



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College

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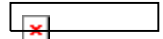
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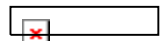
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Basic information about the college

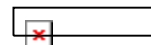


Name of college:	Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Christopher Thomson
Address of college:	205 Dyke Road Hove East Sussex BN3 6EG
Telephone number:	01273 552 200
Fax number:	01273 563 139
Chair of governors:	John Lawrence
Unique reference number:	130669
Name of reporting inspector:	Alex Falconer HMI
Dates of inspection:	10-17 October 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



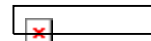
Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College occupies a single site in Hove. The college has around 1,450 students, 82% of whom are on full-time courses. Over 94% of the students are aged 16 to 19 and are enrolled on full-time courses. The remainder are aged over 19, mainly on part-time courses. Around 83% of the courses for students aged 16 to 19 are at level 3 (mainly General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and GCE A2; 15% are at level 2 and there are a small number of students at level 1. The college offers 41 GCE AS subjects and 39 at GCE A2 in sciences, mathematics, business, information communications technology (ICT), physical education, visual and performing arts, humanities, English and modern foreign languages. There are also Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses in health and social care, and travel and tourism along with a Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) National Certificate in sport science. There are also General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses in business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism, and a BTEC intermediate in sport in addition to eight General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. Over the past two years, the college has added vocational courses at levels 2 and 3 to its portfolio in order to meet more effectively the needs of its students. In addition, the college has been developing basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses to meet the needs of a growing number of asylum seekers and refugees in the area.

The college has grown from around 1,280 full-time students aged 16 to 19 and 75 part-time students aged 19+ in 2001 to about 1,320 full-time students aged 16 to 19, 120 part-time aged 19+ and 40 students from overseas in 2003. In the last academic year, 51% of the students were female and 49% were male. The ethnic mix in the college reflects the cultural diversity of Brighton and Hove; the college has 11% of its students from black and other minority ethnic groups.

The college is in financial health category A based on their financial plan 2002 to 2005 and their financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2002. The college has been in category A for the previous three years.

The mission of the college is to transform lives through learning. The college aims to accomplish this by meeting the individual learning needs of students within the curriculum, supporting students to achieve through its guidance programme and working in partnership with other organisations, especially the Sussex LSC and other educational providers.

How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching and the achievement of students are good in seven of the nine curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in two. Within visual and performing arts and media, the provision for art and design is outstanding. Overall, pass rates and retention were above the national averages for courses ending in 2003, representing an improvement over 2002. Students receive good guidance and support and care is taken to match learning support to individual needs.

Key strengths

- good teaching at advanced level

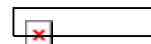
- strong senior management
- effective self-assessment
- effective collaboration with other post-16 providers
- good pastoral and careers support for students
- wide range and scope of enrichment activities
- effective governance.

What should be improved

- teaching and learning at level 2
- management at curriculum level
- poor access for students with restricted mobility
- some unsuitable accommodation
- the rigour of staff appraisal.

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

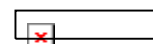


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Good. Pass rates on advanced courses are good and students work well to achieve good standards. Teaching is good and teachers use a variety of methods to interest and engage students. ICT is well used in lessons and students' work is thoroughly assessed and their progress effectively monitored. Management is good at subject level.
Mathematics	Good. Student achievement has improved and pass rates are good on all courses with students' performance at GCE A-level better than might be expected from their previous attainments. Good teaching and subject support ensures the learning needs of individual students are met. There are insufficient opportunities for students to explore concepts and express themselves mathematically.
Business and economics	Good. There are high pass rates in GCE AS economics, GCE A2 economics and GCE A2 business studies. Retention rates on GCSE business are consistently below the national average. Teaching is challenging and inspiring, with a suitable variety of activities to maintain students' interest. Subject extension lessons give good individual curriculum support to students.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. There are good retention and pass rates on GCE AS ICT, but poor retention rates in GCE AS and GCE A2 computing and on the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course. Some lessons lack pace, do not challenge students and are uninspiring. Students develop good practical skills. Support for students is good and there are good online curriculum materials.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good. Pass rates are good on the majority of courses and very good on AVCE travel and tourism. Short courses in sport have very good retention and pass rates and good coaching develops students' practical skills. Teaching is good, but there is a lack of challenge and extension activities for the more able. Students on GCE A2 physical education do not achieve as well as their prior achievement would predict.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. There are high pass rates across all courses. There is much good teaching and students are supported with exemplary course materials, particularly in the outstanding art and design provision where there is also a very high standard of written work. Effective management ensures the sharing of good practice and the regular monitoring of action plans. Opportunities for the practice and development of skills are constrained by unsuitable accommodation in dance and music.
Psychology, sociology, law and politics	Satisfactory. GCE AS and GCE A2 pass rates are satisfactory and students attain good standards of work in lessons. Students are well supported by committed and enthusiastic staff, complemented by high-quality learning materials. Teaching is well planned and much teaching effectively engages students. Curriculum management is

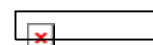
	good and there is a focus on the development of good practice.
Geography, history, philosophy, critical thinking and classical civilisation	Good. There are high pass and retention rates on GCE Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Most teaching is stimulating, especially on GCE A2 courses, and good use is made of well-produced resource materials. Some classrooms are overcrowded and this restricts students' learning. Thorough monitoring and assessment, and teaching which takes account of students' differing abilities are having a positive effect on the quality of provision.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. The curriculum in English, modern foreign languages and ESOL is well managed. Staff are well qualified and experienced and give very good support to students who have a range of abilities and needs. There is much good teaching supported by good learning materials. Much accommodation is poor and this has an adverse effect on teaching.

How well is the college led and managed?



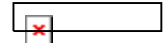
Leadership and management are good. The college is well led by senior managers and governors who set a clear mission and strategy for the college. There have been improvements in students' pass rates and quality assurance over the past four years. Self-assessment throughout the college is good and inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified. Comprehensive action plans are produced and these result in clear targets. Managers collaborate effectively with other education providers in Brighton and Hove. The college mainly serves full-time advanced level students aged 16 to 19, but managers have worked hard to broaden the curriculum to include vocational courses at levels 2 and 3, along with some provision for refugees and asylum seekers. However, management expertise at curriculum level is not uniformly effective and the college has recognised this as an area for improvement. Communications within the college are effective and senior managers have developed an open and approachable style. The financial affairs of the college are well managed and the college provides good value for money. Over £2 million has been spent in the past 15 months in maintaining the buildings, renovating laboratories and constructing a new sports block. However, much of the accommodation is inaccessible to those with restricted mobility.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



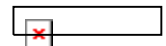
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. It has worked closely with other providers to recruit students from schools where there has been a history of poor progression to FE. It has expanded the range of intermediate level courses and developed vocational routes linked to work placements to meet students' needs. There has been a good response to the needs of particular communities such as refugees based in the local area and international students. Teachers give attention to the individual learning styles and other particular needs of students in planning their teaching. There is good provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the age and condition of much of the accommodation has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. Formal procedures for the promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities and race relations are not well established. There is currently little analysis of student performance by gender or ethnicity.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Students receive good guidance and support. Pre-enrolment advice is good, entry criteria are clear and the admissions process ensures that courses are carefully matched to individual needs. All full-time students on intermediate courses are assessed carefully during induction to determine their particular support requirements. Care is taken to match subsequent learning support to individual needs. The different forms of support, literacy, numeracy, ESOL and specialist help for students with specific learning difficulties are imaginatively integrated under skills development. The focus is upon responding to particular needs so that students succeed in their coursework and examinations. The system of directed and structured study ensures that students with specific learning difficulties and those with weaknesses in literacy and numeracy receive skilled and professional assistance. Progress is monitored systematically by personal tutors through a system which links individual student performance to agreed targets. Careers guidance and assistance with progression to higher education (HE) are generally good.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- helpful and enthusiastic teachers

- the relaxed and adult atmosphere

- being part of a diverse community of students

- the chance to follow-up specialist interests

- good library and sports facilities

- the friendly atmosphere.

What they feel could be improved

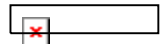
- o poorly designed and inadequately small classroom accommodation in some areas

- o social space

- o parking spaces for students

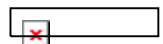
- o shelter from the weather for smokers.

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 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

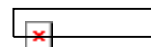


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	72	26	2
Learning 16-18	72	26	2

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. The standards of students' achievements are good. The college has improved the standards and achievements of its students at levels 1 and 3 (advanced level) over the past three years. The vast majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and are enrolled on GCE AS and A-level courses. Level 3 pass rates improved from 88% in 2001 to 91% in 2003 and level 1 pass rates improved from 74% in 2001 to 87% in 2003. However, college data on level 2 pass rates at higher grades show a decline in 2003 to 37%, mainly due to poor completion rates by international students and adults on part-time courses.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Standards are good for students aged 16 to 18. The pass rates for GCE A2 courses improved to 96% in 2003 and the proportion of high grades was 46%. At GCE AS, the pass rate was 89% in 2003 with 39% high grades. In 2003, 23 subjects at GCE A2 and 9 subjects at GCE AS had 100% pass rates. Advanced vocational courses also showed high achievement in 2003, with an average pass rate of 96%. In addition, GCSE and GNVQ intermediate courses for full-time students had pass rates above the national averages. Retention rates have been at or above national average for the past three years.

