally, students who wish to go to university from the foundation course do so. Students' attendance and punctuality are generally good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	9	18	*
		% retention	44	61	*
		% pass rate	100	64	*
Art and craft studies	2	No. of starts	42	52	82
		% retention	79	87	84
		% pass rate	70	64	81
Desktop publishing	2	No. of starts	7	34	40

stage 2		% retention	67	82	98
		% pass rate	50	33	58
AVCE (GNVQ advanced) art and design	3	No. of starts	15	17	10
		% retention	73	76	60
		% pass rate	89	85	100
National certificate in design (one year)	3	No. of starts	7	11	14
		% retention	57	36	86
		% pass rate	100	50	100
Foundation studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	27	29	33
		% retention	85	97	79
		% pass rate	91	89	88

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

108. Most students are particularly good at learning new practical skills and techniques. Pottery students learn essential skills, such as coiling and wrapping, as well as how to try out tests for different glazes before firing their work. A few students acquire high levels of proficiency in how to use specialist software programmes in web design. Some students concentrate too much on learning techniques. In graphic design courses, insufficient time is spent in encouraging students to explore creative ways of achieving solutions to design briefs.

109. Teaching is good. Teachers have a high level of technical knowledge, which they pass on to their students. They praise students for their effort and acknowledge good work. Teaching is most effectively used to support and direct individual students. Teachers adapt learning programmes for individual students to take account of any study difficulties caused by home or health difficulties. They actively seek to ensure that all students are focused on tasks and are making satisfactory progress. They simply and patiently explain complex technical points to ensure that all students understand. Supporting handouts and visual aids are informative and clear. Lesson plans and schemes of work acknowledge the different needs of individual learners. Teachers working with adults recognise the need to allow learners to discover their own solutions through making mistakes and avoid directing them too firmly. On many part-time courses for adults, teachers draw on the students' experiences to help explain key points. Appropriate reference is made to world art to inform students' understanding of other cultures.

110. The teaching of some theory is unsatisfactory. Teachers fail to check that students can grasp the information they are presenting in their lessons. The understanding of theory is not sufficiently linked to practical work. In one lesson, a teacher failed to emphasise the most salient points during the presentation. One lesson was pitched too high for the ability and prior knowledge of the students. Insufficient attention is given to note taking and some students are not eager to record their progress in writing.

111. Assessment practice is good. Full-time students' work is assessed each term by at least two teachers and this ensures consistency of standards. Written feedback from tutors to students on each project is constructive but on occasions too general to be helpful.

112. Tutorial support is good. Students receive a good induction programme, which includes an initial identification of any needs for support in key skills, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and additional learning needs. Trips for full-time students are effectively used to encourage students to work together outside their class groups. Tutors and students agree an action plan as

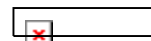
part of the monitoring of progress. Any problems with attendance, punctuality or poor performance are addressed thoroughly in tutorials. Extra support is organised for students who are at risk of failing.

113. Staff are appropriately qualified but some teachers have little recent industrial experience. Most specialist classrooms are spacious, well equipped and provide an adequate learning environment for students. There are very good specialist workshops in photography. ICT facilities are very good and computers have industry standard software.

Leadership and management

114. The curriculum area is well managed. Internal communications are good. There are appropriate arrangements for course reviews. Course team leaders set enrolment targets for the next academic year although these are not always met. Careful consideration of the views of students and feedback from external verifiers inform forward planning. For example, as a result of feedback from students, specialist workshops in the foundation course were rescheduled from the second to the first term.

English, languages and communications



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

Strengths

- good teaching and effective learning on many adult courses
- effective individual support for students
- students' work is constructively marked and assessed
- good range of provision in modern foreign languages.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on some courses
- insufficiently challenging teaching in some classes

- insufficient use of ILT.

Scope of provision

115. The college offers GCE A-level English language and literature and communication studies, GCE AS English literature and communication studies, GCSE English language, and a range of English as a foreign language (EFL) courses leading to qualifications at levels 1 to 5. It offers English for access to HE courses, a creative writing course, business English for engineers, and key skills communication. There are currently 28 students on GCE A-level and GCE AS English language, literature and communications courses, numbers which show a declining trend in enrolments as a consequence of a college strategy to phase out GCE A levels. There are 74 students on GCSE English language courses. The access to HE English course has 54 students and there are 75 students on EFL courses.

