



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College

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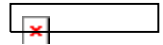
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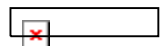
**Basic information about the college**



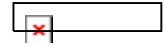
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Name of college:	Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Terence Metcalfe
Address of college:	St Mark's Avenue Leeds LS2 9BL
Telephone number:	0113 294 6644
Fax number:	0113 294 6006
Chair of governors:	Margaret Ramsden
Unique reference number:	130548
Name of reporting inspector:	Philip Pullen HMI
Dates of inspection:	29 September - 3 October 2003

**Part A: Summary**



## Information about the college

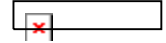


Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College is the only Catholic sixth form college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. The college was established in 1989 and occupies the premises of the former Notre Dame High School for Girls, close to the centre of Leeds. It is a designated institution with incorporated status under the terms of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The college focuses on providing full-time courses for students from its four Catholic 11 to 16 schools in central Leeds, but also recruits substantial numbers of students from other Catholic and non-Catholic schools in the surrounding area. In 2001/02, the proportion of non-Catholics at the college was approximately 38%.

The college has grown steadily over the last 14 years. In 2002/03, the college enrolled 1,189 students, of which all but 13 were aged 16 to 18. Approximately 57% of students are female. Some 16% of students are from minority ethnic groups and include around 40 overseas students. The main curriculum provision is at level 2 and level 3 and includes vocational courses in business, health and social care, and leisure and recreation. The majority of enrolments are for advanced level qualifications. Level 1 qualifications account for less than 1% of enrolments. Student numbers are highest in humanities, information and communications technology (ICT) and science and mathematics.

The college's mission is based on 'building a community on faith and trust'.

## How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the provision to be outstanding in social science. The areas of science, mathematics, business studies, ICT, visual and performing arts, humanities and English and modern foreign languages were judged to be good. Leadership and management of the college are good. There is a strong commitment by governors and senior managers to the college's mission and Catholic ethos. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

### **Key strengths**

- high pass and retention rates for most subjects
  
- effective teaching and learning
  
- the clear strategic direction and ethos of the college
  
- very good opportunities for enrichment and personal development
  
- strong links with partner schools

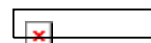
- good provision for careers advice and guidance.

**What should be improved**

- sharing of good practice within and across curriculum areas
- some inadequate accommodation
- the use of ICT in some curriculum areas
- some aspects of the curriculum portfolio.

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

**Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**

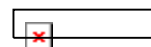


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).*

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	<b>Good.</b> There is effective teaching, particularly at advanced level. Pass and retention rates are high on most General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and Advanced level (A-level) courses but low on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) science courses. Many students progress to science-related courses in higher education (HE). There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> There is effective teaching of key concepts and techniques. Pass and retention rates on most courses are high. However, the pass rate for GCSE mathematics is low and declining. Students receive good learning support. There is limited use of ICT in lessons.
Business studies and economics	<b>Good.</b> Most lessons are well structured with good supporting material. Standards of students' work are high. There are high pass and retention rates on most courses. However, in 2003, pass rates for

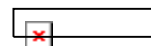
	GCE AS economics, and economics and business courses were poor.
Information and communications technology	<b>Good.</b> There is good teaching and learning. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses but there are low retention rates for GCE A-level computing. There is good support for students in lessons.
Visual and performing arts	<b>Good.</b> Most teaching is effective. There are high pass and retention rates on most courses, although retention rates are poor on some GCE AS courses. Many students produce high standards of practical work. There is insufficient integration of ICT in drama, art and music.
Humanities	<b>Good.</b> There is much good teaching and classroom management. Pass and retention rates are high for most subjects. Study materials are used well to support learning. Insufficient use is made of ICT.
Social science	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is very effective. There are outstanding pass rates for the majority of subjects and high and improving retention rates. Students' oral and written work is of a high standard. In some larger teaching groups, individual learning needs are insufficiently addressed.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is effective. Pass rates are high, although there is a small proportion of higher grade passes in some subjects at GCE A-level. Students receive good feedback on their assignments. There is little use of ICT in lessons.

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



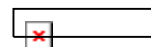
Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers have a clear view of the strategic direction of the college. There is a strong commitment to fostering and promoting Christian values within a caring community, achieving high academic standards and developing the whole person. The majority of pass and retention rates are above the national average. Quality assurance procedures have improved since the last inspection and are generally thorough and effective. However, data from the college's lesson observation scheme are not used sufficiently to inform self-assessment or to share good practice. There is prudent financial management. The college provides good value for money.

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



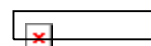
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Whilst the admissions policy gives priority to Catholic students, especially those from Catholic partner high schools, applications from young people of other Christian denominations and from other world faiths are welcomed. At least 40% of students come from areas with widening participation postcodes. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to that of the local community. A small number of students presently on roll have refugee or asylum-seeker status. The college's strong commitment to equal opportunities is grounded in its Christian ethos. There are many instances of positive encouragement to respect and celebrate the differences between students. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. Regular monitoring of enrolments and performance by gender and ethnic background takes place, although insufficient use is made of the information collected. The college is making progress in prioritising and implementing requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).

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



Support for students is good. Effective pre-enrolment, guidance and recruitment activities help students settle quickly into their studies. Relationships with partner high schools are strong. The tutorial programme is valued by students and provides them with very effective levels of support. There are good arrangements for identifying and providing students' additional support needs. Advice and guidance for students applying to HE is comprehensive and effective. The spiritual dimension of students' education is very well supported. There is a broad and imaginative enrichment programme, which is popular with students.

## 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***

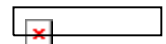
- the lively atmosphere and sense of community
  
- the disciplined learning environment
  
- teachers' subject expertise
  
- good support through subject workshops
  
- good study and information technology (IT) facilities
  
- interesting enhancement courses.

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

- dining facilities

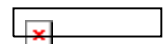
- parking provision for students
  
- social and leisure facilities
  
- assemblies
  
- some crowded classrooms and social areas.

### Other information

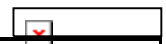


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

### Part B: The college as a whole



### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

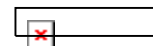


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	76	22	2
19+ and WBL*	0	0	0
Learning 16-18	74	23	3
19+ and WBL*	0	0	0

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

*\* work-based learning*

## **Achievement and standards**



1. Overall judgements about achievements and standards for the years 2001 and 2002 are based on aggregate information in the college performance report produced by Ofsted. This is derived from data supplied by the college in its individualised learner record (ILR). Data for 2003 are derived from the college using its own software. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievements and standards of work on particular courses.

2. The majority of the college's provision is for full-time students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. There is no discrete provision for adults. Students mainly study GCE AS and A-level subjects, with a small percentage studying for an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in one of three subjects. Level 2 provision consists mainly of GCSEs, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) courses and two General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses in business and health and social care.

### **16 to 18 year olds**

3. In the three years to 2002, retention rates have been consistently at or slightly above the national average for sixth form colleges. Level 3 retention rates have shown a steady improvement, generally in line with the national trend. At qualification level, AVCE retention rates are significantly above the national average whereas those for GNVQ intermediate courses are slightly below.

4. Overall pass rates are at or above the national average. Level 3 pass rates have generally been significantly above the national average. In 2001/02, they were within the top 25% of sixth form colleges nationally. Level 2 pass rates were significantly above the national average in 2000/01 but declined to just above the national average in 2001/02. Pass rates on the small number of level 1 courses show a steady improvement over the period 1999/2000 to 2001/02, although the numbers of enrolments are very low.

5. Pass rates for GCE A-level courses are consistently high. In 2003, the overall pass rate for GCE A2 subjects was 92%. In the same year, 13 out of 32 subjects offered at GCE A2 had pass rates of 100%. In 14 subjects, pass rates at grades A to B exceeded 50%. Pass rates for GCE AS subjects are also generally high. In 2003, 18 out of 34 subjects had a pass rate of at least 90%. However, the overall pass rate for GCE AS declined by 5% to 88% in 2003, largely as a result of low pass rates in general studies.

