



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

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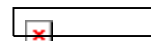
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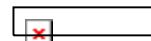
Basic information about the college



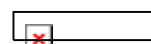
Name of college:	North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Gordon Stokes OBE
Address of college:	Hinckley Road Nuneaton Warwickshire CV11 6BH
Telephone number:	02476 243000
Fax number:	02476 329056
Chair of governors:	Teresa French

Unique reference number: 130836
Name of reporting inspector: Kenneth L Jones
Dates of inspection: 24 November - 5 December 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

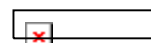


North Warwickshire and Hinckley College is a large general further education (FE) college serving the three borough councils of Nuneaton and Bedworth, North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth. Most wards in Nuneaton and Bedworth are in the worst 25% in England, by indices of education deprivation; one ward is within the 10% most deprived in the country and twelve wards are within the worst 30%. Both North Warwickshire and Southern Leicestershire have suffered significant industrial and commercial decline in traditional areas such as mining, engineering and textiles. Employment opportunities in the area have improved, however, and unemployment is now low. The mission of the college is to enhance the economic and cultural life of the communities it serves by supporting lifelong learning. Some 7% of students at the college are from ethnic minority groups, compared with 3% in the local population, and 62% of students are female. Approximately 14% of students attract additional widening participation funding.

The college provides education and training in all 14 areas of learning, as defined by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), although land-based provision is very small. During 2002/03, the college provided education and training for 24,500 students, of whom 2,500 studied full time. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and most part-time students are adults. Work-based training is provided for some 500 learners across seven curriculum areas and approximately 40% of them are foundation modern apprentices. The college is committed to developing community-based provision. It has two main sites in Hinckley and Nuneaton, nine permanent local centres, and also provides education and training in over a hundred other locations, both at employers' premises and in small communities. Six of the permanent local centres concentrate on community learning, two on supporting businesses, and one on information technology (IT).

Post-16 education opportunities in the catchment area of the college include a variety of models. Schools in Leicestershire are organised into high schools for children aged 11 to 14 and community colleges for those aged 14 to 18. Three of the four schools in North Warwickshire have sixth forms. There is a sixth form college in Nuneaton with which the college collaborates and only one of the nine schools in Nuneaton and Bedworth has a sixth form. The college has developed vocational opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 in collaboration with sixteen schools in north Warwickshire and three in south Leicestershire.

How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching and the achievements of students are good in twelve of the fourteen

satisfactory in three of the areas inspected and unsatisfactory in two. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- strong strategic leadership
- effective management of college-based and outreach provision
- effective teaching and learning
- good achievements overall
- wide range of courses and enrichment activities for students
- responsiveness to community and employer needs
- effective support for students
- extensive partnership working
- comprehensive monitoring of performance.

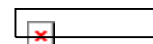
What should be improved

- management of work-based learning
- the achievements of General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) students aged 16 to 18 on many courses
- students' uptake of learning support

- the integration of key skills teaching in most curriculum areas
- the rigour of course reviews in some curriculum areas

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 and mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Retention rates on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics and science courses are high and students on access to higher education (HE) courses achieve well. Pass rates on courses for students aged 16 to 18 are low and teaching does not meet students' needs in some lessons. Teachers work together well as a team, but strategies to improve the performance of students aged 16 to 18 are ineffective.
Construction	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses and teaching and learning are good in wood occupations. Students acquire high levels of skills in practical lessons and there is good personal support for work-based learners. There is little work-based assessment in brickwork and work-based learners make slow progress towards achieving full modern apprenticeships. Work-based learning is satisfactory overall.
Engineering	Satisfactory. There are some high pass rates on college-based courses but retention and pass rates for level 2 performing engineering operations are low. The range of provision and resources are good. Relationships with schools and industry are good but the management of work-based learning is poor and work-based learning is unsatisfactory overall. There is a large proportion of unsatisfactory teaching on work-based learning programmes and the completion rate for modern apprenticeships is low.
Business, administration and management	Good. Retention and pass rates are high for most courses and there is a wide range of provision. There is much good teaching, although a minority of teaching fails to meet the learning needs of individual students. Academic and pastoral support for students is good but action planning for some full-time students and work-based learners is not effective. There is poor framework completion in work-based

	learning and work-based learning is unsatisfactory overall.
Information and communications technology	Good. There is much good teaching, with good resources to support learning. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. The range of the provision is wide, with good opportunities for community-based learning. Work experience opportunities for students are inadequate.
Hospitality and catering	Good. Retention and pass rates on most courses are high and students produce practical work of a high standard. Students with additional learning needs are well supported and there is a well-developed school links programme. There is insufficient use of work-based evidence for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) assessments and target setting for NVQ assessment is poor.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good. Most pass and retention rates are high and there is much good teaching. Students achieve a wide range of additional qualifications. Tutorials provide effective support for individual students. There are insufficient enrichment opportunities for female sports students and some classrooms and teaching resources are unsatisfactory.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Pass rates are high on most college-based courses and practical lessons are well taught. Work-based learners make slow progress toward achieving the full modern apprenticeship framework but work-based learning is satisfactory overall. Curriculum management is effective and students have good opportunities to learn. There are shortcomings in specialist accommodation and equipment.
Child care and early years	Good. Retention and pass rates on the majority of college-based courses are high and work-based learning is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are effective and students receive good support and guidance. There is a wide range of courses for adults in the community. Integration of key skills teaching is poor and work-based learners make slow progress towards achieving modern apprenticeships.
Health and social care	Good. Pass rates are high and retention rates are high on most courses. Teaching is mostly good but some teaching is insufficiently varied to meet different students' learning needs. There is insufficient use of computers in teaching and learning. Pastoral support for students is effective and there are good links with employers.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Much of the teaching on music, media, and performing arts courses is creative and stimulating and pass rates on most courses are high. Accommodation is good and students benefit from an extensive range of professionally related enrichment activities. Retention rates on most national diploma courses are low and insufficient attention is given to the needs of students with different abilities on art and design courses. There is insufficient integration of key skills teaching within the curriculum area.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Pass rates are high on English literature and modern foreign language courses and teaching overall is very good. Students are well supported and have good resources. The provision is well managed, but there are some low and declining retention rates.
Foundation programmes	Good. Students develop good personal and social skills and most teaching is very effective. Courses are well planned to meet a wide range of needs. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, but there is insufficient use of individual learning plans.
Literacy, numeracy and	Good. There is much good teaching on discrete provision in the

English for speakers of other languages	community and students' achievements overall are good. There is excellent engagement with the community and very good links with employers. Teaching and learning resources are good, but the uptake of the learning support offered to full-time students is poor. Literacy, numeracy, language and key skills support are insufficiently integrated within vocational areas.
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How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. Excellent strategic leadership is provided by the principal, governors and senior managers and governance is effective. Most curriculum areas are well managed. The management of work-based learning and one curriculum area is unsatisfactory. The college has comprehensive quality assurance procedures but there are some courses with retention and pass rates that are below the national average in all curriculum areas. The quality of college-based provision is accurately graded through self-assessment but all the strengths and weaknesses in the different curriculum areas are not identified. Teaching is effective. Overall retention and pass rates for the college are above the national average for all levels of work and age groups other than for students age 16 to 18 on advanced courses, where they are at the national average. Equality of opportunity and social inclusion are given a high priority in the day to day operation of the college. Financial management is good and the college gives value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

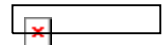
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. It provides courses at diverse locations to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Adults have very good access to literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. The college is innovative in the way it works with different communities and uses partnership arrangements to attract hard-to-reach groups to education and training. Some 7% of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is over twice the level in the local population. The college makes good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Basic skills support for full-time students is effective. The college also provides a wide range of opportunities for students aged 14 to 16. The college has made good progress in its response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. It has a comprehensive race relations policy that has been modified to take into account the requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college has not yet begun to monitor all its commitments under this legislation but has plans to do so. Detailed information is produced on students' performance in relation to gender, ethnicity and age. Access to the college for students with restricted mobility is good.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Guidance and support for students are good. Students are provided with effective and impartial guidance prior to enrolment. All full-time students complete an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs and part-time students are encouraged to complete the assessment. The

tracking of students who are identified as needing literacy and numeracy support. There is insufficient evaluation of the impact of the support provided on students' literacy and numeracy levels. Students are provided with a comprehensive range of support services including welfare, financial and counselling services. The student support fund is used effectively to help students overcome barriers to study. There is a well-designed tutorial programme for full-time and many part-time students to promote personal and social development. However, there is insufficient emphasis on setting clear targets to help individual students to improve their performance through the tutorial system. There are effective arrangements for providing support for students studying in community locations.

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

- friendly, approachable and helpful staff

- good opportunities to learn

- locally based courses

- good teaching

- good support

- library and central learning resources.

What they feel could be improved

- quality of the refectory at Hinckley and refectory prices

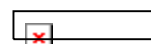
- limited recreational facilities

- unreliable bus services

- lockers for storage

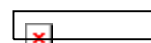
- teaching of key skills.

Other information

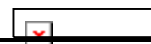


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

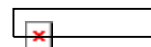


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	66	29	5
19+ and WBL*	80	17	3
Learning 16-18	65	31	4
19+ and WBL*	80	17	3

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

* work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. Overall pass rates are high for students of all ages on entry and intermediate level courses and for adults on advanced level courses. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on courses leading to advanced qualifications are at the national average. Retention rates for both young people and adults have been at or above the national average for the three years prior to the inspection, other than for adults on foundation courses in 2001. Students perform well in key skills tests but few students submit their portfolios for moderation in order to achieve the full award. Attendance in lessons observed during the inspection was above the national average at 81%. Only in three of the areas inspected was it below 80% and was lowest in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, at 74%.

2. The standard of students' work in lessons is generally good. In 65% of lessons, levels of attainment are good or better. Attainment is less than satisfactory in only 4% of lesson. Most students are motivated and enthusiastic about their work but many work-based learners make slow progress towards meeting all the requirements of modern apprenticeships. Students work together well and learn from each other. They contribute well to discussions and relate theory to their own practical experiences. In most curriculum areas, students develop confidence and take responsibility for their own learning. Students on vocational courses develop good practical skills and students across all areas produce written work that is of a satisfactory standard or better.

3. Most IT students are adept at using a variety of specialist software packages. Hairdressing and beauty therapy students are confident, produce work of a high standard and demonstrate good client care. Business students develop a good understanding of business concepts. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL students work well on tasks related to their individual needs. Students on English courses often show imagination and skill in talking and writing about texts. Leisure and tourism students make good progress relative to their prior attainment but students on sports courses are sometimes easily distracted. The standards of work produced in lessons by maths and science students is often satisfactory or better, but many students have low expectations and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

4. Students are successful when submitted for key skill tests but few students collect evidence and submit portfolios to gain key skills awards. Work-based learners make slow progress on the key skills aspects of their modern apprenticeships and few achieve the awards. Many students identified as needing literacy or numeracy support through initial assessment decline the offer of specific support. There is insufficient tracking of these students to determine whether the key skills provision is bringing about sufficient improvements in their basic skills.

5. Some 80% of students who enrol on entry level courses progress to higher level courses and around 35% of students on foundation or intermediate level courses progress to the next level. School pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend the college perform well. Some 50% return to the college for further study and approximately 66% continue with education or training, with 12% progressing to employment.

16 to 18 year olds

6. For the three years prior to the inspection, overall retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been above the national average for foundation and intermediate level courses and at the national average for advanced courses. For the period 2000 to 2002, overall pass rates for foundation level courses have been well above the national average and at intermediate level have been at or above the average. For advanced courses, overall pass rates have been at the national average but were below in 2001. College data for 2003 was not complete at the time of the inspection but indicated that pass rates were at least at the national average at intermediate and advanced levels and well above at foundation level.

7. Students perform well on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and related courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Overall pass rates on GCSE qualifications are above the national average but dipped below in 2001. The percentage of students achieving high grades in GCSE examinations is below the national average. Overall pass and retention rates for NVQ qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 are mostly at or above the national averages. College performance data shows pass rates overall were poor for NVQ level 1 courses in 2002 because students working for NVQ units had been recorded as working for complete awards.

8. Overall retention rates for GCE A-levels courses were just below the national average in 2002 but pass rates have been consistently below. Most students enrolling on GCE A-level courses have below average GCSE point scores. Comparison of the achievements of these students in GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A-level examinations with grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE qualifications indicate that they under performed in 2000, 2001 and 2003.

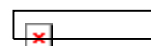
Adult learners

9. Retention rates overall have been above the national average for most years but dipped below for foundation level courses in 2001. College data for 2003 indicates that the retention rate has declined and is at the national average for intermediate level courses. Pass rates are above the national average at all levels and have shown consistent improvement. College data for 2003 indicates that above average pass rates have been maintained.

10. Overall retention rates for NVQ level 3 courses have improved and were well above the national average in 2002, but retention rates are below at levels 1 and 2. Pass rates overall on NVQ level 1 courses are just below the national average. They have improved and are above the national average at level 2, and have been consistently above at level 3. Overall retention rates are high for GCSE qualifications and pass rates have risen from just below the average to just above. The achievement of grades A to C is just below the national average. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses for the three years prior to the inspection have been at or just below the national average and pass rates have been mostly above.