116. There is a wide range of part-time day and evening provision in modern foreign languages on the main college site and in nine centres within a 12-mile radius of the college, which provides progression opportunities from conversational level to intermediate level in French, Italian and Spanish. German is available at foundation and intermediate level. There were 545 adults enrolled on 40 programmes at the time of the inspection, with the majority studying for OCN qualifications. GCE AS and A2 are available for full-time and part-time students. At the time of the inspection, 56 students were on these courses.

Achievement and standards

117. Pass rates on level 3 courses in English and communications are improving. For example, GCE A-level language and literature has consistently good retention rates, and pass rates have improved to 100% in 2002. Pass rates in GCE AS language and literature are poor. The course has been dropped in 2002 and replaced by GCE AS literature. Retention rates on EFL courses are very good, but the pass rates on levels 2 and 3 are erratic, ranging from poor to outstanding in different years. While retention rates on GCSE language have shown a rising trend, pass rates have declined and were poor in 2002. Pass rates on access to HE courses are very good. In modern foreign languages, there have been improvements since 1999/2000 in retention and pass rates across adult part-time courses at all levels. Most pass rates in modern foreign languages are now satisfactory and some are good. Students perform well in class and their written work is of an acceptable standard. Students' oral and listening skills are well developed.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Spanish OCN foundation	1	No. of starts	76	80	82
		% retention	75	66	78
		% pass rate	77	93	96
Italian OCN foundation	1	No. of starts	19	26	43
		% retention	70	86	75
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	89	53	81
		% retention	65	81	91
		% pass rate	66	49	32

EFL level 3 first certificate	2	No. of starts	29	42	56
		% retention	90	98	100
		% pass rate	65	100	48
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	25	21	12
		% retention	80	81	92
		% pass rate	60	76	100
GCE AS communication studies	3	No. of starts	*	11	15
		% retention	*	64	80
		% pass rate	*	71	100
GCE AS English language and literature	3	No. of starts	*	31	24
		% retention	*	81	88
		% pass rate	*	64	76

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

118. All teaching is satisfactory or better. There is some good teaching in English and EFL courses, particularly on access to HE courses. In one lesson, students engaged in a lively debate on a short story, which raised complex issues about child murder. The discussion was handled sensitively and the depth of exploration gave students good material to use in the writing task. In another lesson, students gained in confidence through individual presentations to the rest of the class. In a stimulating lesson on *Macbeth*, the teacher succeeded in sustaining the interest and concentration of the group. However, some lessons lacked pace and stimulation, where students waited passively for the slowest in the class to finish an activity before they were moved on. Sometimes, instructions were not given clearly to students. ILT is underused in English, communications and modern foreign languages.

119. In modern foreign languages, good use is made of the target language. In the best lessons, teachers used a full range of delivery methods, encouraging discussion, role play and group interaction. Grammatical points and vocabulary are introduced naturally and reinforced throughout the exercise. Teachers know their students well and respond appropriately to the needs of students with different abilities within the same group.

120. All staff are appropriately qualified. The main classroom used for English is pleasant and has attractive displays, but an English lesson taught in an open area in the learning resource centre was disrupted by the noise of people who walked through the area to reach offices and other classrooms. Several lessons are taught in mobile classrooms that vary in quality. The mobile classrooms do not have computers. Access to resources is not equal for all students. Students state that there is some over-reliance on the standard textbook used in EFL and that they would like to see more variety in the resource materials. Resources in modern foreign languages are limited, tape recorders are old and students do not use computers unless at home.

121. The marking and the assessment of students' work are good in English and communications. Teachers comment constructively and students know how they should improve their work. There is a clear system for the tracking of progress on English courses. In modern foreign languages, part-time adult provision schemes of work are clearly linked to OCN accreditation. Teachers and students understand the assessment processes. Homework and coursework are thoroughly and correctly marked with suggestions for improvement.

122. There are good progression routes and a good range of courses in modern foreign languages and EFL. In English and communications, there is a satisfactory range of courses from level 1 to 3 and access to HE.

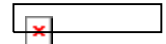
123. There is good support for students on English and communications courses. Pre-course diagnostic testing enables students to get additional learning support. One student was very well supported by the learning support assistant and participated fully in the lesson. However, lack of differentiation in lessons means that the different needs of students are not always met. Students who achieved high grades at GCE AS were unchallenged in a GCE A-level lesson and did not actively participate in the group work which had been organised. In another lesson, students studying for different levels on a communications course all participated in the same activity, which challenged some, but not others.

