

## Oaklands College

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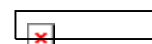
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#### **Basic information about the college**

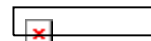


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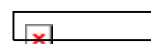
Name of college:	Oaklands College
Type of college:	Further Education
Principal:	Helen Parr
Address of college:	St Albans Smallford Campus St Albans Hertfordshire AL4 0JA
Telephone number:	01727 737000
Fax number:	01727 737575
Chair of governors:	Tom Freeman

Unique reference number:	130723
Name of reporting inspector:	Tony Nasta HMI
Dates of inspection:	24 November-4 December 2003

## Part A: Summary



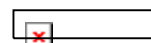
### Information about the college



Oaklands College is a large further education (FE) college with major campuses in St Albans, Welwyn Garden City and Borehamwood. The college was established in 1991 as part of the restructuring of FE in Hertfordshire from the merger of three colleges: de Havilland, St Albans City College and Hertfordshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture. In 2001/02, the college enrolled over 18,500 students of which about 14% were full time, about 70% were part time and the remainder were on leisure programmes, funded through a contract with the local education authority. Courses are offered from pre-entry to degree level. There is substantial provision of adult leisure courses in the community located in community centres and local schools. Using the measure of full-time equivalence, approximately 53% of students were in the 16 to 18 age range. Education and training takes place in all areas of learning. There is substantial provision of training for modern apprentices in construction, engineering and land-based industries. This provision is co-ordinated through the college's 'services to business curriculum area'. The college has received interim funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to develop a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in caring.

The college's mission is to be 'first choice for learning and skills'. Its strategic objectives are to 'deliver quality vocational education and training within an inclusive curriculum responsive to local circumstances; to strive for continuous improvement by putting learners at the heart of the organisation; to value and support all staff; to communicate effectively with students, staff and stakeholders to develop partnership working; to manage the organisation and resources effectively to support innovation while obtaining value for money and ensuring financial viability; and to participate in the communities to contribute to positive change'.

### How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the overall quality of the provision to be inadequate to meet the needs of all students. Six out of the fourteen curriculum areas and leadership and management were unsatisfactory. Seven of the remaining eight curriculum areas were satisfactory and one was good. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

#### **Key strengths**

- good teaching in humanities, English as a foreign language, modern foreign languages, engineering and discrete courses in literacy and numeracy

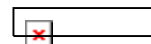
- good tutorial support
- breadth and range of courses
- extent of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

***What should be improved***

- well below average pass rates on many courses
- low levels of student attainment in many curriculum areas
- quality of teaching and learning, particularly on courses at levels 1 and 2
- standard of accommodation and access to information technology facilities
- additional learning support
- leadership and management in unsatisfactory curriculum areas
- impact of quality assurance system in securing improvement
- management of work-based learning.

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

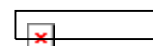


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Land-based industries	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The teaching in the majority of practical sessions is good and students benefit from the wide choice of courses. Retention rates are good and students have access to good specialist resources in equine, animal care and horticulture. The management of work-based learning is poor. The planning of some lessons is inadequate and there is ineffective promotion and practice of equality of opportunity.
Construction	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Teaching in practical lessons is good; better than in lessons on theory. Students with additional needs are well supported. Pass rates on many courses are poor as is the achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework. Key skills and information technology (IT) are ineffectively delivered. Target setting is weak at curriculum level.
Engineering	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There is much good teaching and a good range of learning opportunities. Results for adult students are good, for students aged 16 to 18 they are unsatisfactory and for work-based learners they are poor. The management of work-based learning programmes is poor.
Business and management	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> There is good tutorial support for students. Students make good progress on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) accounting courses and achieve well. The pass rates for foundation and intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in business are high. There are low standards of student work on advanced level programmes. Much teaching is unimaginative, with little use of information and learning technology (ILT).
Information and communications technology	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Pass rates on GNVQ and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) programmes have been good for the past two years, but pass rates for adults on short courses have declined and are poor. There is much dull and uninspiring teaching which does not address the range of student needs. However, full-time vocational students receive a good level of individual subject support which has a positive impact on their attainment. There is poor management of adult and General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) programmes.
Sports, leisure and tourism	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There is a good range of provision. Critical self-assessment has enabled weaknesses to be addressed. Pass and retention rates have improved in some areas and teaching and learning practices are under critical review. Some student achievements remain below national averages. Teaching still lacks variety and poor student punctuality and inadequate accommodation disrupt learning.
Health and social care	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> There are good pass rates on full-time health and social care courses, but low pass rates on childcare courses and NVQ

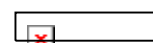
	programmes. Procedures for monitoring the progress of NVQ students are ineffective. There is good use of vocational experience on the full-time courses and an extensive range of options. Tutorial support is good. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
Art and design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are good on vocational courses and teachers use contemporary source material to inform and extend students' knowledge and artwork. The studio accommodation provides a stimulating environment for learning. Poor attendance and punctuality have an adverse effect on learning. Key skills are not effectively integrated into the curriculum.
Media and performing arts	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching in most lessons is satisfactory or better. The range of provision is good and teachers make good use of their current links with the cultural industries. Low retention and pass rates on some courses are associated with inadequate structure, pace and challenge in lessons. Good practice is not communicated across the team, resulting in inconsistent quality standards.
Humanities and social sciences	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates on humanities subjects are generally high, with the exception of psychology. Teachers have high expectations and students make good progress. There are strong partnerships with local schools. The range of enrichment activities is narrow and not promoted effectively to students.
English, modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are mixed they are good in English as a foreign language and poor in GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) English. Teaching and learning are good in English as a foreign language and in many modern foreign language lessons; courses are well managed. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching in English and a lack of consistency in the application of quality assurance processes.
English for speakers of other languages	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes are flexible and reflect local needs. Tutorials for college-based students are effective in supporting students throughout their learning. Teachers are unable to fully develop the full range of language skills, and the more able students are not sufficiently challenged in lessons. Procedures for assuring the quality of franchised courses are weak.
Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There is a good range of provision including that for students with profound and complex learning difficulties. Some aspects of the curriculum, such as independent living skills, are taught particularly well and students gain a broad range of skills through relevant tasks and in a supportive learning environment. Assessment and recording of initial starting points and of students progress are not adequate for assessing progress and monitoring achievement.
Literacy and numeracy	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> There is much good teaching on the discrete courses for adults and students make good progress against agreed targets. However, attainment is poor for students receiving in-class learning support. The liaison between vocational teachers and other staff responsible for learning support is ineffective and much of the team teaching is ineffective and poorly planned.

How well is the college led and managed?



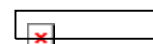
the new senior management team is giving clear direction about the future. The college's approach to equal opportunities is satisfactory. Senior management has made progress in strengthening the financial position and in improving the reliability of management information. However, the quality of provision has deteriorated. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching and poor student attainment. Curriculum management is weak in many areas. The college's quality assurance system, whilst well established has not been effective in raising standards. There is unsystematic use of targets and action plans. The self-assessment report, whilst self-critical did not recognise the extent of the weaknesses in teaching and learning. In work-based learning programmes, students' achievements and the management of provision are poor. Strategies have been introduced to improve the college's performance and, in some curriculum areas, there was early evidence that these are having a beneficial impact.

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



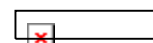
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. There are a wide range of courses from pre-entry through to higher education (HE) level. However, literacy and numeracy support is insufficient. Many full-time students do not succeed in achieving their main learning goals. Links with the community are good. Some 16% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This represents more than twice the proportion in the local population. The college meets its obligations under the Race Relations Amendment Act. It has taken appropriate action to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA), including access to electronic resources such as its website. Many buildings are inaccessible for students with mobility difficulties or visual impairments. There is a plan of works to make the necessary adjustments for physical access. There is a large and varied provision aimed specifically at students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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



Guidance and support for students and trainees are satisfactory. Pastoral support from tutors and central support services are good. Induction is thorough and the tutorial system for full-time students is good. A full range of welfare services is available. Advice and guidance on personal issues and careers are generally thorough. However, the arrangements for additional learning support are ineffective. Initial assessment does not identify the full extent of students' support needs and the in-class support that students receive is inadequate. Whilst one-to-one support for students is good, there are too few trained and specialist staff to meet the needs of students with literacy, numeracy and dyslexic difficulties.

### **Students' views of the college**



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

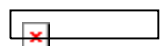
#### ***What students like about the college***

- being treated as adults
- friendly college environment
- supportive tutors
- good one-to-one support
- good practical lessons.

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

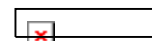
- access to IT facilities
- the library and private study facilities at St Albans City campus
- quality of the teaching accommodation
- timetabling and course administration
- car parking
- cost, variety and availability of food.

**Other information**



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



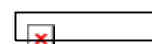
### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & 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	53	33	14
19+ and WBL*	55	39	6
Learning 16-18	52	34	14
19+ and WBL*	56	38	6

*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. Oaklands College offers a wide range of courses that can be studied full time and part time. Some 13 out of the 14 of the LSC areas of learning are covered, as Table 2 in Part D of the report shows. Inspectors used data on students' achievements, drawn from the individualised student record returns and individualised learner returns to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the LSC for the academic years 2000/01 and 2001/02. They also used college data, produced using kite-marked software, on pass and retention rates for 2002/03. The college submitted revised data for 2001/02 and 2002/03 on the first day of the inspection. Whilst these data were reliable, staff at curriculum level were not fully conversant with the data. Inspectors accepted the revised data for 2001/02 in making judgements.

2. The college's overall performance is weak. Whilst retention rates are close to the national averages, pass rates are well below, with the consequence that a high proportion of students that start courses do not succeed in gaining their target qualification. Pass rates are below the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 on courses at levels 1 and 2 and for students aged 19 and over on courses at levels 2 and 3. In 2002/03, there were approximately 5,700 student enrolments on

short courses. The pass rates on these courses were also well below the national averages.

3. The overall attendance rate of 76% in lessons was at the national average. It was highest, at over 84%, in engineering and on courses for students with learning difficulties/and or disabilities.

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

4. Approximately 53% of students, as measured by student full-time equivalents, are aged 16 to 18. In many curriculum areas, students make insufficient progress. There were significant weaknesses in student attainment in construction, engineering, business and management, information and communications technology (ICT), sports, leisure and tourism, early childhood studies, and English. Student attainment was significantly weaker on foundation and intermediate courses and this was often associated with poor skills in literacy and application of number. However, the attainments of students in humanities is good and there were also satisfactory attainments on land-based, health and care, performing arts, media, art and design and on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5. For students who successfully complete their courses, levels of internal progression to FE, work and employment are good. For example, 90% of students on foundation and intermediate courses in ICT who pass the course continue on to a higher level course or to employment.

6. On some courses, students display a high level of sensitivity to equal opportunities issues. For example, on health and social care courses, they are encouraged by their tutors to celebrate the diversity of the local community. However, this is not the case in land-based industries where students and teachers displayed a low level of sensitivity.

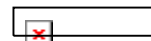
7. The college has a detailed policy for the teaching, learning and assessment of key skills. All full-time students are given a diagnostic assessment in the three main key skills. In some areas, outcomes from these assessments are not used effectively. In some programmes, such as those in land-based and media and performing arts programmes, key skills are effectively integrated into learning activities and related to course assignments. In other programmes, key skills receive little mention in schemes of work and opportunities to build portfolio evidence are missed. The overall achievement of students in key skills has been consistently poor. In 2002/03, pass rates at all three levels are significantly below national averages in application of number, IT and communications.

### **Adult learners**

8. Across most curriculum areas, the level of attainments of adult students is much better than for students aged 16 to 18. It is good for students taking modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language, on NVQ accounting courses and for adults taking discrete courses in literacy and numeracy. On NVQ courses in care, however, students make slow progress in completing their portfolios of evidence and pass rates are low. On short ICT courses and franchised courses for ESOL, pass rates and levels of attainment are also poor.