6. Achievement on AVCE courses is substantially above the national average. In 2003, the overall pass rate was 93%. Pass rates of 100% were achieved in two of the three courses offered and in AVCE business, 88% of those completing the course achieved high grades.

7. Pass rates on GCSE courses vary considerably between subjects. In English language and English literature, the A\* to C pass rate is significantly above the national average. However, in science, the A\* to C pass rate has been consistently below the national average. In 2003, the college's overall GCSE A\* to C pass rate was 50%. Pass rates on the two GNVQ intermediate courses are very high. In 2003, all students who completed the course in business obtained the qualification and the GNVQ intermediate course in health and social care had a pass rate of 95%.



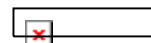
8. The college uses a national system to measure how well students perform in relation to their qualifications at entry. In 2003, students in 13 out of 36 GCE A2 subjects and 12 out of 35 GCE AS subjects obtained higher grades than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE performance. Over the three year period to 2003, biology, mathematics, design and technology, geography, and sociology have achieved consistently high value added scores.

9. There are good progression rates for students. Around 80% of advanced level students progress to HE and the majority of intermediate level students progress to advanced level study in the college.

10. The college provides opportunities for students to gain a key skills qualification in IT. However, they are not able to accredit their IT key skills at level 3 or above, even though the majority of students are following a level 3 programme. In 2001, most students studied for key skills level 2 in IT. Pass rates were high compared with the national average, although the retention rate was low. In 2002, the college made a decision to enter students for the CLAIT qualification in IT as an alternative to the key skills external tests. Results for this qualification were not available at the time of inspection. The college does not offer key skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy.

11. The standard of students' work is good. In 71% of lessons, attainment is better than average and in 21% it is very good or excellent. Students are highly motivated. They demonstrate their growing knowledge, skills and understanding. In lessons, most students apply effort, show interest in their work and make good progress. For example, in social science lessons, students demonstrate good levels of understanding in both their oral and written work. Students' confidence in their practical skills is increased in science and visual and performing arts and media lessons. In some business lessons, students respond well to a variety of challenging tasks, such as competitions. In a significant minority of lessons, poor punctuality by some students disrupted the learning of others. Attendance during the inspection averaged 90% in the lessons observed. This compares well with the average of 85% for sixth form colleges inspected in 2001/02.

## Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 126 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 76% of these, satisfactory in 22% and unsatisfactory in less than 2%. This compares with an average of 73%, 23%, and 4%, respectively, for all sixth form colleges inspected during 2002/03.

13. Teaching and learning at level 3 had the highest proportion of lessons graded good or better. The highest number of outstanding lessons was on GCE AS courses, where the teaching in 87% of lessons was judged to be good or better and none was unsatisfactory. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was at level 2. The lowest proportion of lessons judged to be good or better was on GCSE courses, although there were also examples of outstanding teaching on these courses.

14. In the majority of lessons, teaching and learning are well planned. Teachers prepare thoroughly and make good use of the learning materials that they have produced. In most lessons, teaching methods are appropriate for the students and for the topic being studied. Teachers use questions effectively to ensure students' involvement and to provide challenge. They make frequent checks on learning in lessons. There were many examples of good practice observed in all areas of the college. For example, in social science, teachers had high expectations of students and there was much emphasis on developing understanding of key concepts and appropriate use of specialist terminology. In business studies, good use was made of role play to stimulate interest. In ICT, teachers demonstrated up-to-date subject knowledge and practical expertise and used it to good effect in lessons. In English, there was good communication between teachers and students, and good use of the language being taught in modern foreign languages. In science, mathematics and humanities, lessons were well structured. Practical work was tailored to the needs of individuals in

visual and performing arts and media.

15. In a minority of lessons, some students do not work productively or they fail to show interest. Their interest is often lost when the teacher dominates too much or where insufficient attention has been given to the needs of different groups of students. For example, in a number of lessons in business studies and economics and humanities, students of high ability were not challenged or there was insufficient stimulus to maintain the interest of the less able. In other lessons, the pace was not appropriate to the tasks or to the students. There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning in several curriculum areas. In some GCSE lessons, there was a wide range of ability and the learning of some students was affected by the failure of teachers to address their different needs.

16. Teachers are well-qualified. They have a high level of subject knowledge and are well-supported in updating their knowledge. Many have external examination experience and a few have useful experience in other fields, both of which enhance the learning of students. Staff development is given a high priority. The tutor responsible for staff development liaises frequently with the principal, and staff are fully involved in identifying training and development needs. A two year appraisal cycle was completed in June 2003. This process is supplemented by a lesson observation schedule involving peer and line-management observation. However, evaluation of the impact of staff development is not rigorous enough. The balance of both teaching and support staff in terms of minority ethnic group representation does not reflect that of the student body or the local community and the college is seeking to redress this issue. No specific training has been provided on the promotion of race equality.

17. The college provides a very pleasant, secure environment for learning. The original buildings present challenges but there is a comprehensive vision for the future development of the college. There have been significant improvements in accommodation since the last inspection. These include excellent facilities for staff, improved social and dining areas for students and a drop-in computer centre. The recently refurbished sports hall provides excellent facilities. Classrooms and corridors are generally clean and smart, with well-presented notice boards. There are attractive displays of art which support the Catholic ethos of the college. Although access for students with restricted mobility has improved considerably since the last inspection, some areas still present considerable difficulties. There is no suitable access to some of the science area, some arts and humanities rooms and the area used for learning support. Some subjects are taught in cramped rooms. Two computer studies rooms lack adequate ventilation. The college is planning a new building for September 2004 which will address some of these accommodation issues.

18. Students have good access to computers. Substantial progress is being made towards establishing a comprehensive ICT environment that students value. Features include electronic registration and mark book software to record student progress, e-mail communication for staff and students, and a well-developed intranet. There is a networked computer in all classrooms, and many rooms have projection and other IT facilities. Study facilities are enhanced by a large, pleasant library. The library stock is reasonable but the rate of student borrowing is low. Departmental stocks of books and other resources add to what is available to support students' study.

19. Assessment procedures are rigorous and meet the requirements of awarding bodies. There is good, regular use of homework to support, improve and consolidate learning. The quality and detail of marking and feedback is generally good. Informal assessment in lessons often includes effective questioning by teachers. Frequent references are made to examination requirements when students are completing class exercises. However, no formal arrangements are in place across the college for the representative sampling of students' work. This limits opportunities to share good practice. Informal standards moderation takes place within some vocational course teams but the outcomes are not usually recorded.

20. Reporting of students' progress is good. Teachers keep detailed mark books recording all types of assessment. Subject tutors regularly report progress to personal tutors. Minimum target grades are set for students based on their prior achievement at GCSE. Predicted grades are also set based on coursework performance; they are reviewed regularly and used to inform students about their progress. Parents' evenings are held twice each year and are very well attended. Parents receive

reports on students' progress prior to parents' evenings. Attendance is carefully monitored. Registers are marked electronically at the start of every lesson and the findings are instantly available for all staff to check on students' attendance and punctuality.

21. The college provides a broad range of academic qualifications for students aged 16 to 18. There are 36 options available at GCE AS and A level. Most students choose four GCE AS subjects in their first year and the college arranges its timetable flexibly to enable them to follow their preferred combination. As part of the college's Curriculum 2000 strategy, students are encouraged to take a complementary subject and many choose to do so.