Leadership and management

124. Course management in English, languages and communications is satisfactory. The staff are committed, enthusiastic and work well together as a team. Course reviews are carried out three times a year but the resulting action plans lack focus and detail. Students' views are sought at college rather than at subject level. The aggregation of data conceals subject trends in retention and achievement. Staff are not aware of benchmarking data. Equal opportunities issues are addressed in tutorials, and students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties participate fully in activities.

125. The modern foreign languages classes are delivered by three schools and co-ordinated by a permanent member of staff on a fractional contract. There are 28 staff, including 18 native speakers, who are mostly part time. Team meetings are used as staff development sessions, and staff are beginning to ensure that common assessment practice is in place, and that different teaching and learning styles are being developed.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- good range of programmes and options for students
- thorough support mechanisms used to identify literacy and numeracy needs
- good pastoral and learning support within individual teaching sessions
- highly effective induction.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped quality assurance for literacy and numeracy and learning support
- insufficiently detailed target setting for students
- poor retention rates on ABE programmes
- insufficient access to ICT resources for students on outreach sessions.

Scope of provision

126. The college offers literacy and numeracy programmes for full-time and part-time students. Provision includes discrete basic skills programmes in the college, in community settings and in workplaces. There are currently 167 students on these programmes, of whom 11 are full time. In addition, there are 89 students receiving literacy support and 128 receiving numeracy support. The college also provides a part-time entry life skills programme. Some 63 students, some of whom have a range of literacy and numeracy needs, attend this programme. A range of additional modules is available to students, for example, cookery, ICT and study support.

Achievement and standards

127. The achievement of students is satisfactory. Retention rates are low for students aged 19 and over on entry and level 1 numeracy and literacy courses, but are satisfactory in all other areas. The college has implemented a strategy to address the poor retention rates. Students are now interviewed and screened before they start the programme, allocated to the relevant class, and lessons include time for tutorials and support. Retention rates are reviewed at every team meeting. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures. Most students are on programmes that are not currently accredited and are working to individual learning plans. There is a high level of achievement of these. Most students attend regularly and punctually, although some students choose not to attend their scheduled learning support lessons. Students work well and most students produce work to a satisfactory standard.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
ABE mathematics (one year, internal)	E	No. of starts	15	28	43
		% retention	47	71	49
		% pass rate	100	95	100
ABE English (one year)	E	No. of starts	45	71	74
		% retention	58	68	50
		% pass rate	100	89	81
Entry vocational skills cert. (one year students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)	1	No. of starts	14	14	15
		% retention	79	79	73
		% pass rate	82	55	100

Entry vocational skills award (two year students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)	1	No. of starts	*	10	10
		% retention	*	100	80
		% pass rate	*	30	100

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

128. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching in the better sessions is planned well and a wide variety of teaching methods is used. Students enjoy their programmes and most can confidently express their personal gains. Lessons take account of individual needs and students are effectively challenged. Teachers regularly check students' understanding and most students achieve the outcomes expected of them. In a lesson in a community organisation, there was inspiring teaching that effectively challenged and encouraged the organisation's users and staff to improve literacy and computer skills, whilst producing a local newsletter. In the less satisfactory lessons, teachers did not effectively engage students. Tasks were not explained fully and did not inspire students or meet their needs. Some tasks were not set at the appropriate ability level. Some lessons did not maintain an adequate pace.

129. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of most students. There are some well-prepared handouts, which are colourful and easy to understand for students with entry level literacy. There was a good example of excellently produced worksheets on the theme of a local legend and differentiated to meet the mixed needs of the group. However, some lessons are driven too much by the use of worksheets. All teaching staff are suitably qualified or working towards qualifications. Learning support staff have a variety of qualifications or experience and plans are in place to identify and address skills gaps. Most accommodation is of a satisfactory standard although some lessons observed were ineffective due to an inappropriate environment. In one lesson, for example, students were disengaged and the tutor was unable to identify this due to the layout of the room. There is some poor seating in the ICT learning centre and there is insufficient access to ICT resources for students on outreach programmes.

130. Initial assessment is effectively used to identify the learning needs of individuals. All full-time students receive an initial assessment for literacy and numeracy needs. In the current year, 120 students have been identified as requiring numeracy support and 87 as needing literacy support. Whilst arrangements are made for all students to receive support, some do not attend the lessons. Absence is not yet routinely monitored. All students attending entry level programmes also receive the same assessment. The college has recently introduced a learning styles questionnaire and a diagnostic assessment for key skills. Students on entry level programmes are routinely provided with learning support in relation to their assessment. There is good pastoral and learning support, and induction is thorough and of a high standard. Students have a good knowledge of the rules and regulations, course options, and complaints procedure. There is good equal opportunities training at induction and this is reinforced with quizzes, competitions, crosswords and mnemonics. Inspectors observed good discussions and understanding of equal opportunities issues as they arose in the sessions.