3. Students' work is of a good standard. They respond well to questions and discuss their ideas with confidence. Complex issues are discussed in depth by students in humanities and economics and business. Students demonstrate good problem solving skills in a wide range of curriculum contexts. Good practical technique is demonstrated by students in the science and visual and performing arts. Students use the Internet well for research and show the ability to analyse data confidently. However, note-taking skills are underdeveloped and some students' files are disorganised. Inspectors judged that students' attainments were good in two thirds of lessons and satisfactory in around a third.

4. The college has successfully analysed the progress students make in comparison with their prior attainment. Overall, the college is effective in enabling most students to achieve better results at GCE AS, GCE A2 and level 3 vocational courses than might have been predicted from their attainments.

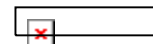
5. Substantial numbers of students are entered each year for a range of key skills at all levels. Retention rates in application of number, communications and ICT vary. Some creditable pass rates compared with the national average were recorded for the external tests in 2003, but poor portfolio completion resulted in low achievement. From September 2003, the college has redesigned the key skills provision. The skills development team now links key skills and basic skills and students study a programme which is better designed to meet their needs. Students without a level 2 qualification in ICT join seven-week ICT lessons and work towards the key skills qualification. Level 2 communications and numeracy sessions are provided for students who do not have relevant GCSE qualifications. Level 3 communications workshops are also available for advanced level students. All students are entered for 'Improve Your Own Learning' key skills and supporting evidence is gathered through personal tutors.

Adult learners

6. The pass rates of adults at level 3 have shown improvement over the past three years. In 2002/03, success rates at level 3 were 80%, an improvement of 24% on the rate for 2001/02. Retention and pass rates for adults at level 3 have been above the national average for the past two years. Over the past two years success rates for adults on level 2 courses have declined. Retention and pass rates were well below national averages in both 2001/02 and 2002/03. The number of adult students at level 1 is very small and their achievements are generally good. ESOL lessons for

asylum seekers and refugees show good levels of attainment. The ECDL course, which is offered through a flexible learning programme to adults, has low completion rates. Attendance is erratic and many do not complete the coursework or the qualification.

Quality of education and training



7. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and attainment in 162 lessons, 9 group tutorials and a small number of one-to-one meetings and coaching sessions. In 72% of the lessons, the teaching was good or better, in 26% it was satisfactory and in 2% it was unsatisfactory. This represents a small decline in good or better teaching from the last inspection in April 1999. At level 1, 80% of the teaching was judged to be good or better and no unsatisfactory sessions were observed. At level 3, GCE A2 teaching was best with 77% of lessons graded as good or better, 21% satisfactory and 2% unsatisfactory. In GCE AS teaching, 72% of lessons were judged to be good or better and 28% were satisfactory. The standard of teaching and learning was weaker at level 2 than at advanced or level 1. There were clear strengths in the provision of additional support for level 2 students through the mix of key skills, directed study and double-staffed sessions. However, there were weaknesses in the management of inattentive and unmotivated students in some vocational and GCSE classes.

8. The best lessons have clear objectives which are shared with students. Teachers skilfully adapt their methods and materials to engage students' interest and to meet the range of students' abilities. Enthusiastic and imaginative teaching sparks lively debate and, as a consequence, students are well motivated. Learning materials, such as study guides and departmental intranet sites, encourage independent learning and enable students to make good progress with their studies. In art and design, good study discipline is encouraged and students evaluate and discuss their work with confidence while respecting the opinions of others. Extension materials and revision opportunities in humanities assignments encourage students to learn at their own pace and to check and consolidate their learning as necessary. In ESOL lessons, good materials relating to employment, housing and health are used to help students master useful, practical vocabulary.

9. The best learning and attainment were observed in practical lessons where 80% were judged to be good or better and no unsatisfactory performance was observed. Around 70% of lessons with a mixture of theory and practical work were judged to be good or better for both learning and attainment. The student attainment profile was lowest in theory lessons where 58% were judged to be good or better, 38% satisfactory and 4% unsatisfactory. In the least satisfactory lessons teachers pay insufficient attention to the ability range in their classes and do not plan for the variety of needs. In some lessons, the tasks set are too mechanical and students extract information or copy notes from the whiteboard without discussion or analysis. In others, the tasks set are not demanding enough and fail to capture students' interest. Teachers' questioning techniques are often inadequate. Their questions do not always develop into a dialogue to test and extend students' understanding. Some questions are too closed or specific and do not stimulate further discussion or exploration of the topic being taught.

10. Students' attendance at lessons is good. An average attendance of 89% was observed during the inspection. Students in science lessons had the best attendance at 95% and students aged 16 to 18 recorded significantly higher attendance rates during the inspection week than students aged 19+.

11. Teachers are academically well qualified; over 95% have teaching qualifications and good teaching experience. Teachers record their needs for professional development in the appraisal process. Planning for staff development takes account of these needs. The college has started to monitor the ethnic origin of its staff.

12. The open learning centre brings together a wide range of learning resources. There is good space for silent individual study and for students to work in groups. The centre is open most

evenings. Students have good access to modern computers in open-access areas for private study. Individual open learning centre staff liaise with subject areas according to their qualifications and interests. In this role, they provide specialist support to students and staff and organise the review and purchase of resources. The open learning centre intranet contains photographs of the staff and lists their working hours so that students can easily make contact. In some curriculum areas, there are too few up-to-date books to meet students' needs. The overall ratio of computers to students in college is good at 1:4.3. However, in a few curriculum areas, students have difficulty in accessing computers. Most of the computers for teachers are located in staff workrooms, but a further 16 laptops are available for short-term loan. The latter are little used.

13. There are good specialist facilities and equipment for some areas of work. The sport building sets a new standard for accommodation at the college. Art, textile and photography studios are well managed and equipped. The college has developed an intranet that students can access from outside the college. Several departments have developed good learning materials to contribute to this. Equipment for recording music is dated and editing equipment in media is used to capacity.

14. The college has been slow to address issues relating to access for students whose mobility is restricted. This issue was identified at the last inspection in 1999. Managers have analysed the extent to which anticipated needs can be met by developing the premises and are currently evaluating options. One group of students has recently analysed the impact of the physical environment on visitors and students with disabilities and have made clear recommendations. Although the college-commissioned accessibility audit was completed in July 2003, this was later than planned and the college has not yet prioritised the work required to address its findings. Signposting inside and outside college buildings is clear and has improved since the last inspection.

15. Many classrooms are well equipped for the courses using them and teachers employ resources effectively to enliven lessons. Rooms and general circulation areas in the main teaching block are well cared for with good displays of relevant course materials and students' work. Increased student numbers have put a strain on the existing accommodation. There is little social space for students. Many classrooms, particularly those in the old college house, are too small to accommodate the classes that use them. This, and the awkward shape of some rooms, restrict the effectiveness of some teaching methods. Senior managers decided not to invest any more money in the maintenance of the college house in anticipation of a capital building programme to improve the quality of college classrooms. As a result, the building is currently poorly maintained. Accommodation in dance is unsuitable for many classes. The music area suffers from poor sound insulation, limiting the use of practice rooms. The surface of sports pitches is poor.

16. The college places a strong emphasis on target setting and monitoring students' progress. Teachers use students' GCSE results to predict the minimum grade that level 3 students should get in the examinations they take at the college. The students are given this grade as the minimum for which they should aim. Students' progress against minimum target grades is monitored closely by teachers and tutors in the process of subject reviews. There is a thorough system of diagnostic assessment for students at intermediate level to determine their needs for support in literacy and numeracy. The information gained through initial assessment is used to plan the level and types of support that students subsequently receive. This takes many forms: directed study, structured study, and in-class support, all of which are successfully adapted to meet the particular needs of individuals. Parents are kept informed through parents' evenings and through helpful reports. An electronic attendance system is currently being trialled. Students' attendance and punctuality are consistently and effectively recorded and poor attendance is followed up rigorously.

17. The assessment of students' work is thorough in most curriculum areas. A key strength in GCE AS and A-level lessons is the use of well-designed study packs that enable students to structure their notes, to extend their knowledge through supplementary exercises and to assess their own progress. Feedback on coursework is generally good; students understand how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. However, there is little analysis of assessment and achievement data to check how ethnicity and gender are related to performance.

18. The college offers 41 subjects at GCE A level, 39 at GCE AS and 8 at GCSE; many of which have growing recruitment. This provides excellent opportunities for specialising or broadening

studies. It has recently developed a range of vocational courses at levels 2 and 3 to meet the needs of students who, because of their previous achievements, are likely to encounter difficulties with a heavy commitment to advanced courses. Student apprenticeships and National Health Service Cadetships allow students to combine vocational courses such as GNVQ intermediate and BTEC courses at levels 2 and 3 with regular work experience. These students achieve qualifications in work-related NVQs that they can develop further when they move into the workplace full time. Students from these programmes progress well to employment or more advanced courses. There is no provision for full-time students at foundation level.

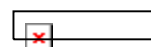
19. The college has responded to local demands by developing courses for refugees and asylum seekers that combine the development of English language and information technology (IT) skills. These courses operate at a range of levels and students progress well, some moving into the college's core provision. Over 400 students take advantage of the college-wide weekly enrichment courses on offer. These include a wide range of sports, visual and performance arts and vocational experience to support career aspirations, particularly in medicine and teaching. Most sports courses are coached by specialist professionals. A student-led Christian group meets in college.