22. The college offers 10 GCSE subjects, and a large number of students follow a re-sit programme. The college is flexible in allowing students to combine study at different levels, and different qualification types. Results in a few GCSE subjects indicate that some students are inappropriately placed on these courses and there are few other options available at this level. For example, there is no alternative at level 2 in mathematics for students who enter the college with poor grades at GCSE. The college does not offer applied GCSEs. The college's vocational provision is limited to three AVCE and two GNVQ intermediate courses. These programmes recruit well and are successful. However, there is currently no vocational provision in ICT, although the college is addressing this at level 3 through the introduction of an AVCE course in 2004.

23. There is little provision at level 1. The college offers foundation level GNVQ courses in business and in health and social care, but has not recruited students to these courses during the current year. The college recognises that its promotion of courses at this level needs to be reviewed. Plans to provide basic skills courses for adults have not been fulfilled. There are currently no courses running for adults, although in 2002 a short IT course for adults was successful.

24. The college works in close and successful partnership with its partner Catholic schools, and increasingly with other schools, at senior and departmental levels. The partnership arrangements have been particularly successful in promoting the development of the curriculum at level 3, and for Year 10 and 11 students in schools. The college provides support for partner schools' specialist status, for example, by offering minority language GCSEs for Year 10 and 11 pupils. It also offers revision classes in English and mathematics for Year 11 pupils.

25. Students have many opportunities for personal, social and wider educational development. The enhancement offer is broad and imaginative. Although participation is voluntary, many students benefit from the programme, for example, through sport, drama and visits to other countries. The annual diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes is well subscribed and contributes greatly to students' personal development. The philosophy, theology and ethics (PTE) programme enjoys support amongst students of all faiths. The programme, which is available to every student, has received accreditation and, in 2003, approximately 850 students achieved the certificate. The 'Aim Higher' programme has been used effectively to increase opportunities for students to experience HE.

26. The college's key skills policy states that students should be given opportunities to develop key skills at an appropriate level through their subject areas. However, the rigor with which this is interpreted varies across the college. There is no central co-ordination of key skills and no monitoring of the standards of key skills that students reach. Students are not able to accredit key skills at level 3 or above even though the majority of students are following a level 3 programme.

27. Pre-entry advice and guidance is good. The college provides an attractive prospectus and other helpful course information. Criteria for entry to the college are clear. There is strong liaison with partner high schools. All applicants who apply before the closing date are guaranteed an interview by staff who are trained interviewers. Well-planned pre-induction days are arranged to introduce potential students to the college and its facilities. Student induction is carefully planned and effective. Changes of subject are handled by a senior teacher after guidance by subject teachers and careers advisors, where appropriate, and have to be signed by parents. At the time of inspection, there were very few changes of subject, considering the number of students who had been recently enrolled.

28. Since the last inspection, the college has developed good arrangements for identifying students

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and providing for their needs. An effective student support policy has been introduced and a qualified learning support co-ordinator appointed. The introduction of initial diagnostic assessment in literacy for all students has resulted in the successful identification of those needing extra help for whom there are additional timetabled tutorials. There has also been increased provision of specialist teaching for students with dyslexia. The provision for students who need help with numeracy is less well developed. There is good communication between learning support staff and subject teachers. Support teachers make good use of individual learning plans and progress reports. Students also appreciate the value of the additional support available to them in subject areas. Subject specific support is strong in many departments. However, because departments organise workshops within their own areas, the student entitlement and experience varies between subjects. Some students find it difficult to attend support workshops because of the constraints of the timetable.

29. Responsibility for overseeing the welfare of the college's international students is taken by a qualified educational welfare officer, who ensures that students have appropriate accommodation, helps them settle into their academic courses and acts in the absence of parents or guardians, when required. Students are offered full support in matters of legislation, such as visas and police registration, and there is a programme of events to introduce them to the way of life in Britain.

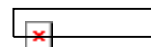
30. Arrangements for tutorial support have recently been revised. Responsibility for managing the tutorial system and for ensuring the quality of the students' experience now lies with two assistant principals. There are four newly appointed assistant vice principals, each of whom leads a team of tutors. Tutors feel confident with the new management arrangements. The tutor team is highly motivated with clear vision and practical abilities. Personal tutors operate as the first point of contact with students, monitoring their progress carefully and reporting regularly to parents. The benefits to students in terms of personal support and help on their courses are well understood and valued by them. The college has developed a comprehensive and interesting tutorial programme. Materials for the tutorial programme, which cover study skills, personal development and the student's entitlement for general studies, have been devised collectively by the tutor team and are produced centrally for each tutor group.

31. There is good advice and support for students applying to HE. All students get help with mock interviews, managing the admissions procedure and drafting of personal statements. Students particularly value the advice they get in completing their UCAS application. The Oxbridge programme provides intellectual challenge and stimulus for those students intending to apply to Oxford and Cambridge.

32. The college is committed to ensuring that the distinctive ethos of the college is maintained despite the increase in student numbers and the changing student profile. Students and their parents acknowledge the importance of the ethos in promoting an atmosphere of harmony and purposeful working which is appropriate and enriching for young people. There are high expectations of behaviour and attitude for all within the college community. Students are actively encouraged to share the values and contribute to the religious life within the college and give generous support to community activities. The ambitious and impressive general religious education programme helps to ensure that every student receives appropriate support for spiritual and personal development. A team of specialist teachers apply much energy and commitment to making the programme relevant and thought-provoking. Lessons are well attended and well taught; they receive a good response from students. There are extensive opportunities for students to be actively involved in liturgy, prayer, charity work and the annual diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. A chaplain, lay chaplain and a Catholic care worker provide counselling services for students and staff.

33. Some students expressed concerns that the format and content of the weekly assemblies did not meet their expectations. Assemblies observed during the inspection were prayerful and thoughtful reflections on the mission and the spiritual journey of all individuals, though there was some evidence of student absence. The college is aware that the success of the assemblies, which are the main vehicle for the prayer life of the college and through which the college meets its statutory obligation to provide opportunity for acts of collective worship, is vital and is keen to reconcile the difference between their aims and student perceptions.

## Leadership and management



34. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers have a clear view of the strategic direction of the college. Its mission has been reviewed and revised recently and is reflected in a set of objectives which emphasise the college's commitment to fostering and promoting Christian values within a caring community, achieving high academic standards and developing the whole person. These priorities are understood by staff, students and the wider community. The college achieves high pass rates and a large proportion of its students move on to HE. Retention rates have been consistently at or above the national average.

35. The college's strategic plan is based on a good analysis of local needs and initiatives. Many students are involved in the Aim Higher programme and the college has successfully widened participation over recent years. The college is a member of Leeds Federation of Colleges and is keen to play its part in local 14 to 19 curricular initiatives. It works closely with its partner 11 to 16 schools to provide a broad curriculum for its largely academic students. It also enrolls students lacking good GCSE results and many of them progress to level 3 courses. There are realistic plans for further expansion while maintaining the college's strong Christian ethos and academic record success.

36. The management structure is clear and effective. A small senior management group brings together staff responsible for curriculum, quality assurance, finance and resources, and student services. Recently appointed assistant vice principals are beginning to establish their important roles, which involve co-ordinating the work of tutors and heads of department. In practice, many responsibilities are devolved to the 28 heads of department, who have considerable autonomy and a corresponding degree of accountability.

37. Curriculum management is at least satisfactory and is good in several cases. Heads of department know their students well and most manage their small teams effectively. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and the resulting reports accurately reflect strengths and needs. However, not all departmental development plans deal adequately with weaknesses. Formal and informal communications are good. Students' responses to questionnaires are discussed and effective action taken. Heads of department are aware of the need to improve students' punctuality and have introduced strategies to tackle this issue. Links between subjects, even within the same curricular area, are generally ineffective.

38. Governors are well informed about the college's performance, financial state and progress against its objectives. They had a leading role in recasting the college's mission and work closely with college managers on curricular and staffing issues. For example, governors were involved in important decisions to appoint assistant vice principals and develop the tutorial system. They receive regular reports on the work of departments and they review self-assessment reports and performance targets. Governors aim to work more closely with groups of subjects so as to be better informed about current developments and needs. In the small number of cases where this system operates, teachers appreciate the opportunity to discuss their work with governors.