11. Overall success rates for all other qualification types that are predominantly followed by adults are consistently above the national average. Retention rates dipped in 2001 at foundation level but have otherwise been consistently above the national average. Pass rates overall are also consistently above the national average. Success rates for adults on short courses are at the national average. The overall achievements of work-based learners are satisfactory in hairdressing and beauty therapy, construction and child care and early years, where they develop skills to a satisfactory level, but unsatisfactory in engineering and business and administration, where students make slow progress.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 275 lessons. They judged that teaching is good or better in 72% of lessons, satisfactory in 24% and less than satisfactory in only 4%. The grades awarded for learning are very similar. Teaching is excellent or very good in 32% of lessons. The 12 unsatisfactory lessons observed by inspectors were not confined to any particular curriculum area. Teaching and learning are most effective in business, administration and management, information and communication technology, sports, leisure and tourism, early years and child care, visual and performing arts and media, English and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes. In construction and hospitality and catering, where the college has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status, there is some very good teaching but none of it is outstanding. Teaching and learning are weakest in science and mathematics. In classes composed of adults or mostly adults, 82% of teaching is teaching is good or

is slightly more effective than at foundation level.

13. In most lessons, students are motivated and contribute well to discussions. Teachers are enthusiastic, plan lessons well and make good use of their industrial experience to relate theory to practice. Most practical lessons are well taught; students understand what is expected of them and have good opportunities to develop their skills. Theory relating to practical activities is explained well. Construction students receive good individual support during practical lessons. In business and administration, students work with actual business documents and good use is made of topical materials in sport, leisure and tourism. Hairdressing and beauty therapy teachers integrate theory and practical teaching well. In practically based curriculum areas, students have good work experience opportunities, which are linked to assignments they have to complete. IT students, however, do not have opportunities to gain direct experience of the application of their subject in the workplace. In many lessons, teachers plan well to take account of students' individual needs, as is the case with foundation programmes and literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. There are examples of good use of extension activities in IT and hospitality, and practical activities in hospitality and catering enable students to work at different levels. In English, group work is used to develop students' confidence. In many curriculum areas, students support and help each other to learn through sharing ideas and their experiences of work. In most lessons, teachers are careful to check that students are learning, and students make good progress.

14. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not take full account of the range of their students' abilities and teaching is too prescriptive. Teachers talk too much and do not allow students sufficient time to develop ideas and problem solving skills.

15. The college has clear structures in place for developing students' key skills. There is a clear operational plan covering basic and key skills, and activities are co-ordinated by a steering group chaired by an assistant principal. The key skills levels of all full-time students and work-based learners are assessed on enrolment and a central team provides support for developing those skills further. Key skills teaching is not effectively integrated with vocational teaching in most curriculum areas, although there are some exceptions, such as hospitality and catering and construction, where there is effective collaboration between key skills and vocational teachers.

16. The college has good resources. Buildings are in a good state of repair and the college plans maintenance and improvements to accommodation well. The learning resource centres (learning zones) at the two main college sites are pleasant and comfortable learning environments with good areas for group work, individual work and quiet study. They provide good access to a wide range of learning materials for students. These include modern computers with easy access to the college intranet and the Internet, books, CDs, newspapers and periodicals. The college provides good access to computers for those with sight impairment and good facilities for those who are hard of hearing. Provision for students who have limited mobility is generally good at most sites, although some doorways are narrow and restrict access for wheelchair users.

17. Most departments have good learning resources. There are particularly good facilities for learning in performing arts, where the accommodation is purpose built and is of a professional standard. Workshops for motor vehicle engineering are spacious and there is a wide range of vehicles for students to work on. There is a well-equipped language laboratory at North Warwickshire College at Nuneaton, and mobile facilities at Hinckley College. Students and staff have good access to computers. There is one computer for every five full-time equivalent students, and teachers and students have good access to laptops at the main sites and at remote locations. However, some students do not have easy access to computers during lessons. Some classrooms used for theory teaching, for example, in sport, languages and hospitality and catering lessons, are cramped and inappropriate for teaching large groups. In hair and beauty the practical teaching areas do not provide a professional working environment for students. Teachers in most areas have good academic and vocational qualifications. Most full-time staff are qualified teachers or are working towards a recognised teaching qualification. Over 80% of full-time teachers have teaching qualifications and a further 13% are following courses to gain qualifications.

18. The college has a clear and comprehensive assessment policy which sets out the standards of good practice expected across all areas of the curriculum. Effective guidance is provided on the

implementation of the policy and for the promotion of good practice across all levels of provision. Implementation of the policy is monitored through internal quality reviews and external verification procedures. Most of the assignments produced by teachers for students are well planned and vocationally relevant and assessment practice is generally good. The most effective schemes of work and lesson plans identify assessment opportunities. Examination board requirements are strictly adhered to and students are generally well informed about assessment requirements and practice. The assessment of work-based learners' progress in business, engineering and some areas of construction is poor.

19. All full-time students undertake a diagnostic assessment prior to the start of their course. The assessment includes numeracy, literacy, IT and the diagnosis of learning difficulties, but does not include students' preferred learning styles. Only a small proportion of part-time learners choose to undergo diagnostic assessment. Personal tutors receive the assessment information and other information that is collected during the admissions process. They use the information during discussions with students about their progress and they refer students to specialist support when appropriate. Only some 25% of students who are identified as needing support to develop their literacy, numeracy or language skills accept the support offered. The college does not systematically analyse the impact of the different forms of learning support provided on raising literacy and numeracy levels.

20. Students' work is marked regularly and thoroughly. On most courses, students are given clear indications as to how they can improve their work. Moderation and standardisation procedures for externally accredited courses are good. However, procedures to verify the work of distance learners are less effective. The college has recognised this weakness and was addressing it at the time of the inspection. Personal tutors maintain records of students' progress in achievement files. The targets contained within the files are negotiated with the individual student at least once a term. Most of the targets are effective in ensuring that students adhere to work deadlines and attend regularly. Few targets are focused on improving students' work and target grades for advanced level courses are rarely used effectively to facilitate improvements in students' work. Students following basic skills courses in the community use individual learning plans to record their progress. These work effectively, although some of the targets need to be more specific. Students on the pathfinder foundation programme are not provided with individual learning plans early enough in their course for progress to be assessed effectively. Consequently, they are not working towards specific learning objectives and there is no clear basis for reviewing their progress.

21. The college has a clear understanding of local and national needs and works effectively with a range of partners to provide a diverse curriculum from pre-entry to advanced level, with many progression opportunities to HE. Partners include local and large national companies, the army, local councils, local universities and schools, and social services. Work-based learning opportunities are offered in engineering, construction, business and administration, hairdressing and beauty therapy and social care and child care. The college responds well to employers' needs and provides specialist courses and opportunities for employees to gain NVQs in the workplace and through distance learning courses. There are good opportunities for school pupils aged 14 to 16 to follow foundation level programmes in a wide range of subjects.

22. The college is particularly effective at attracting those least likely to undertake education and training to enrol on courses, using a range of innovative approaches. Local people are employed as 'learning ambassadors' to encourage their friends, neighbours and work colleagues to access college courses. Many of the 'learning ambassadors' have themselves come into education later in life. The college provides courses at many different locations. Almost 1,000 people follow basic literacy and numeracy courses and about 400 study ESOL. Some 8,000 of the college's students are from areas designated by the LSC as targets for efforts to widen participation. The college has good crèche facilities to help students with children to access learning. Community development workers are employed to develop strong relationships with local voluntary and community organisations throughout the college's catchment area. The Shop in the Town is a well-resourced college information and communications technology (ICT) centre in the centre of Nuneaton that offers a variety of drop-in and taught courses for people who are shopping or are taking breaks from work. College laptops are loaned to students who are housebound to encourage participation through home-based tutor-supported sessions or through distance learning. Construction, hospitality and

catering and logistics have been allocated CoVE status and the college has made good use of CoVE funding to widen the opportunities for students. Particularly good examples include the refurbishment of the college training restaurant and the sharing of best practice with colleagues in other colleges.

23. There is a wide range of enrichment activities for most students, although there are insufficient enrichment opportunities for female students in sport and computing, and IT students do not have sufficient work experience opportunities. Motor vehicle engineering students have the chance to work on rally cars and to work as pit mechanics for local rally teams. In hairdressing and catering, students often compete in competitions and visit employers. Performing arts and media students perform in concerts or organise music tours. Lectures and talks from members of pop and rock bands enhance students' studies in this area further. Trips abroad are arranged in some curriculum areas to enrich learning.

24. Guidance and support for students are good. There is a coherent framework of support and guidance activities for all full-time and part-time students. Students are provided with effective and impartial guidance prior to enrolment. Prospectuses contain comprehensive information about full-time and part-time courses. Open days, recruitment and guidance days, and enrolment days for part-time students, contribute to the enrolment process. All full-time students and most of those on substantive part-time courses are interviewed prior to enrolment. Other part-time learners can request a personal interview. The induction of students, including those who enrol after the start of the course, is effective. There is a comprehensive range of support services for students including welfare, financial and counselling services and an innovative use of youth workers who act as the first point of contact for students in difficulty. There is a college chaplain who is part of the student liaison team and provides support for all religions. The liaison team organise many social events for students, such as quizzes. They also organise a regular programme of useful campaigns each week in the main college refectories to raise awareness about subjects such as safe sex, safe driving, eating disorders, bullying and black history. The learner support fund is used effectively to help students of all ages to overcome barriers to study.

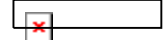
25. All full-time students complete an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs. Part-time students are encouraged to complete the assessment. The college provides a good range and level of learning support, but the monitoring and tracking of the students who are identified by the diagnostic testing is poor. Students receive good support in the college's learning support centres.

26. Tutorial support is mostly good. The tutoring policy includes quality standards that define a students' entitlement whilst they are on a course at college. All full-time students and students on significant part-time courses have a minimum entitlement to three individual tutorials each year. Many students receive regular additional support from course and personal tutors. Tutors are approachable and helpful and give generously of their time. Group tutorials are based on tutorial programmes which reflect the level of the course and cover an appropriate range of topics, activities, careers information and guidance. These are scheduled to take place once a week for full-time students. Tutors maintain an achievement file for every student, which is updated following discussions with the individual. Specific target grades are set for most full-time students on advanced courses and other appropriate objectives are set for other learners. There are examples of well-written, suitably detailed achievement files, but some contain very little information and few clearly stated targets for students to work towards. The achievement files are not used effectively in some curriculum areas and tutors place insufficient emphasis on setting clear targets to help individual students to improve their performance. Parents and carers of students aged 16 to 18 are informed of their progress through written reports that are produced twice a year. The progress of students following community basic skills courses is carefully monitored and recorded. Teachers undertake regular reviews of the progress made by students on entry to employment (E2E) programmes and the progress of other students on foundation programmes is monitored through regular tutorials. There is good liaison between teachers and support workers to facilitate effective support for foundation students. The college was awarded Matrix accreditation for its adult guidance provision in 2003.

27. The college has clear procedures to address poor attendance and improve the punctuality of students. Concern slips are used by teachers to communicate with tutors, who telephone students' homes when issues arise. Overall attendance is 5% above the national average for colleges of a

similar type.

Leadership and management



28. Leadership and management are good. Excellent strategic leadership is provided by the principal, governors and senior managers, and the college is true to its mission to enhance the economic and cultural life of the area through lifelong learning. An excellent range of highly valued provision is offered in the community. This meets the diverse needs of many groups including older people, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ethnic minority groups, disadvantaged or rurally isolated communities and local employers.

29. Governance is good. Governors bring a broad range of community and business experience to the college and are strongly committed to its success. The strategic planning process is clear, with key objectives translated into effective operating statements by each curriculum area and most service areas. Governors are well informed about the performance of the college and receive regular academic and financial reports. They attend two college conferences each year with senior staff. The clerk is a college senior manager and is particularly knowledgeable on governance matters, but judgments about the curriculum are not always clearly recorded at full board level.

30. The college management structure was altered at the beginning of the academic year. Different managers now have clear strategic responsibilities for students aged 14 to 19, community provision, workforce development and the Hinckley College site. There are early indications that the changes are resulting in a more coherent curriculum and increased responsiveness to the needs of communities and employers. Communication in the college is good. Productive and informative meetings take place at all levels.

31. Curriculum management is good in most areas, satisfactory in three areas and unsatisfactory in one. Quality assurance procedures are implemented effectively by curriculum managers, but most curriculum areas have some courses where retention and achievement are below the national average. The quality of course reviews vary. Many reviews are insufficiently rigorous and lack specific actions to deal with the weaknesses identified. The monitoring of students' progress in mathematics and science, engineering and business is not sufficiently rigorous. In foundation studies, insufficient use is made of individual learning plans to clearly identify students' learning objectives. Although students complete an initial assessment at the beginning of their programme, tracking of their actual uptake of additional learning support is inadequate. Most courses are well organised, providing students with a clear and coherent framework for learning. Curriculum innovation is encouraged within a clear framework of accountability.

32. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory, particularly in engineering and in business. Retention rates are mainly satisfactory, especially at foundation level, but achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework has been consistently low at both levels in all areas. Individual learning plans are not used effectively and there is insufficient focus on training in the workplace.