9. The college has about 340 work-based learners, of whom over 90 are advanced modern apprentices, 150 are foundation modern apprentices and almost 100 are on NVQ-only courses. The areas of work-based learning include horticulture, construction, and engineering. Few modern apprentices complete their modern apprenticeships successfully. Only 3 learners of the 271 learners who started in construction over the past three years have achieved the full framework. Retention rates have also been poor and in horticulture only 9% of learners who have completed their programme have achieved the full framework. Achievement of frameworks in engineering is also poor.

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



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 292 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 54% of lessons, 35% were satisfactory, and 11% were unsatisfactory.

11. The overall standard of teaching is lower than the averages for general FE and tertiary colleges inspected in 2002/03, when 63% of lessons were graded good or better and 7% unsatisfactory. The overall standard is also lower than that observed at the time of the last inspection, undertaken by the FEFC, in March 2000. Of the 92 observations in that inspection, 68% were good or better, 25% were satisfactory and 7% were less than satisfactory.

12. The standard of teaching and learning is uneven across curriculum areas. Teaching and learning are most effective on courses in engineering, English as a foreign language and modern foreign languages, humanities, and discrete programmes in literacy and numeracy. The teaching in half of the work-based learning sessions observed was good or better, with 10% unsatisfactory. There was particularly good practical teaching in engineering.

13. There are marked differences in the quality of teaching and learning by level of course. At level 3, 60% of lessons were good or better, with 10% unsatisfactory. At level 2, 48% of lessons were good or better, with 13% unsatisfactory. At level 1, 46% were good or better, with 18% unsatisfactory. However, standards improve at entry level, with 55% of lessons good or better and 6% unsatisfactory. The better teaching and learning are to be found on GCE A-level courses, Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas, and City and Guilds programmes. The less successful teaching and learning are on, full-time vocational programmes at levels 1 and 2. All of the tutorials observed were at least satisfactory, with over two thirds graded good or better.

14. The standard of teaching and learning in lessons attended predominantly by adults is higher than those attended by students aged 16 to 18. Some 55% of lessons for adults were good or better, compared with 53% for students aged 16 to 18; 6% of lessons for adults were unsatisfactory compared with 14% for students aged 16 to 18. Almost a third of lessons observed were taught by part-time staff. Of these, 47% were good or better compared with 57% for full-time staff. However, there were fewer unsatisfactory lessons, with 8% graded unsatisfactory compared with 12% for full-time staff.

15. In general, practical lessons and those which mixed theory with practical activities, were more successful than theory lessons. Practical lessons are good in land-based, construction and performing arts and media programmes, and theory is effectively related to practice in care and early years' programmes. The most successful lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives and detailed schemes of work. The pace of learning is well judged and students are stimulated and encouraged to think for themselves.

16. Most teachers are well qualified and experienced; 90% have already obtained or are working towards a nationally endorsed teaching qualification. New and unqualified teachers are required to undertake teacher training within the statutory timescale. Staff turnover is currently at 18%, with the highest turnover amongst support staff which is at 28%. Hertfordshire has low levels of unemployment and high levels of demand for skilled labour. The college has difficulty in recruiting staff in many areas; for example, to teach literacy, IT, construction, numeracy, and modern foreign languages. The participation rates in staff training are high. Staff development programmes are effectively linked to the appraisal programme and self-assessment.

17. Many curriculum areas have good specialist equipment and resources. Students on land-based industries courses have access to a good range of resources. The purpose-built workshops for most construction courses are good. Engineering and media and performing arts students have access to well-equipped centres. The art and design studios are large and can accommodate student work on a large scale. Although there are good outdoor sports facilities, including playing fields and an all weather sports surface for sports and recreation students, the gymnasias are poorly equipped and the fitness centre is not currently available to students.

18. The standard of much teaching accommodation is poor. On the St Albans City campus, many teaching rooms lack ownership, are drab and have a poor standard of fixtures and fittings. This weakness is recognised in the college self-assessment report. In several of the curriculum areas, inspectors noted that classrooms do not create a stimulating learning environment. In construction, sport, leisure and travel and health and social care, some rooms are too small for the groups that use them. The college accommodation strategy was first produced in 1998 and was reconfirmed in 2002. In February 2003, seven buildings on the St Albans City campus were statutorily listed as grade two. This listing has made it necessary for the college to review future options for the use of accommodation and will involve further delay in making the necessary improvements.

19. Students have inadequate open access to computers at three of the four campuses. During the teaching day, computers in the learning resources rooms are often booked for lessons. There has been considerable recent investment in the college's ICT infrastructure and the pilot stages of a college-wide virtual learning environment. The college computer to student ratio is 1:4.8 and is 1:1.7 for staff. There are insufficient quiet study spaces at the St Albans City and Smallford campuses. The physical access for people with restricted mobility is poor. There are many split level buildings which cause difficulties in providing suitable access. A substantial improvement programme to meet the requirements of the SENDA is planned and some improvements have been made.

20. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. There are thorough and well-formulated assessment procedures linked to individual student targets in humanities, sports, leisure and tourism and on discrete literacy and numeracy courses. Formative assessment is used well to guide students in humanities and in practical sessions in engineering. On NVQ programmes in care, action plans are not used to set clear goals for students. There are no systematic records in place to measure progress towards completion. There are ineffective measures to assess progress in improving literacy and numeracy levels for students receiving learning support.

21. Arrangements for internal verification and moderation are satisfactory. There are college guidelines to ensure assessment meets awarding body requirements. However, in engineering there is too much emphasis on internal verification at the end of programmes and there are inconsistencies in internal verification practice in programmes in visual arts, in media and performing arts and in early years.

22. In work-based learning, there is regular assessment in land-based and engineering programmes. There have been recent improvements in assessment practice in construction, where teachers have begun to visit learners in the workplace to carry out assessment and validate evidence. Nevertheless, overall there is an insufficient range and lack of variety of evidence in work-based learning portfolios. There is insufficient formal recording of assessment in land-based and engineering following progress reviews. Internal verification of work-based programmes is satisfactory in construction and engineering, but insufficiently rigorous in land-based programmes. In both college and work-based programmes, parents and employers are regularly informed of student progress.

23. A wide choice of courses is offered in most curriculum areas. The levels range from pre-entry through to HE, so that students can progress within the college. A well-established consortium of the college and three schools in Welwyn Garden City offers substantial choice for GCE AS and A-level students. A good range of subject options is offered for 160 students aged 14 to 16 as part of the 'Increasing Flexibility' programme.

24. Opportunities for students to enrich their knowledge through visits, work experience and additional options vary significantly across the college. In health and social care, students have a wide choice of options to supplement their main vocational area. In art, design and performing arts, there is an extensive range of visits and visiting professionals make valuable contributions to the courses. Specific activities such as circuit-training and football are provided for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. In contrast, the range of additional studies is very limited in English and humanities. There are few opportunities for students, outside those on specialist courses, to participate in competitive sports.

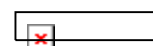
25. The college has links with a wide range of employers and community groups. Programmes in

engineering, land-based and construction have been adapted in response to local needs. Procedures for determining and responding to needs are less well developed in care, business and basic skills. Part-time and evening programmes in adult and community learning are offered at 67 venues to over 2,000 students. Progression routes leading to qualifications are provided for these students in several subject areas. The college is active in many local partnerships and has offered a range of programmes in response to specific needs. For example, it is involved in partnership projects that are aimed at drawing into education under-represented groups such as travellers and the homeless.

26. Pastoral and personal support from tutors and central support services are good. All full-time and most part-time students have a personal tutor and students find it easy to gain support when they need it. Induction is thorough and activities are used well to help students settle into college. Attendance is closely monitored and full-time students who miss lessons are contacted promptly. A full range of welfare services are provided through the college. International students receive good support through a specialist tutor. Pre-enrolment advice and guidance are generally good and care is taken to match students to the right programme both before enrolment and in the early weeks of the term. Careers needs are generally met through a combination of the tutorial programme, central services, partnership with Connexions and a dedicated job coach.

27. The response to students needing additional learning support is inadequate. Where one-to-one support is provided by specialist staff for literacy, numeracy, dyslexia or disabilities, it is very effective. However, there are too few specialist staff to respond to the extent of student needs and many students with diagnosed needs experience long delays before receiving help. Most students rely on in-class support through liaison arrangements between vocational teachers, support tutors and learning support assistants. Much of this support is ineffective. Many class-based staff lack adequate training and expertise to provide skilled support. On most programmes, good use is made of initial assessment to draw up individual student profiles, but too little use is made of this information when planning learning. In franchised ESOL provision, there is no diagnostic assessment.

## Leadership and management



28. Overall leadership and management are unsatisfactory. A new principal was appointed in September 2001 and has started to address weaknesses in management and performance. Whilst appropriate action is being taken, it is recent, and standards have deteriorated since the last inspection. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching, pass rates are poor across many areas and provision in 6 out of the 14 areas inspected is unsatisfactory. There are significant weaknesses in management at curriculum level, in work-based training and in the provision of additional learning support. Many of the identified weaknesses are to do with basic operations such as tracking students and making arrangements for staff cover. For example, in their feedback to inspectors, students made critical comments about course administration and timetabling in 8 out of the 14 curriculum areas. These weaknesses were borne out during the inspection.

29. The college faced significant financial problems having failed to meet its funding agreement with the LSC for the three years between 1999/2000 and 2001/02. Financial management has improved and there is now tight control over expenditure. The accuracy and timeliness of data generated by the college's management information system have improved since the last inspection. Whilst the reliability of data has improved, the legacy of poor management information has meant that weak performance within curriculum areas have not been sufficiently evaluated and appropriate targets for improvement have not been identified.

30. There has been a comprehensive restructuring of management responsibilities, a full review of the courses offered by the college, a new direction set, and an overhaul of communication to achieve a common approach across the campuses. The executive team now comprises the

principal, deputy principal and five directors: two directors of curriculum, one director of curriculum services, a director of finance and a director of corporate services. Below the directors are managers of curriculum, services and functions who manage subject or functional teams. The executive management team work well together and provide clear direction. Communication in the college is improving. Teachers and support staff are optimistic that the changes and developments are beneficial and that the college is starting to address the weaknesses identified through self-assessment and inspection.

31. Quality assurance procedures are not leading to consistent improvements in standards. The college has a long-established system that is linked to the planning process. Some of the weaknesses identified during the inspection are also highlighted by the college's own evaluation. The system is clearly described for staff and is supported by detailed documents. It includes self-assessment and lesson observation and it draws on students' views. A key document in the quality review process is the 'programme log'. Programme logs are often not completed adequately. Some pay insufficient attention to low retention and pass rates. Action plans resulting from the process pay insufficient attention to defining clear targets for improvement or to identifying how progress will be monitored. The college's lesson observation scheme, whilst extensive, underestimated weaknesses relating to teaching and learning.

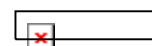
32. The college has strong support and commitment from its corporation members. Governors and the executive team work well together and receive impartial advice from an independent clerk. The corporation has contributed to discussion about the long-term strategy for the college and monitors the financial position carefully. However, further attention needs to be given to the monitoring of students' performance, particularly in relation to retention and pass rates. The success rate targets in the strategic plan, which are required by the LSC, are set below the national average for each of the three years 2004 to 2006. Members have an appropriate range of skills and experience, though there is no community representative and no governor from the minority ethnic community. Limited progress has been made in the use by governors of targets with which to review their performance.

33. The college has developed a good range of successful partnerships with local schools and employers. For example, several hundred sixth form pupils from local schools in Welwyn Garden City attend the college to study one or more GCE AS subjects. It has also developed an extensive range of vocational options for school pupils aged 14 to 16. Partnerships with local industry have resulted, for example, in up-to-date equipment and other resources being donated to the college for the benefit of students' learning.