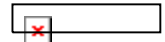
39. Quality assurance procedures have improved since the previous inspection. The college's approach to quality assurance is thorough and largely effective. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly and accurately identified through self-assessment. The system of principals' reviews with heads of department is used well in forward planning. A new lesson observation scheme ensures that all teachers are observed regularly and have the opportunity to watch colleagues teach. These observations are guided by detailed criteria and the results are logged systematically. However, staff are not trained in observing lessons and judgements tend to be over-generous. Moreover, the main messages from these observations are insufficiently used in the self-assessment reports and there is too little sharing of good practice.

40. The college's management information system provides a comprehensive, timely and accurate range of information which helps staff record and track students' progress. Essential data on enrolments, pass rates and retention rates are supplied to managers, and heads of department are kept well informed about budgeting issues.

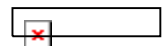
41. The college's strong commitment to equal opportunities is grounded in its Christian ethos and is reflected in its objectives, policies and effective pastoral system. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. A suitable race equality policy and an action plan have been produced. There is regular monitoring of enrolments and performance by gender and ethnic background. However, senior managers acknowledge that there is insufficient use of this information and that further staff training is needed in these matters. The college is working towards meeting the requirements relating to disability legislation and access to premises for those with mobility difficulties is good in all but two subjects.

42. The college manages its budget prudently. In recent years, the college has performed well against its funding targets. Rooms are used efficiently, although some overcrowding adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning. Heads of department manage their budgets efficiently. The cost of staffing as a percentage of the total budget is higher than the average for sixth form colleges. In the light of good pass and retention rates, the many positive value added scores, steadily increasing numbers, strong financial position, attention to best value practices, effective management of major projects and efficient utilisation of staff, the college provides good value for money.

### Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



#### Science



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

#### **Strengths**

- high pass and retention rates on most GCE AS and A-level courses
  
- effective teaching at advanced level
  
- good subject support for students
  
- good progression to science-related courses in HE.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass and retention rates on GCSE science courses
- insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

### **Scope of provision**

43. The college provides a range of science courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Approximately 300 students each year study GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics and environmental science. GCSE courses are available in double award science and environmental science, with over 100 enrolments each year. Students are able to take advanced extension awards and several have been successful in biology and chemistry. There is a good range of science enrichment activities available to students, including lectures and practical sessions at local universities and engineering courses for young women. Departments also offer revision classes for Year 11 pupils in partner schools.

### **Achievement and standards**

44. Most pass rates at advanced level are high. In 2003, the pass rates for GCE AS physics, chemistry and biology all exceeded national averages. GCE A-level pass rates were also high in biology and chemistry, with 98% and 100% pass rates, respectively. Students on advanced level courses mostly meet or exceed the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. However, on the GCSE science course, pass rates have been below national averages for the past three years, with only 50% of students achieving grade C or above in 2003. Pass rates for GCSE environmental science were low in 2003, with only 33% of students achieving grade C or above. Retention rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are generally high. On GCSE courses they are around the national average.

45. The standard of students' written and practical work is high. Students work well in lessons. They answer questions confidently and use technical terms appropriately. Students develop good practical skills and handle equipment and chemicals confidently and safely. Many students progress to science-related courses in HE. For example, in 2002, 82% of advanced level biology students went on to HE. There are also high rates of progression from GCE AS to A-level in science.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	129	87	107
		% retention	75	74	73
		% pass rate	46	42	50
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	40	63	44
		% retention	95	86	98
		% pass rate	87	89	88
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	82	78	95
		% retention	89	92	95
		% pass rate	95	93	93

GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	62	80	79
		% retention	94	91	95
		% pass rate	88	86	93
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	72	55	55
		% retention	83	96	100
		% pass rate	100	98	98
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	58	36	44
		% retention	90	97	98
		% pass rate	98	97	100

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

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

46. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between teachers and students foster productive working. Students are well prepared for their examinations through the effective use of examination questions. In most lessons, they show interest and develop their knowledge and understanding well. In a GCE A-level biology lesson, students were able to write detailed, accurate notes on their own after an informative discussion on homeostasis and regulation. Practical work is well organised. Before undertaking practical tasks, students carry out risk assessments, which are then discussed with the teacher. In weaker lessons, there is insufficient variety of activity to maintain students' interest. In others, there is too little practical work to underpin the theory, for example, in the teaching of electricity on the GCSE course. Students do not have enough opportunities to demonstrate development of key skills in some lessons. There is insufficient use of ICT in science. Some students use word processing and graph plotting in their assessed work, but other opportunities to develop its use are not taken. Teachers are aware of the need to develop this area. There are plans to develop learning materials for the college's intranet.

47. Assessment of students' work is carried out effectively. Homework is set regularly, graded and returned promptly with helpful comments. Regular testing of students using past examination papers enables efficient monitoring of their progress against external standards. Recording of students' progress in chemistry and biology is very well organised, but less so in other departments.

48. There is good guidance and support for students. Subject support workshops are available across all subjects. Students who need help are directed to these workshops, which are used most frequently near examination periods. They value the help given to them in the workshops and also the informal support that they receive. Students are well prepared for progression to HE. There is good individual support for those wishing to progress to medicine, dentistry or veterinary sciences, through workshops and discussion groups.

49. Teachers are well qualified and there is a good balance of new and experienced staff. Several teachers are examiners and make effective use of this experience in their teaching. Teachers have produced excellent booklets, revision guides and other written resources for several courses. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory. Each room has interesting displays, including examples of students' work. Laboratories are well equipped, but some resources are out of date. Sometimes the rooms are too small for the numbers of students and for effective practical work.

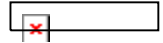
### **Leadership and management**

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are four heads of department who each have management responsibility. There are strengths within individual departments including detailed schemes of work, the monitoring of students' progress and record keeping. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice and there is no manager with the responsibility of taking an overview of developments in science. Departmental self-assessment reports give an accurate



account of the quality of provision in each department but a few weaknesses are not addressed fully. Health and safety practice is sometimes weak. For example, some safety records are not updated regularly and consumption of food is allowed in laboratory areas.

## Mathematics



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

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates on most mathematics courses
  
- high retention rates
  
- effective teaching of key concepts and techniques
  
- good learning support for mathematics students
  
- well-organised courses.

### **Weaknesses**

- declining pass rate for GCSE mathematics
  
- poor punctuality in lessons
  
- limited use of ICT to support learning.

### **Scope of provision**

51. The college provides mathematics courses at intermediate and advanced levels. There are 536 students currently studying mathematics. Students are able to choose from a wide range of unit options at GCE A level. A significant number of students take GCE A-level further mathematics.

Students with a grade C at GCSE are able to study GCE A-level statistics. Some students complete this course in one year. Approximately 200 students re-sit GCSE mathematics each year. Students with a grade D in GCSE mathematics can re-sit in November following a short intensive course, while others re-sit in June. There is currently no alternative provision at level 2 for those students with low entry grades. The department also supports the teaching of numeracy.

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

52. Overall pass rates are high. The pass rate for GCE A-level mathematics has improved consistently over the last three years. Students on GCE A-level mathematics courses achieve higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. The percentage of students achieving high grades is above the national average on the one-year GCE A-level mathematics course. On GCE A-level further mathematics, most students completing the course in 2002 and 2003 achieved A or B grades. However, on GCE AS courses, the grades obtained are below those predicted on the basis of previous attainment. The GCSE mathematics pass rate has fallen from 51% to 40% between 2001 and 2003, but remains above the national average. Retention rates are high on GCSE mathematics courses, and are mostly above or in line with the national average for the GCE AS and A-level courses.