33. Quality assurance systems and procedures are mostly good. There is a high level of accountability, particularly through the academic board and its committees. Performance monitoring is comprehensive but it needs to focus more on some of the inconsistencies between curriculum areas, such as the quality of course reviews. Management reviews of curriculum areas are held each term. These focus too much on budgetary aspects of performance but the college is planning to place greater emphasis on the achievements of students. Thorough internal reviews, which mirror inspection, are held every three years. Target setting and monitoring are good in most areas. Students', employers' and other interested external partners' views are sought and used to improve the quality and range of courses offered. The outcomes of self-assessment are accurate for college-based provision but many of the strengths and weaknesses recognised by inspectors were not identified. The self-assessment report gives insufficient attention to work-based learning and did not

give any contributory grades. All the weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed.

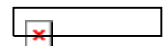
34. Teaching is of a high quality. The level of good or better teaching is ten percentage points above the national average for general FE colleges. Effective use is made of advanced teaching practitioners who disseminate good practice in teaching and learning and support new teaching staff. All staff have very good access to staff development opportunities. Staff development is clearly linked to the strategic objectives of the college through appraisal, lesson observation outcomes and operating plans.

35. Retention and pass rates are above the national average at all levels apart from advanced level for students aged 16 to 18, where they are at the national average. The college has been slow in taking action to improve the poor performance at GCE AS and A level of 16 to 18 over the last four years. Many students fail to achieve the grades predicted on the basis of their achievements at enrolment. The college has started to take action to address this weakness. There is insufficient use of methods for setting individual achievement targets for students based on their previous performance, and for analysing the performance of groups of students. Some improvements have been made to key skills provision. However, integration is still unsatisfactory in some areas, especially in early years and visual and performing arts and media. Key skills are introduced too late in the programme for work-based learners, slowing progress.

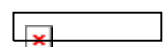
36. Equality of opportunity and inclusion are given a high priority in the day-to-day operation of the college. The college equal opportunities policy incorporates a previously separate policy relating to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college has not yet begun to monitor its commitments under this legislation but has plans to do so. Measures for dealing with racial and sexual harassment, bullying and students' grievances are clear and well understood. The college is broadly meeting its obligations under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. Recruitment, retention and achievement are regularly monitored by gender, ethnicity and number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Senior and middle managers attended equal opportunities training, which has been disseminated to their staff.

37. Financial management is good. Financial expenditure is carefully monitored and reporting on financial matters to governors is good both in depth and in breadth. The college gives good value for money. A detailed course costing structure gives autonomy to curriculum areas to run programmes to match students' needs, as long as overall within the curriculum area no loss is made. The allocation of resources is transparent. Staff bid for capital resources through their operating plans. Changes to staffing are referred to the senior management team, which ensures that staffing reflects the overall strategic aims of the college. The quality of management information has improved significantly since the last inspection, when it was a weakness. Staff now have easy access to reliable data.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on GCSE mathematics and science courses
- good achievement by access to HE students
- good teamwork.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on courses for students aged 16 to 18
- inappropriate teaching not matched to students' needs in some GCSE mathematics lessons
- ineffective strategies to improve the performance of students aged 16 to 18
- narrow range of courses for students aged 16 to 18.

Scope of provision

38. Approximately 400 students study for science and mathematics qualifications and many courses are provided during the day and evening for the convenience of adults. Some 250 students follow GCSE mathematics or science courses on a day or evening basis and GCSE mathematics is taught at four different centres to ensure that the provision is accessible to adults. GCE AS and A-level courses in human biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics are also provided during the day and evening. Around 80 adults follow access to HE modules in mathematics and one or more science modules each year. The college provides facilities and specialist teaching for a local Muslim college. A course for dental surgery assistants is provided during the evening in response to local employment needs. During the year of the inspection, the college had introduced foundation level GCSE mathematics and an Open College Network (OCN) science course. The college has discontinued vocational science courses for students aged 16 to 18 because recruitment is low.

Achievement and standards

39. Most mathematics and science students aged 16 to 18 only have the minimum qualifications required for enrolment and their overall GCSE point scores are low. Many of the GCE A-level students who enrol have failed to gain access to the local sixth form college. Retention rates on GCSE mathematics and science courses are high and are around the national average for most of the other courses offered.

40. Pass rates on access to mathematics and science modules for adults are high. Some 95% of students who follow science modules progress to HE each year. The performance of students aged

16 to 18 on most courses is poor and has been consistently so for the three years prior to the inspection. GCE AS pass rates for physics, for example, were particularly low, at 21%, in 2003. Most students aged 16 to 18 do not achieve the grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE qualifications on enrolment and the proportion of students gaining high grades is also small. Many students have low expectations. Progression rates to HE from GCE A-level courses are low.

41. The standard of work produced by many students aged 16 to 18 is satisfactory and their practical work is often good. In practical classes, students of all ages work safely, take careful measurements and calculate their results accurately. Many students aged 16 to 18 do not complete work that is set for them and they do not develop appropriate work and study habits. Adults on access to HE courses are committed students and produce coursework of a high standard. Punctuality is good and students' attendance in lessons is at the overall college average of 81%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	240	255	260
		% retention	81	84	83
		% pass rate	20	25	32
GCSE single award science	2	No. of starts	31	31	22
		% retention	77	81	73
		% pass rate	38	48	63
Access to HE (mathematics module)	2	No. of starts	39	38	42
		% retention	97	87	95
		% pass rate	87	94	95
GCSE AS biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	25	72	55
		% retention	88	78	73
		% pass rate	36	38	33
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	**	23	16
		% retention	**	70	88
		% pass rate	**	38	21
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	19*	**	16
		% retention	42	**	88
		% pass rate	75	**	50

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

* two-year GCE A-levels in 2001

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

42. Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching, but there are also too many unsatisfactory lessons. In the more effective lessons, topics are introduced carefully with clear explanations. Teachers are careful to motivate students and retain their attention through a variety of approaches including quizzes, educational games and presentations. In a GCE A-level chemistry lesson, for example, the teacher involved the students in a quiz where they identified different analytical methods and chemistry techniques. The group discussed the answers and provided examples of how the techniques could be applied. The students were highly motivated, worked

quickly, enjoyed themselves and applied their knowledge to problems well. Students work well in practical lessons and many, particularly adults, apply their theoretical knowledge well to predict the outcome of the experiments they are conducting. They make accurate observations and draw sensible conclusions. However, some teaching is unsatisfactory and many lessons are uninspiring. Teachers do not make sufficient allowances for the range of abilities in the groups they are teaching; they are too prescriptive and do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop problem solving skills. GCSE maths classes follow a predictable format, of exposition by the teacher followed by exercises. The more able students complete their work quickly and then waste time while weaker students struggle. There is no use of computers or displays to motivate students and help them understand abstract calculations which they find difficult to grasp. The college had purchased an appropriate software package at the time of the inspection, but it was not being used.

43. The teaching of adults is mostly effective. Teachers establish good relationships with their students, who are well motivated and eager to learn. Teachers encourage students to work together and share ideas, and students support each other well. In an access to HE biology lesson, the teacher shared tasks amongst the students, who were required to prepare presentations on respiration and blood circulation. They prepared clear handouts and explanations, and developed their research and presentation skills. Similarly, in an access to HE mathematics lesson, students drew and interpreted graphs accurately and were able to explain the purpose of their work and give examples of its application.

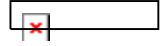
44. Teachers set homework when they think it appropriate, mark it carefully and return it promptly. However, too many students do not complete the work set and take little responsibility for their own learning. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory, but individual students receive insufficient guidance on how to improve their performance. Full-time students have group tutorials each week and pastoral support is good. There is insufficient structured individual support for students, particularly for students aged 16 to 18, and insufficient systematic monitoring of their performance. Additional support workshops are provided in specific subject areas, but students are not required to attend and attendance is not monitored. Sufficient attention is not given to helping students develop good examination technique and to helping them focus on the key facts they need to learn. Students are assessed to determine their literacy and numeracy levels but only some attend additional support lessons.

45. Teachers and technicians are well qualified and many teachers have good industrial experience which they sometimes use effectively to enliven their teaching. Most teachers attend awarding body conferences to update their knowledge. Technicians provide teachers with good support and carry out risk assessments to ensure that students undertake their work safely. Laboratories are modern but some are small for the numbers of students using them. Equipment is adequate although little use is made of computerised data capture systems. A room equipped with ten computers is only appropriate for small groups. Some rooms are well equipped for teaching mathematics but the subject is often taught in rooms where teachers are reliant on worksheets and a whiteboard.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Managers and teachers work well as a team. Teachers use common schemes of work, share learning materials and update their knowledge of the curriculum through attending awarding body meetings. Teachers are provided with good opportunities to develop their teaching and their IT skills, and are supported by the college's team of advanced skills teachers. However, managers have been slow to develop strategies to improve the consistently poor achievements of students aged 16 to 18. Insufficient regard is taken of their levels of achievement at entry and managers do not ensure that students receive sufficient individual support to help them make appropriate progress. Course reviews are not sufficiently rigorous and are not used effectively to bring about improvement. Course reviews contain insufficient analysis of the impact of teaching on students' learning. Managers and teachers are involved in preparing the annual self-assessment report for the area. Although it correctly identifies a number of strengths and weaknesses, data analysis is not sufficiently robust. Data derived through predicting students' achievements, based on their qualifications at enrolment, are insufficiently used in planning.

Construction



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on courses in wood occupations and on the foundation construction award

- high retention rates on intermediate level courses, electrical installation part 1 and the foundation construction award

- high level of skill acquisition in practical lessons

- good teaching and learning of wood occupations

- good personal support for work-based learners.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on City and Guilds electrical installation part 2 courses in 2003

- slow progress towards full framework achievement in work-based learning

- little work-based assessment in brickwork.

Scope of provision

47. The college provides a wide range of foundation, intermediate and advanced level programmes for craft students in trowel occupations, carpentry and bench joinery, electrical installation and plumbing. Some 650 students enrol on college-based courses, of whom approximately 220 are aged 16 to 18. Modern apprenticeships are offered for some 181 work-based learners. A construction

award provides students with opportunities to gain trade skills, associated technical knowledge and progression opportunities when they are unable to secure the work-based evidence required for other qualifications. The college also provides courses for around 100 school pupils aged 14 to 16 and short courses in woodturning and furniture making for adults. A CoVE in building maintenance and repair is being established in partnership with City College Coventry and Warwickshire College.

Achievement and standards

48. Pass rates are high on wood occupations courses and on the foundation construction award. The pass rate was 93% on the NVQ level 2 carpentry and joinery course in 2003. In the same year, all the students were successful on the foundation construction award, which covers both wood and trowel occupations. In contrast, the pass rate on the City and Guilds electrical installation part 2 course was low, having been at the national average during the previous two years.

49. Retention rates are good. In 2003, for example, retention rates on wood occupations and brickwork level 2 courses were well above the national averages and the foundation construction award retained 93% of students in the same year. Retention rates on electrical installation part 1 and National Open College Network (NOCN) programmes at level 2 were well above the national averages.

50. Modern apprentices develop good practical skills but they make slow progress towards meeting all the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Some 66% of apprentices have been enrolled on their courses for more than two years. Pass rates for the full framework are low, at 15%, although 31% of learners who left in 2003 achieved their full framework requirements.

51. Students across the area develop good practical skills. In a bricklaying lesson, for example, work-based learners were able to construct a semicircular arch to industrial standards using English garden wall bond. First-year wood occupations student develop a wide range of skills and are able to use both hand and powered hand tools to create complex franked and scribed mortice and tennon joints. Attendance at most lessons is satisfactory and during inspection was good, at 82%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ trowel occupations	1	No. of starts	19	23	*
		% retention	84	65	*
		% pass rate	63	0	*
NVQ wood occupations	1	No. of starts	36	39	*
		% retention	89	85	*
		% pass rate	84	79	*
Foundation construction award	1	No. of starts	*	*	71
		% retention	*	*	93
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NOCN short course	1	No. of starts	166	109	100
		% retention	95	93	90
		% pass rate	87	76	**
City and Guilds 2360-06 electrical installation part 1 (one year)	1	No. of starts	71	76	77
		% retention	79	84	95
		% pass rate	84	68	64
City and Guilds 2360-	2	No. of starts	49	55	52

08 electrical installation part 2		% retention	90	86	87
		% pass rate	45	58	16
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	30	21	16
		% retention	70	62	93
		% pass rate	48	77	93
NOCN short course	2	No. of starts	89	57	84
		% retention	97	100	100
		% pass rate	88	100	**

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

* NVQ level 1 programmes changed to foundation construction award in 2003

** awaiting certification

Quality of education and training

52. There is much good teaching and learning and most lessons are well planned. In wood occupations and brickwork, students work on a wide range of well-designed and complex tasks and produce work of a high standard. In a first-year wood occupations lesson, for example, students learnt to use powered hand tools well to create mouldings. A work-based brickwork student completed a chimney stack with finished flaunching to an industrial standard within a realistic working timescale. In the best lessons, students are enthusiastic about their work and are able to relate theoretical aspects to their own practical experiences. Teaching is most effective in practical lessons, where teachers provide students with good practical advice, often based on their own experience within the construction industry. In a plumbing lesson, for example, students completed different practical tasks well, using clearly laid-out plans. The teacher provided good support and advice to each student in turn, provided practical demonstrations where necessary and ensured that each student achieved the required standards. Some theory teaching is less effective. In a timber technology lesson, for example, students who completed their work early were not provided with additional tasks and were discouraged from contributing while the teacher concentrated on the less able. In a more effective lesson on research methods, the teacher involved all the students in the group and maintained their interest in the topic through effective use of computers and careful questioning of individual students. Health and safety requirements are rigorously enforced and always correctly observed by students.

53. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall. Assignments are of an appropriate standard and vocationally relevant. Students are provided with worksheets which set out the assessment criteria for different assignment projects and students understand the industrial standards associated with the practical tasks they have to complete. There is a well-developed system for monitoring and assessing students' skills in wood occupations. Assessment is not effective for electrical installation courses where, for example, students are not provided with written assessment criteria. There is insufficient direct assessment of students' practical skills in the workplace, particularly in brickwork, where students do not record sufficient evidence of the work they complete. Internal verification is effective and well managed.

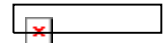
54. Support for students is satisfactory and students on wood occupations courses receive good individual support from their teachers to develop their practical skills. All students undertake diagnostic assessment at the beginning of their courses and receive letters detailing their results and additional learning support needs. The majority of these needs are met effectively through support provided by learning assistants during timetabled lessons. College-based tutorials are satisfactory. Progress reviews for work-based learners are effective and work-based programme co-ordinators support learners well. They collate information about learners' progress and ensure that the college is communicating effectively with both employers and learners. They help learners resolve personal problems.

55. Resources are satisfactory overall. Most workshops are appropriate but some of the work in carpentry is not of a large enough scale to provide realistic work-related experiences for students. Resources for work-based learning are good. Students on wood occupations and brickwork courses have good access to computers and other learning resources.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Management responsibilities were re-assigned during the twelve months prior to the inspection. Course planning, organisation, staffing and timetabling are effective for wood occupations and brickwork, and teaching teams meet regularly to discuss students' progress. The college has had some difficulties recruiting part-time teachers, particularly for brickwork and electrical installation. The numbers of students on electrical installation courses had to be reduced at a time when demand was high. Electrical installation courses were previously managed by another department and insufficient attention was given to students' performance and strategies for improving quality. Areas for improvement have been identified through self-assessment and good practice is being shared. Equality of opportunity is promoted well both within the college and in students' work placements. The college has good links with employers and an advisory board meets three times a year to discuss the needs of students and local employers. The college's contribution to the CoVE development has been well planned. A plumbing workshop has been established in Hinckley through CoVE funding in response to local demand for a broader range of craft qualifications.

Engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 1 welding and many level 3 courses

- productive relationships with schools and industry

- spacious, well-resourced workshops

- good enrichment activities for motor vehicle students

- broad range of provision.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on level 2 performing engineering operations course
- poor monitoring of students' progress
- large proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in work-based learning
- low completion rate of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

57. The college provides a broad range of courses in mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering, motor vehicle maintenance (including fork lift truck maintenance), welding and computer-aided design, from entry to advanced levels for 520 students. The majority of students study at entry and intermediate levels. Some 138 trainees follow work-based learning programmes and approximately 120 students, mostly aged 14 to 18, enrol on full-time courses. Most of the part-time students are adults. Adult students generally attend courses alongside younger students, but some welding and computer-aided design courses are offered in the evening and attract predominantly older students. The college provides internal progression opportunities to HE courses. Some 325 school pupils, aged 14 to 16, are provided with opportunities to sample a wide range of vocational topics through link programmes and are offered opportunities to progress to entry level or applied GCSE courses. The range of courses provided across the area, both in college and in the workplace, meets the needs of students and employers.

Achievement and standards

58. Pass rates on welding and advanced courses are high, and retention rates for most courses are satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on the performing engineering operations course are very low. None of the students on the course passed in 2002, although half of them returned and completed the following year. All engineering students work safely and some produce work of a high standard in both theory and practical lessons. Mechanical engineering students operate engineering machinery and equipment with confidence and demonstrate good practical skills in fitting and turning. Meters and oscilloscopes are used carefully and methodically by electronics students to trace and identify faulty components in amplifiers, oscillators and bridge rectifiers. Motor vehicle students develop good mechanical, bodywork and refinishing skills and students on body repair courses produce paint finishes of a high quality through careful attention to preparation. Students on mechanical engineering courses are able to diagnose faults within chassis systems and welding students produce high-quality work using arc and gas shielded equipment. They are able to test the quality of their work using destructive and non-destructive methods. Pupils on school partnership courses use lathes and milling machines carefully and learn to perform basic machining tasks quickly. Punctuality and attendance at lessons are good. Progression rates within the college are good and many students progress to higher level courses. All students are aware of the opportunities available to them.

59. The pass rate for modern apprenticeships is low, and many trainees make slow progress. Only

35% of the foundation modern apprentices and 20% of the advanced modern apprentices who started the programmes in 1999 completed all the required elements successfully. Although the retention rates for foundation modern apprentices have been satisfactory, many advanced modern apprentices fail to complete and retention rates have been no higher than 42% over a four-year period.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ performing engineering operations	1	No. of starts	*	22	24
		% retention	*	73	96
		% pass rate	*	31	57
City and Guilds welding and fabrication practice	1	No. of starts	35	29	20
		% retention	86	79	80
		% pass rate	63	78	81
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	29	*	37
		% retention	62	*	32
		% pass rate	100	*	25
City and Guilds 3870 lift truck maintenance	2	No. of starts	22	21	23
		% retention	82	76	87
		% pass rate	67	81	75
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	40	46	33
		% retention	73	85	52
		% pass rate	86	85	100
City and Guilds 3810 motor vehicle craft studies	3	No. of starts	17	20	15
		% retention	94	100	80
		% pass rate	69	90	83

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

60. Teaching of college-based courses is satisfactory or better. In the more effective lessons, teachers challenge and inspire their students. Most students respond enthusiastically and make good progress. For example, in a computer-aided design lesson, the teacher structured the lesson skilfully to enable students to model and scale multi-view plans. Students were able to assess the accuracy of scaling when printed. Similarly, in an electronics lesson, the teacher gave students the opportunity to compare their calculated values of resistance and power output with actual values measured in the laboratory. In practical lessons, most students make good progress and exhibit high skill levels. Activities are planned around the equipment available and students' use their time productively. Teachers often draw on their own industrial experience to illustrate and reinforce important points. Teachers' expectations are high but they also praise good work, which encourages and motivates students. Motor vehicle students are provided with very good enrichment opportunities. Students help develop rally cars and act as pit mechanics for local teams. Group tutorials are enhanced by visits from regional universities, careers advisors and support agencies, and motor vehicle students learn how emergency services react to major road accidents.

61. Much of the teaching on work-based courses is unsatisfactory. In these lessons, teachers speak for too long and do not address the learning needs of all their students effectively. Teaching styles are not always appropriate and discussions and activities do not involve all students. Too much time is spent copying notes and diagrams. Much of the language and style of text is inappropriate for the students and some contains grammatical errors. Progress is slow and insufficient checks are made on students' understanding. Work-based learners are employed by a variety of large and small companies, many of which provide good opportunities for training. Some offer training opportunities in specialist areas. A few employers are not able to provide a wide enough range of opportunities for learners to develop an appropriate range of skills and knowledge. Most learning in the workplace is poorly planned and structured. Individual learning plans do not highlight realistic targets for learners to complete NVQ qualifications. Assessors do not have a clear understanding of the key skills development needs of individual learners and targets set during reviews for learners to improve their overall performance are not clearly understood by learners or employers. There is insufficient co-ordination of training activities and sharing of information between staff is poor.

62. Assessment is carried out fairly and accurately and meets the requirements of the awarding bodies. Most performance criteria and assessment briefs are clearly stated. Feedback is generally supportive and gives indications to students of how to improve their work. On motor vehicle courses, however, some assignments do not set out clear assessment or grading criteria and a minority of assessors fail to correct errors or give sufficient feedback. Students' progress in practical lessons is not always effectively monitored and reviewed. There is insufficient use of targets to help students improve their performance. Assessment of work-based learners is satisfactory and, in some cases, good. Learners benefit from being visited regularly by full-time assessors who observe their performance.

63. Support for students is generally satisfactory. All full-time students are assessed on entry to the college. Key skills levels and learning styles are determined and learning support needs are identified. Support teachers are effective in helping students to overcome problems with literacy and numeracy. Individual student tutorials are scheduled, but some students fail to turn up. In others tutorials, tutors discuss attendance and punctuality and pastoral issues but fail to check students' progress or set targets for improvement.

64. Teaching staff are suitably qualified. The staff development programme enables them to improve their teaching skills and update their industrial and subject knowledge. Many teachers maintain productive links with local industry and are able to obtain production vehicles, engines and components direct from leading manufacturers.

65. Classrooms are bright and comfortable and provide a stimulating working environment, but few are equipped with computers. Workshops are spacious and well equipped. The fleet of cars used by the motor vehicle students is extensive and includes many new and current production vehicles, rally-prepared cars and race karts. A learning resources centre located within the engineering block contains an adequate range of books and engineering software and an IT technician provides students with support when required.

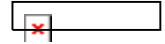
Leadership and management

66. The management of the area was reorganised the year prior to the inspection and is now satisfactory for college-based courses. Action has been taken to address underperforming courses, but some measures are yet to impact fully on students' achievements. Links with local industry are good and the college is responsive to the needs of employers. College quality assurance procedures are implemented systematically and retention and pass rates, external verifier reports and students' views are reviewed regularly to identify areas for improvement. Lessons are observed regularly and outcomes are used along with information gained through staff appraisal to inform staff development needs. Teachers have good training opportunities and maintain and update their skills. At the time of the inspection, steps were being taken to increase the number of women following engineering courses. The school partnership programme is well managed and enables pupils to begin formal engineering training.

67. The management of work-based learning is poor. Few learners have adequate learning plans

that cover the whole period of their apprenticeship and individual learning plans seldom reflect individual learner needs and abilities. The monitoring and promotion of equal opportunities in the work place is weak and poor practice is not challenged. The monitoring of employers' the health and safety practices' is insufficiently robust.

Business, administration and management



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business courses

- high retention and pass rates on AVCE and accountancy courses

- good teaching on most courses

- good opportunities for full-time students and work-based learners to achieve additional qualifications

- good academic and pastoral support for students

- wide range of provision that meets the needs of adult learners and employers.

Weaknesses

- ineffective action planning for some full-time students and work-based learners

- poor framework completion in work-based learning

students.

Scope of provision

68. The college offers a very wide range of professional courses that provide excellent progression routes for adults and a satisfactory range of courses for students aged 16 to 18. Some 168 full-time and 899 part-time students study across the area. Young people have good opportunities to gain additional qualifications. Provision for students aged 16 to 18 includes GCE A-level, AVCE, GNVQ intermediate business and the certificate of administration. Specialist part-time courses include management, accountancy, text processing and book-keeping courses. Distance learning opportunities are provided at foundation level for adults through business partnership programmes. The college also offers work-based learning programmes for 42 foundation and 12 advanced modern apprentices in business administration and accounting.

Achievement and standards

69. Retention and pass rates on AVCE courses are good, and were well above the national averages in 2003. All the students on the GNVQ intermediate business course passed in 2003. Students on vocational courses with low-to-average GCSE results on entry achieve grades that are higher than would be expected, based on their qualifications on entry. However, those students with good GCSE results achieve lower grades than would be predicted, on both vocational and GCE A-level courses. Levels of completion of the foundation modern apprenticeship framework are poor. Only 26% of learners who started in 1999 had completed their frameworks at the time of the inspection. Retention and pass rates on courses for adults are mostly good, particularly on management courses. For example, short courses leading to the certificate in supervisory management have very high retention and pass rates.

70. Students are able to define business terms precisely and have a sound understanding of business concepts. They think logically and develop their evaluative and analytical skills to a satisfactory level. Students across the area are good at applying what they have learned to real situations. In one lesson, AVCE students were able to explain the importance of the high levels of quality control used by fast food chains. Although GCE A-level and management students make very good use of their work experience to illustrate business practices, their knowledge of the business environment is narrow. For example, students struggled in one lesson to provide an example of innovation in business. Adults achieve good standards in their work and most are keen to progress to the next level. Word processing students, for example, achieve the required standard early in their course.

71. Work-based learners produce good portfolios of evidence that meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. However, learners' progress is slow and at the time of inspection, many were still to complete their apprenticeship frameworks.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Word processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	212	477	223
		% retention	98	97	97
		% pass rate	58	33	25
NVQ administration (one year)	2	No. of starts	63	58	21
		% retention	84	81	81
		% pass rate	71	81	70

AVCE business (one year)	3	No. of starts	44	36	44
		% retention	80	97	89
		% pass rate	60	77	90
NVQ accounting (one year)	3	No. of starts	33	46	33
		% retention	82	89	88
		% pass rate	22	90	72
GCE AS business studies (one year)	3	No. of starts	39	49	35
		% retention	79	76	86
		% pass rate	61	84	60
Certificate in supervisory management (short)	2	No. of starts	131	415	114
		% retention	77	75	93
		% pass rate	68	83	82

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

Quality of education and training

72. Teaching and learning are generally good and there are examples of dynamic and challenging lessons. In a GNVQ intermediate business communication lesson, the teacher had prepared a series of challenging tasks that included case studies and group work. In a GCE A-level business studies lesson, open questioning was used effectively to stimulate discussion and debate. In most lessons, teachers question their students effectively to check the level of their understanding and to ensure that they are fully involved in lessons. In the best lessons, teachers make effective use of their own industrial experience and students work with actual business documents. Students make good progress in most lessons; they are well motivated, work well independently and complete their work conscientiously. Students contribute to discussions and are willing to debate current issues. In one lesson, intermediate level students questioned why managers were paid more than shop floor workers and a lively debate ensued. Management courses are very well taught. In one lesson, the teacher made use of examples provided by the students to promote a debate about the nature of trade union power, and then added further examples to challenge their assertions.