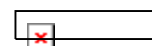
34. The college has clear policies on equality of opportunity and race equality. It recognises that more detailed action planning and monitoring need to be undertaken to ensure that the requirements of the legislation are implemented effectively. For example, it has recently produced information relating students' gender and ethnicity to retention and pass rates. The information has not yet been used effectively to improve the college's performance.

35. The college does not provide good value for money. Space utilisation is poor, given the longstanding problems with accommodation, and student retention and pass rates are low.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Land-based industries



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

***Strengths***

- good and improving retention and pass rates on many courses
- effective use of workplace assessment s for work-based learners
- good teaching in practical lessons
- good range of learning resources
- wide range of courses.

***Weaknesses***

- poor planning in some lessons
- inadequate additional support arrangements for some students
- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor management of work-based learning
- ineffective promotion and poor practice of equality of opportunity.

***Scope of provision***

36. At the time of the inspection, there were over 630 students on full-time and part-time courses in land-based studies. Of these, about 140 students were on animal care, about 100 on equine studies,

about 110 on floristry and over 260 on horticulture courses. There are about 90 work-based learners following modern apprenticeship schemes. There is a range of short courses offering specialist health and safety training. There are a number of pre-entry courses provided for school pupils aged 14 to 16. About 65% of the students are female and about 3.5% are from minority ethnic groups.

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

37. In 2002/03, retention and pass rates on most courses were good and improving. A strategy to improve retention and pass rates has been introduced with a particular focus on attendance and supporting those students who are causing concern. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Since the introduction of advanced and foundation modern apprentices in amenity horticulture in 2000/01, only 9% of leavers have achieved the framework qualification. The overall attendance in this curriculum area in 2002/03 was 89% against a target of 85%. The attendance rate in lessons observed during inspection was low, at 76%. There is a wide variation in the achievement of key skills. However, some students prepare well set out assignments which involve detailed research activities using the Internet.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in land-based industries, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ animal care	1	No. of starts	49	43	38
		% retention	86	81	92
		% pass rate	62	83	100
British Horse Society stage 1	1	No. of starts	42	45	48
		% retention	76	84	77
		% pass rate	53	50	89
NVQ amenity horticulture	2	No. of starts	46	62	33
		% retention	78	87	82
		% pass rate	97	87	88
National certificate in horticulture	2	No. of starts	25	19	27
		% retention	88	100	81
		% pass rate	91	76	86
First diploma animal care	2	No. of starts	34	22	25
		% retention	88	86	88
		% pass rate	97	100	86
National diploma in animal care	3	No. of starts	30	22	16
		% retention	70	64	100
		% pass rate	84	86	88

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

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

38. The overall teaching profile is satisfactory with much good teaching of practical aspects. Students quickly learn new skills and can apply them confidently to the tasks set. They actively participate individually and in groups. Teachers make good use of industrial examples and the students' own experiences to illustrate key learning points. There are also examples of poorly planned lessons and disruption caused by poor punctuality and behaviour. For example, some training lessons carry on too long without any variation in teaching style and do not fully maintain

students' interest. In a few lessons, challenging behaviour is not adequately managed, timekeeping is poor and students are slow in settling down and concentrating on the task.

39. There is a good range of learning resources. The equestrian resources include a horse walker and a solarium, and floristry students make good use of a dedicated photography room to record their work. The range of animal care and horticultural resources are good, however, some of the horticultural facilities are in need of repair and renovation. There is insufficient monitoring of the quality and safety of some of the practical resources used for the training of horticultural students. A few of the teaching rooms are poor and lack a sufficiently vibrant environment to stimulate active learning. Good use is made of a wide range of visual aids and handout materials. Students particularly value the regular recap tests, quizzes and puzzles as a means of checking the progress they are making. All teaching staff are well qualified and appropriately experienced. Work placements for trainees are good with a wide range of quality industrial equipment and supportive employers.

40. Assignment briefs for college-based students are clear and effectively linked to key skills requirements. These students are given helpful feedback on how they can improve the standard of their work. Effective use is made of workplace assessments for work-based learners. Trainees receive regular visits from their assessors and good use is made of a range of evidence from the workplace. Trainees receive good verbal feedback on their performance, but it is not recorded in sufficient detail for future use by trainees in developing their skills. In some portfolios of evidence, there is an over reliance on the use of job sheets.

41. The individual learning and career needs of students are satisfactorily met by the training they receive. There are effective school links and the college is developing good links with a group of land-based colleges that have attained CoVE status. Employers are regularly consulted about their training requirements and courses are amended to meet these. All students have their existing qualifications taken into account during induction and are given credit for these if appropriate.

42. The additional support arrangements for some students are inadequate. In one observed lesson in which students were working in groups preparing presentations, a student with additional needs was not receiving appropriate support, despite having been attending the course for over eight weeks. Although records of support are kept, procedures to monitor progress and identify the impact of support given are not sufficiently thorough. College-based students value the tutorial support they receive.

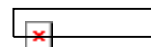
### ***Leadership and management***

43. Leadership and management for land-based provision are satisfactory. There are good communications and some good sharing of practice within sections. There is a regular quality review of all programmes. Clear performance targets are set for the curriculum area each year. These are linked to the college strategic objectives and used to inform staff appraisal. A detailed staff development plan identifies key training needs to improve teaching and learning.

44. There is poor promotion and practice of equality of opportunity. Inappropriate behaviour by students in lessons was ignored by some teachers. Work placement providers are checked to ensure they have policies and procedures in place, but some employers have a poor awareness of equality issues. In a work placement, inappropriate gender images are on display in mess rooms. These incidents are insufficiently challenged by college staff. Equality of opportunity is not effectively promoted during learner progress reviews.

45. The management of work-based learning is poor. Individual learning plans contain insufficient detail and structure to aid the planning and review of training. Training progress reviews do not set sufficiently detailed targets to help the trainees to achieve their learning goals. Some trainees are unaware of what they need to do to further develop their portfolios. Employers are insufficiently aware of the content of the training programme at the college and cannot make effective contributions to support the off-the-job training.

## Construction



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### ***Strengths***

- good teaching in practical lessons
- the comprehensive range of provision
- productive links with employers
- good support for students with additional needs.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates on many courses
- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework
- poor teaching of key skills
- little integration of IT in the curriculum
- lack of target setting for pass and retention rates at curriculum level.

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

46. The college offers traditional craft provision at entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These cover bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing, gas installation and maintenance, and electrical installation. Technician, professional and HE courses are also offered. The range of provision is comprehensive and provides progression opportunities for students within the college and to HE institutions as well as into employment. In 2003, there has been an increased demand for training in plumbing and gas. Currently, there are over 140 students aged 16 to 18 and about 50 adults on full-time programmes, and about 440 students aged 16 to 18 and 770 adults on part-time programmes. The college also provides both on-the-job and off-the-job training for learners on foundation and modern apprenticeships. Good links with local schools have been established. Over 260 pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the college every week for two hours to follow courses in construction.

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

47. The pass rates on a few programmes are high, however, on the majority of courses pass rates have declined. For example, the pass rates in the City and Guilds 2360 electrical installation and AVCE in construction have been consistently high over the last three years. In contrast, the pass rates in NVQ levels 2 and 3 carpentry and joinery and the national certificate in construction, have sharply declined. Retention rates on many courses are poor and in some cases have steadily declined over the last three years.

48. Achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework is unsatisfactory. Only 3 learners of the 271 starting on the foundation modern apprenticeship over the past three years have achieved the full framework. Retention rates have also been poor; they recently improved, however, with a high proportion of those who started in 2002/03 still in learning. Reviews, particularly for electrical installation, have also improved. However, many learners are well past their expected completion date with a considerable amount of evidence still outstanding.

49. Students work well in lessons, particularly in workshops. They develop a range of motor skills and produce good practical work. In one lesson, students on the intermediate construction award in bricklaying acquired good trowel and levelling skills. They referred to a scaled drawing showing elevations and sections to build a wall and a two ring segmental arch in English bond. In a lesson in plumbing, students on the NVQ level 2 course constructed a pipe assembly incorporating mechanical fittings, solder ring and end feed. They used a super-fire brazing torch safely to solder copper tubes.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation part 1 (theory)	1	No. of starts	33	77	62
		% retention	42	77	76
		% pass rate	100	92	100
NVQ in bricklaying	2	No. of starts	25	39	29
		% retention	28	54	59
		% pass rate	100	57	100
NVQ in carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	38	96	78
		% retention	53	67	73
		% pass rate	100	69	50
NVQ in plumbing	2	No. of starts	54	87	100
		% retention	28	56	56
		% pass rate	100	33	50

National certificate in construction	3	No. of starts	21	31	17
		% retention	57	58	94
		% pass rate	83	89	56
AVCE in construction and the built environment	3	No. of starts	25	17	27
		% retention	88	47	48
		% pass rate	68	88	85

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

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

50. The quality of teaching is better for adult students than for students aged 16 to 18. Teachers draw on adult students' own experiences to enrich the activities and lessons are delivered in an industrial context. Theory lessons are often uninspiring. They are often dominated by long spells of lecturing with insufficient questioning of students and lack of challenge. Very little specialist computer software is used to support learning and ILT is not effectively integrated in the programmes. In one lesson, students simply copied from a report to answer a number of tasks that a teacher gave them. Not enough challenging tasks were set for this level of work. Teaching on the new National Qualification Framework (NQF) BTEC programmes was uninspiring.

51. The teaching of key skills is unsatisfactory in many areas. Teachers fail to make adequate reference to vocational areas and many students fail to see the relevance of key skills. Some lessons have ceased to run due to staffing shortages. However, the provision in two of the areas is good, with electrical and brickwork staff using occupationally specific learning and assessment materials to develop key skills.

52. Most teachers have relevant vocational and assessor qualifications. The construction area has a good range of specialist workshops. Workshops benefit from a good supply of tools and materials. Many theory classrooms are drab. They lack displays of learners' work and technical illustrations. There are adequate textbooks in the learning resources centres and some supportive materials on CD-ROM to meet the needs of craft and technician learners.

53. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Students have workbooks in which tasks and assessment criteria are outlined. Most assignments are of an appropriate standard and vocationally relevant. Internal verification of assignment briefs, portfolios and assessment decisions is satisfactory.

54. Links with employers are productive. Employers have donated construction materials to the college. Many help to provide work-based learners with opportunities to develop new skills in the workplace. For example, those nearing the end of their qualification are often moved around sites to gain the necessary evidence for their NVQ. School links are also good, with significant numbers of school pupils attending classes.

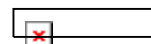
55. Support for students is good. All full-time students have an initial diagnostic assessment in communication and application of number. Extra classes in application of number are available for work-based learners to improve their skills and to prepare for assessment. Students' confidence has improved, particularly on electrical installation courses where the level of numeracy required to pass level 2 qualifications is high. One-to-one support for dyslexic students is good.

### **Leadership and management**

56. At the time of the inspection, a new manager had been appointed and was tackling issues that had been accurately identified in the self-assessment report. Improvements are being made to the management of work-based learning. Work-based mentors are now located in the same offices as teachers and communication is better. Employers are aware of their commitment to training and their

obligations to provide evidence opportunities for learners. Assessment is now taking place more regularly in the workplace. However, there are still shortcomings in the use of data for analysing performance. Targets for retention and pass rates are not set at curriculum level and a more specific development plan is needed to address the issues in the self-assessment report.

## Engineering



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### ***Strengths***

- much good teaching and learning on college-based courses
- good pass rates for adult students on part-time programmes
- the range of courses
- good skills development by work-based learners.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor completion of frameworks for work-based learners
- poor management of work-based learning programmes
- low retention rates on AVCE in engineering.

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

57. Engineering is based at the Welwyn Garden City campus. There is a good range of programmes for full-time students from levels 1 to 3. At the time of the inspection, there were 55 students aged 16 to 18 and 4 adults studying full time and 156 students study part time of which 117 were aged 19 and over. There are also courses at level 4, and over 100 pupils aged 14 to 16 who come from local

secondary schools and attend on a part-time basis. At the time of the inspection, there were 11 advanced and 25 foundation modern apprentices undertaking NVQs at levels 2 and 3.