53. Students work well in lessons and are interested and attentive. The standard of their work is good. Most students show well-developed mathematical techniques appropriate to the level at which they are working. Attendance in the GCE A-level lessons observed was good, at 92%, but lower for GCSE lessons, at 82%. In too many lessons, students arrived late, which disrupts the learning of others.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	131	146	188
		% retention	85	88	88
		% pass rate	51	43	40
GCE A level mathematics	3	No. of starts	90	48	60
		% retention	70	96	95
		% pass rate	79	83	95
GCE AS level mathematics	3	No. of starts	125	109	136
		% retention	86	86	88
		% pass rate	81	73	73
GCE AS statistics	3	No. of starts	*	**	29
		% retention	*	**	93
		% pass rate	*	**	74
GCE A-level mathematics (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	37	24
		% retention	*	89	96
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level further mathematics*	3	No. of starts	**	**	20
		% retention	**	**	100
		% pass rate	**	**	100

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

\* course not available

\*\* fewer than 15 starts

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

54. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and form productive relationships with their students. Teaching of key concepts is given a high priority and is very effective. Appropriate emphasis is placed on ensuring that students learn the correct way to answer examination questions and know how to present their solutions properly. Teachers use effective questioning to check students' progress and also to challenge and extend their thinking. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and topics are taught in a thorough way, giving clear and careful explanations. In one GCSE lesson, Pythagoras' Theorem was introduced using the desktop projector and carefully produced handouts. The teacher praised and encouraged the students, helping to build their confidence early in the course. In weaker lessons, teachers talk too much and there is little variety in their approach. Some teaching does not inspire poorly motivated students on GCSE courses. Little use is made of ICT or graphical calculators to enhance the teaching and learning in mathematics.

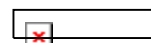
55. Students' performance and progress are monitored effectively. Students in need of extra help are encouraged to follow a specified programme of work in the mathematics workshop. Teachers provide effective individual support that helps students to become more confident. Students are assessed regularly and teachers maintain accurate records of their progress. Information is fed back to their personal tutor and the monitoring of students' progress against their target grades is good. Homework is set regularly and in sufficient quantity. Teachers mark it carefully and provide solutions and helpful comments.

56. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. Resources in the department are appropriate for the needs of students. A good stock of mathematics books is located within the department and all GCE A-level students are provided with textbooks. Classrooms and corridors are decorated imaginatively with a range of stimulating posters. One poster shows the team of students who won a regional mathematics competition in 2003, competing against other sixth form colleges. Resources for the college intranet are starting to be developed and a range of resources for GCE AS and GCSE students is now in place.

### **Leadership and management**

57. Leadership and management are good. The mathematics department is well organised and effectively led by a head of department who gives a clear sense of purpose and direction. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. There are regular, minuted team meetings where account is taken of students' views. Strong emphasis is given to improving the quality of students' work and preparing them effectively for examinations. Self-assessment involves all members of staff. The lesson observation scheme includes opportunities for teachers to observe each others' lessons, which helps to spread good practice. The self-assessment of students' achievements and teaching and learning is not given enough emphasis. There is no effective strategy to improve the GCSE pass rates in mathematics.

### **Business studies and economics**



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

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates on most courses
  
- high retention rates
  
- well-structured lessons with good supporting material
  
- broad range of full-time courses at advanced level
  
- high standard of students' work.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates on GCE AS economics and GCE AS economics and business courses in 2003
  
- classrooms which restrict the effectiveness of teaching.

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

58. The college offers a broad range of advanced level courses in business studies and economics. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in business, economics and in economics and business. An AVCE in business is also offered. At level 2, the college offers a GNVQ intermediate course in business. At the time of the inspection, there were 331 full-time students following business courses, of which 99 were on vocational courses.

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

59. There are consistently high pass rates on most courses. Many students achieve better than might be predicted from their prior attainment on entry. Pass rates on the AVCE, GCE A-level economics and GCE A-level business courses have all reached 100% in each of the last two years. The GNVQ pass rate has improved steadily to 100% in 2002/03. The proportion of students achieving high grades is higher than national averages on most courses. However, in 2003, pass rates on GCE AS economics and GCE AS economics and business were well below national averages. Few students following economics courses achieve high grades. Retention rates are above national averages, in some cases significantly higher.

60. The standard of students' work is high. Lucid and well-written students' assignments show a high level of reasoning and analytical ability. In a lesson about financial ratios, students were confident in making realistic judgements about company performance based on the ratios they had calculated. First-year students demonstrated a clear understanding of the impact on supply and demand of a range of variables. In a lesson on marketing, students made thoughtful contributions, analysing

information and presenting hypotheses about future trends.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in business studies and economics, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	17	19	16
		% retention	76	95	88
		% pass rate	92	94	100
GCE AS business and management studies	3	No. of starts	43	57	66
		% retention	93	96	94
		% pass rate	95	98	94
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	17	35	31
		% retention	100	91	94
		% pass rate	94	84	59
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	37	28	23
		% retention	84	100	91
		% pass rate	97	100	100
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	41	32	44
		% retention	78	91	98
		% pass rate	94	100	100
GCE A-level economics and business studies	3	No. of starts	43	39	27
		% retention	84	97	100
		% pass rate	100	84	93

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

***Quality of education and training***

61. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers use their expertise effectively in explaining new terms and concepts. The best teaching stimulates and challenges students. Teachers successfully incorporate a range of activities into their lessons to maintain students' interest and develop their skills and understanding; they ensure that the pace of work is appropriately brisk and provide good opportunities for students to participate. Some teachers make good use of computers to enhance students' learning. Students enjoy learning in lessons that include an element of competition between them, or allow some role-playing. In a lesson on break-even analysis, the teacher used a traditional balance weighing scale to demonstrate the balancing concept of break-even. This enabled students to visualise the principle being explained. On most courses students are provided with a detailed course guide that includes definitions of specialist terms, revision notes, wider reading and tasks they can use to check their understanding. In a significant minority of lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to meeting the needs of students with widely differing abilities. In these lessons, teachers do not set clear learning objectives and tasks set present little challenge for more able students. Gaps for student completion on task sheets are often too small to allow anything but a cursory response.

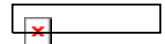
62. Homework is set regularly and returned promptly. However, much of the written comment is generic and offers students little guidance on how to improve. There is no formal system for ensuring that teachers are marking to consistent standards. Students have no opportunity to undertake work experience relevant to their course.

63. Teachers are appropriately qualified, although few have recent business experience. Classrooms contain good wall displays of relevant material and several have a suite of networked computers. However, some classrooms used for business courses are too small for the classes using them and this inhibits the range of teaching methods. There are stocks of textbooks in the classrooms for students' use. Students find a wider range in the library, though much of this stock is dated.

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

64. The economics department is well managed. The small team meets frequently and the acting head of department gives clear direction on matters relating to teaching. The poor examination outcomes in economics in 2003 have led the team to review their delivery methods to provide more support for weaker students. At the time of inspection, the business studies department was without a manager. Newly appointed teachers in that department are working well together to develop learning materials.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- good support for students in lessons
- excellent resources for delivery of IT courses
- well-managed courses.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates for GCE A-level computing
- narrow range of provision.

### **Scope of provision**

65. The college offers computing and ICT courses at GCE AS and A-level. Key skills level 2 and CLAIT plus courses are also available. Enrolments on advanced ICT courses have doubled over the last three years. Over 200 of the 582 enrolments are on GCE A-level courses. However, overall course provision is narrow. For example, students do not have the opportunity to gain key skills accreditation at level 3 and above or to pursue a vocational course in ICT. The college recognises the need to broaden the range of courses offered and plans to offer an AVCE in ICT from September 2004.

