



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Ridge Danyers College

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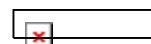
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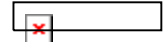
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Basic information about the college

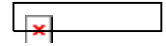


Name of college:	Ridge Danyers College
Type of college:	Sixth form college
Principal:	Christina Cassidy
Address of college:	Hibbert Lane Marple Stockport SK6 7PA
Telephone number:	0161 484 6600
Fax number:	0161 484 6601
Chair of governors:	Chris Baker
Unique reference number:	130836
Name of reporting inspector:	David Dana
Date of inspection:	24-28 November 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

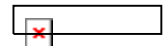


Ridge Danyers College is a sixth form college in the metropolitan borough of Stockport. The college was established in 1995 as a result of a merger between two sixth form colleges. The college operates from two main campuses in Cheadle and Marple, some nine miles apart, with further leased accommodation at Houldsworth Mill in Reddish. Within the borough of Stockport there are four other colleges providing for some 11,100 students aged 16 to 18. Two of these, Aquinas and North Area colleges, are sixth form colleges; Stockport College of Further and Higher Education is a general further education (FE) college; and Bridge College is a specialist college for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The college is unusual for a sixth form college in that it offers provision in 13 of the 14 areas of learning, including some provision for modern apprenticeships. The college attracts students with a wide range of academic qualifications and backgrounds, from those working at foundation level to those with good General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results. There are approximately 7,000 students at the college, of whom some 2,800 are aged 16 to 18 and studying full time. A small number of students aged 14 to 16 from local schools attend the college for a part of their timetable. The majority of students, 88%, are white and 61% of the students are female. Level 3 provision accounts for 75% of the enrolments. There are 154 modern apprentices at the college.

The college attracts students from Stockport, Cheshire, Derbyshire and the south-east suburbs of Greater Manchester. Stockport has a population of about 300,000. Some parts of the borough are comparatively affluent, with unemployment rates of 2.1% against a national average of 3.1%, while others are disadvantaged and have relatively high levels of unemployment.

How effective is the college?



The quality of provision is outstanding in computing and information technology (IT), good in business, humanities, English and literacy and numeracy, and satisfactory in the six curriculum areas of science, mathematics, sport, leisure and tourism, health, social and childcare, performing arts and languages. Provision in visual arts is unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- strong leadership and clear direction

- good communications and teamwork

- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- wide range of courses to meet the needs of the local community
- effective partnerships with schools and employers
- comprehensive quality assurance procedures
- support provided by staff for their students
- effective use of individual targets to motivate students
- learning support for students
- careers guidance for students.

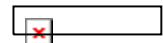
What should be improved

- retention rates and pass rates on some courses
- consistency of application of quality assurance procedures
- teaching and learning in some curriculum areas
- opportunities for and uptake of enrichment activities

- effectiveness of group tutorials
- the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to help learning
- the full completion of frameworks for modern apprenticeships.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

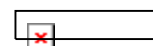


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Satisfactory. ILT is well used in lessons, especially in physics and chemistry. There are well-equipped modern laboratory suites. Support for students is good but teachers give insufficient guidance on how to improve work. There are some poor pass rates and retention rates.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on General Certificate of Education Advance Subsidiary and Advanced-level (GCE AS and A-level) further mathematics courses. There are high retention rates and satisfactory pass rates on GCE A2 mathematics but low retention and pass rates on GCE AS mathematics. On GCSE mathematics courses, retention rates are low but pass rates are above the national average. Support for students is good and includes rigorous assessment. Teaching lacks variety and does not always meet the differing needs of students.
Business	Good. Pass rates are high for General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate business and GCE A-level business. Pass rates are low and declining on accounting and economics courses. Modern apprentices do not achieve their key skills accreditation. There is a lot of good teaching and good support for students. Staff work together well and share good practice. There is little use of ILT in lessons.
Computing and information technology	Outstanding. Pass rates are consistently high on all programmes. Teaching and learning are informed by good diagnostic and formative assessment and personal support for students is good. There are extensive learning resources including a well-developed intranet. The school is well led and managed. There is some poor accommodation.

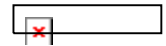
Sport, leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates vary, with some good Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) results in travel and tourism but with low retention rates for GNVQ leisure and tourism. There is good teaching on sport and travel courses and good support for students across all programmes. Modern apprentices do not achieve their key skills. Students' work is not sufficiently well marked and not all students are challenged to meet their full potential.
Health, social and childcare	Satisfactory. Teaching is good and assessment is rigorous. Pass rates are high on introduction to counselling, certificate in childcare and education and the diploma in childcare and education. The pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course is unsatisfactory and few modern apprentices gain their key skills awards. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on psychology and AVCE courses.
Visual arts	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are high for design technology and for foundation and intermediate GNVQ art and design courses but low on GCE AS and A2 level art and design. There is too little good teaching. The area is not sufficiently well managed. Accommodation is not well used. General support for students is good but feedback on assignments is insufficiently detailed to help students to improve.
Performing arts	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates for drama, theatre studies and performing arts courses. Pass rates are low for dance and music technology. The team has correctly identified a number of areas of underperformance and are implementing initiatives to raise standards. There is insufficient emphasis on raising the quality of teaching and learning.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high and retention rates are improving on GCE AS and A2 courses. The effective use of targets, good teaching and high-quality resources are contributing to students' improved success. There is little use of ILT. There is too much reliance on whole-class teaching and teachers fail to meet the needs of the full ability range of students.
Modern languages	Satisfactory. Students who successfully progress to the second year of advanced level courses achieve good results, but standards are low on GCE AS courses. There is a good range of well-organised courses. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory but some teaching does not fully challenge all students. There is a lack of equipment to develop listening skills.
English and communication studies	Good. Retention and pass rates are high on most programmes and teaching is good. There is very good monitoring of students' progress and effective use of targets. Students' work is written and marked to a high standard. The retention rates on GCSE English courses are poor and, in a minority of lessons, weaker students are not sufficiently supported.
Foundation (literacy and numeracy)	Good. Pass rates on some courses are high but retention rates are unsatisfactory. Teaching is good and meets the needs of students. Support for students is good. Individual learning plans are well used but lack time targets. The area is well managed.

How well is the college led and managed?



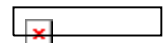
governors provide a clear strategic direction for the college and have the support of staff. Curriculum management is good in many areas. The overall pass rates have improved to, and sometimes exceed, the national averages for sixth form colleges. Retention rates have improved significantly since 2001 but are still below national averages. Self-assessment covers all aspects of the college's work and judgements are accurate. Managers now receive timely and accurate information to monitor performance and students' progress. Communication is good. Governors are committed to the success of the college and closely monitor performance to achieve financial objectives and improve academic results. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Financial management is satisfactory and the college is providing value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



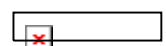
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college meets its statutory duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Equality of opportunity and cultural diversity are effectively promoted to staff and students through staff development events and students' tutorials. Curriculum equal opportunities co-ordinators advise on the appropriateness of teaching materials. The equality and diversity group effectively monitor the implementation of the equality and diversity and the race equality policies. However, there is currently no systematic reporting on progress to managers. The college has responded appropriately to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Most of the college is now accessible to all students and final modifications to accommodation will shortly be completed. The range of provision promotes accessibility and progression and includes basic skills provision from entry level upwards. Recruitment and students' progress are now monitored by ethnicity and gender but the information is not used by course teams in action planning. An innovative mentoring scheme by which students from ethnic minority groups mentor each other provides extra support to these students and has improved local community links. The college operates its own learner support fund to help students in financial difficulties to stay in education. There is very good additional learning support that meets the needs of all students who require it and it has been effective in improving retention rates and pass rates for such students.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



A centrally organised interviewing team provides good, impartial advice and guidance to students. There is a clear framework for induction that incorporates subject activities and takes place over two weeks, during which time students are encouraged to review their choices of programme. This has reduced the number of early leavers by 50%. Excellent additional learning support means that students taking up the support do as well or better than their fellow students at the college. There is consistently good use of individual target setting in the tutorial programme to ensure that students and teachers are aware when standards and progress start to falter. Group tutorials vary in quality and too often become information giving and administrative lessons. There is effective welfare support through a widely publicised service. A dedicated careers and guidance team of qualified college staff provides excellent support to all students progressing from the college into higher education (HE) and employment.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- very good learning support

- open, friendly and informal relations between staff and students

- good teaching

- good subject support provided by teachers

- wide range of library and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities

- good guidance and careers support

- tough attitude to absence.

What they feel could be improved

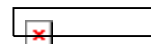
- the quality and quantity of social spaces

- price of food

- the quality of group tutorials

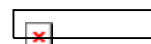
- timetabling.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



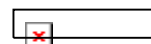
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	73	23	5
19+ and WBL*	80	20	0
Learning 16-18	66	29	4
19+ and WBL*	80	20	0

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

* work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. The college has increased the overall number of students enrolled who successfully complete their programme of study (the success rate) over the last three years. The percentage of students who, having been retained in the college, then achieved their qualification (the pass rate) has been maintained at the same level or improved over the same period. In 2001/02, the college was placed in the middle percentile of sixth form colleges. The major contribution to the recent improvement has been the number of students, particularly those aged 16 to 18, retained at the college who have subsequently achieved their qualification. There has been a further small improvement in 2002/03. There has also been a significant improvement in the pass rate for adults studying on level 3

average for sixth form colleges.

2. Students' attendance during the inspection was 80%. The religious festival of Eid took place during the inspection and the attendance was lower than in a typical college week. Attendance is normally at the average for sixth form colleges.

3. The college attracts students with a wide range of academic qualifications and backgrounds, from those working at foundation level to those with good GCSE results. Students are well motivated. They are all encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility for their own studies and to take advantage of the opportunities the college offers. Students in performing arts, for example, are encouraged to develop skills of self-evaluation and to set their own targets for improvement in performances. Students are encouraged to develop their wider key skills. Group working is being developed in many subjects. Many students demonstrate oral and written skills at an appropriate level, participate effectively in class discussions and demonstrate the ability to sustain an argument. Oral work is particularly strong in English and humanities and is promoted well in computing and IT. The GCE A-level language students develop confidence in their use of the language.

4. Students develop good practical skills in a number of areas including science, computing and IT, sport, leisure and tourism and performing arts. ICT is used well by many students for improving the presentation of assignments and in research activities through the use of the Internet. Progression is good, with many students moving on to study at higher levels at the college or to HE.

16 to 18 year olds

5. Overall success rates for 16-18 year olds have generally matched the national average upwards trend for sixth form colleges over the last three years, but remain a few percentage points below them. A significant improvement has been made in level 3 success rates in the years up to 2002, when the college rate reached the national average for sixth form colleges at the same time that enrolments had nearly doubled. This level has been maintained in 2003.

6. Success rates for students studying accredited qualifications at level 1 have been slightly below the national average. Pass rates have been well above the national average and improving while retention rates have been significantly below the national average and declining. There was a considerable improvement in retention rates to close to the national average in 2003, although pass rates showed a slight decline. GNVQ programmes have shown a significant improvement, in line with national averages.

7. Overall, students' success rates on level 2 courses have improved considerably over the last three years to close to the national average. Most pass rates for level 2 programmes have been maintained at the national average over the last three years. There was a 4% improvement in 2003. Retention rates on level 2 courses have improved over the last two years but declined slightly in 2003. GCSE courses have shown the largest improvement in retention rates while GNVQs have been consistently above the national average. NVQ retention rates have declined to poor levels.