20. Open learning centre IT suites and library area are well used for private study and there is a purposeful atmosphere in both. Students speak highly of the IT facilities in supporting their learning. The college encourages students to recognise the contribution the key skills of communications, numeracy and IT make to success on their course. It provides a range of help for those who wish to develop and accredit these skills. The college works closely with other providers of post-16 education and training to recognise and meet students' needs. The three colleges have a joint application form. Apprentices from the local professional football team attend the college for tutorial support.

21. Entry requirements are clear and helpfully linked to potential course and career options. Students have good opportunities before enrolment to familiarise themselves with the college and the courses available. Care is taken during the admissions process to match student needs and potential to appropriate courses. For example, students with identified specific learning needs are interviewed by staff with expertise in both subject choices and learning support. All students have the opportunity to sample lessons and the college environment before enrolment. Enrolment is managed efficiently and students receive detailed information and guidance on both the college and particular subjects and courses. Student feedback is carefully gathered and analysed and has led to improvements in the quality of admissions and pre-entry advice.

22. Students benefit from good tutorial support and a wide range of counselling and guidance services. Full-time students have daily access to their personal tutors and attend helpful group tutorials once a week. There are standardised procedures for all tutors to follow, for example to ensure the quality of advice on progression from GCE AS to A-level courses. In the best group tutorial sessions, tutors skilfully adapt the materials to meet the needs of their students. The students value the support they get from their tutors. In the least successful tutorial sessions, particularly at level 2, activities are sometimes mechanically completed and the students are disengaged and achieve little. A personal adviser from 'Connexions' is available five days a week to guide students who have been identified as at risk of dropping-out of their studies. Advice on progression to HE and employment is thorough. There is a dedicated careers area, with an extensive range of electronic and paper resources. Part-time students on ESOL courses also benefit from good individual support from well-qualified specialist staff.

Leadership and management



23. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear mission, values and strategy for the college. The work of the college accurately reflects the mission, in

receive. The mission is also evident in a formal collaborative 'accord' that has been established between the three Brighton and Hove-based colleges. This strong partnership minimises undue competition between the providers and helps prospective students in the region to make effective choices. It also promotes the sharing of curriculum innovation and models of good practice between the colleges. The college's key markets are 16 to 18 full time advanced and intermediate level provision as well as some provision for refugees, asylum seekers and students from overseas. Pass rates show an upward trend and are particularly good on advanced level full-time courses.

24. The inspection assessed two curriculum areas as satisfactory, and seven as good, with one outstanding contributory grade in art and design. Aspects of leadership and management were identified as a key strength in English and modern foreign languages, humanities, visual and performing arts and business. However, the management at middle-management level is not uniformly effective. Through self-assessment in 2002, the college identified this area for development and has established a management code of conduct, new management posts and a programme of management training. The college continues to take action to develop management across the college through realigning membership of management committees and further skills development training. There is particularly strong management and curriculum innovation in learning support with an inventive and successful approach to student support activities, formative assessment and the teaching of basic and key skills. Some academic staff are not yet fully conversant with the new support models. The college has recently achieved 'Pathfinder' status for a new and innovative approach to the design of full-time modular courses.

25. The quality of teaching and learning across the college is good. During inspection, the grade profile of teaching was just above the average for sixth form colleges with 72% of teaching graded good or better and only 2% unsatisfactory. Managers emphasise as a priority the need for lesson plans and schemes of work to take into account the differing needs and abilities of students and ensure that academic staff training activities also encourage this. The college offers a particularly broad range of extra-curricular activities, and achieves significant success in sports competitions.

26. Communication within the college is effective. Senior management pursue an open management style in which engagement and accountability are highly valued. They regularly consult staff on key issues of policy and practice. Governors are well informed about the progress of the college. The principal works actively to foster and promote strong links with local schools. Some departmental minutes reveal that not all actions identified in meetings are followed through comprehensively.

27. Rigorous self-assessment procedures are in place for academic and support areas and result in comprehensive action plans. Senior management and governors review self-assessment and monitor progress carefully. Targets are set and progress is judged thoroughly against key performance indicators. These include enrolment numbers, retention and pass rates and consideration of students' prior achievements. A college lesson observation scheme is in place and all staff are observed on an annual cycle. College observers, however, awarded higher grades to the lessons they saw than inspectors did to the selection of lessons which they inspected. The college has recently implemented a new attendance monitoring system which is having a positive effect on student attendance.

28. To date, the college has made insufficient progress on promoting equality and diversity issues in the curriculum. However, it has recently implemented a detailed plan to address this. Procedures for the promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities and race relations under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) and Race Relations Amendment legislation are not well established. There is currently little analysis of students' performance by gender or ethnicity. Management handbooks contain information on the topic, and cross-college briefing events are planned to raise staff awareness of these issues. The college has commissioned consultants to address the lack of access to many parts of the college for students with restricted mobility.

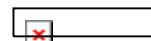
29. Over the past 12 months, the college has made a significant investment of nearly £2 million maintaining and upgrading accommodation and resources. This has enabled the construction of a new sports block, and a major refurbishment of roofing and upgrading of laboratories. The local LSC judge the college to have accurate management information and effective financial management. As a result, the college has been awarded 'Trust in FE' pathfinder status which will mean a reduction in

year-end audit. Effective and efficient use is made of resources. The college provides good value for money.

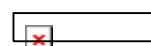
30. All staff have been appraised in the past 12 months. Information from lesson observation does not inform academic staff appraisal. Most appraisals define a clear set of actions and identify valuable developmental priorities. However, a significant number of appraisals are superficial and fail to set clear targets or identify development needs. The college recently did not gain re-accreditation of the Investors in People award. This was as a result of shortcomings, including failure by the college to assess accurately the value of training to individuals, and weaknesses in identifying the benefits of team working. Actions are being taken to address these weaknesses. The college now has a clear budgeted staff development plan in place, which proposes a broad balance of training activities for academic and support staff, managers and governors. It accurately reflects key themes from the college strategic plan including the differentiation of teaching to take account of varying needs and abilities of students, communication, management training and briefings on new legislative requirements.

31. Governors are well informed about key strengths and weaknesses. They regularly receive informative and concise updates and play a key role in monitoring progress on action on key issues. There is detailed and accurate clerking of corporation business with clear, concise papers to governors, succinct and well-organised agendas and minutes. Governors play an effective role in helping to shape the educational character of the college by periodic participation in strategic workshops with senior managers.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- good pass rates at level 3

- good teaching

- high standard of students' work.

Weaknesses

- insufficient sharing of good teaching practice.

Scope of provision

32. The college offers a wide range of level 3 science courses at GCE A2 and GCE AS. At level 2, GCSE biology is offered and there are no vocational courses or any provision at level 1. There are currently 590 student enrolments in science that account for 6% of the total college enrolment. There are 96 students taking GCE A2 and GCE AS human biology and 158 taking biology. In addition, there are 162 taking GCE A2 and GCE AS chemistry and 91 taking physics. Geology and science in the environment have recently been added to the level 3 curriculum and in 2003 have recruited 16 and 28 students, respectively. There are also 39 students taking GCSE biology.

Achievement and standards

33. GCE A2 and GCE AS pass rates in science have been good and the majority have been above the national average for the past two years. In 2002/03, pass rates improved. GCE A2 biology had a pass rate of 100% and chemistry both GCE A2 and GCE A2 science in the environment had pass rates above the national average. GCE AS pass rates were also above the national average in 2002/03. However, pass rates in both GCE A2 and GCE AS human biology have been below the national average for two years. The grades attained by GCE A2 and GCE AS students in 2002/03 were at the standard predicted by their prior examination achievements. Retention rates are good across the sciences and improved in GCSE biology in 2002/03. GCSE A* to C pass rates were below the national average in 2001/02, but improved to the national average in 2002/03. Students work well in lessons at a level appropriate to their learning goals. They respond well to questions and answer with confidence. The standard of practical work is good. Students work confidently and safely. Their written work is of a good standard, but some students' files are disorganised. Students are punctual and their attendance is very good. Science students' attendance was 95%, the highest recorded in the college during the inspection week.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	55	75	64
		% retention	84	75	84
		% pass rate	35	25	46
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	89	100	82
		% retention	88	89	91
		% pass rate	96	87	91
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	121	91	80
		% retention	88	89	93
		% pass rate	83	91	91
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	79	60	55
		% retention	96	93	91
		% pass rate	88	89	92
GCE A2 biology*	3	No. of starts	86	64	57
		% retention	67	98	98
		% pass rate	84	100	100
GCE A2 chemistry*	3	No. of starts	91	62	59
		% retention	77	97	98

		% pass rate	90	93	97
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GCE A level and GCE A2

Quality of education and training

34. The standard of teaching is good and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of students. Students enjoy their courses and there is a good rapport between students and teachers. In particular, the quality of students' responses to verbal questioning is high and they demonstrate the ability to formulate questions of their own. For example, in a biology lesson, students took part in a lively and thoughtful question and answer session on the role of adenosine triphosphate in respiration demonstrating good understanding of this complex molecular process. Course materials are carefully planned. Schemes of work show planning to support students who have difficulties and to set challenging work to the more able. In a good chemistry lesson, students were first set a short task on equilibria and then grouped on how well they performed. The groups were then given additional help or more demanding exercises according to their performance.

35. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods and practical demonstrations. There is good use of IT to help students understand complex concepts and processes. Students used data loggers whilst titrating in chemistry and a computer animation of oscillation was used in physics to help deepen their understanding of the topic. In the least effective lessons, IT was sometimes used to allow students to copy notes without discussion or analysis.

36. Teaching staff are well qualified, enthusiastic and committed to their subjects. They are well supported by a team of two full-time and two part-time technicians. The laboratories are large, well lit and well equipped with specialist equipment. The students have access to a number of data loggers and computers within the science area. The science section of the college intranet has a number of interactive learning resources that are appreciated and well used by the students. The library is well stocked with modern textbooks, periodicals and CD ROM for science students.

37. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Progress is thoroughly assessed through homework and tests. Work is returned promptly with helpful written and verbal feedback. As the students arrived at one chemistry lesson, individual feedback on a recent assignment was sensitively and effectively given and this helped the lesson to get off to a purposeful start. Student reviews are effective in enabling staff and students to monitor progress against agreed targets. Data on students' prior attainments are used to determine minimum target grades for students. These are regularly reviewed and form the basis of reports that are sent to students' parents. Science students get good pre-enrolment information and interviews and prospective students in local schools have visits from staff to help them with course choices.

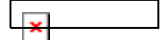
38. Students' learning styles and support needs are assessed on entry. Support is provided where needs are identified and science students value the access to timetabled academic support sessions. However, some lessons are not adapted to meet the range of additional needs of students. Students appreciate the help and support on careers and study habits they get from their personal tutors. The sciences have useful induction materials and good course handbooks that help students settle into their courses. For example, the GCE AS induction in physics centred around a series of problem-solving activities which introduced students to measurement. Students have the opportunity to gain key skills in ICT, but the take-up is low.

Leadership and management

39. Leadership and management at subject level are good and managers give clear direction to their teams. Teams meet regularly and the minutes contain action plans to address current issues. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process. However, some action plans lack detail and not all

actions in the last self-assessment report have been completed. The three science subjects have a high degree of autonomy and little formal joint planning takes place. Lesson observations take place regularly, but the results do not lead to the sharing of good practice or joint actions across the science teams. There is no material on display celebrating student success or diversity.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates
- good teaching
- good curriculum support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities for students to develop mathematical ideas in lessons.

Scope of provision

40. The college offers a wide range of mathematics options at advanced level. About 150 students are currently enrolled on GCE AS programmes and 90 at GCE A2. Further mathematics is taken by about 20 students each year. Students are offered support for Sixth Term Examination Papers Examinations (STEP), but there is no provision for advanced extension award. Level 3 key skills application of number is taken by a small group of students to support their needs in other subjects. About 120 students study GCSE mathematics, of whom 70% are enrolled on advanced courses. There is also a small group of students who are taking key skills application of number at levels 1 and 2. Apart from GCSE, there is no other substantive level 2 mathematics qualification on offer. The vast majority of students on all courses are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

41. Pass and retention rates are high on all courses. A* to C grade pass rates in GCSE mathematics improved in 2003 to a level significantly above national averages. Students achieve on average almost one grade better than their previous GCSE performance. However, only about half of those who start a GCSE mathematics course achieve a C grade or better. Students' achievements in GCE AS mathematics are high relative to national standards, with almost 50% achieving grades A or B in 2003; but around 20% of students who complete the course each year fail to reach a pass grade. GCE A2 pass rates are good and almost two thirds of GCE A2 mathematics and all GCE A2 further mathematics grades were A or B in 2003. Students at GCE A2 achieve significantly higher grades

than their prior achievement would indicate. In 2002, a high proportion of GCE A2 mathematics students progressed to university to study mathematically related subjects.

42. Students develop sound mathematical technique. Their algebraic skills are good, and they are able to use algorithmic tools with care and precision. However, these are sometimes undermined by poor numerical skills. In one GCE A2 class, proofs of complex trigonometric equivalence were thwarted by the inability of students to cancel fractions correctly. Some students develop good problem-solving skills. This is demonstrated by the outstanding performance of students taking part in the UK Senior Maths Challenge over the past three years. Students use computers and graphic calculators with confidence and develop sound visual appreciation of mathematical concepts. But over-reliance on graphic calculators has led to some poor graph-sketching skills. Students are able to apply relevant techniques, but not able to justify why a particular method is appropriate or to discuss underlying concepts with confidence.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	102	110	116
		% retention	91	84	86
		% pass rate	40	41	63
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	175	142	179
		% retention	88	84	92
		% pass rate	81	78	79
GCE A-level mathematics*	3	No. of starts	108	105	102
		% retention	81	99	98
		% pass rate	86	95	92

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* GCE A level 2000/01; GCE A2 2001/02,2002/03

Quality of education and training

43. Much teaching is good and effectively meets the needs of students. Teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that learning is demanding and there is a variety of activity to cater for preferred learning styles. Lessons begin crisply, sometimes with starter activities to review prior learning or stimulate interest. One GCSE class played a bingo game in which students had to calculate metric-imperial conversions, such as the number of litres in two gallons, to identify which numbers to mark on their card. A strong and supportive rapport between teachers and students helps build trust and confidence. Teachers monitor students' learning carefully during lessons to ensure that they are making appropriate progress. Learning resources are used effectively. These include well-produced handouts and high-quality computer presentations. Teaching is clear, with techniques and procedures well structured and carefully explained. However, there are insufficient opportunities to develop mathematical thinking. The questions and tasks set to students are often simple and closed, focusing on the 'what' but not on the 'why'. Teachers often dictate the next steps in processes and require the students to carry them out rather than encourage the students to discuss and formulate possible strategies. One teacher explained the procedure for calculating tax payable in a banded system to students who had not yet assimilated the principles of how and why the tax system works. There is insufficient opportunity for students to discuss mathematics and to make and test decisions. Some teachers question students by name to check learning and to stimulate deeper thinking. Most, however, ask questions to the whole class, receiving answers only from volunteers and thus do not detect any lack of understanding in the remainder.

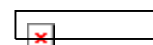
44. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. Staff attend relevant professional development events, and new ideas and materials are effectively shared with other team members. The intranet has a valuable stock of useful materials which are well used by students and accessible from home. These include PowerPoint presentations and schemes of work. Accommodation is adequate, decorated with posters and interesting maths-related newspaper clippings. There is, however, no students' work on display.

45. Induction is effective. Pre-enrolment 'tasters' assist students to choose their GCE AS options. Diagnostic homework is used to identify those requiring extra support. This support takes a range of different forms, including remedial study materials, extra lessons and directed study sessions. Those students starting GCE AS courses who gained their GCSE mathematics grade at intermediate tier are required to attend a bridging course for at least half a term. GCSE lessons are double-staffed at least one period a week to ensure that students receive sufficient individual attention. Teachers are available for extra help in subject-extensions sessions. Work is set regularly, marked and returned promptly. Students are required to make corrections and referred for extra help, where appropriate. Their progress is carefully monitored. Regular tests are used to give students feedback on their progress relative to the year group and target-grades. These are reviewed in formal target setting. Some target-setting has been poor in the past, and training for staff and students has recently taken place to improve this process.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good. Standards over time have been maintained and improved. The department has responded to the college's mission by implementing classroom strategies and curriculum options to meet individual need. There is a clear and cohesive sense of collective purpose and direction, reinforced by good teamwork and effective sharing of good practice, with common schemes of work and materials. Quality assurance is thorough and leads to effective action planning for improvement. However, the internal lesson observation process has not been effective in detecting the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified by inspectors in this inspection. The outcomes of lesson observations are not used to plan staff development or to facilitate the sharing of good practice. Resources are deployed effectively to achieve value for money.

Business and economics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE AS economics, GCE A2 economics and GCE A2 business studies in 2003

- challenging and inspiring teaching

- effective teamwork to improve the standard of students' work

- good subject support.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to the development of key skills.

Scope of provision

47. The college provides GCE AS and GCE A2 courses in economics, business and accounting. There are also vocational business programmes at intermediate and advanced level. A new Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) National Certificate vocational course was successfully introduced in September 2003. The AVCE business course has been dropped due to low recruitment and declining achievements. There are currently 35 students studying GCE AS accounting, 121 taking GCE AS business studies and 87 on GCE AS economics. GCE A2 accounting has 19 students, GCE A2 business studies has 71 and GCE AS economics 43. The OCR national certificate in business has 10 students and GNVQ intermediate business has 15 students. Student numbers are increasing on most courses, however, they have declined by 18% on GCE AS business over the past three years.