73. Some teaching is not challenging enough and is inappropriate for the abilities of all the students in the group, resulting in insufficient learning. While teachers refer to extension strategies in lesson plans, they are rarely used to support students of differing abilities during lessons. There is insufficient integration of key skills teaching. In work-based learning, most learners receive little structured training and do not attend college for off-the-job training. The training they receive at work is unstructured, with most learners gaining knowledge and developing skills through watching and imitating colleagues. College assessors do not provide training when visiting trainees in the workplace and seldom record details of any training provided by employers.

74. Teachers set and mark work regularly and, in most cases, make constructive comments to help students improve their work. Students are well supported by their teachers and tutors but procedures for monitoring of students' progress against their predicted achievements were at an early stage of development at the time of the inspection. Action planning does not provide students with sufficiently detailed guidance on how to improve their performance and progress reports for students aged 16 to 18 do not provide parents with sufficient information about the progress students are making.

75. In work-based training, initial assessment of learners' key skills is effective but individual learning plans do not provide learners with sufficient guidance on how they are to complete different aspects of their programmes successfully. Plans are often unclear and fail to stretch the more able learners, and assessors miss opportunities for learning in the workplace. For example, one learner was required to complete unnecessary project work on communicating with difficult customers. The

college does not have sufficient assessors for work-based training. At the time of the inspection, some learners had not been seen for three months.

76. Teachers are well qualified, although some have little recent industrial experience. The use of local industry as a learning resource is limited on some courses. College-based students benefit from good learning resources, but resources for work-based learning are variable and often unsatisfactory.

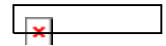
Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Job roles are clear, teaching teams are well organised and there is good communication across the area. Management information is used effectively to set challenging targets and equal opportunities policies are well implemented.

78. Course reviews, however, are not sufficiently critical and action planning sometimes lacks rigour. Staff development opportunities are good but are not always linked to the weaknesses identified through self-assessment. There is insufficient emphasis on strategies to improve teaching and learning.

79. In work-based learning, meetings of managers, co-ordinators and assessors identify students who are making slow progress but are ineffective in bringing about improvements. A system for identifying learners at risk of not completing their programmes successfully has been introduced, but it is too early to assess its impact.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- very good retention rates on courses for adults

- high retention and pass rates on computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) courses

- good teaching

- high pass rates on GNVQ intermediate IT and AVCE ICT courses

- wide range of courses providing good progression opportunities

- o effective use of high-quality resources to support learning.

Weaknesses

- o low pass rates on GCE AS IT and integrated business technology (IBT) level 2 courses
- o inadequate work experience opportunities to enrich students' learning.

Scope of provision

80. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time computing and IT courses from entry to advanced levels for some 200 students aged 16 to 18 and over 6,000 adults, who mostly enrol on short courses. Full-time courses include GNVQs at foundation and intermediate levels in IT, AVCE ICT and GCE A-levels. Part-time courses are offered at different times and at many community venues to ensure that they are accessible to adults. Most of this provision leads to OCN qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 and includes courses in Java, visual basic, web design, Hypertext Mark-up Language (HTML), and photoshop and dreamweaver software. Other part-time courses include ECDL, new CLAIT and CLAIT plus. There are good internal progression opportunities to HE courses but there are no specific access to HE courses.

Achievement and standards

81. Retention rates on courses for adults are very good and retention and pass rates on CLAIT course are significantly above national averages. Many students on the IBT2 course choose not to take the final examinations and pass rates are consequently low. A high proportion of students on community courses progress from level 1 to levels 2 and 3 courses successfully. Pass rates on intermediate and advanced full-time vocational courses are high, with satisfactory retention rates. AVCE students progress well to HE. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are considerably below the national averages and students on these courses do not perform as well as would be expected on the basis of their qualifications on enrolment.

82. Overall, students develop good IT and computing skills and their standard of attainment is good. Students are adept at using a variety of specialist software packages and advanced level students plan their projects successfully using project management software and Gantt charts. Adults on evening courses use technical terminology and notation correctly and develop new skills quickly. One student, for example, used digital photography equipment to produce a professional-quality family calendar.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
CLAIT / new CLAIT * (one year)	1	No. of starts	1,160	595	229
		% retention	89	82	92
		% pass rate	85	80	82
Internet technologies	1	No. of starts	192	143	**

		% retention	93	96	**
		% pass rate	60	23	**
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	84	41	34
		% retention	75	85	74
		% pass rate	51	69	84
IBT (short)	2	No. of starts	310	468	112
		% retention	95	95	96
		% pass rate	65	55	28
AVCE ICT	3	No. of starts	74	84	58
		% retention	88	87	78
		% pass rate	22	72	80
IBT (one year)	3	No. of starts	139	99	79
		% retention	78	84	75
		% pass rate	46	58	58
GCSE AS IT	3	No. of starts	37	43	31
		% retention	89	74	71
		% pass rate	58	50	45

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

* course changed to new CLAIT in 2003

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

83. Most teaching is good or very good but there is a minority of unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of adult classes is often very good; students are enthusiastic and eager to learn. In these lessons, teachers are encouraging, support students well and ensure that they are learning at their own pace. Schemes of work are detailed, most lessons are well planned, and theory and practical activities are well integrated. Teachers explain terminology and demonstrate tasks clearly. They determine individual students' understanding through careful questioning and discussion. Handouts are well prepared and informative and are available on the college intranet. Powerpoint presentations and assignment briefs are used effectively to promote learning. In many lessons, extension exercises are used well to ensure that all students are fully occupied and are completing work that is appropriate for their level of ability.

84. Teachers make effective use of the high-quality resources to provide relevant practical activities to extend students' knowledge and develop their skills. In one lesson, for example, students were developing operational websites to stimulate the sales of computers. The group had undertaken research to determine best practice on the Internet and students worked together well to develop ideas and resolve technical problems. In a part-time evening class, students designed business cards using a desktop publishing package and one woman produced cards for her self-employed partner's business. In the less effective lessons, teachers rely too much on a narrow range of teaching strategies, they talk too much and do not adjust the pace and style of their teaching to the needs of all the students in their groups. Full-time students do not have sufficient opportunities to relate their studies to industrial and commercial applications. They are not provided with work experience opportunities or sufficient opportunities to visit different organisations and meet practicing professionals. There is insufficient integration of key skills teaching.

85. Accommodation and technical resources are of a high standard. Software is of a commercial

standard and students are able to use memory sticks to transfer work between college and home computers. There is a wide range of scanners, colour printers and digital cameras that students can use to enhance their work. Students have good access to computers during their private study time and are able to access materials remotely through the intranet. Well-resourced IT workshops enable adult students to attend at times and venues suited to their individual circumstances.

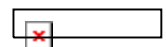
86. Assessment practice is mostly good. Students' work is carefully marked and they receive constructive feedback that helps them improve, but teachers are not consistent in correcting spelling and grammatical errors. GCE AS and A-level students do not receive sufficient feedback on their work and they do not receive sufficient advice on how to score marks successfully in examinations.

87. Students are well supported in lessons by their teachers. They receive effective additional learning support to help develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Some of the support is provided during lessons by specialist learning support staff. Induction is well planned and effective, but appropriate arrangements are not always made for students who enrol late. Tutorial support is satisfactory overall and there is a well-planned tutorial program for full-time students to support their personal development. There are instances of very good support being provided by tutors who set students individual targets to motivate them and help them to improve their performance.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are good and managers are committed to providing equality of opportunity and increasing adult participation in education and training. Managers have established a wide range of provision and place significant emphasis on ensuring that courses are easily accessible to adults within their own communities. Course management files are well maintained and contain comprehensive records. Teachers work well together as a team, meet regularly and share good practice. Quality assurance is satisfactory and inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. Managers have taken action to address areas of unsatisfactory achievement and declining enrolments, but it was too early to assess the impact of these changes at the time of inspection. Lessons are regularly observed across the area but there is insufficient analysis of the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning in course reviews and in the self-assessment report for the area. Teachers are appraised, provided with good staff development opportunities and encouraged to gain additional qualifications. The college self-assessment report identifies the need for teachers to update their industrial experience but, at the time of the inspection, none of the teachers in the area had applied for short-term secondment.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most courses

- high standard of students' practical work

- good support for students with additional learning needs

- well-developed school links programme

- achievement of a wide range of additional qualifications by students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on NVQ level 3 food preparation and cooking

- insufficient use of work-based evidence for NVQ assessments

- poor target setting for assessment on NVQ programmes.

Scope of provision

89. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses for some 98 full-time and 250 part-time students. The provision includes NVQ courses in food preparation and cooking and food and drink service at levels 1 to 3, AVCE hospitality and catering and programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A wide range of non-vocational courses meets the needs of the community, including courses in gourmet cookery and cake decoration. There is also a wide range of additional qualifications and courses available for full-time students. These include patisserie level 2, intermediate food hygiene, and the wine and spirit education trust certificate. A well-established school link course is offered to introduce catering to pupils, who attend college or work placements to achieve NVQ level 1 qualifications in food preparation and cooking. There are nine learners on apprenticeship programmes in the workplace who attend college one day each week. The college, along with three other partner colleges, was awarded CoVE status in December 2002.

Achievement and standards

90. Many of the students who enrol on courses in the area have low levels of achievement. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses and are particularly good on the NVQ level 1 food preparation programme with 87% retention rates and pass rates of 74% in 2003. Students also achieve well on the NVQ level 2 quick service course, where retention and pass rates in 2002 were 100% and 97%, respectively. Retention and pass rates are high on short courses. Pass rates on the NVQ level 3 food preparation and cooking course are poor. In 2002, only 33% of students passed and in 2003, the pass rate declined further, to 27%. Students have access to a wide range of additional qualifications and pass rates are high. For example, in 2003, all the students on the NVQ level 2 bar service course were retained and they all passed. In the same year, there was a 75% retention rate and a pass rate of 78% on the diploma for pastry cooks. School pupils aged 14 to 16 are given the opportunity to complete NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking; pass rates are good and there is good progression to college-based courses.

91. Students working in the college training restaurant demonstrate good customer service skills and work well as part of a team. Foundation level students show particularly good skills in serving food

and drink and benefit from working in this environment. Students working in the college restaurants are smartly dressed and those working in the kitchens wear appropriate protective clothing, although some students wear inappropriate footwear when working in kitchens. The standard of students' practical work is high, and students develop good craft skills. Some students work to an exceptionally high standard, particularly in patisserie and cake decorating. In one lesson, for example, adult students who had only recently started an introductory cake decorating course were finishing royal iced Christmas cakes to a highly professional standard. They demonstrated good use of piping skills and filigree work. Many full-time students compete successfully in local and national culinary arts competitions. Students' attendance in lessons is high, at 88%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	32	19	45
		% retention	53	40	87
		% pass rate	100	100	74
OCN Cake Decoration (short course)	1	No. of starts	178	116	75
		% retention	99	96	96
		% pass rate	93	88	85
NVQ food preparation and cooking (two year)	2	No. of starts	67	34	49
		% retention	49	53	47
		% pass rate	85	83	86
Basic food hygiene	2	No. of starts	656	515	682
		% retention	99	100	100
		% pass rate	100	97	95
NVQ hospitality quick service	2	No. of starts	23	27	20
		% retention	96	93	84
		% pass rate	77	100	63

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

Quality of education and training

92. Much of the teaching across the area is good or very good and teachers place considerable emphasis on health and hygiene. Practical lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of their industrial experience to motivate students. In a very effective lesson, for example, an enthusiastic group of adults were encouraged to experiment with ingredients and were skilfully helped by the teacher to understand the impact of different ingredients on the flavour of the completed dishes. Theory teaching is not as effective, and theory lessons are sometimes satisfactory but uninspiring. The purpose of a theory lesson on the hygienic preparation and storage of food, for example, was clear, but the teaching was not sufficiently focused on individual students. The classroom was too small for the size of the group being taught, the students were unable to contribute to discussions and there were too few activities to keep them motivated. Conversely, a mixed theory and practical lesson for foundation level students was very effective. The students tested different designs for folding napkins and selected the most appropriate for use in the restaurant, having considered different factors such as time, appearance and hygiene. All the students were well supported and they all learnt new skills. Teaching in both practical and theory classes incorporates clearly written handouts.

93. Teachers are careful to produce learning materials that can be easily read and understood by

those with learning difficulties, although recipe books produced by the college are difficult to read due to the small size print. Students are frequently taken on well-planned visits to develop their knowledge of the industry. There are annual trips to France or Belgium to enable students to develop their understanding of continental cuisine. Students understand the relevance of key skills to their career prospects and the teaching of key skills training is integrated within their main areas of study and is effective.

94. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory and is generally well recorded, although not all students are clear of where they are on their programme. Students' portfolios are satisfactory and contain sufficient evidence of their achievements, but insufficient use is made of evidence gathered in the workplace. Where witness testimony is used from the workplace, the evidence is often poorly recorded and perfunctory. Little use made of photographic evidence in portfolios. Assessment planning is poor. Students are not set clear targets to ensure that they achieve units regularly. Some students have been on programmes for well over a year and have no units achieved.

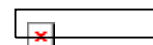
95. Students are provided with good pastoral support. Students with learning difficulties are given particularly good discrete support in both practical and theory lessons by well-qualified support staff. Some support staff have catering experience and food hygiene and health and safety qualifications. Teachers provide students with good academic support and attendance and punctuality are regularly monitored. Tutorials, however, are not sufficiently well structured to help students plan their work and achieve NVQ qualifications quickly.

96. The college training restaurants provide good, realistic training environments for students. They are well resourced and one restaurant has been refurbished to a very high standard using CoVE funding. The training kitchens are well equipped and, at the time of the inspection, the college was planning to use CoVE funding to improve the pastry kitchen, where equipment is not to industry standards. There is a wide range of modern recipe books, magazines and periodicals in the college resource centre to help inspire students. Changing rooms are kept clean and tidy most of the time. Teachers keep up to date with changes in the industry, attend exhibitions and compete at catering and hospitality competitions. Updating teachers' industrial experience has also been identified as a priority area for using CoVE funding.

Leadership and management

97. Leadership and management are good. Teams meet monthly to review students' progress, lessons are observed regularly and there is a strong emphasis on promoting equality of opportunity. Course reviews are carried out systematically and most strengths and weaknesses are identified, but the analysis of weaknesses is not sufficiently detailed to provide a sound basis for planning for improvement. Good links have been developed with local schools. Managers have a good strategic overview of the needs of the industry the college serves both locally and nationally. CoVE funding is being used effectively to support and develop the provision. At the time of the inspection, managers and teachers from the CoVE partnership had just started to meet to discuss working practices and share good practice.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- mostly high pass and retention rates

- good teaching

- effective individual tutorials that support students' learning

- good achievement of additional qualifications.

Weaknesses

- insufficient enrichment provision for female students on sports courses

- some inadequate classroom accommodation and resources.

Scope of provision

98. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses for approximately 300 students, mostly aged 16 to 19. The provision includes the AVCE in travel and tourism, GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate, diploma and first diploma in sport, the public service first diploma, national certificate and national diploma and GCE A levels. There is also a football development course, which includes the Football Association's coaching certificates at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are many additional qualifications available to full-time students, including the Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC), air fares and ticketing, first aid and sports leadership qualifications. Ten pupils aged 14 to 16 follow a foundation level link programme in sport and leisure.

Achievement and standards

99. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. They are particularly high for the AVCE double award in travel and tourism, where all the students completed successfully in 2003. There are also high pass rates for the public services courses. Progress relative to prior attainment on travel courses is good. Some 86% of students who followed the AVCE travel and tourism double award exceeded their predicted grades in 2003. Students who enrol for additional qualifications perform well. In 2003, for example, all the students who took the air fares and ticketing course were successful and the pass rate on the certificate in travel destinations course was 91%.

100. Most students develop good learning skills. Travel and tourism students have good communication skills and are able to contribute well to discussions in both informal and formal settings such as committees. Students' leadership skills are well developed, particularly on the public services courses. Students on the sports courses are sometimes easily distracted and they do not always listen to what they are told. Attendance in lessons during the inspection was high, at 86%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
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AVCE travel and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	31	26
		% retention	*	97	100
		% pass rate	*	93	100
AVCE travel and tourism (single award)	3	No. of starts	45	41	45
		% retention	82	85	87
		% pass rate	95	74	72
First diploma in public service	2	No. of starts	32	20	19
		% retention	91	70	89
		% pass rate	79	86	100
BTEC national diploma in applied science (sports science)	3	No. of starts	23	18	21
		% retention	96	50	62
		% pass rate	68	78	100
GCE AS sports games and recreation	3	No. of starts	20	22	18
		% retention	90	91	89
		% pass rate	50	90	75
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	*	21	19
		% retention	*	95	74
		% pass rate	*	90	93

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

101. There is much good teaching, and teaching is particularly effective in travel and tourism. A minority of lessons are unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers make effective use of topical materials and events and relate the contents of their lessons to students' own experiences. In these lessons, students are motivated, participate well in discussions and take responsibility for their own learning through completing exercises conscientiously and seeking advice when they are unclear. In a travel and tourism lesson on customer service, for example, the teacher got students to share their experiences of difficult customers. The teacher was careful to involve all the students, who listened and commented constructively on each other's experiences. The teacher used a variety of different teaching approaches, including role play and group work, to maintain the class's enthusiasm and help students identify how best to deal with different situations. Teachers often make good use of their industrial experience and use anecdotal evidence to illustrate particular points. In the less effective lessons, teachers talk for too long, do not make the purpose of the lesson clear, and do not relate the content of the lesson sufficiently to the group's interests, and some students distract others. There is insufficient integration of key skills during lessons. Teachers' schemes of work often include objectives for developing key skill, but little guidance is given to students to enable them to produce appropriate evidence of achievement for their portfolios.

102. Students benefit from an extensive programme of additional courses, which provide them with additional qualifications and improve their prospects of securing employment. Teachers also provide a wide range of enrichment activities, including visits in this country and abroad. The visits are well planned and enable students to gather information and evidence for completing assignments. Male sports students have opportunities to participate in team sports and training that help them to complete their coursework. There are few similar opportunities for female students, who are consequently disadvantaged.

103. Students' progress is carefully monitored and assessment practices are good. Assignments are well designed and students are set clear and realistic timescales for completing them. Students' work is carefully marked and they receive clear and constructive feedback on how they can achieve improvements. Progress reports for students on the AVCE travel and tourism course identify realistic and achievable short-term targets. Internal verification procedures are thorough.

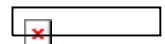
104. Students are well guided and supported once they have commenced their courses, but students do not receive sufficient information and clarification about the content of different programmes prior to enrolment. Tutorials are well structured. Students are set long-term and short-term targets to support their learning, and their individual learning plans are reviewed regularly. Targets are set for personal performance in sport, as well as for academic work.

105. The sports facilities and playing fields are adequate, but the surfaces of the playing fields were showing signs of use at the time of the inspection. Students use a gymnasium during the day for improving their own personal fitness levels. The gymnasium is also open to the public. Classroom accommodation is poor and provides an unsuitable environment for effective teaching and learning. In some lessons, overcrowding makes individual feedback and group work very difficult. Classroom teaching resources are inadequate, especially for sports. For example, sports students could not analyse performance properly using a small portable video player.

Leadership and management

106. The area is well lead and managed. Staff work together well as a team. Developments and new initiatives are implemented quickly and effectively. The curriculum is kept under continuous review to ensure it provides students with good opportunities for achieving qualifications that meet the employment needs of the area. Course documentation is comprehensive and well organised. Schemes of work are well structured, but some lack clearly identified learning outcomes. Managers and teachers meet regularly, lessons are observed and action is taken to address weaknesses. Course reviews contribute to the self-assessment of the area, but they contain insufficient analysis of students' performance and the effectiveness of teaching to support effective action planning for improvement. Teachers across the area are provided with good opportunities for professional development.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most college-based courses

- good teaching in practical lessons

- good, vocationally relevant enrichment for all students

- effective curriculum management
- wide range of flexible learning opportunities.

Weaknesses

- shortcomings in specialist accommodation and equipment
- insufficient attention to the needs of individual students in theory lessons
- slow progress toward achieving the full modern apprenticeship framework.

Scope of provision

107. The college offers a wide range courses for some 340 full-time and 580 part-time students. Many are available during the day, in the evening and at weekends and students are able to combine qualifications to produce full-time courses than meet their needs. Most full-time students follow NVQ hairdressing courses at level 2 and beauty therapy courses at levels 2 and 3. The college also provides a full-time holistic therapies course and a diploma and an advanced diploma in sports therapy. A make-up artistry course combines different aspects of courses that are relevant to the cosmetics industry. Part-time courses include a range of holistic, beauty therapy and taster courses in all disciplines. Modern apprenticeships are provided for 79 work-based learners, mostly at foundation level, in hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Achievement and standards

108. There are high pass rates on most college-based courses, and retention rates are at or above the national average for general and FE colleges. In 2003, the pass rate on the NVQ level 2 beauty therapy one-year course was significantly above the national average. Pass rates on both the Indian head massage and the NVQ level 2 hairdressing one-year courses have been consistently high during the three years prior to the inspection. Students performed well on the diploma in reflexology in 2003, with 94% of students competing the course and all gaining the full qualification. Work-based learners attend college once a week on a day-release basis, and attendance and punctuality are very good. However, students' progress in achieving the full modern apprenticeship framework is slow, and full achievement of the framework is low. Students' progression rates from level 2 to level 3 courses are low and few students pass key skills tests.

109. Most students are confident, produce work of a high standard and demonstrate good client care. Students' portfolios are of a high standard, well organised and comprehensive. Make-up artists keep their work in professional portfolios suitable for display during interviews with prospective employers. On two occasions, the college has won first place in team events in competitions run by the Association of Hairdressers and Therapists. Despite the low rates of completion of the apprenticeship framework, work-based learners develop good practical skills. Overall attendance for the area is below the college average, at 78%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	16	21	32
		% retention	69	73	81
		% pass rate	81	88	96
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	112	134	142
		% retention	56	58	42
		% pass rate	68	85	79
Indian head massage diploma	2	No. of starts	53	50	50
		% retention	96	94	90
		% pass rate	90	94	98
NVQ beauty therapy (two year)	2	No. of starts	52	64	51
		% retention	69	52	55
		% pass rate	78	72	82
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	2	No. of starts	33	25	44
		% retention	67	100	70
		% pass rate	91	84	87
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	62	35	35
		% retention	84	83	94
		% pass rate	96	86	100

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

Quality of education and training

110. There is much good teaching. It is consistently good in practical lessons but a minority of theory lessons are unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers use methods that engage and motivate students. Teachers are supportive and provide students with immediate and useful feedback that helps develop their confidence. Teachers integrate theory and practical work well, demonstrate techniques clearly and are models of good practice for their students. During a level 3 beauty therapy practical lesson on electrical treatments, for example, the teachers carefully questioned the group to reinforce previous work on anatomy and physiology to ensure they understood the scientific basis for vacuum suction treatments. Teachers produce good and imaginative resources to enliven their lessons and retain their students' interest in their work. In one lesson, students played a game that involved identifying bones from their anatomical descriptions. Theatrical make-up students produced step-by-step plans for creating ageing effects using digital photographs and overlays of tracing paper. Work-based learners are encouraged by their teachers to share the examples of good practice from the workplace and they produce work of a commercially acceptable standard during practical lessons at college.

111. Teachers pay insufficient attention to the needs of individual students in theory lessons. Although lesson plans sometimes identify individuals with low levels of literacy or dyslexia, the activities and learning materials selected by teachers fail to support these students and, in the least effective lessons, present barriers to learning and motivation. In one lesson, students were required to take notes quickly from hand-written material on a whiteboard. The writing was small and difficult to read. The teacher failed to notice that the students were struggling to keep up and had produced incomplete and badly spelt notes that were inadequate for revision purposes.

112. All students participate in additional activities that are relevant to their courses, including shows and competitions. They also have opportunities to attend product training events, trade shows and specialist demonstrations. All students have work experience opportunities and use their skills to benefit people in the local community. For example, holistic therapy students recently worked with a mental health organisation offering therapeutic treatments, and sports therapists work with a local rugby club. These activities enable students to gain a broader perspective of their vocational area and improve their employment prospects.

113. Assessment is well planned and is carried out effectively in accordance with awarding body guidelines. Internal verification is rigorous. Students receive immediate and constructive feedback on practical assessments and outcomes are clearly recorded, enabling both students and teachers to monitor progress effectively. The majority of work-based learners are assessed in the workplace by college assessors or qualified workplace assessors. Employers are involved in reviews of learners' progress. Reviews are carried out regularly and learners are set targets to progress their work. However, when targets are set, insufficient regard is paid to the length of time learners have been following programmes and the slow progress being made by many.

114. All full-time students have an intensive, full-day interview during which they undergo different forms of diagnostic testing and their dexterity is determined. They are provided with careers information and guidance on selecting an appropriate course. Students returning for a second and third year are interviewed to ensure that they are making appropriate choices. Full-time students are well supported through regular group and individual tutorials. Work-based learners have a college-based tutor and a workplace mentor, usually the employer. Their progress is monitored through regular assessment and review meetings.

115. Students' literacy and numeracy levels are determined at interview and students are referred for support by their tutor. A small number of students receive one-to-one support from a basic skills specialist during lessons and an additional vocational teacher provides support during some practical lessons. Students are also referred to the central college facility for additional support outside course hours, but many are reluctant to take up the support.

116. The accommodation used for teaching does not reflect a professional working environment. There is little storage space in the specialist areas. Rooms are cluttered with students' belongings and unused equipment, making access difficult and presenting potential safety hazards. The wet area is cramped and the make-up studio is too small for larger groups. Students do not always have sufficient access to mirrors and lighting. The reception area is badly situated and there is limited seating for clients.