8. Level 3 courses form 75% of college enrolments. Success rates for level 3 courses have improved consistently over the last three years by 20% a year and are now in line with the national average at the same time that entries have nearly doubled. GCE A-level courses have shown the largest improvement, while GNVQ precursor courses and AVCEs were above national averages and have continued to improve. Retention rates have shown similar improvements. The levels of retention rates and pass rates have been maintained in 2003. Measures of the overall progress made by students studying for GCE A-level and AVCE qualifications based on their previous GCSE achievements indicate that the majority of students in their second year make satisfactory progress but that some first-year students do not achieve their potential.

9. The retention and pass rates for both foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships are low. Modern apprentices rarely achieve their key skills awards. Some apprentices have recently completed the full framework in business. The pass rates for NVQs are generally low, with less than half of all work-based learners gaining a qualification. The majority of students are working towards

childcare qualifications. Retention rates are also low, with just over half of all students reaching the end of the planned programme.

Adult learners

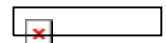
10. Overall success rates for adults have been at or above national averages for the last three years. Level 3 success rates have shown the largest improvement from 1999 to 2002. The overall trend in pass rates for long courses has been upwards at all levels. Retention rates have been uneven and below national averages.

11. Success rates at level 1 have been at or above the national average for the last three years. Retention rates were slightly below national averages but improved significantly in 2003. Pass rates have improved slightly over the last three years.

12. Success rates at level 2 have been uneven over the last three years but overall the trend has been upwards. Success rates for GCSE, GNVQ and NVQ courses have improved, although NVQ results have remained below the national average. Pass rates have been above the national average for the last three years and the trend has been upwards. GCSE courses have shown the largest improvement against national averages but NVQs have also improved. Retention rates have been below the national average for the three years to 2002 and have not improved.

13. Success rates at level 3 have improved over the three years to 2002 and have been at the national average for the last 2 years. GCE A levels have improved to well above the national average, with success rates doubling to 70%. Numbers enrolled on NVQ courses have increased by one-third and the success rates have been at or slightly below the national average during this period. The retention rate for GCE A levels matches the trend in success rates but NVQ retention rates have remained over 15% below national averages. Pass rates for GCE A levels and NVQs have been consistently above national averages and the trend has been one of improvement.

Quality of education and training



14. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 192 lessons, across 10 areas of learning covering 12 curriculum grades. Of these, teaching was good or better in 73% of lessons and unsatisfactory in 5%. This profile is in line with the national average for sixth form colleges. Teaching is of a similar quality for students aged 16 to 18 as for adult students. The best teaching is found on level 1 and level 2 courses, with over 80% of lessons graded good or better and only 2% unsatisfactory. The largest proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is also at level 1. Those lessons with a mix of practical and theory activities provide the best learning experience for the students, with the learning in 80% of these lessons graded good or better. Theory lessons are satisfactory. About 10% of lessons consisting of mainly practical activities were graded unsatisfactory. The most effective teaching and learning takes place in computing and IT, literacy and numeracy and business.

15. Schemes of work provide good coverage of course content and the in-course assessment requirements. Examination and awarding body requirements are being addressed in the schemes. A significant number of teachers of GCE A levels are able to use their experience as examiners and moderators to prepare students for undertaking coursework or building portfolios. Many schemes of work and lesson plans identify where there are opportunities for students to obtain key skills evidence but this is rarely promoted by teachers.

16. Over 95% of teaching and learning across the college are satisfactory or better. In all areas of learning, there are some very good lessons. Teachers have established good, productive working relationships with their students in many lessons. In the best lessons, teachers used their knowledge of students' preferred learning styles and outcomes of initial assessment to plan activities to meet

individual learning needs. This is a particular feature of the best lessons in health and social care and literacy and numeracy. In the most successful lessons, teachers involve the students in a range of stimulating learning activities to sustain their interest. This is evident in lessons in science, computing and IT, sport, performing arts and humanities. In most areas of learning, individual support is good, either in formal lessons or informally at other times. It is well developed in lessons in science, mathematics, health, social and childcare and literacy and numeracy, where there is frequently a good balance between group work and individual support. In a few lessons in computing and IT, support for individual practical work is poor. In the best lessons on courses at level 3, teachers frequently set a variety of learning activities that help students to develop their skills of research, analysis and critical evaluation and their clear articulation of ideas and argument. This is especially the case in science, computing and IT, performing arts and English lessons. In some of the other areas, teachers fail to help students to develop the high evaluative skills required for study at higher levels. In the areas of business, sport, leisure and tourism, health social and childcare and performing arts, teachers use their knowledge of the industry to link theory to practice and involve students in lessons through their work experiences.

17. In the weaker lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to the range of learning needs of all students, fail to ensure that students are involved in the activities they have set or use only one type of learning activity for long periods. In some lessons, mistakes in practical work are not corrected. There are few examples of the use of ILT in lessons to help students learn. It is used well in science.

18. The college has recently made significant improvements to its utilisation of space on both campuses. It has also been creative in improving the quality of accommodation for students by converting and adapting areas to meet identified curriculum needs, such as in the creation of a small film theatre. The college is also actively investigating opportunities for further developments at each campus to alleviate the limitations in accommodation that still remain and which affect the quality of the learning in some curriculum areas and affect the ability of the college to extend the provision offered. Temporary accommodation is still required at Cheadle, in spite of the recent new building programme. Although there is good use of space around the campuses, there are insufficient spaces on both campuses for students to mix socially.

19. Much of the accommodation is well maintained, clean and welcoming, and many rooms and adjacent corridors have a clear curriculum identity. Most specialist subject areas have good resources and teaching spaces, although there is a lack of some specific equipment in visual art and modern languages and accommodation in visual arts and computing and IT restricts the range of teaching activities. The college has had to limit investment because of the need for financial savings. Priorities have been identified and have been successfully addressed. Most accommodation is now accessible to students in wheelchairs and the college plans to comply with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA) by 2004. The major outstanding project is a lift for the Buxton Lane site in Marple. However, many classrooms lack modern IT equipment to implement the college's ILT strategy and few classrooms other than those with dedicated computer suites have workstations available for students' use. One exception is science where a high number of workstations are readily available to students for practical work and academic study.

20. The main library at each campus has a good range of books and other learning materials, including periodicals. Computers are available for research and other academic work and there are adequate numbers of student study spaces for quiet private study. There is good Internet access for research and all students are given an introduction to Internet search techniques during induction. The ICT centres at each campus also provide students with open access to ICT facilities and overall there is adequate access except at some peak times.

21. The implementation of the college's ILT strategy has been slow and to date has had little impact on the teaching practices of many staff. The college has purchased a commercial intranet package but has failed to ensure its implementation. The 'laptop for teachers' scheme has begun to provide some incentive to staff to develop their ILT capability. There has been some group and individual training by the ILT champions over the last three years to raise staff awareness but the amount of time available to these staff to promote ILT has been small.

22. In most curriculum areas, there are sufficient numbers of well-qualified and experienced staff.

Where staff have been identified as requiring a suitable teaching qualification, appropriate training is given, although in a few instances there is considerable delay in starting the training. The college has been successful in recruiting new staff to shortage areas such as computing and IT and developing their teaching skills in-house. Other staff development activities support the professional development of staff to meet individual and curriculum team needs.

23. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is good in most areas. Assessment is well planned and clearly communicated to students. Students complete an individual learning plan for each of their courses that identifies the target dates for assessment, including coursework and assignments. Individual learning plans do not always identify timescales to meet targets. Students, tutors and parents are aware of workloads at an early stage and are able to negotiate extensions.

24. Students receive satisfactory initial assessment at enrolment and induction. Students are assessed for key skills, literacy, numeracy and learning styles. They receive feedback on their results. The results of initial assessment are effectively recorded on the management information system and are used to develop the individual learning plans. Not all tutors take account of students' learning styles when planning teaching.

25. In most curriculum areas, assignments are clearly set with detailed criteria for marking. Most tutors correct errors and return work promptly but in a few curriculum areas there is insufficiently detailed feedback to enable students to improve their work. Students studying GCE A-level courses are set minimum target grades for achievement which are used by tutors when marking work. Most students are highly motivated by the setting of targets. There is a college-wide assessment policy which is implemented effectively by staff. Assessors and moderators often share good practice. Assessors are observed by internal verifiers and feedback is given on improving performance and standardisation of assessment. In most areas, staff make good use of external moderators to develop their assessment practice and ensure consistency. External reports from awarding bodies are regularly reviewed by course teams and contribute to the annual course review.

26. A college-wide homework policy is communicated to students and regularly reinforced by staff. Homework is regularly set and is monitored effectively by most tutors. Some tutors do not maintain records of the grades for homework. Last year, the college introduced review days for first-year students, which were particularly successful and have subsequently been extended to all students. The reviews are based on regularly updated information from the management information system and feedback from subject and personal tutors. The reviews lead to good action planning and students are fully involved in negotiating their individual learning plans. Following the reviews, updated reports are sent to parents of students aged 16 to 18. Adult students and work-based learners' reviews are also held regularly. Employers are frequently involved in the reviews of work-based learners and appreciate the regular feedback on the student's performance.

27. There is a wide range of courses for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. The college offers courses and programmes in 13 of the 14 areas of learning. Hair and beauty therapy is not offered by the college but is available at a local provider. Work-based learning is limited to 3 curriculum areas, with 154 modern apprentices. Work placements are offered to all full-time students. There is a broad range of level 3 provision, which accounts for 75% of enrolments. Most full-time students follow a programme of four GCE AS qualifications. This year the college revised the points scheme for entry and enabled students to follow a more flexible programme of two GCE AS courses and two GCSE courses. Early enrolment results show a promising reduction of almost 50% in the number of students who change their course of study. There are also level 1 and 2 non-accredited courses for adults. Students are able to progress effectively in all curriculum areas. Adult provision consists of full-time courses leading to qualifications and a wide range of non-accredited courses. There is also higher level provision for teacher training and a part-time degree with a local university. Students' and tutors' feedback are used effectively to withdraw and develop courses. A good labour market analysis is produced by the marketing team.

28. Key skills and basic skills are widely promoted. Key skills are taught in separate lessons. On many courses, opportunities for teaching and assessing key skills have been identified and are highlighted in lesson plans and in schemes of work but are not promoted well by teachers. Pass and retention rates for key skills are above the national averages. They are good for key skills IT at levels

1 and 2, but low at level 3 for all three key skills of numeracy, literacy and IT. The achievement of key skills for modern apprentices is particularly low.

29. There are effective links with local schools and approximately 50 pupils aged 14 to 16 years attend the college for vocational qualifications, mostly in care. The college is a key member of the local learning partnership, the 14 to 19 sub-group and post-19 forum. There are good links with employers for corporate training, work-based learning and work placements. Many employers repeatedly return to the college for staff training. Good examples of current corporate training are taking place in care and computing and for teaching assistants and assessors. There are 1,000 students on distance learning programmes and the college has a learndirect centre.

30. Enrichment activities in sport, outdoor pursuits, languages and the arts are available to students as part of their full-time programme. So far this year, 56% of full-time students are taking part in enrichment activities. Students are encouraged to recognise personal development through hobbies, work and voluntary activities outside the college. The enrichment timetable has been amended to match the resources available and not all students who wish to take part in activities are able to do so. There are a number of international trips and social activities linked to the students union. Not all curriculum areas have sufficient enrichment opportunities and records of take-up are incomplete. The college is currently developing an on-line learning log which will include a record of enrichment in addition to more general attendance monitoring. A new programme of raising awareness of cultural diversity has been particularly successful for students and staff. The peer mentoring programme is effectively promoted throughout the college.

31. A centrally organised interviewing team provides good, impartial advice and guidance to students. The guidance team also provide an after care service to students who have left the college but need further advice and guidance. Specialist adult guidance interviews are available on both campuses.