### **Achievement and standards**

66. Students achieve high pass rates on all advanced level courses. GCE A-level pass rates are considerably higher than national averages. Students broadly achieve the grades predicted by their performance at GCSE. There are high retention rates on most courses. Retention rates on GCE A-level computing have improved since the introduction of the alternative GCE AS and A-level ICT courses but are still below the national average. Progression to HE is good. In 2002, the majority of GCE A-level computing students progressed to university to follow related courses.

67. Students work hard. Many produce work of a high standard. In a GCE AS ICT lesson, students constructed complex spreadsheets with a range of controls to automate data entry and validate the answers. At such an early stage in the course, their performance was better than would be expected. In theory lessons, students respond well to skilful questioning, are able to think critically and can justify their answers. Punctuality is sometimes poor, especially for the first lesson of the day.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	65	46	53
		% retention	80	96	92
		% pass rate	81	91	88
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	*	82	104
		% retention	*	78	90
		% pass rate	*	72	81
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	60	28	34
		% retention	63	86	88
		% pass rate	63	75	100
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	*	82	29
		% retention	*	78	97
		% pass rate	*	72	93

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

\* course not available

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

68. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons are generally well planned with good attention paid to

considering students' learning styles and ensuring that an appropriate range of teaching methods is used. In the most effective lessons, students' interest is engaged from the start and is maintained through the skilful use of a range of approaches and extension activities to stretch the more able students. Collaborative working in small groups is also encouraged and is effective in enhancing learning. During practical lessons, teachers provide sensitive, individual help, as required. This help often takes the form of questions which developed the student's ability to think problems through and produce the correct solution on their own. In the less successful lessons, teachers sometimes talk too much and do not provide sufficient stimulus to maintain students' interest. Homework is set regularly, marked and returned quickly. Most students' work is marked carefully, but some teachers' comments do not give sufficient advice to help students to improve. There is an effective informal assessment moderation system.

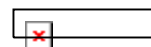
69. There is good support for students. Regular subject workshops in ICT are provided. Students may be required to attend following absences or if teachers feel that extra help is needed. Many students attend voluntarily and speak highly of the help they receive. Students are given target scores based on their GCSE results. Progress towards these targets is checked during the regular tutorials and support given as required.

70. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their subject. They develop good working relationships with their students. There are excellent specialist resources. A good range of appropriate textbooks is located in the IT rooms. This is supplemented by well-designed, teacher-produced learning materials which are helpful to students. Data projectors and interactive whiteboards are in regular use by staff and students. Industry-standard software is used across the department. A newly built IT suite provides air-conditioned classrooms and a well-used drop-in centre. However, some of the older accommodation is less suitable and is often too warm. Equipment is well maintained and faults are attended to rapidly. Students have generous storage space on the college network. Some teaching material is also available on the college's intranet.

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

71. Leadership and management are good. The heads of computing and ICT and the ICT co-ordinator share management responsibilities. Student records are carefully kept and progress closely monitored. All staff are involved in the planning process and in self-assessment. They work well together and benefit from the sharing of good practice through, for example, an effective lesson observation scheme and shared teaching materials.

### **Visual and performing arts**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on advanced level courses
  
- high retention rates on GCE A-level courses
  
- much effective teaching



- o good standard of students' practical work in most areas.

**Weaknesses**

- o poor retention rates on some GCE AS courses
- o insufficient integration of ICT in drama, art and music
- o some inadequate accommodation and resources.

**Scope of provision**

72. Approximately 330 full-time students are currently studying GCE AS and A-level art, drama, music, design and technology, and media. About 20 students study GCSE media each year. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time.

**Achievement and standards**

73. Pass rates on most advanced level courses are high. For example, pass rates for GCE A-level art and design have been 100% for the last three years. Pass rates on GCE AS courses have been consistently at or above the national average for the past two years in art and drama. Students perform well in relation to their prior education and achievements. The pass rates on the GCSE media course have improved steadily over the past two years to above the national average. Retention rates on most GCE A-level courses are high. On the GCE A-level art course, retention rates have improved over a three-year period to above the national average. However, retention rates for many GCE AS courses, including media, design and technology, and drama, are below the national average.

74. Most students in art have well developed research, study and disciplinary skills. Sketchbooks contain work of a high standard and students are able to give a clear account of how they intend to develop ideas. In practical work, students have a good awareness of theoretical contexts and an ability to evaluate ideas critically. Students on drama courses are confident, articulate and contribute effectively to group discussions. Many students progress to HE arts courses and to employment. Poor attendance and punctuality by some students have an adverse effect on learning. Development of group projects, scheduled assessments and planned delivery of the curriculum are affected too often.

**A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2001 to 2003**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE media	2	No. of starts	17	25	17
		% retention	88	84	76
		% pass rate	67	48	62

GCE AS art studies	3	No. of starts	47	53	63
		% retention	83	91	89
		% pass rate	95	98	96
GCE AS drama	3	No. of starts	49	35	65
		% retention	73	86	82
		% pass rate	100	97	94
GCE A-level design technology	3	No. of starts	*	17	18
		% retention	*	88	83
		% pass rate	*	93	100
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	54	50	44
		% retention	50	88	95
		% pass rate	100	95	95
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	37	27	33
		% retention	81	96	97
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

\* course not available

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

75. There is much effective teaching. Learning objectives are clear and teachers ask appropriate questions to promote understanding and generate discussion. In the best lessons, once students have acquired the necessary basic skills, they are given freedom and challenged to explore their own ideas creatively. In one art class, students were experimenting with paint techniques. They showed confidence in their approach to experimenting with a wide variety of materials and styles. Theory and practical work are linked effectively and imaginatively. Performing arts students successfully explore complex concepts through discussion and improvisation. In one lesson, students carefully studied the context of the set text, and then analysed the performance and stylistic conventions to a high standard. The good working relationships between staff and students help create a stimulating and productive learning environment. Students in media completed innovative lighting projects with productive support from their technician. In some lessons, however, there is ineffective use of technical support. In less effective lessons, learning activities are too tutor-centred, lack appropriate variety and students are not sufficiently challenged.

76. Use of IT is underdeveloped in art, music and drama. Limited access to ICT restricts development of students' skills. In design and technology lessons, however, teachers make effective use of the interactive whiteboard and up-to-date software.

77. Students are kept well informed of their progress. Tutors give clear and regular guidance on what they have to do to improve. Written feedback is brief, but students' work is mostly graded in line with awarding body criteria. Some students are unsure about their assessment criteria and this hinders their progress with coursework. Students are provided with minimum target grades, which provide a framework to monitor their progress. Students recognise and value the help they receive from teachers.

78. There are many enhancement opportunities. Drama students participate in a college-wide performance. There are workshops with professional artists and links with local industry. Last summer, art students visited a Catholic college in Greece. Development of key skills is poor. There is little reference to key skills in work schemes and few opportunities for students to gather evidence

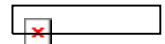
to demonstrate their level of skills.

79. Some accommodation and resources for practical work are inadequate. Many of the rooms are cluttered and lack sufficient specialist resources, such as sufficient computers with appropriate software in media. The drama studio floor is poor and the space is unsuitable for public performances. One space being used to teach drama has health and safety hazards. The music rehearsal room is not soundproof and there are insufficient headphones. There is no access to the art rooms for students with restricted mobility.

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

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams give priority to improving students' achievement. There is effective informal communication and good relationships between staff. Teachers regularly attend training events delivered by awarding bodies for development of their subject expertise. Staff recognise that there are insufficient opportunities to share good practice, for example, through formalised meetings. There is insufficient attention paid to addressing weaknesses identified in the lesson observation scheme.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
  
- students' high levels of achievement relative to their prior GCSE grades
  
- much good teaching and classroom management
  
- good use of study materials to support learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some teaching insufficiently varied to cater for all levels of ability
  
- little use of ICT

- o insufficient sharing of good practice.