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

58. The achievement of adult students in this programme area is good. The large numbers of students on computer-aided design programmes make good progress and achieve well. Retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on full-time programmes have been more variable and many are below the national averages. In 2002/03, the first diploma had a poor pass rate and the AVCE had an unsatisfactory retention rate. There is poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks by work-based learners. Key skills were introduced late for these learners and there is slow progress towards framework completion.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City & Guilds 4351-03 three-dimensional computer-aided design	2	No. of starts	38	48	44
		% retention	92	98	86
		% pass rate	97	98	89
City & Guilds 4351-01 two-dimensional computer-aided design	3	No. of starts	27	37	71
		% retention	93	100	92
		% pass rate	100	100	92
AVCE (double award) in engineering and precursors	3	No. of starts	16	*	30
		% retention	56	*	47
		% pass rate	89	*	71

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

59. Much of the teaching and learning in engineering is good. Teachers often relate the subject being studied to industrial applications or draw on students' experiences to illustrate particular aspects of engineering. The training in practical aspects is very good with teachers setting high standards. Health and safety are given good consideration and students are highly competent in the use of hand tools. They take responsibility for their own measurement and testing of manufactured components. Lessons and courses are well planned. However, the formal recording of learning activities lacks detail and is not clearly related to meeting individual student needs. In some lessons, there is insufficient checking on whether learning has taken place. Work-based learners undergo good skills development in the workplace. Employers have structured training programmes in place.

60. There is good use of ILT. Students on electronics programmes are able to simulate circuits on the computer and make large numbers of changes to components and instantly receive a change to output signals. Attendance in lessons is good and absences are closely monitored and reported by telephone, usually on the same day. In a few theory lessons, there was too much formal input and little checking of student understanding.

61. Engineering teachers are well qualified vocationally, and most have or are studying for a recognised teaching qualification. Teachers take advantage of a good range of professional development opportunities in support of their professional work. Learning assistants play a significant role in assisting teachers in practical workshops and, together with the technicians, make a good contribution to the students' learning experience. Accommodation is generally of a good quality and most rooms have displays applicable to the curriculum being studied. However, some

classrooms are not to the same standard and do not provide a stimulating working environment. Equipment in support of computer aided design is good, with the latest versions of software. Machine tools are out of date. The learning resource centre at Welwyn provides access to computing facilities and has a good range of textbooks, but a limited number of periodicals. In-company resources for work-based learners are good. Learners have the opportunity to work on prototype equipment and recently developed machinery. Members of staff at companies that are responsible for training and mentoring are very experienced.

62. Assessment practice in engineering programmes is satisfactory. Most assignments and practical tasks are well designed and students are awarded appropriate grades. On some programmes, the internal verification of assignments at the draft stage has ensured consistency of approach. Marked students' work often does not contain sufficient written feedback to inform the students of the actions necessary to improve their own performance. There is good assessment practice in workshops where students assess their own performance before assessment by the teacher. Too much internal verification of marked work is left until the end of the course. Assessment visits to the workplace are regular. However, there is an over-reliance on the generation of written reports as the main type of evidence. Observations are brief and do not result in clear assessment decisions. The formal assessment of written reports does not take place until the portfolio of evidence has been completed. Assessment targets are very broad and do not encourage directed progression.

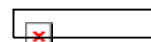
63. Engineering has a good range of programmes and a full-time course at level 1 has recently been introduced. Large numbers of adult students enrol on computer-aided design programmes to update their skills. Many students progress through the programmes and some full-time students progress to employment and return as part-time students. There are a range of vocational courses that cater for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local secondary schools. Work-based learning programmes meet the needs of employers and learners. The use of optional units in the NVQ are discussed with employers and suitable units agreed.

64. All new full-time and substantial part-time students are assessed for learning needs. A number of students are receiving additional help with their communications skills and a few students are receiving help with other learning difficulties. All students have a personal tutor and full-time students have a timetabled tutorial with an appropriate range of activities. Attendance at tutorials is unsatisfactory. Work-based learners receive good levels of support from their employers. Some employers have nominated mentors to look after the welfare of learners as well as carry out training activities. Learners are actively encouraged to attend college for their off-the-job training activities and are given time at work to carry out evidence gathering activities.

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

65. Leadership and management of the engineering programme area are satisfactory. Programmes of study are well organised. There is a clear quality framework, however, not all course teams are implementing it. Insufficient attention is given to setting targets to improve retention and pass rates. The curriculum area's self-assessment recognises many of the issues faced by engineering at this college and includes actions to address weaknesses. Some actions have already had an impact and improvements are evident. The management of work-based learning is poor. Progress reviews are overdue for many work-based learners. Past reviews have not targeted progress effectively. For most learners key skills were introduced at a very late stage in their programme. As a result, many learners are well beyond their planned completion date. Employers contractually agree to abide by their equal opportunities policy, but little active monitoring of this is actually carried out.

### **Business and management**



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

**Strengths**

- consistently high retention and pass rates on NVQ courses in accounting
- high pass rates on foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses
- good tutorial support.

**Weaknesses**

- low standard of work on full-time level 3 courses
- much unimaginative teaching
- insufficient use of ILT
- inadequate employer links
- insufficient provision of additional learning support
- inadequate review of performance at course level.

**Scope of provision**

66. The college offers business and professional courses from entry level to foundation degrees. It has a small provision of management and administration courses. Full-time courses are available at St Albans City and at Welwyn Garden City campuses, mainly for students aged 16 to 18. Part-time programmes are also offered at these campuses, with accounting courses available at Borehamwood. At the time of the inspection, 104 students were studying full-time courses, of whom 95 were aged 16 to 18. There were 219 part-time students, 89% of whom were aged 19 or over.

**Achievement and standards**

67. Students achieve consistently well on NVQ accounting programmes. Students were thoughtful and reflective in their work, and carried out routine procedures well. Pass rates on foundation and

intermediate GNVQ courses are generally good. However, retention rates on those programmes have declined and are low. Students on these courses cope with simple tasks, but many have difficulty with more advanced skills. For example, foundation GNVQ students could identify stakeholders in organisations, but descriptions of their roles were often superficial. Intermediate business students showed good grasp of invoice completion, though a high proportion struggled with the calculation of percentages.

68. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level business studies have improved, but are generally low. Students on the GCE A2 course achieve less well than expected given their prior qualifications. The standard of their work indicates a lack of sufficient depth of analysis. The work of second-year AVCE business students was also below the expected standard and many struggled with the law of contract. However, the work of first-year AVCE students was of a good standard with clear progress being made. The work of advanced certificate in marketing students was well below the expected standard. There is increasing focus on the development of study skills. Whilst this is starting to have some impact, many students on lower level programmes do not yet have the discipline of bringing previous notes and textbooks to lessons, as requested by teachers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate in business	2	No. of starts	24	24	35
		% retention	79	67	57
		% pass rate	84	75	80
NVQ in accounting	2	No. of starts	53	50	37
		% retention	74	80	89
		% pass rate	85	90	87
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	65	79	56
		% retention	92	95	82
		% pass rate	55	49	78
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	*	55	51
		% retention	*	91	92
		% pass rate	-	36	66
GNVQ advanced/AVCE in business	3	No. of starts	87	90	42
		% retention	62	68	60
		% pass rate	81	89	69

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)  
The college submitted additional data for 2002  
\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

69. There is too much unimaginative teaching. Teaching and learning were graded as good in less than half of the lessons observed. In some lessons, students progressed well. Second-year students on the national certificate in e-business delivered very good presentations based on a visit and further research into an Internet mail order company. Students were challenged and produced work of a high standard. Intermediate NVQ accounting students critically evaluated the structure and content of completed portfolios of former students, provided as examples by the teacher.

70. Students often make slow progress on full-time courses. Significant lateness and absence

restricts the learning of many students and disrupts lessons. In many lessons, the teacher fails to enthuse or challenge students. Although teachers have detailed group profiles on students' backgrounds, support needs and preferred learning styles, they often do not use them to plan specific support for individual students. In many lessons with full-time students, less able or less motivated students lose interest quickly. Students who finish tasks are not given any supplementary work whilst others catch up. Students often produce work of little depth when working in groups. However, better teachers question students effectively, challenging them to develop their ideas.

71. Teachers and students do not use ILT sufficiently. There is little use of the Internet and no use of computer presentations or electronic boards in lessons observed. A significant proportion of students' work is hand written rather than produced on computer. There are insufficient computers for individual student use at the St. Albans City campus. The virtual learning environment is used by few students and contains relatively little business material.

72. Most teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers lack the appropriate qualification or do not have relevant commercial experience. There is good uptake of staff development, though progress is slow by staff undertaking ICT training. Classrooms are drab at St Albans and Welwyn Garden City campuses. Handouts provided by teachers are generally of good quality.

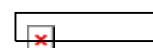
73. Tutorial support on full-time courses is good. In addition to weekly group tutorials, students have regular individual tutorials. Tutors and students review progress against agreed targets, identify barriers to improvement and seek solutions. However, there is insufficient provision of additional learning support for students. Although the need for support was identified at initial assessment or was subsequently recognised by teachers, support has not been put in place for a significant minority of students. Assignments and exercises are generally appropriate. However, assessment criteria are not always clear and students often fail to show the critical analysis and evaluation skills needed to achieve higher grades.

74. Good opportunities exist for students with low prior achievement, with entry and foundation level courses available. There are good opportunities to progress to higher level programmes within the college. Many accounting students progress from level 2 to level 4. The recruitment to part-time programmes has declined and the range of courses available has narrowed considerably. No clear strategy is in place to identify and respond to employer and part-time student needs. There is little use of visiting speakers or visits to business organisations to enrich the curriculum.

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

75. There had been significant changes to management responsibilities at the time of the inspection and it is too early to assess their full impact. The findings of the college's internal lesson observation process closely reflects the judgements of inspectors. Targeted support for under-performing teachers has been put in place, but standards have yet to improve significantly. The review of performance by course teams lacks rigour. Key weaknesses are overlooked or underestimated. Many course action plans are poorly focused and do not indicate clearly the actions necessary to improve performance. However, managers compiled an incisive self-assessment report. There is a sound process for target setting, involving the curriculum manager, curriculum leaders and course co-ordinators, but the review by course teams is insufficiently rigorous if targets are not met. The curriculum manager attends regular student focus group meetings. This is seen as an important part of the quality monitoring process and the views of students are taken seriously in planning for improvement.

### **Information and communications technology**



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on GNVQ and AVCE courses
- good progression rates from vocational courses
- wide range of subject support for full-time vocational students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates on most adult courses
- much dull and uninspiring teaching
- insufficient differentiation in many lessons
- deficiencies in management of adult and GCE A-level courses.

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

76. At the time of the inspection, there were 249 students following GNVQ and AVCE courses from foundation to advanced level. The college also offers a City and Guilds diploma in ICT at level 2. There were over 90 students on GCE AS and A-level courses, provided through a consortium with local schools. ICT courses are also offered on an open learning basis for approximately 230 adult students who follow a mix of short and modular courses.

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

77. There are good pass rates on full-time GNVQ courses at foundation and intermediate level. Pass rates on the AVCE courses have been above the national average for the last two years; however, retention rates have been mixed. Pass rates for GCE AS and A-level courses have been very poor, but improved to the national average in 2002/03. For most short courses, taken predominantly by adult students, pass rates were poor in 2002/03. Pass rates on key skills programmes have also been well below national averages. Progression rates of students moving from foundation to intermediate and intermediate to advanced level vocational courses are good. Progression to HE and employment are also good, with 21% of AVCE students progressing into HE and 67% into employment or training.