Achievement and standards

48. There were high pass rates in GCE AS economics, GCE A2 economics and GCE A2 business studies in 2003. In 2002/03, GCE A2 economics and GCE A2 business studies achieved 100% and 99% pass rates, respectively, compared to the national average of 96%. GCE AS business pass rates have been below the national average for the last three years. Retention rates have been good on most courses. In 2003, GCE AS and GCE A2 business studies had retention rates above the national average at 92% and 99%, respectively. In GCE A2 business studies and GCE A2 and GCE AS economics, students achieve higher grades than their previous attainment would predict. The standard of work produced by students is good and most students attain their learning goals. Business and economics students are developing the ability to analyse data and show good understanding of concepts and terminology. Most students benefit from visits to local businesses and use the Internet effectively to research reference material. Students attend well and are punctual.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	18	15	15
		% retention	89	87	87
		% pass rate	88	85	92
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	16	41	45
		% retention	94	93	91
		% pass rate	53	82	78
GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	93	149	134
		% retention	91	91	92
		% pass rate	85	85	85
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	78	67	65

		% retention	91	90	89
		% pass rate	93	93	90
GCE A-level business*	3	No. of starts	55	65	81
		% retention	80	95	99
		% pass rate	91	98	99
GCE A-level economics*	3	No. of starts	47	57	47
		% retention	79	100	98
		% pass rate	89	96	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* GCE A level 2000/01; GCE A2 2001/02, 2002/03

Quality of education and training

49. Teaching observed during the inspection was good and at its best was demanding and inspiring. The teachers share materials effectively and work closely as a team. Economics lessons are varied and teachers use verbal exposition, questioning, handouts, role-plays and exercises effectively to stimulate students. In the best lessons, theory is well linked to practice. In a business studies lesson, the teacher effectively used a video on the start-up locations of Brighton businesses. The students recognised the locations which created interest and enthusiasm. The students were then encouraged to critically analyse location and went on to develop the evaluative skills required of advanced level. Students' learning plans are regularly reviewed and adjusted according to individual circumstances. In 2003, a large proportion of students achieved demanding target grades. A few teachers did not pay sufficient attention to the mix of ability in their classes nor plan effectively for the students' learning styles.

50. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach and regularly attend subject-specific training days. Learning resources for business and economics students are good. The library contains a good stock of up-to-date materials. The department has developed its college intranet site with good access to learning materials and links to sites of interest. The analysis of surveys of students' views shows that some students feel that access to IT is poor. Some rooms are too small for the classes that use them. This restricts the effectiveness and variety of group work.

51. Assessment practice is good and homework is regularly set. Assessment is thorough and assignments, assessment criteria and marked work are moderated effectively. Assignments and homework are marked promptly. Clear and constructive feedback is provided so students know what to do to improve their skills. First-year and second-year students benefit from practice examinations before modules in January and June. Moderator feedback forms record high levels of compliance with the administrative and assessment requirements of awarding bodies.

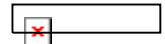
52. There are good links with external partners and well-organised trips are arranged with local businesses. A senior partner in a local accounting firm has contributed to accounting classes and given advice on careers in accountancy. Vocational business students attend a work experience placement one day a week for the duration of their course. The placements provide them with useful awareness of the commercial world. The links between business studies and the development of key skills are inadequate. They are not included in schemes of work. Key skills are not integrated into the assignments of vocational business units or used to develop students' literacy and numeracy.

53. Students receive comprehensive advice before they enrol. Economics students find this particularly helpful in confirming their choices. There is strong subject support for students. Teachers make particular efforts to give individual support to students. Student surveys commented on helpful and supportive staff. While additional support needs are systematically diagnosed, attendance at support sessions is low, preventing the development of students' business skills.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are good and the morale of teachers is high. There is good teamwork and teachers work well together. They share materials and work closely to improve students' learning. Both, formal and informal communications are effective. Staff meetings are held regularly and minuted actions taken are closely monitored. Annual departmental reviews are thoroughly carried out and examination results, retention rates and individual achievements are closely analysed. However, students' views on the quality of their experiences are not systematically collected and some action plan targets have not yet been met. Staff are kept well informed of changing examination requirements and have good links with awarding bodies.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on GCE AS ICT

- well-prepared online course materials

- good curriculum support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor and declining retention rates on some computing courses

- poor teaching in theory lessons

- few links with business and industry.

Scope of provision

55. The college offers courses in GCE AS and GCE A2 computing and ICT, GCSE ICT and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) to around 260 full-time students. There are 34 students taking GCE A2 computing and 49 studying GCE A2 ICT. There are also 49 students taking GCE AS computing and a further 87 on the GCE AS ICT course. GCSE ICT has 31 students and there are 13 students studying on CLAIT courses. At present, 79 students are enrolled on the

flexible learning ECDL.

Achievement and standards

56. Retention and pass rates on the GCE AS ICT have been consistently at, or above, the national average for the last three years. The pass rate in 2002/03 was 10% above the national average. The pass rate on the GCE A2 computing, at 92%, has been above the national average for two years. However, the retention rate on this course declined in 2002/03 to 90% which is 6% below the national average. The retention rate on the GCE A2 ICT has improved and was 98% in 2003. Retention and pass rates in GCE AS computing have declined and are now below the national averages. In 2003, student achievements at GCE A2 were below that which would have been predicted from their prior attainment and for GCE AS courses at the standard predicted. The level 1 telematics course has had 100% retention and pass rates over the last two years. There are very low retention and pass rates on the ECDL one-year course.

57. Computing and IT students have a good practical understanding of the software they are using. Students at all levels effectively use the Internet for research. The standard of many students' coursework is good. Students are able to work well at their own pace from workbooks or tasks set by teachers. Around half of the GCE A2 computing students and a third of those on the GCE A2 ICT course progressed on to HE in 2003. During the inspection week the average attendance in this area was 84% which is below the college average of 89%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Telematics basic	1	No. of starts	**	14	11
		% retention	**	100	100
		% pass rate	**	100	100
ECDL 1 year	2	No. of starts	**	79	108
		% retention	**	16	14
		% pass rate	**	69	50
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	61	83	59
		% retention	93	90	86
		% pass rate	93	73	76
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	109	110	98
		% retention	87	89	87
		% pass rate	76	79	86
GCE A2 computing*	3	No. of starts	51*	39	41
		% retention	78	100	90
		% pass rate	75	92	92
GCE A2 ICT*	3	No. of starts	40*	60	62
		% retention	73	95	98
		% pass rate	93	84	85

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* GCE A level 2000/01; GCE A2 2001/02, 2002/03

**course did not run

Quality of education and training

58. Teaching is good in practical computing lessons. Schemes of work and lesson plans are thorough, but do not always take account of students' learning styles or contain extension activities for the most able. Practical sessions are well managed and constant monitoring of progress by the tutor ensures that the students' computing skills are developed. Students are well motivated and able to work effectively with tutor support. Second-year students work enthusiastically on project work and use their programming skills and knowledge to good effect. One student in GCE A2 computing developed a database for an international agency as part of his second-year project. Most teachers make good use of questioning to revise and check students' understanding of previous learning. In one lesson, students were working through a database exercise and had difficulty in transferring the theory into practice when drawing an entity relationship diagram. This led to a lively discussion among the class and the teacher and resulted in the students solving the problem. However, in many lessons, insufficient account is taken of the prior attainment of students. Too much time is spent reviewing previous learning and the introduction of new work is too slow. Students who are already familiar with the topic achieve little and get bored. In theory lessons teachers fail to vary the work sufficiently to keep the students interested. In one lesson, the teacher had difficulty in explaining the normalisation of data and students became unresponsive and lost interest. Many tasks set are not demanding enough and fail to capture students' imagination. Teachers do not help students to develop their communication skills sufficiently by enabling students to contribute to the lesson in discussion or by presenting findings from group work to the class.

59. There are insufficient opportunities for students to visit local companies. There is no input from local companies on project work or programme planning and students do not go on company visits or benefit from invited speakers from the IT industry. Teachers do not have recent industrial experience. The computers in the department have recently been updated and a new operating system installed. At present, the department is piloting a managed learning environment to enable students to have access to course materials, assignments and mark schemes at college or from home. This is a valuable resource and much used by the students. The layout of computer rooms restricts movement and this limits the way teachers and students move from theory to practical work. Only one computer room has a data projector and this limits the demonstration of IT functions. Some overhead transparencies are poor and are difficult to read.

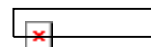
60. Students understand the assessment procedures and assessment is used effectively to monitor students' progress. Marked work is returned promptly, but the quality of feedback varies from brief notes to detailed guidance on what the student needs to do to improve. The report from the external moderator on centre-assessed GCE A2 ICT work in 2003 stated that the marks awarded were overgenerous.

61. Students are well guided on to their chosen programmes of learning and most students find the induction period useful. Diagnostic testing takes place to identify students needing additional support and many students take advantage of this. Subject tutors regularly monitor students' progress and provide good support on an individual and group basis during timetabled subject-extension periods. Students speak highly of the usefulness of these sessions and also the support received from tutors during teaching sessions and at other times. Very good use is made by students of online materials to support their learning.

Leadership and management

62. Curriculum management is satisfactory, but there is insufficient focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. All staff are involved in the annual self-assessment report and the completion of the departmental action plan. The annual self-assessment report is too descriptive and does not contain analysis of students' destinations or the effectiveness of induction. Teachers in ICT have observed each other's lessons in order to share good practice and to support one another. A managed learning environment has been developed for the college by the ICT team. Weekly staff meetings are timetabled to enable all full-time and part-time staff to attend. However, the minutes from these meetings are cursory. Formal and informal communications between teachers are good. The monitoring and recording of attendance and progress on ECDL courses are ineffective.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- good pass and retention rates in travel and tourism
- high achievement on additional short courses
- good pass rates from level 3 courses into HE and employment
- good coaching and development of practical skills.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates of students on GCE A2 physical education course
- lack of demanding extension activities for the more able students in some lessons.