32. The college has a clear induction programme with a range of activities over a two-week period. These activities introduce students to assessment procedures and to what is expected of them in terms of work, attendance and the achievement of minimum target grades. Induction takes place in course or subject areas and is systematically followed up through the tutorial system. Students are encouraged to analyse the suitability of their course or subject during the induction period and a specific change of course day is established which allows students to change programme, after consultation with subject teachers and personal tutors.

33. There is a well co-ordinated tutorial support programme for students. The programme includes induction, opportunities to review progress and guidance. Tutorial support for adult students is good. Six Saturday tutorial and study skills sessions are arranged for part-time adult students. There is consistently good use of reviews of students' progress and target setting within the tutorial programme. Tutorials are also used to develop national records of achievement. Group tutorials vary in quality and, in some, students are not sufficiently involved.

34. There is effective monitoring of attendance and punctuality. Every student is expected to account for any absence and record the reason in their tutorial file. Tutors receive weekly print-outs of the attendance of their students. Student managers intervene where a student has consistently low attendance or punctuality. Student liaison advisers play a significant role in monitoring attendance patterns and alerting tutors to matters of concern.

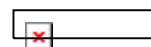
35. Outstanding learning support is provided by the college, with effective pre-enrolment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is effective one-to-one learning support for students on intermediate and advanced programmes and support in classes by learning support assistants for foundation students. Additional learning support has a positive impact on improved retention and achievement for students. An analysis of the students receiving support indicates that for students studying at levels 1 and 2, the retention and pass rates are above the average for the college and at level 3 are equal to the college average.

36. There is effective welfare support through a widely publicised service. The team members are

enthusiastic, mutually supportive and responsive to identified students' needs. The welfare service provides help with a wide range of students' concerns and difficulties. It is particularly effective in putting students in touch with specialist counsellors and advice services such as the benefits hotline. The college has good Connexions service advice and support for students with established links. Counsellors provide a very good service for students.

37. Careers education and guidance have a team of dedicated and qualified staff who give excellent support to students seeking entry to HE as well as progression to employment and further education or training. There are well-resourced careers libraries at both Cheadle and Marple campuses that are frequently used by students. In 2003, there were 415 applications for HE places and all but 5 were given offers. 20% of the applications were from students of ethnic origin.

Leadership and management



38. Leadership and management are good. The current principal took up post in September 2002 and new senior managers were appointed. At the time of the new principal's appointment, the college was in financial difficulties, enrolments had been below target and it was operating a deficit budget. The principal, staff and governors have reviewed the mission of the college and improved finances. The governors, principal and senior managers provide a clear vision and direction for the college. The college mission, 'working with you to succeed', was agreed after thorough consultation. The college's three-year development plan is a comprehensive and coherent document that identifies the actions required to secure improvements. There are clear roles for senior managers in meeting the key objectives and strategic priorities for the next three years. The senior management team has effectively focused its efforts on improving the students' experience. Early indicators are positive. The college has met its enrolment target. The revised entry criteria and a new induction programme have reduced the number of early leavers by almost 50%.

39. Communication in the college is good. The principal and senior managers have responded positively to staff and student surveys. The management style is now open and consultative. Morale has improved and staff feel that their opinions are valued. Newsletters, briefings and regular meetings at all levels have improved communications. The college has good links with the local community and high schools. It is an active partner in the Stockport 14 to 19 strategic group.

40. Governors are strongly committed to the college and the quality improvement strategy. The teaching, learning and quality sub-committee effectively monitors quality issues and takes actions on under-performance. Governors now have a better awareness of the key issues facing the college and receive regular, detailed reports on progress against objectives and targets in the development plan. Self-assessment of the corporation includes a detailed review of good practice and weaknesses against key areas of activity. Governors have completed a skills and training audit and actions are in place to address their needs.

41. Management of the curriculum is good in most areas. On most courses, staff work well as a team and share teaching resources. They effectively use data to monitor students' progress. Curriculum management is most effective in literacy and numeracy, computing and IT, and sport, leisure and tourism. In these areas, there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements. The management of visual arts is unsatisfactory. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory. The work-based learning manager closely monitors the progress of learners and provides monthly reports to senior managers. However, completion rates for modern apprentices are low.

42. The college has developed a strategy to further improve the quality of teaching but it is not yet effective in all areas. All teachers are observed at least once a year. Tutorials are not observed as part of the programme. Inspectors identified weaknesses in lessons which had also been found by college observations. The lesson observation profile for the college is at the national average profile

for sixth form colleges. The new deputy-principal for curriculum and quality established a teaching and learning group in September to share good practice. It is too early to identify the impact of this group. The college did not appraise teaching staff in 2002/03 but they have recently been trained on the new system to be introduced this year. There is a detailed staff development plan which focuses on strategic priorities.

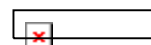
43. The annual self-assessment process is comprehensive. Each course team and service area produces its own report but in some areas there is insufficient emphasis on improving teaching and learning. A process of review and validation of the reports leads to a summary report. In most areas, a detailed action plan is produced and performance against the targets is reviewed termly by senior managers and governors. All curriculum areas have an annual internal quality review involving lesson observations and a further review of progress. The process does not always involve course managers and some do not value the process. The outcomes are not always used in the self-assessment of courses. Teachers and newly appointed student managers monitor attendance closely and there have been improvements in attendance on all courses.

44. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted to staff and students. The college has an equality and diversity policy and a race equality policy. The equality and diversity group effectively monitors implementation of the policies. Senior managers and governors do not receive systematic reporting on progress. Several staff training events have raised awareness of equal opportunities. Each curriculum area has an equal opportunities co-ordinator to advise on appropriate teaching materials and some appropriate changes have been made in most areas. Good progress is being made in meeting SENDA requirements. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups at the Cheadle site is higher than the local community. The college monitors the recruitment of staff and has started to analyse retention and pass rates by gender and ethnicity. There is insufficient use of this analysis in course action plans. A number of college documents have been produced in minority ethnic languages and interpreters are available at parents' evening. An innovative mentoring scheme by which students from minority ethnic groups mentor each other gives extra support to these students and has increased links with local community groups.

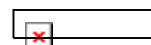
45. Management information data are accurate and reliable. Managers and teachers have good and timely access to a wide range of reports through the college's online system. Reports are very useful to and help staff in monitoring the attendance, retention and achievement of individual students and course performance. In addition to regular reports, management information staff respond quickly to individual requests for data.

46. Financial management is satisfactory. Financial control has improved since the appointment of the new finance director in 2001. The college has benchmarked its costs against similar organisations and identified key areas of savings. Finances are closely monitored by senior managers and governors against financial objectives. Budget holders had effective training in financial management and receive regular reports. The college does not yet calculate individual course costs. Overall, the college provides value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- good use of ILT in teaching, especially in chemistry and physics lessons
- well-equipped science provision
- good subject support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- poor pass and retention rates for GCE AS biology and physics
- insufficient attention to differing needs of students in mixed-ability classes
- insufficient guidance on how to improve written work.

Scope of provision

47. Science provision at the Marple and Cheadle campuses includes a good range of GCE AS and A2 courses for 500 students. On both campuses, GCE A-level biology, chemistry, electronics and physics are available, along with GCSE biology. There is also a popular evening class in astronomy at Cheadle. Double the number of students are studying biology compared with either chemistry, physics or electronics. Just over half of the students continue from GCE AS to A2 courses. Several adults are on GCE A-level courses and most astronomy students are adults. Science teachers also contribute to the teaching of biological modules on the courses managed within the college's access provision. Overall, 45 adults study sciences.

Achievement and standards

48. Pass rates and retention rates are at or below national averages in most subjects, but both GCE AS and GCE A2 chemistry courses have pass rates and retention rates very close to national averages. On these courses students achieve results that are better than might be predicted from their previous achievements at GCSE. In contrast, GCE AS biology and physics pass and retention rates are consistently below national averages and students' results compared with their previous GCSE points scores declined in 2003. Pass rates for both students aged 16 to 18 and adult students on biological courses, and adults studying astronomy, are close to national averages. Students' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. There is good progression from GCE A-level courses to the study of scientific subjects in HE.

49. Students carry out practical work safely and are developing good skills in volumetric analysis and sketching from microscope slides. Physics and electronics students can design and set up appropriate circuits to, for example, compare specific heat capacities of different metals. The projects of adult astronomy students are well presented and their research includes access to

relevant websites and practical exercises, such as a photographic study of the moon.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2000 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	152	259	200
		% retention	89	88	84
		% pass rate	70	68	74
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	121	124	104
		% retention	88	85	88
		% pass rate	86	76	83
GCE AS electronics	3	No. of starts	42	47	43
		% retention	79	83	93
		% pass rate	76	72	80
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	108	92	90
		% retention	88	86	78
		% pass rate	92	84	81
GCE A2 biology	3	No. of starts	*	84	131
		% retention	*	98	93
		% pass rate	*	95	87
GCE A2 chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	71	66
		% retention	*	96	98
		% pass rate	*	94	94
GCE A2 physics	3	No. of starts	*	53	50
		% retention	*	100	88
		% pass rate	*	96	86

Source: ISR (2000 -2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

50. All teaching is satisfactory and over half is good or better, with some challenging teaching across the subjects and on the two campuses. Teachers, especially in chemistry and physics, make good use of ILT to help students' learning. They make good presentations using data projectors and give interesting demonstrations, such as the introduction to digital signalling and an illustration of condensation polymerisation and nylon production. Data loggers were used to sketch acid-based titration curves and spreadsheets to calculate pH values. In biology, teachers use videos and OHT transparencies effectively and students are referred to websites to research topics such as the effects of toxins on organisms. Demonstrations such as the use of a sheep's lung to illustrate gaseous exchange maintain students' interest and encourage thoughtful questions.

51. Where teaching is less good, lesson plans are insufficiently detailed, lessons are uninspiring and teachers fail to vary the teaching and learning activities. For example, in some lessons, time is spent completing past examination questions and worksheets or copying of notes of the correct answers to test questions. Teachers do not always plan for the whole range of students' abilities and require students to listen to long explanations on enzymes or muscle action rather than to be more actively involved in the learning. Some experimental work, for example, the preparation of a standard

solution, gives little opportunity for students to explore the reasons for experimental procedures. Even in some good or very good lessons, teachers do not always ensure that the weakest students are given sufficient support to enable them not only to learn the basic principles but to make good progress.

52. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and benefit from a variety of relevant professional development. They are well supported by technicians. At both Marple and Cheadle campuses, laboratories are well equipped, with good overall computer availability. The layout of the science accommodation allows for a pleasant area with subject and science careers displays, where students can socialise and consult a range of scientific journals and publications. The libraries have a good selection of modern textbooks and more general books for astronomy, biology and physics, CD-ROMs and a wide range of periodicals, some online.

53. Teachers set homework and tests regularly and students are given many opportunities to attempt past examination questions but, in some cases, especially in biology, significant amounts of lesson time are devoted to these questions. While teachers almost always grade work well and compare the grade with the student's target grade, only a small proportion of the work has detailed comments to help students to understand why marks have been awarded and there are very few examples of detailed comments that help students to improve their work. The department has identified the need for rigorous assessment and constructive feedback in its action plan but currently routine marking is not regularly monitored.

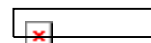
54. Good timetabled enrichment opportunities include chemistry for biologists and a biology research project in conjunction with Liverpool University on DNA analysis. Students also participate in national analytical chemistry competitions, attend lectures on topics such as natural selection or genetic engineering and have visited the Jodrell Bank radio telescope and the laboratories of the British Space Programme.