### **Scope of provision**

81. Over a third of enrolments in the college are for GCE AS and A-level courses in the six areas that make up humanities. These are geography, history, law, Christian theology, general studies and classical civilisation. All students take GCE AS and A-level general studies as part of their overall programme of studies. The college is one of the largest centres for classics in the country and recruitment in this subject is thriving. There is little humanities provision at GCSE level. A GCSE history course is offered but this recruits few students. A new GCSE in religious studies started in September 2003 and attracted four students.

### **Achievement and standards**

82. Retention and pass rates in most humanities subjects are high and consistently above the national average. All students completing GCE A-level classical civilisation and Christian theology have been successful for the past two years. However, pass rates for GCE AS general studies were significantly below the national average in 2003. Most GCE A-level courses exceed national averages for students achieving higher grades. In all humanities subjects, apart from history and general studies, most students achieve beyond what their previous attainment would have predicted.

83. Attainment in lessons is good. Students develop good analytic and expressive skills, which serve them well in examination performance. They manage their own learning effectively and use the college student planner well to plan homework. Lessons are well attended and students are punctual.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	27	35	53
		% retention	81	91	85
		% pass rate	95	94	93
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	131	83	105
		% retention	87	84	88
		% pass rate	75	87	91
GCE AS general studies	3	No. of starts	485	58	581
		% retention	93	36	93
		% pass rate	61	81	66
GCE A-level classical civilization	3	No. of starts	*	78	81
		% retention	*	96	98
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	54	36	36
		% retention	79	94	97
		% pass rate	84	94	94
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	77	61	60
		% retention	70	95	98

		% pass rate	94	94	97
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course not available

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

84. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons are well planned to ensure thorough coverage of the syllabus. Teachers are experts in their subjects, which their students value. They communicate their knowledge clearly and enthusiastically and produce helpful workbooks and handouts to structure students' learning. Most lessons involve the teacher presenting information to the whole class, directing focused questions and setting exercises for students to complete. Students do not often contribute beyond answering questions specifically directed to them. In one Christian theology lesson, however, the teacher succeeded in generating lively discussion, which challenged the students and motivated them to make connections beyond the subject. In the few instances where group work took place, it was well managed; students responded positively to the experience and enjoyed the activity. Students in a GCE AS history lesson took part in a role-play to decide the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. This enabled the teacher to identify one group where learning had been superficial, while another group developed their understanding of the relevance of geography for history. In some lessons, however, there is too little focus on how individual students learn. Activities are insufficiently varied to check understanding and address different ability levels.

85. Homework is regularly set. Assessment of learning takes place through teachers' comprehensive oversight of students' written work. This is thoroughly marked and speedily returned. Students are informed of their progress and encouraged to achieve beyond predictions.

86. Students receive good guidance before starting their humanities courses. They are invited to attend a summer induction programme at which they attend taster lessons in the subjects they may wish to take. Those who attended reported that they found these helpful in making their final choices. Apart from law, no humanities department has information on the college's website, although their courses are listed. If students need additional support they are referred to specialist learning support tutors or invited to attend subject workshops. The current timetabling arrangements can make it difficult for some students to attend.

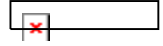
87. Students are well prepared for HE by the Aim Higher initiative, which introduces them to university life. They visit universities, attend conferences, which extend their experience, and meet students already in HE. Law students have mentors who are practising local solicitors.

88. All classrooms are suitable for teaching, although students in some lessons work in cramped conditions, and extra desks are positioned in the centre of the room. Most rooms are well decorated with relevant posters and charts. Some teachers make good use of their previous experience to extend students' understanding. For example, in one lesson, a law teacher brought in copies of byelaws, which he had developed, to illustrate enabling legislation. Teachers refer students to useful websites but make no direct use of ICT in lessons. There is little material on the college's intranet.

### **Leadership and management**

89. Leadership and management are good. The humanities subject departments work autonomously but effectively. Each head of department is responsible for subject management and for purchase of resources. Some of the departments are very small: in geography there is a single member of staff, and in law the head of department is the only full-time member of staff. Subject meetings are informal and there is little sharing of good practice between departments. The quality of documentation varies between the departments. Some departmental files include data on gender and disability and the results of student satisfaction surveys, but there is little analysis of these data.

## Social science



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

### **Strengths**

- outstanding pass rates in the majority of subjects
- high standards of students' oral and written work
- high and improving retention rates
- very effective and enthusiastic teaching
- high-quality course materials and subject guides
- well-managed courses.

### **Weaknesses**

- overcrowded classrooms constraining the effectiveness of some lessons
- individual learning needs insufficiently addressed in some larger teaching groups.

### **Scope of provision**

90. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in politics, sociology and psychology and GCSE psychology and sociology. Numbers enrolled on social science courses have substantially expanded over the last three years, particularly in psychology and sociology. At GCE AS, there are 64 students studying politics, 205 studying sociology and 259 studying psychology. At GCE A level, there are 33 studying politics, 98 studying sociology and 186 on the psychology course. There are approximately 25 students on both the GCSE sociology and psychology courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

91. There are outstanding examination pass rates for the majority of courses. Students consistently achieve at or above the national average. This pattern of achievement has been sustained in the face of substantially expanded student numbers. In 2003, GCE AS pass rates for all three social sciences were well above the national average. In the same year, GCE A-level pass rates were near or above the national average with a large proportion of higher grade passes. A major strength is the high proportion of students who gain grades above those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results, particularly in sociology. Students are highly motivated and make good progress in their studies in relation to their prior attainment. Attendance is good. The well-directed and purposeful nature of lessons encourages students to stay on course and attain their learning goals. This is reflected in the high and improved retention rate over the last three years across the social sciences subjects for both GCE AS and A-level courses, despite the trend of growing student numbers.

92. Students show particular confidence in their oral skills, which are fostered through regular exposure to critical debate in lessons and the requirement to justify their reasoning in a range of differing political, sociological and psychological contexts. They acquire good study habits. The standard of students' written work is high and supported by the detailed attention to developing students skills of researching and presenting their work in accordance with the subject methodology.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	182	130	136
		% retention	84	89	91
		% pass rate	94	95	96
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	146	138	244
		% retention	90	87	93
		% pass rate	93	96	94
GCE AS politics	3	No. of starts	53	61	52
		% retention	89	82	92
		% pass rate	81	88	96
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	61	94	94
		% retention	75	96	96
		% pass rate	98	99	98
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	78	90	136
		% retention	69	94	96
		% pass rate	98	94	95
GCE A-level politics	3	No. of starts	32	32	39
		% retention	88	94	100
		% pass rate	96	93	90

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

***Quality of education and training***

93. There is a lot of very effective and enthusiastic teaching. Teachers display authoritative subject expertise and successfully communicate their specialisms to gain the interest of their students. They have high expectations of students, which leads to well-focused learning. In politics lessons, students made impressive responses to the analysis of contemporary political issues both in a domestic and European context. They were encouraged to think for themselves, support their

arguments and evaluate alternative perspectives. In a GCE A-level sociology lesson, students were encouraged to draw upon their own experience to reflect on the definition of religion and relate this to theoretical classifications. Their contributions to discussion were skilfully consolidated by the teacher. Some imaginative teaching in psychology used role play and paired exercises to convey aspects of learning theory and sign language as an initial preface to more in-depth case study analysis. The majority of lessons very successfully meet the wide range of student ability represented on these subjects. Growth in student numbers has led to larger class sizes and in a few instances this has limited the opportunity to address fully the individual needs of all students.

94. Students' learning is supported by high-quality study guides, topic booklets and resource packs that teachers have produced to underpin their teaching. These learning materials make a strong contribution to ensuring consistency in the progressive development of subject content, concepts and methods in the social science disciplines. They incorporate a good range of sources, extracts, website references, case studies, tasks and tests including sections to be completed in lessons.