Scope of provision

63. The college offers a range of full-time courses in sport, sports coaching and travel, tourism and recreation. There are 107 students currently studying GCE AS and GCE A2 physical education and 39 students taking AVCE travel and tourism. There are also 19 students enrolled on BTEC national sports science. In addition, there are a further 19 on the level 3 sport and travel course which is combined with an NVQ level 2 course in customer care. There are 11 students studying GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and a further 15 enrolled on the BTEC first diploma in sport. In addition to their main programme of study, 132 students are enrolled on one of 6 sports development courses which make up the college sports academy. There are also 28 students enrolled on City and Guilds travel destinations and International Air Transport Travel Association (IATA) fares and ticketing qualifications. There is no level 1 provision in sports and travel.

Achievement and standards

64. Pass rates on AVCE travel and tourism have been at, or above, the national average for the last three years and in 2003 all the students who took the qualification passed. Both GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and the BTEC first diploma in sport had good retention and pass rates when they

were introduced in 2002/03. Sports coaching courses have high retention and pass rates. Although all the students who completed GCE A2 physical education in 2003 passed the qualification, the students were awarded grades significantly below what would be expected from their prior attainment. On other courses, the students achieved standards broadly in line with the predictions from their prior attainments. A large proportion of students completing AVCE travel and tourism and GCE A2 physical education progress into HE or to employment.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
BTEC first in sport	2	No. of starts	***	***	16
		% retention	***	***	81
		% pass rate	***	***	92
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	***	***	13
		% retention	***	***	92
		% pass rate	***	***	83
GCE AS physical education	3	No. of starts	62	51	63
		% retention	90	80	94
		% pass rate	86	88	92
AVCE in travel and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	**30	15	11
		% retention	77	60	100
		% pass rate	96	89	100
AVCE in travel and tourism (single award)	3	No. of starts	***	21	11
		% retention	****	62	91
		% pass rate	***	100	100
GCE A2 physical education	3	No. of starts	*41	46	33
		% retention	76	93	94
		% pass rate	94	98	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* GCE A-level physical education

** GNVQ advanced in leisure and tourism

*** course did not run

Quality of education and training

65. Teaching and coaching are good. In the best lessons, topical and stimulating source materials are effectively used. For example, in one lesson, BTEC national sports students studied theories of group dynamics in sport and then applied these with interest to the circumstances surrounding a recent England international football match. This resulted in lively group discussion in which students demonstrated well-developed evaluative skills. In travel and tourism lessons, there is good use of appropriate and interesting case studies. These case studies, of places as diverse as Sinai, Cyprus and Brighton, comprehensively cover the assessment criteria for the course and provide variety and interest for the students. They also help them to develop their understanding of the impact of tourism on development. Sports development groups are effectively coached by professionals and students

have opportunities to gain national governing body awards in their chosen sport. For example, the football development course is coached by staff from Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club. In a tennis coaching session, analysis of ground strokes enabled students to diagnose and correct faults in technique by using appropriate coaching points. However, in some lessons, teachers dominate the activities too much and do not enable the students to develop their own skills. Some teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the range of ability in their classes or plan effectively for the variety of needs.

66. Effective use is made of a good range of resources. The learning centre has a good range of textbooks and industrial-standard publications and Internet access. The travel intranet has links to the industry and coursework assessments with additional reading and notes included. The sport intranet is less well developed. The new sports centre is an excellent resource which combines a multi-sport hall with classrooms and a well-equipped ICT room. However, sports pitch surfaces are poor and this has an adverse effect on training and coaching sessions, particularly in football. All full-time staff are qualified teachers. Part-time staff are very well qualified in their vocational areas.

67. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are effective and have a positive impact on learning. Good use is made of progress reviews to set targets for students and monitor their achievement. Teachers regularly set homework and end of unit tests for students. Written feedback on assignments and homework gives clear guidance on how students can improve their performance. Moderation procedures of students' work and the arrangements for external verification are rigorous.

68. National Pathfinder students currently enrolled on sports and travel area are monitored and assessed at their vocational placements by trainers and assessors from Brighton and Hove training agency. However, some of these students have not yet had placements arranged and others have not had preliminary assessment visits. Students speak highly about the combination of college courses and work placements in the local travel and sports industry.

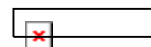
69. There are excellent sporting enrichment opportunities and the college runs a wide variety of recreational and competitive activities on Wednesday afternoons. Students in the sports development courses take a variety of coaching qualifications and some progress into county and national sports squads.

70. There are regular reviews of student performance and students use the college diary and comprehensive course handbooks to plan and organise coursework deadlines. Students benefit from good pastoral support, which they value highly. It contributes positively to retention and pass rates. There is appropriate initial advice and guidance for students and a thorough induction period in September. Every effort is made to ensure a smooth transition from school to college. Tutor groups are formed from students on a variety of courses and levels. Subject staff provide effective support in lessons and monitor students' progress within their subject area. Staff organise lunchtime drop-in revision sessions, which students find useful. Some additional learning support sessions on Wednesday afternoon clash with college sporting fixtures. As a result, some students cannot attend all the support on offer. GCE AS and GCE A2 physical education students are offered additional practical sports assessment times on Tuesday evenings to develop their practical skills ready for external assessment. Students value the support they get from teachers.

Leadership and management

71. Leadership and management are good. Teaching teams meet regularly and effectively plan course development and assessments. All staff are involved in the annual self-assessment process, but the standard of evaluation in self-assessment reports varies. The report which contains the travel and tourism team's self-assessment is detailed and realistic in its evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report from the sports department has improved in 2001/02, following a period of considerable staff changes. The current report is evaluative and identified weaknesses in the provision have been addressed and improvements monitored. However, the internal verification procedures of students' work are weak. Lesson observations are not used to share good practice or to contribute to staff-development planning.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

The contributory grade for work art and design is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high pass rates
- high standard of students' work in art and design
- much good teaching
- good subject support for students in vocational areas
- strong management and team work.

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation for practice and development of skills in dance and music
- lack of resources for independent learning.

Scope of provision

72. There are 953 students enrolled, mainly aged 16 to 18 and full time: 361 in art and design, 438 in media, and 154 in performing arts. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in art and design (fine art, textiles, photography), dance, theatre studies, performance studies, media studies, film studies, communication studies and music. Some 56 students take GCSE dance or courses at levels 1 and 2 in dance and the theory of music.

Achievement and standards

73. There are high pass rates across all courses, with 100% pass rates in GCE A2 art and design for the last three years and 100% pass rates in GCE AS film, drama, and GCE A2 theatre studies in 2003. Retention rates are generally high. The percentage of high grades is significantly higher than national averages on most courses. On the majority of courses in 2003, students achieved higher grades than were predicted from their GCSE attainment.

74. Students present their ideas confidently, demonstrating good study discipline and respect for other students' opinions. There is a very high standard of work in art and design. Theory is integrated into practical studio activity and students are able to evaluate and discuss their work with confidence. Portfolios and sketchbooks are vibrant, with drawings and experimental developments in personal styles supported by appropriate evaluative text. In art and design, students are able to discuss their work with confidence and use appropriate terminology effectively. Creative ideas and processes are well developed by the students and the new images and artefacts they create are related back to previous work. In GCE AS photography, the students worked conscientiously and with maturity in the dark room and the studio. They achieved very good results, especially since they were only five weeks into the course. In performing arts, students are confident in practical work and use technical language in group work. However, the attainment of students in dance, media and music is constrained by the lack of appropriate facilities for practice and independent study.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS art studies/fine art/ textiles/ photography	3	No. of starts	186	215	190
		% retention	89	90	90
		% pass rate	99	99	99
GCE AS film studies	3	No. of starts	45	64	59
		% retention	96	83	81
		% pass rate	100	96	100
GCE AS theatre studies	3	No. of starts	30	41	29
		% retention	70	88	86
		% pass rate	71	89	100
GCE A2 art studies/ fine art/ textiles/ photography	3	No. of starts	*79	103	129
		% retention	*80	99	97
		% pass rate	*100	100	100
GCE A2 media studies	3	No. of starts	*109	66	109
		% retention	*72	97	96
		% pass rate	*100	100	99
GCE A2 theatre studies	3	No. of starts	*39	12	12
		% retention	*59	100	100
		% pass rate	*91	92	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* two-year GCE A level

Quality of education and training

75. There is a high standard of teaching. In the best lessons, teachers use imaginative approaches to introduce challenging ideas in an entertaining way. A GCE A-level media lesson on `magazines

and gender' successfully introduced the concepts of ideology, marxism and hegemony by requiring students to explain these terms in a way that could be understood by an eight-year old sibling. In a dance lesson which introduced the Laban notation, the teacher devised a simple game where numbers were assigned to basic notation moves. Students used their telephone number to select six moves and performed them for their partner. The partner was required to decipher the number from the dance moves. This imaginative and demanding task led naturally to more complex notation. In art and design lessons, the standard of teaching and learning is outstanding. The projects are imaginative and encourage students to be ambitious. High expectations and very good one-to-one support in lessons mean that students often achieve much higher standards of work than their prior attainment would suggest. In addition, individual support enables students to express and develop their ideas effectively and to sum up their achievements concisely.

76. Teachers provide excellent support materials. In art and design, a contextual study handbook guides the student from the proposal of a theme to the conclusion with a series of prompt sheets and study plans. Creative presentations of projects are encouraged. The course handbook for media, film and communications includes a workbook to be used in lessons, background reference material and an important revision aid. The media handbooks and worksheets are available on the intranet with a well-developed range of material and web links.