55. Students value the opportunity to book individual subject support sessions and the more informal availability of teachers to help with specific problems. They are able to access notes on lessons they have missed through the college intranet, even from home. Good careers guidance and support and detailed information on science careers are available. Currently, few scientists act as tutors. Students feel disadvantaged because tutors, some of whom are part-time, do not have knowledge of their study programmes and are difficult to contact.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The current self-assessment report is based on detailed subject reviews, and the action plan is realistic. However, there has been insufficient time for improvements to have an impact on pass rates and the monitoring of other targets is insufficiently rigorous. Staff work well in subject teams and share teaching resources across the two campuses, but do not co-operate sufficiently across subject boundaries. There is a good awareness of equal opportunities issues but staff are not involved in strategies, for example, to improve recruitment of female students to study physics.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for GCE A-level further mathematics

- rigorous assessment

- high levels of individual support for students in lessons

- effective teamwork leading to a co-ordinated approach to teaching.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on GCE AS mathematics

- narrow range of teaching methods

- lack of use of ILT in lessons.

Scope of provision

57. The college offers a good range of provision at both campuses that includes GCSE mathematics, GCE AS and A2 mathematics, GCE AS and A2 further mathematics and key skills application of number levels 2 and 3. GCSE mathematics is offered during the day and in the evening to provide opportunities for students to improve to a grade C for progression to other courses. The timetabling arrangements for modules in mathematics and further mathematics allow students to take GCE A-level mathematics in one year. There are 605 enrolments in mathematics subjects. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and are following a full-time programme.

Achievement and standards

58. Retention and pass rates in mathematics and key skills application of number are satisfactory but uneven, with some courses being above the national average and some slightly below. GCSE mathematics and key skills application of number level 2 both have pass rates above the national average but low retention rates. Retention rates for GCE AS mathematics are low but improved in 2003. There have been very low pass rates for GCE AS mathematics for the last three years. These have improved in 2003 but they remain below the national average. There are high retention rates and satisfactory pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics courses. Retention and pass rates on GCE AS and A2 further mathematics are very good.

59. Students are able to use technical terms confidently. All students use calculators effectively, including the function keys. Calculations are neatly set out in a logical manner, showing all the steps, and this allows students to gain process marks in examinations. Students demonstrated good study skills by describing how they could improve their work. Students make good use of colour and bordering in their notes to highlight important points. The better students handled mental arithmetic easily and are able to appreciate numerical relationships.

60. Retention rates on level 2 programmes are being tackled through a much greater emphasis on monitoring progress in key skills and using parental pressure on GCSE students through letters home. Only those with a grade D who actually need GCSE are recommended to sit the GCSE mathematics examination. Other students are recommended to take key skills level 2 application of number.

A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2000 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	381	457	334
		% retention	84	78	68
		% pass rate	32	40	50
Key skills application of number	2	No. of starts	*	227	154
		% retention	*	95	78
		% pass rate	*	24	32
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	277	215	196
		% retention	87	76	80
		% pass rate	65	47	55
GCE A2 mathematics	3	No. of starts	**	83	49
		% retention	**	100	100
		% pass rate	**	93	92

Source: ISR (2000 and 2002), college (2003)

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

61. Lesson plans have clear and realistic objectives. Topics are introduced using good board work and are reinforced by practical exercises. However, some lesson plans lack references to skills development and identify only a narrow range of teaching methods which would ensure that students were fully involved in the work. There are high levels of effective individual support in the lessons. Teachers regularly check individual progress during the lesson and offer specific individual help where necessary. This includes immediate feedback on work and discussion of particular problems. Teachers extend students' knowledge by encouraging them to discuss their understanding of concepts, although at times this was necessary because teachers had failed to make a thorough check to ensure that students had a good understanding of the topics covered in previous lessons. During the best lessons, students' own knowledge is effectively used in contributing to the development of the concept or topic. In one key skills lesson, covering the revision of metric and imperial measure, the teacher made good use of questions to involve the students and used their experiences to reinforce the key learning points. The teacher set problems in everyday contexts to confirm students' understanding further. In some lessons, teachers fail to make sure that students are learning. At times, students rigidly followed recognised mathematical methods that fail to develop their understanding and analytical skills.

62. Students are well supported by enthusiastic and committed staff who offer help both during and outside lessons. Classes are taught in appropriate designated classrooms, which are well lit and comfortable. All rooms have colourful displays which cover mathematical theories and show interesting and relevant examples of mathematics being applied to everyday life. Calculators are available and are issued to students during GCSE lessons. There are insufficient graphical calculators for GCE A-level students. Students are encouraged to buy their own. A graphical

calculator and an OHP were used in one lesson. There is no digital projection equipment in the mathematics area. Computers were seen in one room on each campus but these were not used. Each course has a detailed handbook, containing the syllabus, requirements for success, marks for a particular grade, details of the staff, recommended books and useful websites.

63. Assessment is rigorous and makes good use of examination questions and marking schemes. Regular reviews help students to concentrate on improving their performance. Marks are recorded on monitoring sheets in the handbooks. This enables students to see areas for further work. All GCE AS students are given an initial assessment to check their understanding of GCSE work. Those who score less than 66% are given some distance learning and then retested. The small class sizes in further mathematics allow teachers to offer students a high level of individual support.

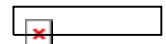
64. Provision is good for those wishing to study mathematics at level 3 and progress to mathematics-related courses at university. Most students successfully progress to courses in engineering, architecture, science, medicine, mathematics, mechanical engineering and IT.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management are good. Staff work well as a team, despite being on two campuses. Roles and responsibilities are clear and are understood by all staff. Single-site and whole-team meetings are held on a four-week cycle. All courses produce a self-assessment report. There is repetition in some elements of self-assessment, as courses are taught by the same staff with the same resources.

66. The team have acknowledged the low pass rates on GCE AS courses in their self-assessment report and strategies are now in place to improve these rates. The strategies include the use of progress review sheets, recommendations to use websites, letters home when homework is not completed, greater use of diagnostic testing to identify problems and the future introduction of foundation advanced mathematics to increase the skills of weaker GCE AS students. It is too early to see the impact of these strategies.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level business and law and GNVQ intermediate business courses

- good teaching

- good support for students

- good teamworking and sharing of good practice.

Weaknesses

- little use of ILT in classrooms
- poor pass rates for GCE AS economics and accounting.

Scope of provision

67. The college offers business courses ranging from level 1 to level 3, although the majority of courses are GCE A-level courses at level 3. There are over 900 full-time students enrolled on a range of courses that include GNVQ foundation and intermediate business and GCE AS and A2 business, accounting, economics and law. There is a smaller range of NVQ courses in administration and accounting at level 2 that cater for a small number of adults and 23 modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

68. Pass rates have generally improved over recent years. Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business and GCE A2 business and law are significantly above the national averages. The GCE A2 business and law courses have the highest numbers of students. Pass rates on GCE AS accounting and GCE AS economics courses are well below national averages and are declining. Retention rates are mostly at, or above, national averages and on the GCE A2 business course the rate is significantly higher. The retention rate on GNVQ intermediate business has dropped below the national average. Attendance at lessons observed during inspection was satisfactory at 80%. There is good progression to higher level courses.

69. The standard of students' work is good, particularly on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses and the GCE A2 law course. On other courses, students demonstrate an understanding of the topics covered during lessons. First-year AVCE students quickly grasped the concepts of cash flow forecasts and were able to produce their own, and economics students confidently explained their views to the class and contributed well to discussions. Pass rates for modern apprentices are poor; most do not achieve the key skills element of their programme.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 2000 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ business intermediate	2	No. of starts	39	39	65
		% retention	69	82	71
		% pass rate	52	84	93
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	42	51	52
		% retention	90	98	92
		% pass rate	79	78	65
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	30	54	40
		% retention	83	94	90
		% pass rate	68	61	64

GCE A level business management and office studies	3	No. of starts	173	116	132
		% retention	61	95	91
		% pass rate	91	93	100
GCE A level law	3	No. of starts	88	109	129
		% retention	52	91	95
		% pass rate	98	99	98
GCE A level law	3	No. of starts	184	242	256
		% retention	83	82	85
		% pass rate	82	79	82

Source: ISR (2000 -2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

70. Most teaching is good. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of students, set targets and use probing questions to challenge students and reinforce their learning. In one business studies lesson, students discussed their research and ideas effectively and agreed how they would feed back to a company. In another business lesson, students analysed their skills and experience well to prepare for a job application. The level of debate was good and students were authoritative and sensitive when assessing their fellow students. A very effective exercise involved students working in pairs and describing the skills of the other student, then sharing the descriptions and analysing the differences and similarities. Most students are confident and articulate. Students develop good work-related skills during the annual work experience programme.

71. In the less effective lessons, teachers sometimes fail to address the learning needs of all the students in the class and the pace of teaching is frequently too slow. There is a lack of variety in teaching and learning activities and students are not sufficiently stimulated to learn.

72. Teachers are well qualified and frequently update their vocational skills through placements with local employers. There are sufficient assessors and verifiers for modern apprentices. Staff share good practice when developing learning materials. There has been slow progress in using ILT resources to help students learn. Overall, the accommodation is adequate, although some classrooms are too small for class sizes and this limits the range of learning activities that can take place. Group work is sometimes hindered by the poor soundproofing of classrooms. The number and range of books available are small for the number of students on courses. Teaching is sometimes hindered by the lack of access to ICT facilities in some classrooms. This means that students cannot move smoothly from theory to practical work and teachers are unable to use ICT as a teaching resource. GNVQ and AVCE students now have access to computers in their lessons.

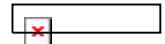
73. Assessment and monitoring of students' work are good. Teachers give detailed and effective feedback which helps students to improve their performance. Parents and employers are kept well informed on students' progress. Reviews are frequent, with clear targets set for students. Students are regularly set homework, which is swiftly marked and used to agree further targets.

74. Support for students is good. Students receive good initial guidance at induction. Initial assessment is thorough and identifies additional learning needs including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) support. Some students have not taken up the additional learning support. Retention rates have improved where students have taken advantage of additional learning support. All students have an individual tutor. Support for individual students is good in lessons, with teachers making time to help resolve problems and answer questions. Careers guidance is good. Most students make good progress to higher levels of qualifications and from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships. Numbers of students progressing from GCE AS business to GCE A2 have halved during recent years.

Leadership and management

75. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Staff work effectively together and communication is good. Not all part-time staff attend meetings. Staff development opportunities are good and are managed through the appraisal process. Targets for retention and achievement are set effectively for each course through the quality review process. Staff regularly use the college and course management information. Pass rates and retention rates have generally improved during recent years. Course files are organised effectively. The self-assessment report and action plans are reviewed regularly at course meetings. Work-based learning is managed through a separate school. Staff from both schools work well together.

Computing and information technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all programmes

- consistently good teaching and learning

- good learning resources, including a well-developed intranet

- very good diagnostic and formative assessment

- good personal support for students

- strong leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- inappropriate ICT accommodation for class teaching.

Scope of provision

76. The college offers courses in GNVQ intermediate IT, AVCE, GCE A-level computing and GCE A-level ICT to full-time students aged 16 to 18. Adult courses range from beginners' courses such as start IT through computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). There are 668 full-time students and 1,300 part-time students, including some students aged 14 to 16 on GCE AS ICT courses.

Achievement and standards

77. Pass rates are high and are above average on many programmes. In particular, pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate ICT and AVCE ICT courses were more than 10% above national averages in 2003. Pass rates for the ECDL and CLAIT courses have been above national averages for three years. Retention rates on all programmes are near, or above, national averages and most are improving. There is proficient use of IT skills on full-time courses and good attention by students to layout and presentation. Student progression on all programmes is high. In 2003, 50% of students on the GNVQ intermediate IT programme moved on to the AVCE. Each year, substantial numbers of students from the GCE A-level and AVCE programmes enter university to study computing or IT related subjects.