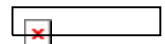
95. Students' work is carefully marked and assessed. In some subjects, front sheets are used with detailed feedback criteria to ensure consistency and to identify areas for improvement. Students' progress is checked regularly and monitored against target grades. Regular and well-targeted support is provided to students on an individual basis and workshop sessions are used effectively to meet specific additional needs.

96. Teachers are very well qualified in their subject specialisms and bring good scholarship and academic standards to their teaching. A number have valuable additional experience in such areas as examining and textbook authorship. Teachers are well supported in updating their subject knowledge. Classrooms for sociology, psychology and politics have good subject identity. They contain a very good range of teaching and learning resources and good use is made of wall display material to provide subject contextualisation. Accommodation for psychology has recently been consolidated in one building in the college but the rooms are too cramped for the large class sizes and adversely affect the opportunities for group work. The main base room for politics, although well resourced, is also very cramped and not conducive to the varied range of learning activities undertaken in the subject.

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

97. Leadership and management are good. The area is well managed and administered. There is a clear commitment across the three subjects to carry forward the successful tradition of achievement together with a measured introduction of appropriate changes and innovations. Departmental documentation is thorough and well structured. There are regular and well-minuted team meetings and identified points of action. There is a lot of very good practice, much of which is successfully shared on an informal basis. However, there is a lack of formal methods for the identification and dissemination of best practice.

### **English and modern foreign languages**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates
  
- effective teaching



- good feedback on assignments
- good management of the English curriculum area.

**Weaknesses**

- low proportion of higher grade passes
- little use of ICT in lessons.

**Scope of provision**

98. The college offers courses in English, French, Italian and Spanish at GCSE, GCE AS and GCE A-level. Courses in English literature and English language and literature are also available at GCE AS and A-level. There are 466 students enrolled on English courses and 90 students enrolled on modern language courses. In addition, the college also offers twilight GCSE Italian and Spanish lessons to Year 10 and Year 11 pupils from local Catholic feeder schools. Progression from GCE AS to GCE A-level is good, particularly in English.

**Achievement and standards**

99. Pass rates are high and consistently above the national average for most subjects. However, the proportion of higher grade passes for GCE A-level in some English and modern foreign language subjects has regularly been below the national average, sometimes by a substantial amount. For example, in 2001/02, GCE A-level French had a grade A to B pass rate of 24%, against a national average rate of 48%. Pass rates for GCSE Spanish were also below the national average in 2003. Retention rates on most courses are at or above the national average.

100. Attainment in lessons is good. GCSE English language students develop a good knowledge of technical theatrical terms and are able to apply these to their study of Shakespeare. GCE AS English language students have a very good understanding of the strengths and limitations of different narrative voices. Students taking GCE AS French have very good speaking skills, and use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. GCSE Italian students develop good speaking and listening skills at a very early stage in their course.

**A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2001 to 2003**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English Language	2	No. of starts	46	84	96
		% retention	76	77	83
		% pass rate	46	78	64
GCE AS English	3	No. of starts	54	56	78

literature		% retention	87	82	90
		% pass rate	100	93	97
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	28	39	26
		% retention	96	87	88
		% pass rate	100	88	91
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	59	55	71
		% retention	76	95	94
		% pass rate	96	100	97
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	15	17	21
		% retention	87	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

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

101. Most teaching is good or better. The majority of lessons have clear aims and objectives which are shared with students. Students are well prepared to undertake difficult tasks. In the best lessons, teachers use very skilful questioning to challenge and check students' understanding and to ensure that they are all fully involved in the lesson. In a GCSE English language lesson, where students had completed an exercise on vocabulary improvement, the teacher asked questions in such a way as to make sure that the learning of all students was assessed. There is often a good variety of activity and a good range of stimulus material. In a GCE A-level English literature lesson, the teacher used the graveyard scene from Hamlet to introduce the ideas of transience and death prior a study of Carol Ann Duffy's poem, 'Small Female Skull'. In language lessons, teachers make good use of the language being taught and regularly reinforce pronunciation, especially hard to pronounce sounds and words. Good use is made of the language assistants in Spanish and French as a learning resource. There is good attention paid to equality of opportunity in lessons. In one French lesson, students discussed racism and immigration in France from different points of view, using a range of media and material. In a special lesson for advanced English students, students discussed gender bias in literature and literary criticism. GCE A-level English literature students discussed the events of Act 3 of *Othello* from both the male and female perspective. In the less successful language lessons, the task is sometimes beyond the current language attainment level of the students. In addition, some oral mistakes are not always corrected; these errors are often reinforced and copied by other students. In English lessons, there is some tendency for discussion to be dominated by a few students. There is little use of ICT in lessons. Where ICT is used, it is mainly for presentation purposes. Good reference is made to internet resources in languages, however, students are expected to access these outside lesson time.

102. Feedback on assignments is good. Work is thoroughly marked and promptly returned. Teachers make detailed and helpful comments that clearly indicate which parts of the work are good and areas in which performance could be improved. However, some basic errors in grammar and spelling are not always corrected.

103. Students value the pastoral and personal support offered by their tutors and find the pre-enrolment support and information valuable. Students' individual needs are considered and met well within lessons. For example, teachers pay particular attention in lessons to the needs of students whose first language was not English. Students' progress is reviewed and targets for improvements set on a regular basis, supported by student reports and well-attended parents' evenings.

104. There is a good range of enhancement activities in English and languages. Opportunities exist for students to participate in the college newspaper, creative writing workshops and advanced English and languages lessons for university entrance. A particularly well-attended and lively English

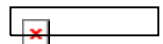
Society engages students and encourages original writing. A successful Easter Conference was organised by the English department in conjunction with the Aim Higher initiative.

105. Teachers are well qualified and use their expertise to good effect. Four members of the English staff are examiners of the syllabus they teach. Good displays with relevant and up-to-date material make classrooms an attractive environment for students. In the English area, innovative and useful teacher-produced study guides support learning well. Some inappropriate accommodation makes group work difficult to organise. Access to specialist equipment is restricted through timetabling arrangements.

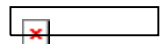
**Leadership and management**

106. Leadership and management are good, particularly in English, and enhance the learning experience for students. Forward planning is a particularly strong feature of the department, enabling a pro-active approach to curriculum development. There is good day-to-day communication to solve issues in languages and English and both students and staff appreciate this. Students' achievements are regularly reviewed and reported to governors. However, in languages, few long term targets are set or monitored. Although students' views are analysed, there is no formal action plan to make improvements. Lesson observations have been conducted for the last 3 years. The resulting grade profile is generous and the observation notes do not reflect the grades awarded in terms of evaluative language and examples.

**Part D: College data**



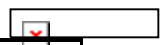
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	7
2	12	6
3	68	60
4/5	0	0
Other	20	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in autumn 2003*

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments % *

Science and mathematics	990	8	12
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	62	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	295	2	3
Information and communication technology	571	2	7
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	267	4	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	81	0	1
Visual and performing arts and media	377	4	4
Humanities	3,638	23	43
English, languages and communication	486	0	6
Foundation programmes	31	5	0
Unknown AOL	1,684	19	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,482</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2003

\* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	570	55	62	*	*	*
	Retention rate	82	87	90	*	*	*
	National average	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate	73	77	82	*	*	*
	National average	70	66	71	67	70	75
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	915	479	538	*	*	*

	Retention rate	81	78	81	*	*	*
	National average	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate	85	93	86	*	*	*
	National average	80	85	84	70	68	71
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	2,199	4,832	4,207	*	16	*
	Retention rate	74	82	91	*	75	*
	National average	75	80	89	63	64	69
	Pass rate	92	89	93	*	*	*
	National average	85	86	88	65	67	75

*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 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further*

*Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.*

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: *College ISR*

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	80	19	1	100
Level 2 (intermediate)	60	36	4	25
Level 1 (foundation)	0	0	0	0
Other sessions	100	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>126</b>