78. In many lessons, students make insufficient progress. On some occasions, this is because students struggle with the level of the subject and teachers are not able to build on their prior

understanding. On other occasions, teachers do not give students sufficient support as they work through tasks on an individual basis.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	29	43	41
		% retention	97	81	73
		% pass rate	50	97	83
CLAIT 1 (short)	1	No. of starts	267	181	125
		% retention	82	96	100
		% pass rate	55	60	40
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	**	61	63
		% retention	**	85	78
		% pass rate	**	75	88
AVCE in ICT	3	No. of starts	*	104	69
		% retention	*	57	75
		% pass rate	*	97	88
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	68	33	44
		% retention	76	79	84
		% pass rate	44	0	65

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

\* course did not run

\*\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

79. Much teaching is dull and uninspiring. Many lesson plans lack detail, the objectives are not clear and students lack confidence in completing the tasks. Some lessons lack structure and a logical progression. In the poorer lessons, there is an over-reliance on one method of teaching, for example, too much tutor input, or an over-reliance on task sheets. Teachers do not pay enough attention to checking students' understanding or monitoring their progress. In one lesson where students were expected to make a business presentation on computer security, they were given insufficient guidance on the task. Differing levels of ability are not allowed for during many lessons. Weaker students often experience difficulties, become frustrated and on some occasions are disruptive. Stronger students are able to cope easily, but are not challenged enough. Teachers have profiles of individual students' backgrounds and needs, but often fail to take account of these. Adults on open learning courses frequently do not obtain enough support because their teachers are not able to give them enough individual attention.

80. In the better lessons, teaching was tailored to the range of needs. For example, in a good lesson about creating travel itineraries more able students were challenged with additional exercises on the intranet, while less able students had time to catch up. Good use is also made of individual subject support workshops to allow full-time vocational students time to catch up with assignment work.

81. Resources are generally adequate to meet the students' needs. There are good network facilities. However, there are insufficient computers for self-study on the St Albans campus. Few teachers use data projectors to enhance their delivery and there are insufficient colour printers for

students' use. In the open access areas at the St Albans campus, surrounding noise makes it difficult to hear teachers during whole-class lessons.

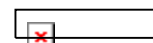
82. On vocational courses, there is comprehensive coverage of unit requirements and assessment criteria are clear. Comments on marked work vary in quality. Most is detailed with comments on how to improve standards. However, some is too brief with few pointers to improvement. A lack of explicit feedback is also reflected in individual progress reviews that frequently contain vague targets. There is a lack of clear monitoring of the progress of GCE A-level and adult students.

83. Enrolments on part-time adult courses are declining. Full-time students receive good information, advice and guidance to ensure they are placed on appropriate courses. Their initial progress is closely monitored to ensure that the level of course matches their ability. Learning support is available in most classes at foundation and intermediate levels, but is not sufficiently targeted at students with identified needs. There is good individual support for students with hearing and visual impairment, which helps them to participate fully in their lessons. Full-time students enjoy good tutorial support. However, the use of student progress reviews is often weak.

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

84. The management of vocational courses is satisfactory. Programme logs contain targets for retention and pass rates, enrolments, progression and attendance. All aspects of the provision are evaluated and actions for improvement accurately identified. Action plans are reviewed frequently and there is regular staff appraisal and a range of staff development programmes to meet identified needs. Student evaluations are collected and analysed. There are deficiencies in the management of adult and GCE A-level courses. Programme logs and self-assessment documentation are incomplete with no systematic targets for enrolments, retention and pass rates. There is ineffective co-ordination of these courses. The self-assessment report does not identify the weaknesses in teaching and management that were identified during inspection.

### **Sports, leisure and tourism**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good and improved pass rates in 2003
- good and improved retention in 2003
- wide range of provision
- comprehensive student support for full-time students

- critical self-evaluation by course teams.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates in the first diploma and in GCE AS and A-level physical education
- lack of variety and stimulation in lessons
- poor punctuality
- poor teaching accommodation
- few competitive opportunities for students.

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

85. At the time of the inspection, there were 165 students on sports courses and 140 on travel programmes. In travel and tourism, courses are available at foundation, intermediate, national diploma and Higher National Diploma (HND) levels. In sport, students study physical education at advanced level or follow more vocationally focused courses through a general foundation programme into first and national diploma courses in sports science. NVQ options are also available in both disciplines at each level, but take up is low. Some students undertake additional qualifications. These include resort representative for travel students and a community sports leader and selected coaching awards for sports students. Provision has been recently established for the Arsenal Ladies and the St Albans Men's Youth soccer teams. The Arsenal Ladies team follow a national diploma in sports science.

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

86. Retention and pass rates are improving. In 2002/03, many courses exceeded national averages. Performance on full-time tourism courses at foundation, intermediate and AVCE levels are above national averages. In sport, the national diploma in sports science achieved similar results. However, pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses in physical education the first diploma in sports science, and the community sports leader award are all below national averages.

87. In most lessons, standards are satisfactory. At intermediate level, new concepts are understood and knowledge is applied successfully in practical tasks. On level 3 courses, new learning is applied in ways which require interpretation and analysis. For example, diploma students, having learned about the importance of group cohesion in sport, applied that learning by looking at the challenges inherent in integrating people from different cultures into a cohesive team. In some lessons, standards are poor. Students are not challenged and little learning is taking place. For example, in a practical basketball session no new skills were introduced and no opportunities were provided to

evaluate personal performance or improve previously learned skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
First diploma in sports science	2	No. of starts	33	21	24
		% retention	58	67	83
		% pass rate	53	50	70
GCE AS in sports, games and recreation	3	No. of starts	22	24	*
		% retention	95	88	*
		% pass rate	71	33	*
GCE A2 in physical education	3	No. of starts	47	19	*
		% retention	26	95	*
		% pass rate	83	56	*
VCE in leisure and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	28	38	33
		% retention	86	66	52
		% pass rate	71	34	81
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	19	15	*
		% retention	89	60	*
		% pass rate	82	78	*
National diploma in sports science	3	No. of starts	34	*	66
		% retention	74	*	76
		% pass rate	80	*	94

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

88. In general, teaching is satisfactory. Students' individual learning needs and preferred learning styles are routinely diagnosed. However, most teachers use too narrow a range of teaching methods. In the best lessons, learning activities are varied and preferred learning styles accommodated. For example, in a lesson that focused on coaching styles the teacher, wishing to illustrate different learning styles in a practical activity, set up a task that required students to utilise visual, audio and practical presentation techniques. In doing this, the teacher was responding to the range of needs that existed within the group. Teaching in a minority of classes is poor. Planning is weak in these lessons and the needs of individual students are not catered for. Students are not engaged and no attempt is made to reinforce points or to get students to reflect on previous learning. Key skills are taught and assessed discretely and assessment opportunities are missed. Some course teams are developing a more integrated approach.

89. Full-time teachers have relevant commercial experience and most are well qualified. Some accommodation is poor and this impinges on student learning. Outdoor facilities for sports students are good and these include playing fields and a floodlit all-weather surface. However, the college's gymnasias are poorly equipped. The fitness room at the Smallford campus, which is currently being refurbished, is too small. Better quality, hired accommodation is also currently used. Rooms at the St Albans centre are poorly decorated and furnished. Displays of student work are rare. Some rooms are too small for the groups that use them.

90. Assessment practices are generally sound. Course handbooks provide clear advice and guidance about terminology, assessment expectations and marking schemes. Penalties for missing deadlines are explicit and are applied. Marking schemes, which are given to students in advance, are clear about pass, merit and distinction grades and how these can be achieved. Procedures for internal verification are clearly understood and followed by course teams. Lead verifiers are either appropriately qualified or are in training. Assessment is used during progress reviews to motivate students to improve. Student work is marked considerably and returned promptly. Teachers' comments are helpful. Teachers working with national diploma students are starting to use minimum target grades to inform student target agreements.

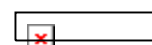
91. There are limited opportunities for non-academy students to engage in competitive sports activities. Most travel students undertake work experience. They also train in the college's travel shop which has access to the high street and deals directly with the public. A range of relevant educational visits are provided.

92. Induction is thorough with effective use of initial reviews to confirm course selection, agree long-term goals and negotiate initial targets with students. Learning support is offered, but take up is inconsistent. Tutorial activity is good. General issues are addressed within weekly group sessions and individual tutorials deal with academic and personal matters. Progress reviews are carried out three times a year. Subject reports are prepared, progress is monitored, new targets agreed and reports sent to parents.

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

93. Leadership and management of the courses are satisfactory. The self-assessment report for sport and travel is self-critical, reflective and demonstrates good review at team level. Judgements are valid and targets achievable. Improvement plans are followed through. For example, in response to declared weaknesses, retention and pass rates across all areas have improved, equipment for the performance laboratory is being updated and the preferred learning styles of different students are now being considered when lessons are planned. Teachers are observed at least twice a year by a line manager and through peer review. Teachers are finding the process helpful. Teaching issues are discussed as a key element in appraisal. In 2002/03, a significant amount of training was undertaken as a result of appraisal recommendations. The gender balance amongst teachers and managers is evenly distributed, enrolments are analysed by ethnicity and some teachers incorporate cultural and gender issues into their teaching.

### **Health and social care**



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

#### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on full-time health and social care courses
  
- good teaching on full-time courses
  
- good use of vocational experience on college based courses

- extensive additional study programme for full-time students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on full-time childcare courses
- low and declining pass rates on NVQ programmes
- too much unchallenging teaching
- ineffective procedures for monitoring student progress on NVQ programmes
- ineffective management.

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

94. At the time of the inspection, there were over 210 full-time students and almost 530 part-time students. Part-time courses include NVQ in care and early years, classroom assistants and counselling courses. Over 240 of the part-time students were enrolled on NVQ programmes from level 1 to 3 in health, social care and early years. There are full-time courses from level 1 to advanced level with substantial numbers taking courses in childcare. Short courses include first aid, drug awareness, safer moving and handling and deaf awareness. Courses are offered at both the Welwyn and Smallford campuses.

95. The college has received funding for the initial stage in the development of a CoVE in caring. The original application for CoVE status was for both care and early years. This has subsequently changed to a single focus on caring with the aim to develop training and good practice materials for the care workforce.

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

96. There are high pass rates on full-time courses in health and social care, but poor and declining pass rates on full-time childcare courses. NVQ programmes have good retention rates, but poor pass rates. The standards of work of full-time students are satisfactory and there is reasonable progression to HE and to relevant employment. On full-time health and social care courses, students successfully link theoretical concepts to practical experience and show good understanding and application. In counselling classes, there is a good standard of practical skill demonstrated through experiential learning and reflection. Whilst students on NVQ programmes are highly motivated, many are well behind in collecting evidence to build up portfolios of evidence for assessment. Insufficient attention is given to keeping track of their progress and completion and pass rates are poor.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	17	16	22
		% retention	65	81	65
		% pass rate	82	92	93
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	16	22	16
		% retention	88	91	88
		% pass rate	79	70	50
NVQ in care (1 year)	2	No. of starts	65	75	47
		% retention	89	93	89
		% pass rate	48	39	10
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	37	37	37
		% retention	70	86	95
		% pass rate	85	91	51
GNVQ advanced health and social care/AVCE	3	No. of starts	17	22	17
		% retention	76	64	65
		% pass rate	92	100	91
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	18	20	19
		% retention	28	70	89
		% pass rate	100	70	56

*Source: ISR (2001) and college (2002 and 2003)  
The college submitted additional data for 2002*

***Quality of education and training***

97. Overall the quality of teaching is below the national average. It is better on full-time courses, counselling courses and other short courses than on NVQ programmes. In the former, students' practical experiences are drawn upon and linked well to theory, for example by applying the theory of colour in primary school settings. Students develop a good understanding of the rights of clients and of health and safety. Equal opportunity issues are well integrated into learning through appropriate case studies, using examples of children from different ethnic groups.

98. In weaker lessons, there is a lack of adequate planning. On NVQ courses, teachers set unchallenging goals and the theoretical and practical elements of the courses are not integrated effectively. Students have unrealistic expectations of how long it will take to complete units and what skills and knowledge they will need to demonstrate. In key skills lessons for full-time students, teachers do not take into account the prior competences of students.