78. Most students demonstrate good practical skills and are confident in their use of various software packages. Students on the GNVQ intermediate course are confident in their use of applications software and in one lesson using a graphics package, for example, they completed their assignment on time and to a high standard. There was also good understanding of design methods and how to document aspects of systems. First-year AVCE students confidently analysed information from a project brief and competently completed an assignment on data flow diagrams with very little assistance. GCE AS students were able to document spreadsheet macros with few queries and started to design a user interface. Students on CLAIT courses had developed sufficient confidence in their skills to work through the course books and try out various software facilities.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Start award in technology, computing, IT (short)	1	No. of starts	353	287	210
		% retention	94	87	88
		% pass rate	84	87	95
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	151	352	269
		% retention	90	73	77
		% pass rate	93	85	81
ECDL	2	No. of starts	46	124	142
		% retention	57	76	77
		% pass rate	85	91	89
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	89	67	63
		% retention	89	91	94
		% pass rate	84	92	89
GCE AS IT	3	No. of starts	170	159	149
		% retention	84	87	86
		% pass rate	84	90	84
GCE A level computing	3	No. of starts	70	51	52
		% retention	66	92	98
		% pass rate	87	94	94

AVCE ICT (double award)	3	No. of starts	66	75	75
		% retention	79	71	99
		% pass rate	96	85	95

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

Quality of education and training

79. Most teaching is consistently good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In the most effective lessons, students are engaged in discussion and are made to think and articulate their responses and to justify their decisions. Students are challenged to develop their skills to the maximum and learning is extended for those able to benefit through the individual support provided. In whole-class teaching, teachers use well-prepared displays and presentations.

80. In some less effective lessons, the teachers gave, after a brief introduction, individual support for students completing practical assignments. There was no change of activity or discussion and students flagged after a long session of close computer work.

81. A comprehensive range of resources is available on the intranet. Students have access to handouts, manuals, articles and support materials and there is also a subset of this information available on CD-ROM for use at home. The open access suite gives students access to computers outside class time. Learning resources for the part-time courses are extremely good. The teaching provided by the large team of part-time tutors is effective.

82. Much ICT accommodation for specialist lessons is inappropriate for essential group and class teaching. A large IT area on the Marple campus, for example, is separated into four teaching rooms by screens. They provide good accommodation for students receiving individual support for practical tasks but when used for group teaching the sounds are distracting to students in other areas. There are similar problems on the Cheadle campus

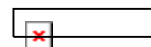
83. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Students understand both the criteria against which they are judged and the ways in which their work could be improved. Comprehensive feedback is given on assignments and is viewed by students as helpful in improving their standard of work. Support sessions are provided on vocational programmes to give students a chance to catch up on coursework. Scrupulously maintained records on both full-time and part-time students help monitor their progress over time.

84. Support for students is good. There is strong personal support for full-time students and adults on evening classes appreciate the well-informed and helpful advice offered by their part-time tutors. Students can book appointments to see some teachers on the intranet. Students also have e-mail contact addresses for all staff and there is a post box outside the staff room. For each class, there is good information in course folders on disclosed disabilities and learning styles. Teachers give of their time out of lessons freely to help students who may be falling behind or having problems with particular aspects of the course. Teachers provide sensitive help on personal issues. There is support for students with disabilities. For example, there are specially adapted terminal desks, ultra-large monitors for use by visually impaired students and specialist provision at Houldsworth Mill for visually impaired adults. Staff provide support and encouragement for female computing students.

Leadership and management

85. Subject leadership and management are excellent. There is a coherent approach to ensuring that students achieve as highly as possible. Staff work hard to ensure good communication between campuses. Full-time staff from both sites attend regular course team meetings and a weekly e-mail bulletin keeps part-time staff in touch with developments on short courses. Performance monitoring is well established, both for full-time and part-time staff and is used to maintain high standards across all the programmes.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates for AVCE travel and tourism
- good teaching on sport and travel courses
- good support for students
- effective communication and sharing of good practice.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GNVQ leisure and tourism courses
- poor completion of modern apprenticeships frameworks
- insufficient challenge for more able students
- insufficient feedback on assignments.

Scope of provision

86. The college offers GCE AS and GCE A2 physical education, AVCE leisure and recreation, AVCE travel and tourism, GNVQ leisure and tourism at foundation and intermediate level and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas in sport. There are approximately 540 full-time students aged 16 to 18 on these courses. There are 24 modern apprentices, 16 at foundation level and 8 at advanced level. A football coaching programme run by ex-professional footballers attracts 64 students to the college. Short courses such as the community sports leader award and the travel agents certificate and sport enrichment activities of football, rugby, netball,

hockey and badminton provide additional opportunities to enhance students' qualifications and experience.

Achievement and standards

87. There are good pass rates and retention rates on the AVCE travel and tourism course and good retention rates on GCE A2 physical education. Pass rates on GCE AS physical education are below the national average. Retention rates on most courses have improved but remain below national averages. Retention rates on both foundation and intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism courses are significantly below the national averages for sixth form colleges. Completion rates for modern apprentices are poor. Pass rates for NVQs, technical certificates and additional industry awards are good. Apprentices fail to complete the key skills element of the programme.

88. The standards of students' work in over 60% of lessons are good or better. The standards of students' work on the AVCE programmes are generally high and some work is completed to a very high standard on travel and tourism courses. Students on the foundation GNVQ travel and tourism course produce work to a high standard in class and are interested and enthusiastic. Students on level 3 programmes contribute well to discussions in theory lessons and are developing appropriate analytical skills for sports coaching. High standards of coaching are achieved by some NVQ students. Students have a good awareness of health and safety. Attendance at lessons observed during inspection is good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	No. of starts	57	47	37
		% retention	67	77	59
		% pass rate	82	86	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	69	79	51
		% retention	84	85	65
		% pass rate	62	58	79
BTEC first diploma in sport	2	No. of starts	*	*	52
		% retention	*	*	81
		% pass rate	*	*	90
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	87	62	78
		% retention	78	95	94
		% pass rate	88	92	89
AVCE leisure and recreation (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	41	49
		% retention	*	63	53
		% pass rate	*	63	88
AVCE travel and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	61	61
		% retention	*	57	70
		% pass rate	*	91	98

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

89. Teaching on sport and travel courses is good. Teaching and learning in practical lessons and in the majority of travel and tourism lessons are good. The results of the students' learning style survey are used well in planning lessons and students respond well to the variety of teaching activities they experience. Teachers also draw on their personal industrial experiences to illustrate theoretical concepts and make the lessons relevant and enriching for the students. Students are motivated by the vocational expertise of teachers and pass rates are good on the practical and industry-related units. In travel, there are opportunities to gain good work placements in travel shops and at the local airport, where students are guaranteed a job interview. Teachers make good use of the students' experiences during lessons. Good use is made of video to support teaching and provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. Teachers take the opportunity to explore cultural issues related to sport when they arise. In a GCE AS physical education lesson on contemporary studies, perceptions about how cultural and social differences can affect involvement in sport and perceptions of who plays different sports such as football and golf were discussed.

90. In practical lessons, students are set individual targets and standards to be achieved. A trampoline session started with a general introduction and students were encouraged to progress through individual tailored activities, but the opportunity to practise coaching skills was missed. Teachers provide good oral feedback to students during practical lessons.

91. In some of the less satisfactory theory lessons, teachers fail to meet the range of learning needs of all the students in the class. Some weaker students do not participate effectively while others find the work too easy. Written feedback on students' work does not provide students with enough information to help them to improve their performance.

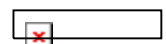
92. Resources are satisfactory. Recently introduced student handbooks are used to set individual targets and monitor students' progress. The intranet site contains lesson notes and links to useful websites to help students study on their own. Some areas of the intranet are still being developed. There are good sports facilities including fully equipped sports halls and gymnasiums. All sports students are expected to participate in college sport programmes. Sports teams perform well at regional and national level as indicated by the displays on the sports notice boards.

93. Overall, support for students is good. Excellent use is made of learning support on foundation programmes. Students with physical and emotional support requirements have been successfully integrated with the college. One member of staff has developed a very good link with a pupil referral unit, enabling disadvantaged learners to successfully follow a programme of study. GCE A-level physical education students choose the sport for external assessment from an extensive list of options. Teachers complete observations and assessments at evenings and weekends when the students' are competing at their highest level.

Leadership and management

94. Leadership and management are good. Communications between staff across the different sites is very good. The staff work well as a team to share good practice, develop learning materials and review the courses offered in the curriculum area. The introduction of the new BTEC first diploma in sport has been well managed, with large numbers of student recruited and both pass rate and retention rates slightly above national averages. Teachers effectively promote equality within lessons and take opportunities to discuss cultural diversity when applying theory to practice. The evidence from observation of teaching has been used effectively in self-assessment to improve teaching and learning.

Health, social and childcare



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

Strengths

- good pass rates for introduction to counselling and the certificate and diploma courses in childcare and education

- good teaching

- effective assessment and review across all courses

- wide range of courses for the local community

- effective team management.

Weaknesses

- poor completion rates for modern apprentices

- poor pass rates on GNVQ intermediate courses

- unsatisfactory retention rates on level 3 courses in 2002/03.

Scope of provision

95. The college offers GNVQ foundation, GNVQ intermediate, and AVCE health and social care. In early years care, the college offers the certificate in childcare and education at level 2 and the diploma in childcare and education at level 3. GCSE psychology is offered at level 2. GCE AS and A2 psychology are offered at level 3. There are part-time counselling courses at levels 1 and 2 and NVQ care and early years courses are offered at levels 2 and 3. There are foundation and advanced modern apprentices in care and in early years. GCSE health and social care is offered at a number of local schools. Some 1,147 students, of whom 270 are full time, are enrolled on courses in health and social care and childcare. There are 659 full-time psychology students. There are 97 part-time NVQ students and 121 modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

96. Pass rates are good on introduction to counselling and on the certificate and the diploma in childcare and education. Pass rates on most full-time courses have not improved during recent years and are below the national average. There are poor pass rates on intermediate GNVQ health and social care. In 2002/03, retention rates were unsatisfactory on AVCE and GCE A-level psychology courses.

97. Pass rates are poor for foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. Students fail to achieve the key skills component of their course. Progress is too slow for modern apprentices. Some 80% of modern apprentices have reached the end of their programme and gone into employment without achieving the NVQ.

98. Coursework and portfolios are satisfactory. Students develop good skills for employment or HE. Psychology students demonstrate good analytical skills. Care and early years students concentrate on meeting the needs of the individuals in their care and have good practical skills. Students on all courses develop confidence, ask perceptive questions, contribute to discussions effectively and work productively with their fellow students.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	27	21	31
		% retention	78	90	84
		% pass rate	90	89	88
Introductory counselling skills	1	No. of starts	77	59	36
		% retention	88	98	97
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	41	39	53
		% retention	83	92	87
		% pass rate	88	78	78
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	190	185	258
		% retention	71	98	92
		% pass rate	81	93	93
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	50	66	85
		% retention	66	71	56
		% pass rate	82	83	88
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	21	44	24
		% retention	81	73	75
		% pass rate	88	100	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

99. Much teaching is good. In the most effective lessons, teachers achieve a good balance between meeting the individual needs of students and meeting awarding body requirements. Planning is comprehensive and good learning materials are designed by teachers for specific topics. Learning plans for students take account of abilities and a wide range of teaching methods is used. In a first-year diploma in childcare and education lesson, on the topic of how children learn, a range of learning tasks was used to meet individual learning styles. There was good use of worksheets and

extension tasks to reduce the amount of note taking and to maintain the pace of the lesson. A good balance of direct and open questions helped to ensure participation and check students' learning. Students responded well and remained interested throughout this theory lesson. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory. However, there are no computers in the classrooms.