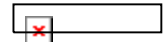
131. The college has invested significantly in the development of individual learning plans. The overall learning outcome is identified in the individual learning plan. Targets are identified each term. Short-term learning goals are identified and progress towards them is recorded at the end of the lesson. There is insufficient detail in the termly and short-term targets. The aim is clear but the steps to achieving these targets are not broken down effectively into measurable activities. Students are unclear about what they have achieved in individual lessons and about what they need to do next. Although progress is reviewed each term, it is not sufficiently linked to the overall learning outcome, to ensure that the learning programme is completed in a timely manner.

132. Courses effectively meet the needs of students in a range of locations. Programmes include provision during the day and in the evening at the main college site, and some basic skills in the workplace and community. There is a good range of levels and options. Core modules include English, mathematics and, in some cases, ICT. There is an extensive range of optional modules on some courses, for example, cookery, sport, personal development, citizenship, music therapy and study support. All adult students on the full-time programme have clearly mapped progression aims. Effective links with employers have been established and literacy and numeracy provision is being developed in local workplaces.

Leadership and management

133. Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. The college provides effective strategic direction for literacy and numeracy provision through its strategic plan. This is supported by a basic skills improvement plan. There is an initial assessment policy for all full-time students and for both full-time and part-time students at entry level. A cross-college essential skills group has been recently established to enable the sharing of best practice and standardisation of paperwork, and for staff to work on common systems. There is an effective system of team meetings. Quality assurance for literacy and numeracy and learning support is undeveloped. A system has recently been put in place to observe the practice of new learning support assistants but this has not yet been extended to all staff. Evaluation systems for learning support are still in the process of being established. Non-accredited programmes are not internally moderated to ensure standardised practice. However, the college is in the process of implementing a new system.

English for speakers of other languages



134. Six ESOL lessons take place each week and 19 part-time students attend these sessions. The college provides a satisfactory level of ESOL provision from entry level to level 1. Provision has recently been restructured to distinguish between the varying ability levels of students. A wide range of resources is used, including comprehensive handouts, cassettes and a range of visual resources that effectively promote learning. Lessons are varied to meet a wide variety of learning styles. The programme is well planned. Students are able to effectively demonstrate their competencies in written, listening and verbal skills.

Part D: College data

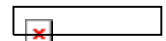
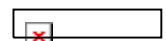


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18	19+
1	20	38
2	45	13
3	18	8
4/5	1	1



Other	16	39
Total	100	99

Source: Provided by the college in 2002

Note: Percentages in column 19+ have been rounded and hence do not total 100

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	374	1,181	11
Land-based provision	0	123	1
Construction	1	13	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	256	97	3
Business administration, management and professional	93	3,134	23
Information and communication technology	427	1,233	12
Retailing, customer service and transportation	51	53	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	219	377	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	70	296	3
Health, social care and public services	229	553	6
Visual and performing arts and media	133	1,655	13
Humanities	387	858	9
English, languages and communication	405	357	6
Foundation programmes	271	993	8
Total	2,916	10,923	100

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level	Retention and pass	Completion year				

Courses)		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	607	301	185	1,686	970	930
	Retention rate	81	81	77	74	79	78
	National average	81	81	80	80	79	78
	Pass rate	55	61	79	56	70	84
	National average	61	65	69	62	68	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	919	653	461	910	789	1,074
	Retention rate	84	78	81	82	78	81
	National average	76	77	76	78	79	79
	Pass rate	63	74	72	67	70	71
	National average	67	68	70	67	69	71
3	Starters excluding transfers	443	426	448	833	735	788
	Retention rate	70	75	79	78	76	78
	National average	75	75	76	79	78	79
	Pass rate	56	65	73	55	71	72
	National average	72	74	74	66	69	71
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	14	11	2	99	87	98
	Retention rate	93	100	0	84	76	98
	National average	85	82	86	84	82	86
	Pass rate	100	100	0	76	86	68
	National average	67	69	57	61	60	57

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

Sources of information:

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

	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	sessions observed
Level 3 (advanced)	70	21	9	66
Level 2 (intermediate)	64	34	2	55
Level 1 (foundation)	59	33	8	36
Other sessions	72	22	6	18
Totals	66	28	6	175

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