99. Assessment and the monitoring of student progress are unsatisfactory on the work-based NVQ programmes. Students are not given initial diagnostic tests to assess their literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment practice is inconsistent. In the absence of agreed procedures at team level, many teachers do not maintain systematic records to monitor student progress towards completion of the full awards. Many students are not set clear goals and are unclear about the targets that they need to meet. Procedures for internal verification are insufficiently rigorous.

100. The qualifications of existing staff are satisfactory with a range of professional qualifications such as nursing, midwifery and early years' education. Most have teaching qualifications or

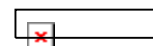
appropriate assessor awards. Staff absence as a result of sickness and a shortage of assessors have had an adverse effect on learning and attainment. Students have experienced frequent changes of assessors, class cancellations and the combining of teaching groups. Although most classrooms are bright, some on the Smallford campus are cramped. This restricts the opportunities for group work.

101. There is a good range of courses and a wide range of options for full-time students to extend their knowledge. For example, the additional study programme includes drug awareness, first aid, practical craft skills and aromatherapy. There is good personal support for full-time students, who value the tutorial system and the guidance that they receive on personal issues.

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

102. Leadership and management of care and childcare provision are unsatisfactory. Quality assurance procedures are not applied rigorously. At course level retention and pass rates are not addressed in a consistent way. Progress towards targets is not systematically reviewed. The programme logs are incomplete for NVQ programmes. Meetings held at course team level do not focus sufficiently on assessment, monitoring student progress or upon the identification and spreading of good practice. On NVQ programmes, the roles of employers in supporting learning and assessment are underdeveloped. There is an extensive list of employers with whom the college has contacts. However, there are no employer representatives on the steering committee of the CoVE. The self-assessment report did not take account of the weaknesses in teaching, management and student achievements.

### **Art and design**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on most full-time vocational courses
- valuable use of contemporary sources in teaching
- light and spacious studio accommodation.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- poor punctuality and attendance in many lessons
- poor integration of key skills

- insufficiently challenging teaching and learning in some specialist areas.

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

103. There is a mix of full-time and part-time programmes. The majority of the students are on full-time vocational art and design programmes which include foundation and intermediate GNVQ, AVCE and the national diploma foundation qualifications. There are also GCE AS and A-level courses in art and design and part-time courses, many of which offer practical crafts such as jewellery, ceramics, stained glass, painting and drawing and photography. Two new courses, the national diploma in graphics and the national diploma in fashion, have been introduced in 2003/04.

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

104. Pass rates on full-time courses are generally good. However, key skills are not related to the vocational context and pass rates and student motivation are low. The standard of work across the courses is too variable. Students at intermediate level and on the foundation national diploma produce work of a high standard. For example, diploma students work confidently with a range of materials including wood, plastic, metal and card, dealing with conceptual ideas based on the 'Light Bulb'. The students were developing sculptural forms by changing a functional everyday object into a non-functional sculptural form. In an intermediate class students were reproducing high-tech photo shop images into traditional collograph prints.

105. In some specialist workshops students are not challenged sufficiently. The standard of the work produced suffered from using very basic technology, for example printing from acetate stencils. Students were not relating techniques to design and creative solutions. This resulted in their work being unfocused and not related to their main qualification.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
BTEC foundation national diploma in art and design	3	No. of starts	41	48	35
		% retention	85	90	94
		% pass rate	97	98	97
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	37	33	38
		% retention	70	82	97
		% pass rate	85	85	89
AVCE double award art and design	3	No. of starts	57	57	43
		% retention	87	*	44
		% pass rate	70	*	89
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	**	33	46
		% retention	**	94	89
		% pass rate	**	77	85
GCE AS art and design	3	No. of starts	150	188	112
		% retention	80	81	87
		% pass rate	61	67	75

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

\* data unreliable

\*\* data unavailable

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

106. There is good teaching on the intermediate courses at the campuses at both St Albans and Welwyn Garden City. In a methods and material class, students made imaginative use of 'collage' techniques in product design. They researched the work of artists such as Andy Warhol and Oldenburg and related this to their own work.

107. There was poor attendance and punctuality in many of the full-time classes observed. Teachers were spending valuable lesson time on ascertaining why students were late and repeating instructions. There was not a consistent approach to lateness and students were surprised to be challenged.

108. Reviews and assessment reports are not consistent in the department and each course has developed separate paperwork and procedures. There is very little evidence of assessment sampling except on the GCE A-level courses. The use of action planning on vocational courses is too general and does not provide enough challenge. There is evidence of verbal feedback on a one-to-one basis, but this often takes the form of telling students what to do rather than encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning.

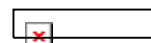
109. Many teachers are lively and enthusiastic about the subject and this is reflected in the good use of contemporary source material in lessons which extends students' contextual knowledge. The department makes good use of the colleges' proximity to London and students visit art shows and galleries both independently as part of their assignment research and through organized college field trips. During 2003/04, the college has arranged field visits to exhibitions of art and design work in the Living Crafts exhibition, Clothes' Show, Alexander Palace, Victoria and Albert, Central St Martins Degree Show and the Tate Modern.

110. The provision is predominately for full-time students at levels 2 and 3. The access to HE course is successfully integrated into the national diploma foundation course. The community programme offers a wide range of subjects including jewellery, stained glass, water colour painting, and ceramics under the banner of City and Guilds creative crafts. Teaching staff are approachable and helpful. This is reflected in the tutorials, although the monitoring of attendance and punctuality by personal tutors has had little impact in improving punctuality and attendance. There is substantial information on students' learning styles and prior achievements. However, there was little evidence of this information having any impact on the style or delivery of lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

111. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is in a transitional period, with new curriculum leaders with special responsibility for a team of full-time and part-time staff and an advanced practitioner who has responsibilities for standards and mentoring new members of staff. It is too early to assess the impact of these changes. All new managers have received management training and there is evidence of greater sharing of good practice, through closer monitoring of course assignments and team working. Although there is a regular cycle of meetings, there is insufficient attention to record keeping through the use of systematic minutes and formal action plans.

### **Media and performing arts**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on full-time level 3 programmes
- wide range of provision
- good links with cultural industries to inform learning
- good resources for multimedia and music technology.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient pace and challenge in some lessons
- poor retention and achievement on GNVQ intermediate in media
- insufficient focus on quality improvement.

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

112. The college offers a range of programmes in performing arts and media at the St Albans City and Welwyn campuses. Most students are aged 16 to 18. At the time of inspection, 86 students were studying full time on advanced courses in media and multimedia, and 121 were studying courses in performing arts, music practice and music technology. A further 69 students were studying on intermediate courses in media, performing arts and popular music. There were 201 GCE AS and 99 GCE A2 students studying drama, film studies, media studies and photography. There are also part-time courses in the evening in photography, ICT, and a course in writing for radio is available as an additional qualification for full-time students on media programmes.

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

113. There are good pass rates on the full-time level 3 programmes. Pass rates in GCE A-level film studies and media are improving and achievements on the newly introduced BTEC first diplomas in performing arts and music are above the national average. Retention rates on GCE AS media, GNVQ intermediate media and City and Guilds 7700 in media techniques are poor. Pass rates on the level 2 courses are also low.

114. In drama programmes, students show a good development of practical skills in the use of language, presentation and movement, and they have a good awareness of stylistic conventions. In music and music technology programmes, students demonstrate satisfactory technical proficiency along with creativity and expression. They have a good understanding of different performance contexts and audiences. For example, music technology students had composed imaginative soundtracks to an extract from a feature film. They were able to reflect upon and critically appraise their own work. In media programmes, students show good theoretical knowledge of key concepts and can apply them productively to texts presented for analysis. On the more successful courses, students' progress is good as a result of challenging assignment briefs and close monitoring by teachers. On the less successful courses, a lack of pace in lessons and little structured action planning with students on assignments limits achievements.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate media	2	No. of starts	28	33	30
		% retention	61	85	53
		% pass rate	94	71	69
BTEC national diploma media	3	No. of starts	20	17	19
		% retention	80	82	89
		% pass rate	100	93	100
AVCE media	3	No. of starts	25	17	18
		% retention	64	82	83
		% pass rate	88	86	83
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	104	108	63
		% retention	89	84	70
		% pass rate	67	46	82
GCE A-level film studies	3	No. of starts	22	18	16
		% retention	78	100	100
		% pass rate	53	97	100

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

***Quality of education and training***

115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the more successful lessons, students work productively both independently and in groups. They gain confidence in experimenting with different techniques and evaluating their effectiveness. Students are well supported in developing individual approaches to the tasks assigned to them. For example, in a drama lesson, students explored aspects of character and motivation through improvisation exercises.

116. Less successful lessons lack challenge. They are poorly planned and students' contributions to discussion are not consolidated. Activities are insufficiently structured or timed rigorously enough. The momentum of learning is often not maintained in these sessions and less well-motivated students lose concentration.

117. Many staff have good experience of working in the cultural industries and in most cases their expertise is used well to support learning. For example, a music lesson involved a teacher, who was also an experienced, professional musician and an advisor from an arts funding organisation. By watching a demonstration and participating in a question and answer session, students were able to

use the teacher's and the guests' expertise to help them plan for an assessed public performance.

118. Good resources for multimedia and music technology enhance learning. A music suite has 30 keyboard workstations with industry-standard software. Students have good access to the Internet and this is used effectively to research information. For example, in a music class, students were researching and evaluating the different professional formats to electronically store and protect musical information. Specialist media resources have recently been acquired allowing for high-quality digital editing sound recording and filming on both sites. Some theory classes in music are held in inappropriate accommodation. The seating layout and specialist equipment obscures the sight of the whiteboard and impedes interaction amongst group members. There is limited accommodation for rehearsal and performance in performing arts.

119. There is a good representation of arts disciplines in the range of programmes offered. Following a curriculum review, additional level 2 programmes were introduced in 2002/03. These courses have recruited well and progression from level 2 to level 3 programmes is good. Progression to HE or into related employment is also good; 96 students progressed to HE courses in related disciplines in 2003.

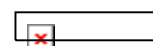
120. Assignments briefs are devised using a standard format and are related to vocational practice in the cultural industries. There is good integration of the key skills assessment of communication and improving own learning and performance in assignments. On some courses, formative assessment comments are detailed and clear, but the good practice of having common assessment feedback sheets has not yet been shared with all courses.

121. Initial assessments are carried out across the programme area during induction. Learning styles and additional support needs are logged and detailed group profiles produced. In the better lessons, this information informs planning for activities and assessment. For example, a student in film studies who has English as a second language has extended deadlines for assignments and receives additional learning support. In other lessons, the information is not being routinely used to plan specific support for individual students. Some 10% of students have been diagnosed as needing dyslexia support and this is being provided in most cases. Students particularly value the tutorial support they receive. Careers and HE advice form an effective part of the tutorial programme.

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

122. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory, however, there are inconsistencies in the management of programmes. There are effective procedures for the observation of teaching and learning. However, there is little systematic action planning to address weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. The minutes of meetings record little focused debate about the quality of teaching and learning. Some curriculum logs record targets, but do not include action plans indicating how those targets will be met. A minority of courses have incomplete curriculum records. There are attempts to ensure consistency of provision across the two sites and across subject areas, but this has yet to be wholly effective. For example, enrichment activities and work experience opportunities are made available to media students on the St Albans site, but not to media students on the Welwyn site.

### **Humanities and social sciences**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good retention and pass rates in law and sociology
- good teaching
- strong academic and pastoral support
- good partnership arrangements with schools
- effective use of assessment to improve students' learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention and pass rates in key skills
- low GCE AS psychology pass rate.