77. The art and design studios for fine art, textiles and photography are well managed, each with a computer, scanner and printer. The 'Artweb' intranet, which students regularly use, links to online galleries and image banks. However, there is no dedicated three-dimensional (3D) facility which limits the range of work students can do. Opportunities for practice and the development of skills are also constrained by unsuitable accommodation in dance and music. The L-shaped dance studio is awkward in shape and has poor ventilation. The alternative dance space is a shared hall which lacks privacy. There are no mirrors, changing areas or showers. Classrooms in music are too small for the size of classes and poor soundproofing in music practice rooms limits rehearsal opportunities. Equipment for recording music is dated. The editing equipment in media is heavily used and in need of updating. There is poor access to the media area for people with restricted mobility. Student enrolments have increased and space constraints are limiting opportunities for students to work on their own.

78. Student progress is monitored effectively. In art and design, students have clear guidelines and prompts for written work. Marked drafts are encouraging, detailed and provide advice for development. Final presentations of contextual studies units are imaginative, including 3D renditions of the text.

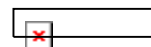
79. Students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and Asperger's syndrome are supported well. A photography student unable to use his left hand to load film into the developing tank was helped by a specially made device which enabled him to develop his own films unaided. Progression to specialist HE courses is high; 64% in art and design, 77% in performing arts and 62% in media.

80. There are many enrichment activities including life drawing, digital imaging, film making, jazz and rock workshops, musical theatre, dance and vocal training. There is an annual visit to Prague, and regular visits to London galleries, museums and theatres. Students benefit from the many opportunities for presentation and performance. For example, the Bhasvictors, where students presented their work in a local cinema for students, staff, parents and prospective students.

Leadership and management

81. There is good teamwork across the departments. The subjects are well managed by their respective leaders. There are regular meetings to share good practice. Communication is very good with both full-time and part-time staff. Equality of opportunity is stressed at curriculum level. The art and design team use common lesson plans and context sheets to ensure that the six groups of GCE AS art students have an entitlement to common teaching and learning methods. Although the large student numbers lead to crowding and pressure on resources, space is effectively managed to its full potential.

Psychology, sociology, law and politics



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

Strengths

- good curriculum support for students
- much lively and stimulating teaching with GCE A2 groups
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate in GCSE humanities
- some undemanding GCE AS teaching.

Scope of provision

82. This curriculum area is part of a wider range of humanities subjects offered. The subjects in this area are popular and student numbers continue to grow. At the time of the inspection, there were 32 students studying GCSE humanities, 553 students studying GCE AS and 254 studying GCE A levels in law, politics, psychology and sociology. All subjects in this area have large numbers of students. Psychology recruits more students than any other subject in the college.

Achievement and standards

83. In GCE AS and A-level subjects, retention rates are often at or around the national averages. In GCSE humanities, the retention rate was low in 2001/02 and 2002/03. Pass rates also vary in most subjects. At level 2, the pass rate for GCSE humanities has improved over the past three years and in 2002/03 it was above the national average. At GCE AS and A level, there are some good pass rates, particularly in politics, psychology and sociology. However, with the exception of GCE A2 sociology, no subject has consistently been at or above national averages for two years running. The proportion of students achieving high grades in GCE AS and A levels is improving in most subjects, with the national average for high grades exceeded in 2002/03 in GCE A2 politics, GCE AS and GCE A2 psychology and GCE AS sociology. Data shows that most students reach the level predicted by their GCSE grades.

84. In some lessons, students attain high standards of work and demonstrate a good knowledge and

understanding of the subjects they are studying. They are encouraged to develop skills of analysis and evaluation. For example, students came to one sociology GCE A-level lesson having undertaken prior reading and were set tasks which required them to use different sociological perspectives to analyse social data. In some lessons, however, student attainment was not strong. For example, in a law GCE A-level lesson, students extracted information from websites. This was a mechanical exercise which did not require students to use or analyse the information.

A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology, sociology, law and politics, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE humanities	2	No. of starts	37	37	40
		% retention	95	70	78
		% pass rate	51	58	65
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	87	115	108
		% retention	93	90	81
		% pass rate	84	87	74
GCE AS politics	3	No. of starts	23	36	44
		% retention	91	86	93
		% pass rate	90	84	98
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	208	216	199
		% retention	87	90	87
		% pass rate	71	76	87
GCE A2 psychology	3	No. of starts	107	82	96
		% retention	80	98	96
		% pass rate	94	93	96
GCE A2 sociology	3	No. of starts	89	53	51
		% retention	69	94	98
		% pass rate	98	98	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

NB: The figures for GCE A2 law, psychology and sociology for 2000/01 are the legacy GCE A-level results for that year

Quality of education and training

85. All teaching observed was good, very good or satisfactory. In the best lessons, staff motivated students by using relevant contemporary materials. For example, in a law lesson, job advertisements were analysed by students who then built up a picture of the work of the legal profession. In a sociology lesson, the complex notion of different sociological perspectives was introduced through students being called to the classroom window and invited to say what they could see. Students recognised that what they saw depended on their interests or viewpoints.

86. In some less successful lessons, students' attention wavered because teachers failed to give enough attention to students' prior learning and experience. Direct questioning and other teaching methods were not used effectively to tackle inattentive students.

87. Most accommodation and equipment is satisfactory, although there is limited access to

computers for groups. Some large groups are timetabled in rooms that are too small, restricting the range of teaching and learning activities that are possible and causing some discomfort. Library staff work with subject areas and are starting to build up appropriate resources. Each subject has a site on the college's intranet. The psychology and sociology sites have developed a good range of learning materials, activities and links to other relevant sites. In all subjects, good handouts and learning packs provide effective stimulus material for students who may be 'aiming high' or may be 'feeling confused'.

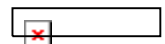
88. Assessment is carefully designed and systematically applied. In psychology and sociology, assessment packs present all assessments, including mark schemes and where appropriate self-assessment recording forms. In psychology, students plot their progress visually on a chart. Grades predicted from GCSE scores are used as student target grades and these are regularly reviewed with students by personal and subject tutors. A wide range of enrichment activities take place. In law, visits to local and London courts, visiting speakers and involvement in the national Mock Trial Competition extend the opportunities for learning. In politics, students visit the Houses of Parliament, 10 Downing Street and party conferences, and take part in an annual Model United Nations Assembly.

89. Schemes of work and lesson plans take into account different learning styles. For example, class exercises often encourage students to present findings in their own preferred way, written, visually or orally. Subject extensions are available for students who request or need additional time because they are aiming for high grades or because they want to catch up.

Leadership and management

90. The curriculum area is well managed. The college's key priorities are reflected in development plans. For example, more effective planning of teaching to take account of the differing abilities and needs of students was identified as a key goal in the 2001/02 development plans and has now been introduced into schemes of work, lesson plans and learning materials. The good practice in psychology and sociology is being used as the basis for wider dissemination. Self-assessment is generally realistic. Lesson plans and schemes of work are also very thorough, though, they do not always give sufficient attention to defining lesson objectives. The assessments resulting from the lesson observation scheme provide too generous an interpretation of the standards of teaching and learning. Equal opportunities issues are reviewed well in some subjects. In psychology there has been an analysis of results by gender and a subsequent focus on male underachievement. Ethnocentricity and inappropriate language are challenged in lessons.

Geography, history, philosophy, critical thinking and classical civilisation



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates at GCE A2

- stimulating teaching

- well-produced resource books and websites

- effective use of monitoring and assessment policies

- extensive curriculum activity to enrich learning

- strong curriculum management and leadership.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some GCE AS courses

- some inadequate classroom accommodation.

Scope of provision

91. GCE AS and A-level courses are provided in history, geography, philosophy and classical civilisation and at GCE AS in critical thinking. Students are almost entirely full-time and aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were just over 500 students on these programmes. Of these, 70% are studying on GCE AS courses. One third are on history, courses where there is a choice of syllabuses.

Achievement and standards

92. Students achieve well on GCE A-level courses. Over two years, high pass and retention rates have been sustained in geography and philosophy. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving high grades was well above the national average. Of 55 history students, 41 obtained a grade A or B. Over a period of three years, pass rates on GCE AS courses have fluctuated above and below national averages. The percentage of high grades in philosophy has improved significantly over two years to well above the national average. In critical thinking, no high grades were attained in 2003 after two previous years of good results. Many students failed to reach their target grades. Retention rates on GCE AS courses in classical civilisation and critical thinking are unsatisfactory. In philosophy, there has been significant improvement in retention rates to well above the national average. In the main, students achieve the grades that are predicted from their prior attainment. Attendance is poor in critical thinking and, in too many lessons, students fail to return punctually after formal breaks.

93. Students produce work of a good standard. Written work is well organised. Complex issues are explored in depth. Most students develop good skills of research and investigation, critical analysis, evaluation and decision-making. Through an emphasis upon problem-solving assignments, key skills are enhanced. For example, in geography and classical civilisation coursework, students attain proficient standards in written communication, use of number and IT skills. In history, philosophy and classical civilisation the standard of oral work was impressive.