Leadership and management

117. Leadership and management are good, and work-based learning is well co-ordinated. Managers are committed to ensuring that students of all ages are able to follow courses successfully and the college equal opportunities policy is carefully implemented. Students are offered a wide range of flexible learning opportunities with three enrolment dates. They are able to combine qualifications to produce programmes that meet their needs and organise their time at college to fit with the school day or around other commitments. Staff responsibilities are clearly defined and staff meetings are held regularly and are effective. Course teams work well together, course records are well maintained and teachers share good practice. Quality assurance procedures are effective. Course reviews are comprehensive and underpin the area's self-assessment procedures well. College data used to set targets for retention and pass rates do not always match information held by course teams. Teacher appraisal is supportive and targets are negotiated with teachers in line with their personal needs, the strategic aims of the college and awarding body requirements. Teachers have good staff development opportunities. Part-time teachers are well supported through a mentoring system.

Child care and early years



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on college courses

- good teaching and learning

- effective tutorial support and guidance

- good progression rates from NVQ level 2 to 3

- wide range of community based courses for adults.

Weaknesses

- learners' slow progress towards achieving modern apprenticeships

- poor integration of key skills teaching

- below average and declining retention rates on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma course.

Scope of provision

118. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses. Out of the 330 students on full-time and part-time college-based courses in child care and education, 60% are adults. NVQs at levels 2 and 3 are offered to adults in employment and to students aged 16 to 25 through work-based learning. There are 67 foundation modern apprentices, 14 advanced modern apprentices and a further 12 students working towards NVQ qualifications in the workplace. A new NVQ course in play work attracted 13 enrolments. An entry level course in caring for children is provided for pupils aged 14 to 16 in partnership with local schools. There are internal progression opportunities to HE courses.

Achievement and standards

119. There are high retention and pass rates on most courses. All the students on the CACHE foundation award passed in 2001, 2002 and 2003. Retention rates on the CACHE diploma were below the national average for both years. The number of adults studying for NVQs in child care is increasing, and there is good progression from level 2 to 3. During the two years prior to the inspection, some 67% of foundation modern apprentices achieved the framework. Many students take too long to complete, or fail to achieve, the key skills requirements. Achievement is very good on part-time courses for adults. Students gain useful additional qualifications in subjects such as first aid, sign language and leisure activities.

120. Students are confident and enthusiastic about their work. All students demonstrate a good understanding of the most common theories that impact on child care practice and result in high-quality child care. Students also demonstrate a good understanding of policies and legislation affecting the care of children. Students acquire good practical skills and use them effectively in the workplace. Many students make good use of experiences they gain through work to complete assignments. They develop good research skills and use the internet effectively. CACHE students produce written work of a high standard. Most students develop good communication skills and relate well to both children and adults. Attendance in lessons is good and students are punctual.

A sample of retention and pass rates in child care and early years, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ early years child care and education	2	No. of starts	51	47	64
		% retention	70	52	87
		% pass rate	97	88	83
NVQ early years child care and education	3	No. of starts	52	53	72
		% retention	75	75	81
		% pass rate	100	97	98
CACHE diploma in early years child care and education	3	No. of starts	31	28	33
		% retention	94	82	76
		% pass rate	97	83	*
BTEC national diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	**	29	33
		% retention	**	86	79
		% pass rate	**	100	96
Professional development certificate hospital play specialism	4	No. of starts	16	18	**
		% retention	88	89	**
		% pass rate	100	100	**

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

* awaiting confirmation of externally assessed component from CACHE

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

121. The quality of teaching overall is good. Most lessons include a wide range of learning activities that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the principles of caring for young children. Teachers manage group work effectively. They encourage students to focus on the task given to them and ensure that all students listen to verbal feedback. Teachers use their

knowledge effectively and use a wide range of teaching methods to challenge and stimulate learning. In a lesson on child abuse, the teacher used the students' limited knowledge of the subject skilfully to categorise different types of abuse. Sensitive aspects of the subject were introduced carefully and students discussed the meaning of different terms and how they could be interpreted. Courses for adults are particularly well taught. A wide range of settings are used well for students to gain workplace experience and links with nurseries, schools and employers are good. In many lessons, teachers make use of students' knowledge of the workplace effectively to reinforce theory and link theory and practice.

122. Teaching on foundation level courses is very good and encourages students to develop their own personal skills and reflect on how they have used them in practise. Lessons introduce students effectively to using different types of equipment when caring for babies, and teaching supports learning appropriately through realistic simulated practical activities. CACHE diploma students ask relevant questions about childhood illnesses and teachers manage group work effectively so that all students contribute. Teachers on CACHE courses do not stress the importance of making relevant links between different units to integrate students' learning. Students with individual learning needs are supported effectively by learning support workers, but teachers do not always manage this resource effectively enough. Students are not sufficiently aware of why they need to develop their key skills. The teaching of key skills is not sufficiently integrated with the teaching of vocational programmes, and students' acquisition of key skills is not monitored effectively. Accommodation and resources are good. Students have access to computers during lessons, but little use is made of them.

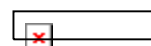
123. All students understand the purpose of assessment. Assignments are marked appropriately and written comments help students to improve on the quality of work. NVQ assessors have appropriate vocational qualifications and carry out their role effectively. All NVQ students have assessors who work closely with them and monitor their progress against national standards. Action plans for work-based learning assessments are set within realistic timeframes and assessors are supportive and provide students with good feedback. Problems detected through assessment are dealt with quickly.

124. The induction of students to the college and work placements is appropriate and students are well supported through a well-structured tutorial system. Good use is made of individual learning plans for monitoring the progress of both college-based and work-based learners, although there are insufficient references to key skills development. Students receive good careers advice. Teachers monitor students' attendance carefully and absenteeism is quickly followed up.

Leadership and management

125. The overall leadership and management of the area are good. Teachers communicate effectively and work together as a team. Courses files are well organised. Managers ensure all staff attend curriculum meetings and use appraisal effectively to plan teachers' professional development. Work-based learning staff are managed effectively and employers recognise the good support provided to them by the college. Course reviews are effective and managers have taken appropriate action to improve the declining retention and pass rates on the CACHE diploma. Teachers identify students' individual learning needs through initial assessment. This is documented clearly and actioned appropriately. Staff are aware of the college's equal opportunities policy and apply it effectively. Teachers emphasise the importance of equality through visual displays in classrooms. The college has established good working practices with The Early Years Partnership in Warwickshire.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- high retention rates on most courses

- mostly good teaching on AVCE and part-time programmes

- effective links with employers

- good pastoral support.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently varied activities to meet different students' learning needs

- insufficient use of computers in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

126. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels for students of all ages. There are some 320 students aged 16 to 18 and 1,870 adults enrolled on courses in the area. The offer for full-time students provides good progression opportunities and includes the GNVQ intermediate course in health and social care, the AVCE in health and social care and the BTEC introduction to care diploma. A GCSE in health and social care is provided for pupils aged 14 to 16 through partnership arrangements with schools. Specific courses for adults include part-time courses in counselling, sign language and first aid. Some 300 employed students follow NVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3 and further students study through distance learning arrangements. The number of learners following foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships is small. The college works with the Red Cross in Leicestershire and Warwickshire to provide first aid courses for around 740 people.

Achievement and standards

127. Retention rates have been high on most programmes for the three years prior to the inspection. Retention rates on the AVCE health and social care course fell from well above national average in 2001 and 2002 to significantly below in 2003. Pass rates on full-time programmes are consistently above national averages for general and FE colleges. In 2003, 60% of students on the AVCE health and social care course performed better than predicted on the basis of their GCSE qualifications on enrolment. Retention and pass rates are at or above the national average for part-time courses. Few students on full-time programmes achieve key skill qualifications. Progression to the next level of

study, to related employment and to HE is good.

128. Candidates following NVQ courses in care produce portfolio evidence which is relevant to their workplace and pertinent to the competencies within the award. Students following distance learning courses make good use of work-related packs to develop skills related to work in care homes. During lessons, students' work is appropriate for the level of their course and meets specific awarding body requirements. Group work is effective and students are supportive of each other. They link experiences from professional practice, life experiences and work placement to classroom theory well. In a lesson on the purpose and function of supervision within counselling, students were able to relate their own recent experiences of being supervised to the theory presented by the teachers. Students' course files are well organised and assignment work is at an appropriate standard. Attendance in lessons is good, at 86%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
First aid at work	1	No. of starts	285	313	354
		% retention	100	99	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	30	38	15
		% retention	90	89	87
		% pass rate	81	91	100
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	80	69	84
		% retention	84	88	93
		% pass rate	99	93	82
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	46	45	32
		% retention	91	80	67
		% pass rate	74	94	100
AVCE double award	3	No. of starts	45	27	21
		% retention	69	78	95
		% pass rate	100	95	95
Diploma in welfare studies	4	No. of starts	*	16	16
		% retention	*	88	81
		% pass rate	*	100	77

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

129. Most teaching is good or better, but there is a minority of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is particularly effective on the AVCE health and social care course and on part-time programmes. The majority of schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and identify opportunities for developing students' key skills, particularly communication skills. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and have good strategies for managing activities in the classroom. In a group tutorial, students who had returned to college from work experience placements gave short presentations on their experience and a key activity with which they had been involved. The teacher dealt sensitively with students who shared their first experiences of death and degenerative

diseases, enabling the group to appreciate the value of objective professional relationships with service users. In less effective lessons, teachers do not provide students with sufficiently varied activities to allow them work at a pace that is appropriate for their individual levels of ability. Students who complete the tasks set ahead of others sit and wait for their colleagues and waste time. Teachers do not question individual students sufficiently to ensure that they are learning. There are insufficient computers in classrooms to support and enhance learning. Students leave classrooms to use college facilities, which are often overcrowded or unavailable, and the flow of lessons are disrupted. Full-time students are provided with useful opportunities to broaden their experience through enrichment activities, such as basic courses in sign language and first aid. AVCE students benefit from a residential experience in their first year. There are dedicated classrooms for teaching full-time students in which their work is displayed. There is well-stocked library with appropriate texts and periodicals.

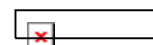
130. Teachers and NVQ assessors are appropriately qualified. The assessment of work produced by students on full-time courses is fair and accurate. Written comments clearly indicate which assessment criteria have been met. Teachers make useful comments on how students might improve their work when lower grade criteria are achieved. However, where students are producing good work, feedback is less detailed and does not always explain why the work merits higher grades. The assessment of NVQ candidates in the workplace is effective and students receive good support from college-based assessors. They provide clear feedback to candidates on the competencies they achieve. Where direct questioning is used as an assessment technique, questions and answers are recorded in detail.

131. Pastoral support is good. Personal tutors regularly review students' progress, set targets and discuss personal issues affecting students' work. Specific learning needs in numeracy and literacy are identified through an initial screening programme. Learning support is available to students with identified additional support needs but they do not always take up the support. Attendance at lessons is monitored carefully and procedures for following up absenteeism are implemented effectively.

Leadership and management

132. Leadership and management are good. There are good links with local and regional health and social care partners to ensure that provision is responsive to local employment needs. Team meetings are held regularly, minuted and circulated to all staff. Diversity and equal opportunities are promoted effectively in lessons. All courses are reviewed effectively as part of the college's quality assurance system. The course reviews form the basis of the self-assessment report for the area. The self-assessment report recognised the key strengths identified by inspectors but failed to identify the key weakness related to the insufficiently varied teaching activities. Managers and teachers have a good understanding of target setting for retention, achievement and attendance and use targets effectively to raise standards. Teachers have good opportunities for professional development and for updating their skills.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- much creative and stimulating teaching on music, media and performing arts courses
- good purpose-built accommodation that enhances learning
- extensive range of professionally related enrichment activities for students
- good progression to HE.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most national diploma courses
- insufficient attention to the needs of students with different abilities on art and design courses
- insufficient integration of key skills teaching.

Scope of provision

133. The college provides a wide range of full-time courses at advanced level including national diplomas in fine art, graphic design, fashion, media, performing arts and popular music and a selection of subjects at GCE AS and A level. There are good opportunities for students to progress to HE courses within the college. Provision at intermediate level is more limited than at advanced level but includes BTEC first diploma, OCN and City and Guilds courses. There is no provision at entry level. Opportunities are provided for pupils aged 14 to 16 years from local schools to sample courses. Taster days and short accredited courses for gifted and talented pupils are having a positive impact on recruitment. The opportunities for adults to follow accredited courses, both on the main sites and at community-based venues, are expanding. There are some 730 young people aged 16 to 18 and approximately 1,900 adults enrolled on visual, performing arts, media and music courses. Most adults follow part-time courses and most young people study full time.

Achievement and standards

134. Pass rates on most courses are good, with the exception of GCE AS media. Pass rates on national diploma courses are high but retention rates are below the national average for general FE colleges. Very few students on GCE AS drama, GCE AS fine art and GCE AS and A-level media gain high grades at the end of their studies, although some would be expected to on the basis of their GCSE qualifications on enrolment.