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

123. Courses in humanities are held on the Welwyn Garden City and St Albans sites. GCE AS and GCE A-level courses are offered in geography, history, law, sociology, philosophy and psychology to full-time students aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were 326 full-time students following humanities and social science courses. There were 48 students on a full-time access to HE course and 87 on a part-time course. The college works closely with 15 secondary schools in consortia arrangements in Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and Hatfield. There are 320 school students following courses which allow them to take part of their GCE AS and GCE A2 programme at the college. There is no humanities provision at level 2 following a decision to discontinue General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) re-sit courses for students aged 16 to 18.

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

124. Retention and pass rates in GCE AS and A-level law are high. Retention and pass rates in GCE AS sociology are also above national averages. Pass rates on the access to HE course are consistently good and a high proportion of students progress to HE. Retention rates in GCE AS psychology fell in 2002/03 to 75%, which is slightly below the national average. Pass rates in GCE AS psychology are also below the national average. Pass rates on key skills are poor. Pass rates in application of number, communications, problem solving and improving own learning and performance have been consistently poor over the last three years.

125. Standards of work achieved by students are high. Written work is well presented and students are confident in giving presentations and discussing their work. In a GCE AS sociology lesson, students presented the findings of their research to the rest of the class. They then led a lively

discussion about how sociological theories were applied to the modern world. This displayed their skills of application and evaluation very well. Students develop good research skills. They are able to analyse complex data and apply their knowledge effectively. They work well individually and in groups and they are particularly good at evaluating their own performance. Poor attendance is followed up and appropriate action taken where necessary.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	194	222	207
		% retention	76	80	75
		% pass rate	55	66	65
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	167	71	94
		% retention	66	90	90
		% pass rate	48	81	81
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	70	69	61
		% retention	83	80	84
		% pass rate	67	85	86
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	99	107	98
		% retention	76	87	85
		% pass rate	86	71	78
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	58	51	64
		% retention	53	98	95
		% pass rate	79	74	87
Access to HE (full time, one year)	3	No. of starts	85	44	62
		% retention	82	73	76
		% pass rate	89	91	89

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

*The college submitted additional data for 2002*

***Quality of education and training***

126. Teachers have high expectations and set students challenging targets. Students respond well and work productively. Lessons are thoroughly planned and take account of students' individual needs. They have clear objectives and students know what is expected of them. A wide range of appropriate teaching methods are used, which enable students to learn effectively and make good progress. In a GCE AS law lesson on the powers of arrest, students role played an incident involving a stop and search. Following a discussion of the role play, students were able to demonstrate their understanding of the principles of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. This exercise gave students a written record of their learning and helped them to develop skills of evaluation and analysis. Teachers have up-to-date professional knowledge and are very enthusiastic about their subject. They give clear explanations and frequently check that students understand the points being made.

127. Classrooms contain subject-related displays on the walls, much of which has been produced by students. This work is regularly used as a learning resource in lessons. There are occasional problems with students being unable to access computers for individual study. Classrooms are

overcrowded in some lessons. Teachers are well qualified. Staff development is effective in that it is focused on raising standards of teaching and learning. Teachers have developed good support materials that students use well both in lessons and for individual study.

128. Assessment of students' work is frequent and rigorous. The initial assessment of students' individual learning needs is thorough. The information is used well to inform the planning of lessons and activities. Students evaluate their own work well and receive detailed feedback on how they are progressing.

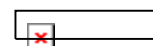
129. The partnership arrangements with local schools are very effective in providing a wide range of humanities subjects for young people aged 16 in Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and Hatfield; 15 secondary schools are involved in consortia with the college. These arrangements allow young people aged 16 to take part of their GCE AS programme at college. These students integrate extremely well into college and work well alongside full-time college students. There are formal management arrangements for the consortia and communication between the college and schools is good. The access to HE courses benefit from good links with local universities. There are no level 2 courses in humanities and the range of part-time courses for adult students is narrow. The range of enrichment activities is narrow and is not well promoted to students.

130. Academic and pastoral support is good. Students gain from a well-planned induction programme that helps them to settle quickly into their course. Group and individual tutorials focus on target setting and monitoring students' progress. They have access to online tutorials through e-mail. Support for students in helping them to plan their progression to employment or HE is strong.

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

131. Curriculum management is particularly good at course level. Subject teams work well together and they are well supported by curriculum leaders. Course teams share good practice and are committed to raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Targets are set for recruitment, retention and pass rates and progress towards these is regularly monitored. Course reviews are thorough and self-critical and are followed up with detailed action plans. Information on student retention and pass rates is used well to plan for improvement. The self-assessment report was thorough and comprehensive.

## **English, modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language**



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

The contributory grade for English is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

The contributory grade for English as a foreign language is **good (grade 2)**

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on GCE A-level English courses
  
- good teaching on English as a foreign language courses

- effective matching of students to appropriate level in English as a foreign language and modern foreign language courses
- good enrichment programme and support for English as a foreign language students
- well-managed modern foreign language and English as a foreign language provision.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates in GCSE English and GCE AS English language and literature
- pass rates in GCE AS and A-level modern foreign languages below national averages
- unacceptably varied quality of teaching in English
- lack of effective quality assurance in English.

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

132. There are advanced level courses in English language, English literature and English language and literature. GCSE English, an access course and key skills communication at levels 1 to 3 are also offered. Full-time and part-time English as a foreign language courses are offered from beginners' level to advanced level. There are day and evening courses on several sites from beginners' level to level 3 in four modern languages and to level 2 in Portuguese and Russian.

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

133. The attainment of many students in English lessons is unsatisfactory. Students are not given enough and sufficiently demanding work. Retention and pass rates are good on the majority of GCE A-level courses in English. However, performance is weaker at GCE AS. Although results at GCSE English language have improved, they are still below the national average.

134. In the last three years, retention and pass rates on modern foreign language courses have improved to at least the national averages for beginners and level 1 certificate in business language courses. At GCE AS and A-level, many pass rates are below national averages. In lessons, students are confident in their use of language and have good standards of pronunciation. On English as a

foreign language courses, retention rates are good and pass rates for those students entered for examinations are satisfactory. Programme files carefully track students' progress and the great majority of students achieve their personal learning goals, even where an examination is inappropriate.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate of business language competence (basic level)	entry	No. of starts	280	239	132
		% retention	75	84	75
		% pass rate	27	47	54
Certificate of business language competence (survival)	1	No. of starts	83	122	113
		% retention	77	82	72
		% pass rate	16	36	53
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	293	259	95
		% retention	78	62	81
		% pass rate	31	40	45
English as a foreign language first certificate	2	No. of starts	118	226	170
		% retention	96	93	91
		% pass rate	47	40	30
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	32	*	21
		% retention	47	*	100
		% pass rate	80	*	90
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	56	26	29
		% retention	71	97	83
		% pass rate	78	84	95
English as a foreign language Cambridge advanced certificate	3	No. of starts	62	33	41
		% retention	95	88	91
		% pass rate	46	48	70
GCE AS English language and literature (1 year course)	3	No. of starts	61	41	36
		% retention	66	73	75
		% pass rate	80	83	63

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

135. Students are insufficiently challenged in many English lessons and often make little progress. In several lessons, students chatted and did not work on the task set. Lessons lack a clear structure and the needs of individual students are not addressed. Students do not have enough work set to practise the skills they need. Many are disheartened. The use of ILT is underdeveloped. There are very few enrichment activities. Although the general standard of teaching is unsatisfactory, there were some examples of better practice. For example, in one lesson students bubbled with ideas about Margaret Atwood's *'The Handmaid's Tale'* handling complex ideas such as 'totalitarianism'

and 'dystopic societies'.

136. All lessons observed in English as a foreign language and modern foreign language were well planned, with good records of work. Teachers know their students well and match lesson content to needs. Students' language capabilities are carefully assessed on entry so that they are placed on the appropriate level of courses.

137. Learning was particularly good in English as a foreign language lessons. In one lesson, students were shown a poster of David Beckham as an introduction to using the construction 'like' in different contexts. All students participated fully in the activity. Most modern foreign language lessons were conducted entirely in the foreign language; students learned new words from meaningful contexts. Students had a good grasp of basic situations after only eight weeks on the 'First steps' course. In a German class based at a local factory, students made good use of online materials and were confident in asking the tutor for clarification of grammar and specialist vocabulary. Modern foreign language teaching at GCE AS and A level, was less successful in addressing the wide ability range of adult students. However, teachers attempted to address this by providing extensive homework to allow weaker students to catch up and cover the syllabus.

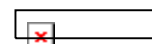
138. Specialist resources for the teaching of languages and English as a foreign language are good. A newly installed 20-position virtual learning centre with electronic whiteboard is an important new development. English as a foreign language rooms at St Albans are bright with attractive posters and displays of student work. Teachers on the modern foreign language and English as a foreign language courses are well qualified, with most English as a foreign language staff having diploma qualifications.

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

139. Systems to improve the quality of English provision are not yet in place. There are inconsistencies in the standard of schemes of work and lesson plans. Teachers do not meet frequently enough to evaluate or share good practice. A new curriculum leader has been appointed to review the provision.

140. The English as a foreign language and modern foreign language sections are well managed. There is a good level of debate on professional issues in regular team meetings. There are exemplary subject logs in English as a foreign language. These include detailed class profiles, lesson plans and schemes of work and action plans. Guidance sheets incorporating good practice advice are circulated to all staff. Issues identified in the lesson observation programme are discussed in team meetings and have resulted in improved practice. Considerable use is made of e-mail as a management communication tool with both staff and students. This helps senior staff maintain good contact with the large team of part-time staff.

### **English for speakers of other languages**



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### ***Strengths***

- flexible programmes that are responsive to individual needs
  
- good tutorial support on college courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- inadequate development of students' language skills
- lack of challenge for more able students
- unsatisfactory monitoring of franchised provision.

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

141. ESOL courses are provided directly by college staff in St Albans and Borehamwood and through a franchised arrangement involving two organisations, operating on a contract basis in North London. The college's direct provision is for over 300 students on course from pre-entry level to level 2. Most of the college students come from the surrounding area, but include some asylum seekers. The main course offered consists of a three-day language skills programme which can be extended with extra classes. The other routes are evening classes at the college and at community venues which tend to be for women only. There are currently 98 students on franchised programmes attending entry-level courses in North London.

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

142. Pass rates on external qualifications held at the main college are good, but these relate to the small proportion of students who are actually entered out of the overall cohorts. Pass rates for 2002/03 on franchised provision are well below national averages. In lessons, there is often an overemphasis on writing skills and the theoretical use of language. Insufficient attention is paid to reading, listening and speaking and this impedes student progress. In classes, students who are struggling usually get good support. However, this is often at the expense of more able students for whom the work is insufficiently challenging. As a result, overall attainment levels are low. The needs of younger students, who are a minority, are not effectively met. Insufficient attention is given to their study skills and progression to higher level courses and this is reflected in their attainments.

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

143. The courses and schemes of work have been mapped against the national ESOL core curriculum. However, teachers lack the specialist skills and qualifications to translate these objectives into good classroom practice. In the better lessons, students practise speaking using contexts to which they can relate. For example, in a lower level class, there was good use of an information gap activity in which students had to ask questions to locate a key that was 'lost' and in a higher level class, students debated which topics should be included in a biography and which were better suited to a gossip magazine. In weaker lessons, there is insufficient checking of comprehension before language analysis and other writing tasks begin. Even in satisfactory lessons, there is too much emphasis on writing at the expense of speaking and this is most problematic where students write things that would be more usual in spoken form, for example, 'could you repeat that, please'. On franchised courses, there is little evidence of differentiation in teaching. Individual needs are not properly addressed. Volunteers are used inappropriately in main teaching roles rather than in fully supervised support roles.

144. Courses are extremely flexible with a range of starting dates, levels and options. On the day

courses, students can do the core programme of nine hours, but add extra modules in numeracy, IT, business English, pronunciation and life in Britain. There is also flexibility in terms of students studying skills at different levels and students can increase or decrease the number of extra classes at any time according to other constraints on their time. The timetable is designed to enable families to take children to school before starting and collect them after class. However, on franchised courses, provision is only available at entry level and IT is not integrated into learning.