A sample of retention and pass rates in geography, history, philosophy, critical thinking and

classical civilisation, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS classical civilisation	3	No. of starts	*	34	39
		% retention	*	76	74
		% pass rate	*	88	86
GCE AS critical thinking	3	No. of starts	18	58	73
		% retention	67	97	73
		% pass rate	92	96	85
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	87	92	73
		% retention	85	90	90
		% pass rate	84	90	94
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	142	100	106
		% retention	95	94	90
		% pass rate	83	81	95
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	85**	41	62
		% retention	76**	98	100
		% pass rate	95**	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	81**	81	56
		% retention	79**	99	98
		% pass rate	86**	91	100
GCE A-level philosophy	3	No. of starts	20**	33	19
		% retention	70**	100	95
		% pass rate	93**	100	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course did not run

** two-year course

Quality of education and training

94. There is a large proportion of good and very good teaching and learning particularly in GCE A2 lessons. In philosophy, vigorous, imaginative teaching sparked a lively, intellectual debate on ideas of freedom and liberty. In a history lesson on the Nazis' rise to power, class discussion was skilfully used to prepare an answer to a typical examination question. Lessons have clear objectives which are shared with students. Teaching methods and learning materials are skilfully adapted to meet the range of student abilities. As a consequence, students are often well motivated. In GCE AS critical thinking, for example, a lesson on evaluative reasoning made good use of a published article as a means of testing the logical argument. In a few lessons, teachers miss good learning opportunities. In philosophy, for example, there were two occasions when the teacher, instead of students, read aloud from texts. In some lessons, questions are not developed into a dialogue to test and extend students' understanding. When students are engaged in class discussion, the standard of oral contributions is very high. This was particularly evident in philosophy and classical civilisation lessons in which intellectual points of view were exchanged at a perceptive level.

95. There is very good use of learning materials. Study guides and department websites enable students to deepen their understanding of topics and encourage independent learning both at college and at home. In geography, teachers make effective use of the local area for fieldwork. In a 90-minute lesson, students investigated evidence of urban regeneration in Brighton and followed this up with an IT-based mapping exercise. On another occasion, pages from the department's website were used to reinforce learning on nearby coastal management.

96. Some classrooms are not conducive to good teaching and learning. Most are shared with other subjects, some are overcrowded and some have a furniture layout which impedes one-to-one monitoring of learning. Whiteboards are of a poor quality. The temporary classrooms used by philosophy and classical civilisation are not soundproofed and students' concentration is easily disturbed. The classrooms cannot comfortably accommodate the student numbers. This impedes group work and the monitoring of individual learning. There is an inadequate supply of classroom computers.

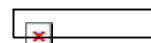
97. Monitoring and assessment of students' progress are thorough. A process of target setting is in place and implemented. Teachers maintain a check on individual student progress. Assessment practice is very good. Students benefit from feedback. The adoption of cover sheets for marked work is effective in creating a dialogue between teacher and student. Elements of self-assessment are incorporated. Regular assignments are set and marked and returned quickly. Students comment favourably on this.

98. There is extensive enrichment of learning at curriculum level including local, national and international visits and conferences. Students benefit from a range of support outside the timetabled lessons. Support workshops are organised in subject-extension time each week. In geography, emphasis has been placed on helping those with low and high target grades. In an observed history support session, the focus was explaining difficult historical terminology.

Leadership and management

99. Leadership and management are strong. Teams review courses to establish the best opportunities for students to reach their full potential. This has led to recent changes in course specifications in history, geography and philosophy. Good lines of communication are established between subject leaders and the divisional curriculum manager who monitors departmental progress. Heads of department manage their curriculum responsibilities enthusiastically and proficiently. Good use is made of performance indicators. Much effort has been spent in reviewing schemes for work for each course and in incorporating new teaching and learning methods. Staff have attended management and professional courses and brought new ideas into their curriculum areas. Part-time staff are well integrated. Self-assessment is thorough and has led to improvements in the quality of provision.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- good pass rates in GCE A2 French and German and elementary ESOL programmes

- well-designed and stimulating teaching materials

- thorough assessment and feedback to students

- good learning support on level 2 English courses

- good planning and curriculum monitoring.

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation.

Scope of provision

100. The college provides courses in GCSE English, GCE AS and A-level English literature, GCE AS and A level in English language and literature, GCSE in Spanish and GCE AS and A levels in Spanish, German and French. It also provides National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes in Spanish and Italian. The college offers ESOL programmes at elementary and intermediate level and language support for speakers of other languages studying GCE AS and A-level programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were 488 students enrolled on English programmes, 202 on language programmes and 66 on ESOL programmes. Many students on foundation programmes are asylum seekers and refugees.

Achievement and standards

101. Pass rates on GCE A-level, GCSE and ESOL courses are generally above the national averages for sixth form colleges. For example, GCSE and GCE AS in Spanish and in GCSE English, results have remained consistently above the national average for the past three years. Retention rates are more mixed, particularly at GCE AS where in French they are below the national average.

102. Students generally make good progress. On GCE A2 French and German programmes in 2003, students achieved much better results than predicted by their GCSE grades. In ESOL lessons, students demonstrated confidence in class discussion and made good progress in improving their vocabulary. Students learn to work well in groups and share ideas which they feel are respected and valued. However, some English students do not read widely beyond their core texts.

103. During the inspection, the attendance in observed lessons was 85% in English and modern foreign languages and 80% in ESOL classes. Students are usually punctual.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
English for speakers of other languages (elementary)	1	No. of starts	19	10	7
		% retention	89	70	100
		% pass rate	65	100	86

GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	68	75	83
		% retention	91	88	87
		% pass rate	68	67	61
GCE AS language and literature	3	No. of starts	81	104	103
		% retention	84	87	91
		% pass rate	100	89	89
GCE AS French language	3	No. of starts	75	66	48
		% retention	83	83	81
		% pass rate	85	89	87
GCE A2 English literature	3	No. of starts	*	87	74
		% retention	*	94	95
		% pass rate	*	96	99
GCE A2 French	3	No. of starts	*	30	30
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	83	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

104. Most of the teaching inspected was good or better and none was unsatisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with their students. Group work is used effectively to share ideas and develop oral skills. Modern foreign language teachers make particularly good use of the language being taught. Plans in English lessons identify the context and the content of the lesson, but often do not include clear learning objectives.

105. Good handouts and other learning materials have been developed for English teaching at GCE AS and A level. They include a wide variety of contemporary writing including poems and extracts from novels along with a range of exercises for students. Questions are designed to stimulate the most able students and provide help for those in difficulty with particular texts. Good use is made of electronic resources, such as dedicated websites for individual research outside the classroom. ESOL students use well-presented materials that relate to their daily needs addressing, for example, employment, housing and health issues. Independent learning and self-assessment are also encouraged on modern foreign language courses by course handbooks and the open language centre.

106. There is much poor accommodation. Many rooms are too small and badly shaped. Students are unable to move about the room and this restricts teaching activity. Much of the accommodation is poorly decorated. Teachers attempt to enliven drab areas through the use of displays of students' work and posters advertising cultural events. There is no ICT equipment in teaching rooms and poor overhead projectors facilities in the language laboratory. The modern language stock in the library is small and out of date.

107. Students' work in all curriculum areas is thoroughly marked and promptly returned. They receive good feedback with clear targets for improvement. In languages, most work is returned to students in less than a week. There are good cover sheets for English work which clearly identify assessment criteria.

108. In modern foreign languages, there is an appropriate range of courses to meet the needs of students. NVQs in Spanish and Italian are offered to students who intend to work abroad or whose needs are more practical than academic. A range of ESOL courses is offered to asylum seekers. There is currently no purely English language-based qualification at level 3, but there are plans to develop this for the next academic year.

109. Students on GCSE English and other intermediate programmes receive good learning support. The curriculum has been designed to meet the range of abilities. There is an additional weekly session to support students with a need for additional literacy support.

Leadership and management

110. The curriculum areas are well managed. Courses are well planned and all departments hold regular meetings which focus upon monitoring student progress. Management roles and the lines of responsibility are clear. All of the key documentation for English staff is available on the intranet. Target setting for all students is used effectively with reference to data on their prior attainments. Student feedback is analysed and the results are used to make improvements. The self-assessment process includes all staff and the issues identified for action are clear and relevant.

Part D: College data

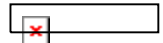
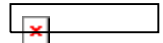


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	6	0
2	22	63
3	68	29
4/5	0	0
Other	4	8
Total	100	100

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	1,602	31	16
Land-based provision	0	0	0

Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	27	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	440	14	4
Information and communication technology	1,270	136	14
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	401	3	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	8	0	0
Health, social care and public services	357	0	3
Visual and performing arts and media	763	6	8
Humanities	2,002	19	20
English, languages and communication	2,981	36	29
Foundation programmes	120	24	1
Total	9,971	269	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	19	50	353	**	**	**
	Retention rate	37	92	82	**	**	**
	National average	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate	86	74	79	**	**	**
	National average	70	66	71	67	70	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	650	559	532	18	15	140
	Retention rate	78	89	81	72	93	17
	National average	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate	92	78	92	62	57	88
	National average	80	85	84	70	68	71

3	Starters excluding transfers	2,251	4,508	4,460	**	41	57
	Retention rate	84	84	91	**	63	72
	National average	75	80	89	63	64	69
	Pass rate	84	88	88	**	65	78
	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 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 2000 to 2002: College ISR.

**numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	73	25	1	131
Level 2 (intermediate)	61	33	4	21
Level 1 (foundatio	80	20	0	5
Other sessions	80	20	0	5
Totals	72	26	2	162

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