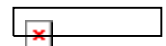
100. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good and well established. Students have regular reviews and revise their learning plans. Apprentices have a progress review every six weeks and full-time and part-time students have a review three times a year. Assignments are promptly assessed and returned to students with comments on how to improve the standard of their work. There is initial diagnostic assessment for full-time and part-time students. Students with additional learning needs receive support from classroom assistants, either in the lesson or at other times. Teachers and tutors skilfully create a supportive learning environment. However, NVQ students who have training sessions in the workplace are supported by trainers who have not received any basic skills or learning support training.

101. The college offers a wide range of courses to meet the needs of the local community. There are clear progression routes in care and early years and in psychology and counselling. Apprentices progress from foundation to advanced levels. Part-time day and evening provision in both care and early years training has widened participation. This area of learning has been active in promoting and developing vocational training initiatives such as the new vocational GCSE in health and social care in schools. Care assistants from local residential homes who cannot attend the college receive training in the workplace. The NVQ playwork course was introduced in response to a request from the early years partnership. Curriculum staff have played an active role in assisting Stepping Hill hospital to establish NVQ training. Students are offered good opportunities to participate in childcare exchange schemes in Europe and some students have been on placement in Sweden and in the Netherlands.

Leadership and management

102. Subject team management is effective. There is close liaison between staff on separate sites. Staff work well in sharing good practice, particularly on internal verification and standardisation of assessment. Courses are planned and materials developed as a single team. The subject team work well with the work-based learning school to effectively support apprentices. The subject team regularly review their performance, plan actions and monitor improvements. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and analytical. The team responds well to feedback from students, for example, in changing options of units and changing the order of unit presentation. Staff development is frequent and industrial experience is encouraged. Equal opportunities, cultural diversity and individual rights are mandatory areas of study in all care and early years courses. Students have a good understanding of these issues and effectively apply principles of equal opportunity in their practice at work or on work placement.

Visual arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on design technology and foundation and intermediate GNVQ art and design courses

- high-quality GCE A-level final projects in design technology and photography

- good individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on GCE AS and A2 art and design
- too little good teaching
- unsatisfactory use of accommodation
- ineffective curriculum management
- ineffective assessment feedback for improvement.

Scope of provision

103. The college offers a satisfactory range of GCE A-level and vocational courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Provision is offered on both college campuses, although a wider range of courses is available at Marple. GCE A-level courses in art studies and fine art are offered on both sites, while GCE A-level photography is available only at Cheadle. Vocational courses offered at Marple include foundation and intermediate GNVQ art and design and AVCE art and design. Part-time courses in fashion, watercolour painting and photography are available during the day and in the evening. Of the 475 students enrolled, 80% are studying GCE options and 20% vocational provision. Some 80% of students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

104. Pass rates on design technology and the foundation and intermediate GNVQ art and design courses are good. The pass rates for GCE AS and A2 design technology have improved and are now above the national average. Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ foundation art and design course were 100% in 2002/03. However, pass rates are poor for GCE A-level art and design. The pass rates for GCE AS art and design have declined from 93% in 2000/01 and are now 29% below the national average. The pass rate for GCE A-level art and design has also declined, from 89% in 2000/01 to 19% below the national average. Students who arrived late for lessons disrupted learning on several occasions. The standard of student's final project work in design technology and photography is good. In surface pattern design, students used colour and a wide range of media with confidence and enthusiasm. However, objective drawing and the development of ideas from first-hand resources are poor. Work in sketchbooks lacks creativity and relies on second-hand imagery.

105. Few students progress from the AVCE art and design to HE. Of 53 students finishing in 2003, only 7 progressed to HE and 5 of these moved on to fashion-related courses. Most of the other

students progressed to a local foundation course.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	15	27	16
		% retention	87	85	81
		% pass rate	85	61	85
GCE AS art studies/fine art	3	No. of starts	160	182	151
		% retention	81	80	87
		% pass rate	93	84	62
GCE AS design and technology	3	No. of starts	38	40	61
		% retention	82	83	84
		% pass rate	84	91	88
GCE A level art and design	3	No. of starts	68	94	90
		% retention	79	93	92
		% pass rate	93	89	76
GCE A level design and technology	3	No. of starts	28	25	25
		% retention	64	96	96
		% pass rate	83	92	96

Source: ISR (2000 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

106. There is too little good teaching. Teachers use a small range of teaching methods. Some teaching is dull and fails to motivate or challenge students. In less effective lessons, students do not get sufficient assessment feedback to improve, their skills are not developed well and they do not attain the standards expected, particularly in drawing, three-dimensional (3D) design and printmaking. The best lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives, and teachers have high levels of technical expertise. In one well-organised life drawing lesson, the classroom was rearranged to provide space for easels, and resources and equipment and materials were well prepared. Examples of the teachers' work were used to provide visual stimulus, whole-class teaching developed drawing skills and one-to-one support was used to check learning had taken place.

107. The use of the accommodation and resources is unsatisfactory and inhibits learning. The one small multi-purpose art room at Cheadle is suitably arranged for very small groups but the layout is unsatisfactory for the majority of classes. The layout limits activities to small-scale table work and the equipment available for printing and textiles is not exploited. The ceramics room at Cheadle is not available to students aged 16 to 18. There are practical facilities for photography at Cheadle, but the room used for teaching theory is cluttered and untidy and a potential health and safety hazard. There is insufficient space or equipment to teach drawing at either campus. The facilities at Marple for 3D design, photography, clay and plaster, and computers for graphic design, were not fully utilised or exploited. There is a good library on both sites with a wide range of books, magazines and periodicals. Students value the support provided by library staff. Students have access to appropriate computer workstations in the art area and there is good access to ICT in learning centres on both sites. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff for the provision offered.

108. Assessment feedback does not provide sufficient help for students to improve their work.

Formal feedback given to students frequently consists of supportive comments but does not identify their strengths and weaknesses or give them clear guidance on how to improve their technical skills and overall quality of work. The monitoring of students' progress and standards achieved compared with their GCSE entry grades is poor. The targets for AVCE students are insufficiently demanding.

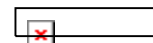
109. Initial assessments of literacy, numeracy and learning disabilities carried out during induction effectively identify students in need of learning support. One AVCE student with dyslexia then received good support from teachers during lessons and one-to-one specialist support for an hour a week, and a foundation student was given appropriately differentiated activities and handouts.

110. There is good support for individual students. Teachers have friendly, professional relationships with students and many provide additional help to students in finishing their projects. Good specialist careers guidance, a counselling service and financial advice are all readily available. All full-time students have weekly group tutorials and regular one-to-one interviews. Group tutorials are largely about administration and form filling while the support received during one-to-one meetings is effective and valued by students. Tutorial notice boards for vocational art and design students are well presented and informative.

Leadership and management

111. Aspects of leadership and curriculum management are poor. Team meetings are not held regularly and do not always have agendas or minutes with action points. Memos from managers do not always result in action. Communication and links between teachers working on different sites are poor. There are no clear strategies for sharing good practice and, in particular, for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Target setting, self-assessment and development planning have not addressed issues raised by external moderators and standards on some course have declined over a three-year period.

Performing arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE AS and A2 drama and theatre studies and GCE AS performance studies courses

- consistently good development of students' self-evaluation skills

- stimulating range of enrichment activities

- consistent implementation of initial strategies to raise standards.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS courses in dance and music technology

- low retention rates on AVCE performing arts (single award) and intermediate GNVQ performing arts courses

- insufficient variety of teaching methods to meet the needs of all students in some lessons

- inappropriate recruitment and enrolment procedures for vocational courses

- insufficient sharing of good practice.

Scope of provision

112. The college offers a wide range of GCE A-level courses in performing arts, dance, drama and theatre studies, music and music technology. Vocational courses include one-year and two-year AVCE in performing arts, intermediate GNVQ performing arts and GCSE dance. There is no level 1 or evening provision in performing arts. There are 364 students, of whom 76% are studying performing arts dance and drama courses. Over 99% of students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

113. Students achieve high pass rates on the GCE AS and A2 drama and theatre studies courses and GCE AS performance studies, where many students also achieve high grades. Retention rates on these courses match the high national averages. On most courses, pass rates are at, or above, national averages. There are low pass rates on GCE AS dance and music technology courses. Retention rates on the AVCE performing arts (single award) and intermediate GNVQ performing arts courses have fallen significantly to well below national averages. Retention rates have shown some improvements in 2003/04 compared with the same period in 2002/03.

114. Some 86% of level 2 students progress to higher level courses within the college and 68% of GCE AS students continue to study the related GCE A2 course. Many students progress to a range HE courses at external institutions.

115. Students demonstrate good critical analysis skills in performance studies and music. GCE A-level drama and dance students use interpretative, characterisation and devising skills to good effect. Performance skills and technique are less strong, particularly on vocational courses. Good musicianship skills in music technology are effectively used to produce finished work of good musical merit. These students' critical analysis skills are less developed. During the week of inspection, attendance was good, at 87%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	98	110	105
		% retention	76	90	88
		% pass rate	96	99	92
GCE A2 drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	*	55	73
		% retention	*	96	93
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE AS music	3	No. of starts	29	32	31
		% retention	86	78	90
		% pass rate	96	100	86
GCE A2 music	3	No. of starts	*	22	19
		% retention	*	95	100
		% pass rate	*	100	89
GCE AS performance studies	3	No. of starts	25	17	33
		% retention	68	65	88
		% pass rate	88	100	97
AVCE performing arts (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	33	16
		% retention	*	61	94
		% pass rate	*	90	87
AVCE performing arts	3	No. of starts	*	23	32
		% retention	*	100	59
		% pass rate	*	57	74

Source: ISR (2000 -2002), college (2003)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

116. Tutors develop good working relationships with students and most lessons are well planned. Students value the support they are given in developing good planning and self-evaluation skills. Tutors set clear learning objectives at the beginning of lessons and students frequently identify individual or small group targets to meet these. At the end of lessons, students document and discuss progress and set targets for the next lesson. In the best lessons, tutors set stimulating activities and expect high standards. During a venue research project, intermediate GNVQ students watched productions at two contrasting local venues and took part in an entertaining quiz to check their learning. They then devised short dramatic pieces about these venues.

117. In some lessons, tutors use too small a range of teaching and learning methods to extend students' learning effectively. In the weaker lessons, students are sometimes engaged in one type of learning activity for long periods. Tutors sometimes fail to check learning or to adequately support the progress of the least able students. In practical work, poor technique is not always corrected and some of the most able students are not always effectively challenged. There is little reference to key skills during lessons. Little use is made of ILT to enhance learning.

118. The college has good specialist facilities at Marple. These include a well-equipped theatre and studio theatre, a dance studio, a newly-equipped music technology laboratory and a recording

studio. There is a satisfactory stock of books and videos covering most courses except music, where the range is small. At the Cheadle campus, there are insufficient specialist facilities, and rehearsal spaces for students and staff accommodation are inadequate. Tutors are well qualified in their specialist subject areas but some staff have little industrial experience. Technical support is inadequate. The one technician works across both campuses and is shared with media courses and the school of performing arts.

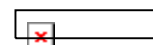
119. Information gathered during initial assessment on additional support needs is shared with staff and used effectively to plan each student's programme of study. Students are set realistic minimum target grades which are used to monitor progress. Staff plan well-co-ordinated assignments and some are unusual and imaginative. Performing arts students undertook research for a commissioned performance for primary school children. Students devised short dramatic pieces using original local source material, such as World War II newspaper articles. Students explored the role of the narrator in performance and further developed their understanding of local conditions during the war. In some lessons, tutors set homework which is insufficiently demanding. Some assessment feedback does not provide sufficient information to students on what they need to do to improve.