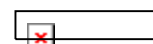
145. On the college courses, tutors provide good tutorial support, making effective use of individual learning plans to set targets and personal goals. Tutors meet with students and go through their marked work to identify what improvements they need to make. There are also weekly workshops, where students can work through assignments with individual help from teachers. Personal issues are dealt with sensitively and students are referred to specialist external agencies where this is necessary. On the franchised courses, diagnostic assessment is inadequate and individual learning plans are not used effectively to monitor progress or set targets.

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

146. There is insufficient monitoring of the standards of teaching and learning of the franchised provision. Although there are frequent visits from college administrators to monitor registers of attendance and induct students in college procedures, there is insufficient monitoring of the curriculum. Communication is over-reliant on e-mail and telephone conversations. Only two visits a year are made by the curriculum manager to franchise partners and the weaknesses identified through inspection have not been addressed. The franchised provision is not evaluated as part of college self-assessment.

147. Progress is being made in redesigning curriculum materials to meet national standards, and this is reflected in the attention given to staff development and training. Many teachers are graduates. However, most have only initial qualifications in language teaching and their skills in implementing the new ESOL resources are insufficient. Regular team meetings focus on operational issues and there is not enough sharing of good practice.

### **Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very effective teaching of independent living skills
- extensive range of programmes
- good personal support
- effective use of student feedback

- strong leadership of the new curriculum area.

### ***Weaknesses***

- weak initial assessment
- inadequate assessment of students' progress
- insufficient planning of communication between students.

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

148. At the time of the inspection, the curriculum offer included programmes for 634 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Of these, 480 were aged over 19 and were predominantly part time. Students can choose varied pathways and have a good choice of subject options. There are good opportunities to take single modules to extend lifelong learning. Specific programmes are provided for students with profound and complex learning difficulties, mental health difficulties and students who have autistic spectrum disorders. Some pre-vocational courses and work experience are offered, but on a small scale. As well as LSC-funded provision, the college offers community programmes such as weekend classes that current students attend, and programmes for more senior students.

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

149. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall. They are limited by the effectiveness of the ways in which targets for learning are set and how achievements are assessed. Students develop a wide range of skills and understanding that help them to becoming more independent. For example, many learn how to use kitchen equipment safely and how to travel by themselves on familiar routes. Most students become more capable of expressing their choices and making decisions. Many part-time adult students extend the activities they can do in their leisure time by learning new skills in arts and craft. Many full-time students go on to courses at a higher level. A few progress from their courses to employment.

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

150. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. For some programmes, teachers make effective use of half-day and full-day lessons to integrate a range of relevant skills into a single coherent project or activity. For example, students with severe learning difficulties plan a menu to a budget, shop for the ingredients and rotate roles such as finding items on shelves. On returning to the college, they learn to cook a healthy meal. Teachers and support assistants check carefully what the students can do by themselves and allow them to learn the consequences of their own decisions in a safe manner. In such lessons, literacy, numeracy and other skills are developed in practical ways that assist students to live more independently.

151. Staff working with students recovering from mental illness use interesting activities and resources to capture and hold their students' interest and motivation. For example, Alan Bennett's

'Talking Heads' monologues are used to show students how to develop characters for their own scripts. Students devise their own monologues, exploring issues that are important to them. In some lessons, specific activities are designed to promote increased communication between students. For example, in one class where there is a deaf student, all students take turns to greet each other using sign language and finger spelling. In many lessons, communication takes place primarily between the tutor and the student. Too few activities are planned and designed to encourage regular communication between students and teachers do not make full use of naturally occurring opportunities. In some lessons, there is too great an emphasis on teaching the whole class as a group or on working through an activity with each student in turn. Students become bored, lose concentration and are not sufficiently involved for the whole of the lesson. In the better lessons, teachers and support assistants work well together to teach and support learning, but in others students are required to wait for too long for attention or a new activity.

152. The department provides a welcoming and supportive learning environment. The rapport between staff and students is good in most lessons. Detailed information is gathered about students' personal and social needs and this is used well to provide personal support. Risk assessments are particularly good and are used well in planning lessons and schemes of work. A qualified nurse with disability training offers specialist personal care where needed. Accommodation is spacious and well lit and students' work is displayed well on the walls. Specialist resources for students with profound and complex learning difficulties are good. Good use is made of community resources to develop independent living skills.

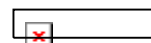
153. Assessment processes are in place, but are not fully effective. Initial assessment does not sufficiently identify students' prior achievements and the gaps in their learning. Information gained through initial assessment is not used sufficiently in identifying goals. Individual targets are not clearly mapped to goals. Assessment plans are weak and do not clearly identify when and how specific targets can best be measured. Students are assessed frequently, but the quality of assessment information is generally poor. Assessment information is not used sufficiently to revise targets. Achievements are not recorded in ways that make it easy to track progress against the full range of individual targets. Teachers praise achievement and give constructive feedback within most taught sessions.

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

154. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was brought together into one department about a year before the inspection. There is a clear management structure for the area, with curriculum leaders based at each main site. Formal communication structures are clear with regular team meetings. Staff from different sites and programmes discuss teaching and assessment strategies and share materials. Leadership of the new curriculum area is strong. Staff have a clear sense of strategic direction and are well motivated. Significant changes have been made to provide a more coherent curriculum. All programmes are now based on individual learning plans rather than externally accredited courses and are focused on students' long-term needs. Good training opportunities are provided for learning support assistants and teachers to gain teaching qualifications. New tracking systems have been introduced to monitor students' targets. The first audit of these was rigorous and identified many key weaknesses.

155. Valuable meetings are held once a term with student representatives from each college centre. Students raise a broad range of issues about the curriculum and about the quality of their time at college, such as access to water to take medication and space for their taxis at the beginning and end of the day. Managers take these issues very seriously, formally replying and following up with effective action where they can and explaining the reasons if this is not possible. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative and self-critical. It accurately identifies the weaknesses identified during inspection, but overestimates the impact of recent reforms.

### **Literacy and numeracy**



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### ***Strengths***

- much good teaching and learning on discrete courses
- effective tutorial support for part-time adult students
- good progress made by part-time adult students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- inadequate arrangements for learning support
- ineffective teaching where support is integrated into lessons
- deficiencies in co-ordination and management.

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

156. The college provides discrete part-time literacy and numeracy courses, primarily for adults, in the college and in the community. Over 200 students were enrolled on these courses at the time of the inspection. Additional support in literacy and numeracy is also provided for students taking other, mainly vocational qualifications, to help them achieve their main learning goals. About 170 students, the vast majority full-time students aged 16 to 18 were in receipt of this support. The main form that this support takes is the use of support tutors and learning support assistants who help students in lessons. However, there is also a small amount of 1:1 support and dedicated teaching for students with identified support needs.

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

157. Adult students make good progress on the discrete courses. Attainment at entry level is particularly good. For example, one student who enrolled in September and could not write his address had a list of more than 70 words he had learned to spell and was now using in his work. Retention rates and attendance are satisfactory and many adult students are working towards the new national qualifications. Students progress from discrete literacy and numeracy provision on to other courses in the college such as IT. However, student progress and attainments are poor for many students receiving in-class learning support.

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

158. On discrete literacy and numeracy courses, lessons are well planned and effective in meeting individual and group needs. Students learn well from one another and acquire skills which they can apply at work and in everyday life. In a numeracy lesson, a group of students used blocks of units imaginatively to learn 'borrowing' in subtraction. They discussed the process with one another for support and to check their understanding. By the end of the lesson, they were able to do the calculation without using the blocks and were amazed at 'how easy it was', having never understood it before. In the less-effective lessons, teachers often rely too much on written worksheets.

159. The provision of in-class support during lessons is ineffective. Integration of basic skills with students' vocational subjects is poor. Planning for the development of the skills needed for students to succeed on their main qualification is weak and usually not identified in individual learning plans. In the poorest lessons, weak students are often left to struggle without help and are unable to participate or complete tasks. Teachers make insufficient use of diagnostic information in selecting teaching methods with the consequence that students' prior experience and levels of skill are not taken into account. Support teachers do not always give adequate attention to students with most need. In some lessons, they do not check students' understanding or provide them with strategies to enable them to work independently.

160. Specialist literacy and numeracy staff are well qualified and experienced. However, the college has not been able to recruit sufficient staff with appropriate qualifications. Many of the learning support assistants are inexperienced. There are useful base rooms with specialist resources. However, the learning materials in use in class are rarely customised to meet students' interests and needs. Although IT is used well in a few lessons, there is scope for much greater application to help students.

161. There is good assessment practice in discrete literacy and numeracy courses. Students working towards the national qualifications in basic skills have well-organised files. Review processes for adults make good use of targets to identify development needs. However, the planning to assess progress in improving literacy or numeracy levels for students receiving learning support is ineffective. Teachers do not take sufficient account of diagnostic assessment and do not work effectively with staff providing learning support during lessons.

162. The scale of discrete provision, particularly in the community, is very small. Links have been established, for example with the probation service, schools and a community resource centre and new courses are planned for travellers and other under-represented groups.

163. Advice and guidance for adult students are good and highly valued by them. They benefit from extensive feedback on homework, have individual spelling and writing practice and are able to evaluate their own progress against learning goals. Across many curriculum areas, arrangements for additional learning support are poor and do not meet the needs of students. There is little one-to-one provision. Specialist dyslexic support linked to literacy is good, but few students are currently receiving it; there is a long waiting list for specialist assessment and some students who have been assessed have not received support.

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

164. There are deficiencies in the management of this area. The college has set challenging targets to increase provision as part of its contribution to the 'Skills for Life' targets. However, it has made limited progress to meet these targets. The scope and scale of the discrete provision is very limited. The significant weaknesses in the provision of additional learning support to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills are not identified in the self-assessment report. There is insufficient sharing of good practice, knowledge and expertise, or planning across the provision. The liaison between vocational teachers and staff responsible for additional learning support has not resulted in students receiving adequate help to meet their needs.

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

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	26	43
2	42	27
3	25	13
4/5	0	2
Other	7	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in autumn 2003*

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

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,138	475	6
Land-based provision	365	485	3
Construction	348	399	3
Engineering, technology and manufacture	102	265	1
Business administration, management and professional	493	1,149	6
Information and communication technology	1,367	919	8
Retailing, customer service and transportation	2	138	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	568	871	5
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	47	49	0
Health, social care and public services	1,139	2,652	14
Visual and performing arts and media	856	1,111	7
Humanities	2,490	547	11
English, languages and communication	1,395	707	8
Foundation programmes	2,601	4,307	27

<b>Total</b>	<b>12,911</b>	<b>14,074</b>	<b>100</b>
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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+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	875	815	*	5,696	3,434	*
	Retention rate	75	74	*	42	71	*
	National average	76	75	*	73	69	*
	Pass rate	67	59	*	66	62	*
	National average	65	69	*	66	68	*
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	2,053	1,692	*	2,622	1,785	*
	Retention rate	70	70	*	62	77	*
	National average	72	70	*	70	68	*
	Pass rate	74	69	*	64	67	*
	National average	67	69	*	64	68	*
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	21	3,501	*	1,969	1,820	*
	Retention rate	70	70	*	62	61	*
	National average	67	71	*	69	68	*
	Pass rate	69	67	*	65	63	*
	National average	75	77	*	66	69	*
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	**	**	*	338	193	*
	Retention rate	**	**	*	72	64	*
	National average	66	73	*	67	67	*
	Pass rate	**	**	*	66	61	*
	National average	65	54	*	58	55	*

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

\* ISR data not accurate for 2001/02 - the college re-submitted data with significant changes to ISR

\*\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	60	30	10	118
Level 2 (intermediate)	48	39	13	77
Level 1 (foundation)	46	36	18	39
Other sessions	53	40	7	58
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>292</b>