120. Students benefit from a stimulating range of enrichment opportunities. The performance centre at the Marple campus hosts a range of professional companies throughout the year, including performances from local theatre and dance companies. There is a wide range of effectively timetabled and well-attended enrichment classes. Students are encouraged and supported to participate in many external performances. Informal links have been established with the local community, schools and industry. Recruitment and enrolment procedures for vocational courses are inappropriate. There are no auditions for students on vocational courses and some students are not placed on appropriate courses. These courses have poor retention rates. Students receive useful careers guidance and support. Tutorial support is well co-ordinated and generally effective in helping students to concentrate on key targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The performing arts team consistently implements strategies to raise pass rates and retention rates, such as the well-co-ordinated and improved enrichment programme. There is a shared vision and purpose to the work of the school. Quality assurance processes have correctly identified a number of areas of underperformance. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice. Action plans deriving from the quality assurance process do not concentrate sufficiently on raising the standards of teaching and learning. For example, where course reviews identify low pass or retention rates, action plans do not always identify the need to review teaching and learning methods. An equal opportunities champion has been appointed but it is too early to identify any significant impact on the work of the team.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- good pass rates for GCE AS and A2 courses

- successful strategies to improve retention rates

- effective use of targets to improve success

- good teaching

- high-quality subject resources.

Weaknesses

- too much whole-class teaching in some lessons

- underdeveloped use of ILT in lessons.

Scope of provision

122. The college provides GCE AS and A-level courses at both campuses in a broad range of humanities subjects, including sociology, history, geography, critical thinking, and general studies, government and politics, ancient history, archaeology and religious studies. GCSE sociology has recently been included in the curriculum offer to complement the developing level 2 provision in the college. Some 18 students are on this new course. Overall, this provision caters for approximately 920 students, the majority of whom are advanced level students aged 16 to 18. The college offers a small range of courses to adult students. There are 15 adult students on a one-year evening course at Cheadle which leads to GCE AS and GCS A-level sociology. Humanities staff teach history and social issues on the access to HE and access to social science courses.

Achievement and standards

123. GCE AS and A2 pass rates are high. They are above the national average for sixth form colleges in all subjects except GCE AS geography and geology. In 2002 and 2003, GCE A2 sociology, government and politics, philosophy and religious studies students achieved 100% pass rates. The proportions of passes at the higher grades of A to B in archaeology, ancient history, sociology and philosophy are above the national averages. In most subjects, students perform above levels predicted by their GCSE grades. Retention rates are improving but they are still below the national average for most GCE AS courses. In 2003, the retention rate was 100% for GCE AS ancient history and geology and GCE A2 archaeology, philosophy and religious studies.

124. Standards of attainment are good or better in two-thirds of lessons. Students' high-quality written work shows the development of subject-specific study skills. Extension material is available to stretch the most able students but is not always used to good effect in some lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	187	176	201

		% retention	86	80	85
		% pass rate	75	90	96
GCE A2 sociology	3	No. of starts	*	72	92
		% retention	*	99	97
		% pass rate	*	96	100
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	150	161	120
		% retention	83	89	90
		% pass rate	90	92	97
GCE A2 history	3	No. of starts	*	76	81
		% retention	*	97	98
		% pass rate	*	99	99
GCE AS government and politics	3	No. of starts	33	43	43
		% retention	85	81	88
		% pass rate	75	94	95
GCE A2 philosophy	3	No. of starts	*	15	17
		% retention	*	93	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100

Source: ISR/ILR (2000-2002); college (2003)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

125. There is a lot of good teaching. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is clearly communicated to the students and contributes to the quality of learning. In the best lessons, teachers are well organised, have clear learning objectives and employ a variety of methods to stimulate learning. In one GCE A-level sociology lesson on labelling theory, the teacher carefully recapped the previous work through good use of questioning. Students were then split into small groups and given two well-chosen questions each to explore further the concepts of the law breaker, law maker and law enforcer. Students shared ideas and developed hypotheses, effectively supported by the teacher at various times. The emerging ideas demonstrated good understanding and sophisticated analysis, which were then shared with the whole class.

126. In a history lesson, a video was used well to explore various relevant points of view to a class exploring why the new model army revolted in 1647. Students made notes and these were used as a basis for the small group work which followed. Teachers use well-directed questions to check students' learning. In a GCE A-level sociology class, the teacher used an excerpt from a well-known cartoon to reinforce the feminist perspective on religion. It perfectly illustrated the sociological view that women and not men are socialised to be concerned about children's morality and that going to church helps effective socialisation.

127. In less effective lessons, the teacher spends too much time talking and students are not sufficiently engaged in their learning. However, in some lessons, there is too much whole-class teaching to ensure that all students are working to their individual potential. At times, students miss out on opportunities to acquire higher level evaluative skills through independent research of source material. In one GCE AS history class, students listened for 40 minutes to a talk that was not particularly demanding academically without being given any opportunity to question or discuss the topic. A significant minority of students failed to make notes. Key skills are not integrated into subject teaching and opportunities for students to develop their key skills are missed. Students use ICT to

research and produce assignments, but few teachers use ILT to enhance lessons.

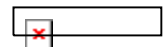
128. There is a wide range of relevant resources. Teachers have produced high-quality resource booklets in most subjects. These contain well-thought-out source materials and case studies to help students learn. Humanities teachers are well qualified and benefit from regular professional development and training. Classrooms have stimulating displays of students' work and provide an attractive learning environment. A good selection of textbooks and reference materials is available in the libraries on both campuses.

129. The monitoring and assessment of students' work is thorough. Minimum target grades are determined for each student at the start of their course and their progress against these targets is monitored regularly. Teachers regularly set and mark homework; feedback is helpful in helping students' to improve future work. There is a common homework policy, but there is no formal process to monitor that it is consistently implemented. The accuracy of assessments is maintained by regular internal moderation and cross-marking. Support for students is good. Students speak highly about the support and guidance they receive. Teachers give generously of their time outside of the classroom. Revision and extra coursework classes are arranged at lunchtime or at the end of the college day.

Leadership and management

130. The curriculum area is well led and there is a clear vision for the team. Courses are well organised and effectively managed. Staff work well together, communicate effectively across sites and share teaching materials. Subject teams make good use of college information systems to monitor students' progress. The self-assessment process does not use lesson observation outcomes to share good practice.

Modern languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for GCE A-level French and German

- good uptake of extended learning opportunities outside of lessons

- very wide range of provision

- well-established and successful links with other countries

- well-co-ordinated planning of courses.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS courses

- failure to meet the learning needs of all students in some lessons

- inadequate facilities for the development of listening skills

- insufficient development and use of ILT to help learning

- insufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

131. There is a wide range of courses both for students aged 16 to 18 and for adult students. The most popular GCE A-level courses are French, Spanish and German, but there is some provision in Urdu, Russian, Italian and Latin. Some 60 students are studying GCSE Spanish. Most of these students are also on an advanced programme of study. There is an accredited course in basic Spanish at level 1. Accredited adult courses are available across levels 1, 2 and 3 in French, Spanish, Italian and Greek. There are 240 full-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on daytime language courses and 500 part-time adult students, mostly attending evening classes.

Achievement and standards

132. Students' achievements are satisfactory. Students who successfully progress to the second year of advanced level courses achieve good results. Pass rates are high on GCE A2 courses in both French and German, and in 2002/03 were 100%. Pass rates are generally below national averages on GCE AS courses and the number of students attaining higher grades at GCE AS is also low. Retention rates are often below national averages, in spite of some improvement in 2002/03 in French and Spanish. The retention rates for GCE AS Spanish and French are very good in 2002/03, at over 90%. The retention rate has declined for GCE AS German.

133. The accuracy and standard of work produced by students in lessons is generally good in GCE A2 and in some GCE AS French lessons. The standard of work produced by adult students shows a high level of accuracy. Students' competence in speaking the language they are learning is often weak in GCE AS lessons. Students are reluctant to use the language without prompting and their vocabulary is limited. There is poor progression from GCE AS to A2.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	57	73	25

		% retention	60	71	80
		% pass rate	94	92	100
Adult practical languages	2	No. of starts	*	101	125
		% retention	*	71	70
		% pass rate	*	78	82
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	77	63	48
		% retention	77	73	90
		% pass rate	81	65	77
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	53	33	30
		% retention	87	91	83
		% pass rate	87	90	72
GCE AS Spanish	3	No. of starts	33	32	28
		% retention	85	81	96
		% pass rate	82	65	67
GCE A2 French	3	No. of starts	*	30	24
		% retention	*	93	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A2 German	3	No. of starts	*	20	16
		% retention	*	100	81
		% pass rate	*	95	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

134. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students are interested in learning languages but are not always challenged sufficiently. GCE A-level students are confident and make good progress. Students work with interest and enthusiasm in most lessons. They enjoy working with one another, make good use of time spent working in small groups and respond well to creative tasks. In the best lessons, students make good contributions in class and are able to recall details and vocabulary from previous lessons. In a well-planned literature lesson, students acquired a high level of accuracy in the written and spoken language through a well-led discussion on the text, and used the foreign language throughout. However, staff do not always have high expectations of students' capability in lessons. There is a lack of challenge and progress in some lessons, with insufficient coverage of new language and knowledge. In one lesson, what was intended as a brief quiz to revise work covered in the previous lesson lasted 30 minutes. Students do not adequately develop the ability to use the language spontaneously. Teachers do not differentiate sufficiently between the needs of individual students. Teaching is sometimes uninspiring, activities are too predictable and students' understanding develops slowly.

135. Students are well supported outside lessons by the provision of extension materials. Their use of these is recorded and checked by the teacher. Students also benefit from fortnightly contact with a foreign language assistant. They feel supported by the assistants and gain confidence through their conversations.

136. There are some significant gaps in the facilities available for language learning. There is no

language laboratory at the Marple campus. This is a significant obstacle to students' ability to develop listening skills in line with examination board requirements at GCE A level. A significant majority of GCE AS students achieve a lower grade in their listening examination than in other units. There are very few resources available on the college intranet for independent work. Materials are not routinely placed on the network by staff.

137. Teachers set homework regularly in order to monitor students' progress. In GCE A-level French, teachers' comments are linked clearly to the assessment criteria and students are given encouragement. Marks are recorded in a class file. This practice is not consistently used across the department. The homework and marking policy is not fully implemented. In particular, it is often not clear to a student what they must do to improve and there is no reference to performance relative to individual target grades. Assessment procedures for part-time adult courses are rigorous and monitoring is well organised.

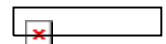
138. Students studying modern languages have very good opportunities to enrich their knowledge and skills through contact with other European countries. There are well-established work placement links with other European countries, as well as other educational visits such as regular participation at a student conference in Belgium, which enhance the students' experience and stimulate their understanding of other cultures. A significant proportion of students take advantage of these opportunities.

Leadership and management

139. The curriculum area is well led. There is good organisation and communication across the languages department. Regular team meetings are held to discuss issues relating to, for example, enrichment opportunities and the work of foreign language assistants. Students' achievements are thoroughly analysed and strengths and weaknesses are identified, as appropriate. Part-time tutors of adult learning courses are well supported through meetings and lesson observation. Staff are involved in reviewing courses and roles and responsibilities are shared across the team. Course reviews written by subject co-ordinators, however, do not always identify appropriate actions for improvement. The modern languages development plan fails to identify how improvements could be made to teaching and learning. Course reviews for GCE A-level German and Spanish do not identify how to address the recognised weakness of 'poorly developed oral skills'. In general, there is insufficient emphasis on making improvements to teaching methodologies. Lesson observations carried out by line managers, however, are effective in identifying both strengths and weaknesses.

140. The number of students recruited to modern languages courses has dropped significantly over the last four years. This has been particularly evident on GCE AS courses, where numbers have halved over that period. The department has, however, been very active in addressing this problem. There is a good programme of schools liaison in place.

English and communication studies



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most GCE AS and A2 courses

- good teaching

- high standard of written work
- very good monitoring of students' progress and use of individual targets
- good management of programmes.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates for GCSE English and GCE AS English literature
- insufficient support for weaker students in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

141. The school of communications and culture offers courses on both the Marple and Cheadle campuses. Courses are offered in GCSE English language and GCE AS and A2 communication studies, English language, English literature, English literature and language, media studies and film studies. Modules in communication studies, creative and professional writing, English literature and film studies are also offered as part of the access programme. Courses are offered in the day and evenings. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and are studying full time. There are 1,595 enrolments. Links with local schools are good. Staff visited or received visits from five local schools in 2002/03 for a variety of activities.

Achievement and standards

142. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. The pass rates on GCE AS communication studies, English literature and film studies and GCE A2 English language, film studies and media studies are above national averages and are 100% for GCE A2 English language, English literature and film studies. Most students achieve the grades that would be expected of them on the basis of their GCSE results. In 2002/03, students studying GCE AS English literature and GCE A2 film studies achieved one grade higher than would be expected.

143. The standard of students' written work is good. Formal assignments are well presented and carefully planned. Students' files are well organised with carefully produced notes. Students also demonstrate high levels of confidence in their learning. GCE AS students are developing good technical vocabularies and evaluative skills and GCE A2 students are proficient in their critical and theoretical understanding.

144. The retention rate on the GCSE English programme is poor. In many lessons, students are not punctual. Opportunities to produce work for key skills communication are identified in schemes of work but there is little evidence of these opportunities being promoted by teachers or used by students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and communication studies, 2000 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	261	273	243
		% retention	82	74	69
		% pass rate	53	33	72
GCE AS communication studies	3	No. of starts	43	84	70
		% retention	74	86	83
		% pass rate	100	82	93
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	147	178	172
		% retention	89	87	87
		% pass rate	100	94	99
GCE AS film studies	3	No. of starts	49	86	94
		% retention	82	76	85
		% pass rate	100	100	99
GCE A level English language	3	No. of starts	103	111	113
		% retention	64	94	93
		% pass rate	98	99	100
GCE A level media studies	3	No. of starts	111	95	123
		% retention	61	97	98
		% pass rate	91	100	99

Source: ISR/ILR (2000-2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

145. Most of the teaching on GCE AS and A2 courses is good or better. Teaching in GCE A2 communication studies and one English literature lesson was outstanding. In class discussion, GCE AS English Literature students displayed excellent reading skills and a sophisticated understanding of the themes of legitimacy, Christianity and nationalism in the prayer scene prior to the battle of Agincourt in *Henry V*. They were also fully sensitive to the impact of this on the audience's response to character and therefore able to fully appreciate a full-screen viewing of the battle scene which was subsequently shown.

146. In a GCE A2 communication studies lesson, careful planning of learning enabled students to approach the difficult, more theoretical aspects of the course with ease and confidence. Students were considering the relationship of television to culture through an exploration of viewing habits. After drawing upon personal experience, the students were able to compare their own perceptions to Bogart's reception studies and consider its relevance in context, effectively linking theoretical and experiential data. The students were then asked to summarise a difficult Marxist analysis of culture in small groups and approached the task with confidence. The approach to this task on a group basis and the linking of theory and experience encouraged students to feel confident in tackling the material. In the lively discussions that ensued, students exhibited an excellent command of technical vocabulary and theoretical approaches, along with an impressive fluency of expression.

147. Students are well supported in the development of good study skills in lessons. Note taking is directed and worksheets are designed to assist students in clearly structuring their thoughts. Many lessons are characterised by a brisk pace, well-measured learning phases and an appropriate range of learning methods to respond to varying learning styles. Students in these lessons show a good

knowledge of their subjects, well-developed technical vocabularies and a good ability to form critical judgements. In a small number of lessons, the range of teaching methods used does not effectively help weaker students.

148. Teachers are well qualified in their specialist subjects and 84% have or are working towards qualified teacher status. Almost one-third of staff also work as examiners and there is at least one examiner for each of the GCE AS and A2 subjects taught. Most classrooms are well resourced, spacious and have stimulating wall displays which include students' work. A small number of classrooms, however, are partitioned rooms and noise levels impede learning.

149. A wide range of subject-based enrichment opportunities is provided and many students take up these opportunities. Events have included visits to museums, theatre and a trip to France and Belgium to visit battlefields. The college also runs a successful film club, magazine and debating society.

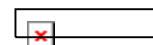
150. Monitoring and assessment of students' progress are rigorous. Students receive extensive verbal and written feedback about how to improve written work and their performance is regularly discussed in relation to individual learning targets. All learners were aware of their minimum target grades and how they are making progress towards achieving them. Homework and coursework are accurately assessed. Good communication is maintained with parents through consultation evenings and contact at home if students are not attending or performing at an appropriate standard. In a small number of lessons, there is insufficient formal assessment.

151. Students receive extensive academic and personal support from subject tutors, which is further complemented by the tutorial system where students also receive careers guidance. Rigorous procedures are in place for monitoring attendance and punctuality and for intervention where there is cause for concern. Communication between teachers, personal tutors and student services staff about students' progress is good.

Leadership and management

152. Individual courses are managed efficiently. The management of the whole curriculum area is effective and places emphasis on staff working together. Teachers are enthusiastic and there is good teamwork. There are good procedures for reviewing the quality of courses and self-assessment processes are rigorous and involve all staff. Staff have good awareness of the strategic priorities of the college and the contributions they make in the achievement of goals. There is good communication between staff and managers at all levels.

Foundation (literacy and numeracy)



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

Strengths

- much good teaching

- effective use of individual learning plans

- good assessment of individual needs

- good support for students

- good management and co-ordination of programmes.

Weaknesses

- insufficient integration of technology to help learning.

Scope of provision

153. The college offers literacy, numeracy and language, essential skills and vocational skills courses at entry level and key skills in communication and application of number at levels 1 to 3. Full-time students aged 16 to 18 who have not previously gained key skills or an equivalent qualification are offered key skills units in addition to their subject courses. There are part-time courses aimed at adults in literacy, numeracy and ESOL from entry level to level 2 and essential skills at entry level. There are 700 students enrolled on courses, of whom 600 are aged 16 to 18 and 100 are adults. There are a further 67 students aged 14 to 16 from local schools on a vocational project. Additional support in literacy and numeracy is available to students on all college courses. Students re-sitting GCSEs also study key skills communications and application of number.

Achievement and standards

154. Pass rates on some courses are high. Key skills communication and application of number levels 1 and 2, ESOL entry level to level 2 and vocational skills entry level have all had consistently high pass rates at well above national averages for the two years to 2003. Retention rates on the key skills programmes with large numbers of students are well below national averages. Students reach appropriate standards in both literacy and numeracy. consistent with the programme of study. Students demonstrate high levels of individual learning and study skills. They work independently and with purpose.

A sample of retention and pass rates in foundation (literacy and numeracy), 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Key skills communication (one year)	1	No. of starts	16	78	87
		% retention	63	90	74
		% pass rate	50	61	77
Key skills application of number (one year)	1	No. of starts	*	164	234
		% retention	*	93	74
		% pass rate	*	61	65
Entry vocational skills	1	No. of starts	*	26	15

award		% retention	*	88	86
		% pass rate	*	87	88
Key skills communication (one year)	2	No. of starts	24	56	138
		% retention	54	96	79
		% pass rate	80	20	49
Key skills application of number (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	227	154
		% retention	*	95	84
		% pass rate	*	24	29

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

155. Most teaching is good. Courses and lessons are well planned. All schemes of work and lesson plans are mapped against the new core curricula for literacy and numeracy. Lesson plans are detailed and include preferred learning styles, the roles of learning support assistants and when progress is monitored. Teachers ensure that the individual learning needs of students are addressed in a consistent way. They use a good variety of methods and activities and work well with support assistants to meet the needs of students effectively.

156. Teachers are knowledgeable and have good experience in their subject. They convey literacy, numeracy and language skills well to their students and introduce new topics effectively using students' experiences where ever possible. For example, in a numeracy class, students are encouraged to work on percentages in the context of everyday activities. In a literacy class, adult students practise communication skills on the topic of the Euro. Teachers give regular feedback on the students' progress throughout lessons and check on their learning. The quality of written feedback is good. There are helpful comments on the quality of students' work and suggestions on how it could be improved.

157. Teachers have good rapport with students. They insist on responsible behaviour from students. Students respond well to being challenged by the teachers. They reflect and adjust their behaviour. Students are highly motivated. They develop good personal and organisational skills, develop confidence and improve their self-esteem. They are punctual and develop good skills of independent learning and effective teamwork.

158. Most staff in this area have a specialist teaching qualification and have attended training for the new core curriculum in literacy and numeracy. There are plans in place to train the remaining staff. Most classrooms provide an appropriate environment for learning, but some are too small for the size of the class using them and the range of activities, and most are not supplied with adequate IT equipment. Computers with literacy and numeracy software have been installed in the literacy and numeracy base rooms, but this software is not available to students in other classrooms.

159. Individual learning plans are good. They are easy to follow and are well used by both students and staff to confirm initial assessment results, targets, learning styles, completed work and reviews of progress. Plans contain both short-term and long-term goals. They identify specific skills that students need to develop and how to achieve those skills. The learning plans do not have dates or periods of time by which the targets should be achieved. Students value their learning plans and use them to record the work completed during the lessons. The continuous assessment processes are good and enable students to monitor and assess their skills at different stages in their learning.

160. Support for students is good, from both the teachers and the support assistants. There is a good system of subject-based tutorials to review the progress of students and involve them in self-assessing their development.

Leadership and management

161. Subject leadership and management are good. Key priorities for students have been identified, which are matched to the requirements of the national standards. Students' progress is effectively monitored and information about students is regularly shared. The team has a clear direction and there is good support for staff development. Regular site and cross-college meetings take place. There is a well-developed mentoring scheme for staff to fully share best practice. The use of technology in lessons is not fully developed. Some staff have not yet achieved appropriate qualifications at levels 3 and 4.

Part D: College data

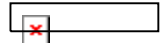
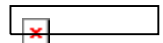


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2001/02



Level	16-18	19+
1	5	32
2	21	17
3	74	10
4/5	0	0
Other	0	41
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2001/02



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,292	247	8
Land-based provision	56	188	1
Construction	33	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	150	40	1
Business administration,	696	609	7

management and professional			
Information and communication technology	720	1,182	10
Retailing, customer service and transportation	8	401	2
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	681	993	9
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	398	2,424	15
Visual and performing arts and media	1,239	302	8
Humanities	4,475	330	26
English, languages and communication	1,236	645	10
Foundation programmes	72	75	1
Total	11,056	7,436	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	912	450	298	1,524	1,268	1,695
	Retention rate (%)	65	64	62	59	68	57
	National average (%)	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate (%)	79	78	83	78	83	82
	National average (%)	70	66	71	67	70	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,164	1,209	1,280	748	725	1,329
	Retention rate (%)	68	77	76	59	65	59
	National average (%)	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate (%)	82	82	84	76	84	83
	National average (%)	80	85	84	70	68	71
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,534	7,242	7,006	660	909	910
	Retention rate (%)	57	75	86	45	55	59
	National average (%)	75	80	89	63	64	69

	Pass rate (%)	80	85	87	70	80	87
	National average (%)	85	86	88	65	67	75
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	*	80	30
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	*	28	17
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	*	95	100
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	n/a	n/a

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	68	26	6	140
Level 2 (intermediate)	83	17	0	36
Level 1 (foundation)	94	0	6	16
Other sessions	75	25	0	4
Totals	73	22	5	196