135. Students on craft courses in soft furnishing and upholstery produce finished work of a very high standard and much of the work of students on media and music courses is of a professional standard. Media and popular music students achieve success in national further education skills competitions. The performance skills of music and performing arts students are well developed and students on performing arts courses develop good critical evaluation skills. In a performing arts lesson on character archetypes, for example, students acted out their own scripts enthusiastically. Their analysis of their own and the group's use of narrative and body language was of a high standard. The drawing and research skills of students on art and design courses are mostly satisfactory. Art and design students are encouraged to experiment to enhance their creativity. However, the final outcome of much project work lacks finished quality. Students' technical and IT skills are good and in most cases they use IT effectively.

136. Attendance and punctuality across the area are good. Too few students achieve full key skills qualifications although many pass key skills tests. Progression to HE is very good, both to external institutions and to the college's internal HE programmes.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NOCN soft furnishing	1	No. of starts	362	504	579
		% retention	98	99	99
		% pass rate	75	93	84
First diploma in performing arts	2	No. of starts	24	34	25
		% retention	96	85	88
		% pass rate	91	100	95
Diploma in foundation studies	3	No. of starts	44	43	28
		% retention	73	93	64
		% pass rate	100	100	94
National diploma in drama	3	No. of starts	17	23	20
		% retention	82	48	65
		% pass rate	79	100	100
National diploma in media production	3	No. of starts	23	32	37
		% retention	87	56	54
		% pass rate	90	100	90
National diploma in popular music	3	No. of starts	27	17	28
		% retention	96	88	46
		% pass rate	78	73	85
GCE AS music technology	3	No. of starts	*	34	28
		% retention	*	79	75
		% pass rate	*	70	95

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

137. Most teaching is good or very good and there are no unsatisfactory lessons. There is a very good rapport between students and teachers. Teaching is well planned and organised and develops students' skills and knowledge effectively. Practical lessons are well structured and enable students to plan their work and solve problems. Many music, media and performing arts lessons motivate students to develop their creativity, learn effectively and achieve high standards. In a lively media lesson, for example, students presented ideas for video projects to the rest of their group. The teacher encouraged and supported all members of the group well and the students discussed their ideas with confidence. In an effective dance lesson, students worked on sequencing a variety of movements for a forthcoming public performance. The choreography was challenging and the teacher skilfully enabled all students in the group to make excellent progress. In less effective lessons, the needs of students of mixed ability are not always met. In these lessons, more able students are not provided with sufficiently challenging work to help them achieve high grades and less able students are not sufficiently supported to complete work by the deadlines set. For example, during a computing lesson, the teacher did not provide a mixed ability group with sufficient reminders of the purpose and objectives of the lesson and did not ensure that all the students were consolidating their learning. In some art and design lessons, teachers allow students to rely too much on easily accessible materials to develop their ideas. Students are not encouraged sufficiently to research topics and make use of information obtained through visits to galleries. In a minority of practical lessons, groups are too large and students have insufficient access to specialist equipment, which impedes their learning.

138. Adults are taught effectively across most areas. Teachers address the individual needs of students in a careful and sensitive manner, which improves students' confidence and creative abilities. The use of contemporary and classical music in an adult drawing lesson, for example, provided an opportunity for students to use mark-making techniques at an advanced level. It allowed the students to translate their responses to the music into two dimensional form, exploring shape, tone and colour effectively.

139. Students are provided with an extensive range of additional activities, such as concerts, performances, visits to exhibitions, competitions and music tours. Students on the national diploma in media course participated in a residential visit to Budapest and took on the role of a film crew. Visiting lecturers in music have included members of Slade, Iron Maiden and performers from *Pop Idol*. These activities are effectively integrated into the curriculum and enrich students' learning experiences. There is insufficient integration of key skills teaching within the vocational areas and opportunities for integrating key skills teaching are missed. Key skills lessons lack relevance to students' main vocational interests.

140. Assessment and verification are thorough on most courses. Most assignments are carefully planned and clearly explain what is required of students for assessment purposes. Assignments, for example, in fine art, do not provide students with sufficient guidance on how to approach complex tasks. In a small sample of written work, errors in spelling and grammar were not corrected. In most cases, clear and constructive feedback informs students of what they need to do to improve. Students' progress is monitored well and parents of those aged 16 to 18 are kept well informed of progress through reviews and invitations to college events, such as shows.

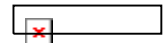
141. Students receive good pastoral and curriculum support and teachers and tutors are accessible outside timetabled periods. Students receive good guidance on career planning. Group and individual tutorials are used effectively to monitor students' progress. The monitoring process encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and helps develop their self-confidence. They are able to present their ideas coherently in front of a group.

142. Accommodation for teaching all aspects of the provision is of a high standard and provides stimulating working environments for students. Much of the equipment meets industry standards and students have access to a wide range of specialist equipment. The college provides many of the materials students need for their studies. Many of the teachers in the area are practising professionals and they use their experience well during lessons to motivate students through frequent reference to industrial practices. Although many teachers in the area do not hold teaching qualifications, they are provided with good staff development opportunities, encouraged to gain teaching qualifications and are provided with support to gain higher degrees.

Leadership and management

143. The area is well managed. Staff meetings are staggered across days and sites to enable most teachers, including part-time teachers, to attend, and communication is good. Teachers are well supported by their managers. Both full-time and part-time teachers are provided with good opportunities for training and development and their training needs are identified effectively through appraisal. Provision for adults in the community is well co-ordinated. Quality assurance procedures are effectively implemented and course reviews are used well to identify areas for improvement and provide evidence for self-assessment. Methodologies for predicting students' performance on the basis of their achievements at entry to the college are not used sufficiently to challenge and help individual students achieve their full potential. Appropriate strategies to improve retention rates on national diploma courses were being implemented at the time of the inspection but it was too early to judge their impact. Equality of opportunity is promoted well.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on English literature and NOCN languages courses

- very good teaching

- good resources to support learning

- good support for students

- effective management.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on English language advanced level courses in 2001 and 2002

- declining retention rates on some language courses.

Scope of provision

144. The college provides GCSE English and GCE A-level courses in English language, English literature and English language and literature for some 350 students. Most of the 200 GCE A-level students are aged 16-19. Enrolments for courses in English have remained stable during the four years prior to the inspection, and all English courses are available during the day and evening. English also forms a part of several access to HE courses and there are two creative writing courses for adults. A wide range of part-time provision is available in modern foreign languages. Courses of different duration accredited by the OCN are provided in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Greek and Japanese at entry to advanced levels. Modern foreign languages courses are offered at six of the colleges' outreach centres and the college provides languages training for the personnel of two major local companies. There has been substantial growth in the numbers of students following language courses during the three years prior to the inspection, with some 730 enrolments in the 2002/03 academic year.

Achievement and standards

145. Pass rates for GCE AS and A-level English literature courses have been 100% for the three years prior to the inspection. Retention rates have been at or above the national average over the same period. Students following these courses perform as well as or better than would be predicted on the basis of their generally weak qualifications at enrolment. There has been more fluctuation in the performance of students on English language courses. The GCE AS English language pass rate fell to well below national average in 2002, as did the retention rate, but recovered and was good in 2003. Both retention rates and pass rates for GCE A-level English language were below the national average in 2003. English language students do not perform as well as would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE qualifications. Following a review of the English language provision, a different syllabus, more suited to the needs of students' attending the college, has been adopted. There have been satisfactory retention and pass rates on GCSE English courses for the three years prior to the inspection.

146. Pass rates on modern foreign languages courses are high. For example, in 2003, pass rates were over 90% at entry level in French and Greek and at foundation level in French and German. Students achieve well in lessons. However, retention rates on some language courses have declined over a three-year period. On one-year entry level programmes, for example, the overall retention rate has fallen from 72% to 66%. Similarly, for foundation and intermediate courses, the overall rates have declined from 93% to 73%, and 97% to 67%, respectively. The college has taken action to address the decline and has restructured entry level courses into three ten-week blocks. It was not possible to fully evaluate the success of these actions at the time of the inspection.

147. The standard of work achieved in English is good. Students on advanced level courses show imagination and skill in talking and writing about texts, and hold sophisticated classroom discussions on narrative form and language use. Technical terms are used correctly. In creative writing lessons, students read their own prose and poetry with confidence and offer constructive and insightful comment on the work of peers. Students' written work is often of a satisfactory quality or better. Most essays are well structured and make appropriate use of quotations and textual references. Attainment in most modern foreign language lessons is good or better. In a Greek lesson, for example, entry level students showed well above the expected level of ability to read the Cyrillic alphabet.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	120	170	126
		% retention	77	79	73
		% pass rate	47	55	57

GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	**	23	51
		% retention	**	74	94
		% pass rate	**	47	83
GCE AS English language and literature	3	No. of starts	43	65	54
		% retention	82	88	78
		% pass rate	54	88	71
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	**	27	23
		% retention	**	76	78
		% pass rate	**	100	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	22*	**	18
		% retention	67	**	83
		% pass rate	100	**	63
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	74*	32	45
		% retention	68	91	78
		% pass rate	56	90	89

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

* two year GCE A-level in 2001

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

148. There is much very good and some outstanding teaching. Lessons begin promptly and work progresses at a rate that ensures students are challenged but supported in their learning. In most of the lessons observed, every member of the class contributed to discussion or other spoken activity. Learning is frequently checked by skilful questioning. In a Spanish lesson, students gave a short presentation on the week's news and the teacher checked their full understanding through humorous yet probing questioning. Group work is used effectively to develop students' confidence. In an English literature lesson, students considered Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaids Tale* and received very good support from the teacher during small-group discussions. The teacher worked with each group, challenged assumptions and probed analyses to draw well-grounded arguments from each student. During the concluding whole-class discussion, the depth of students' learning and sophistication of their views was clearly evident. Having tested their ideas and views in small groups, students are more ready to share their opinions with the whole class. Teachers of modern foreign languages use the target language at every possible opportunity and encourage students to do likewise, correcting pronunciation or supplying vocabulary where necessary. An intermediate level Spanish lesson was conducted entirely in the target language. In a French entry level lesson, instructions were given first in French, then repeated in English only when necessary.

149. Schemes of work and lesson plans are prepared carefully and identify the individual learning needs of students. Teachers plan imaginative learning activities. For example, in one GCE AS English language and literature lesson, students listened to Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* before exploring Simon Armitage's poem of the same title. The teacher carefully managed the pace of the lesson so that the group kept discovering new features of the poem. Students learnt from each other and were excited by their own grasp of the poet's technique and the way writers in different genres create atmosphere and mood. In less effective lessons, teachers dwell too long on certain topics, allow certain students to dominate discussions and fail to motivate and involve less able or less forthright students. There is some good use of computers in lessons. In an entry level German lesson, for example, the teacher used a data projector rather than a handout for a vocabulary building activity, and in an intermediate Spanish lesson, the teacher used the internet to illustrate

grammatical points. There is good use of note taking, and most teachers regularly review students' files to check the quality of their notes.

150. Assignments are carefully and promptly marked and teachers give students clear guidance on how to improve the quality of future work. Assessment objectives are clarified for students in course handbooks and, in many lessons, students are provided with sample assessments and examination questions on the topics they have been studying.

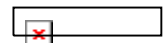
151. There are good resources to support learning. Teachers are generally well qualified and most have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Of the language teachers, 65% are native speakers of the languages which they teach. Handouts used in lessons are clear and are presented in an attractive manner. They give students effective guidance and set useful tasks to develop skills. The library contains a good stock of up-to-date books and periodicals. Library stock has recently been reviewed, and teachers played a major part in the selection of texts and periodicals. In the college's learning resources centre, there are many well-produced study guides and work packs, for example, dealing with grammar, and much biographical and cultural context material for students of literature. There is some good accommodation. The language laboratory is equipped with an interactive whiteboard, data projector, satellite television receiver and comprehensive video and audio facilities. However, many rooms are not equipped with computers and some rooms are too small for the size of groups using them. The college has started to upgrade resources at outreach centres, and a successful bid has been made for the provision of a mobile language laboratory for the Hinckley centre.

152. Students receive good support. College policies and procedures are well implemented and are augmented in a number of ways. The curriculum leader reviews tutorial and concern notes and, where issues appear to affect several students, produces guidance and instruction notes for general distribution. There is an effective system of referral to a drop-in study support workshop run by English and languages staff. Good records of the support needed by students and reviews of patterns of referral and support across time are maintained. Sessions at the workshop are much appreciated by students. Part-time language students have frequent contact with their teachers by e-mail or telephone. All students following English courses take part in termly target-setting reviews.

Leadership and management

153. Management is effective and the area is well lead. Teachers and managers meet regularly to discuss approaches to teaching and learning, identify effective teaching strategies and share good practice. Teachers' views and expertise are valued by managers. Course documentation is very well maintained. Managers have taken well-considered action to address problems with pass and retention rates on a number of courses. Part-time language teachers are well supported through a system of support tutors. Quality assurance procedures are effectively implemented. Self-assessment is thorough and detailed, and teachers are self-critical and seek improvement wherever possible. Managers set challenging targets for improvement and managers and teachers collaborate effectively to achieve them and to bring about improvements.

Foundation programmes



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

Strengths

- good achievement of personal and social skills

- effective teaching

- effective programme planning to meet a wide range of needs

- good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

154. Foundation studies include three main programmes. The first, the pathfinder programme, is a multi-level programme designed to meet the needs of school leavers and others from entry level to foundation level. This programme provides opportunities for young people to develop their skills and confidence over one or two years in preparation for vocational training. Extensive use is made of the learning support staff, who provide support to students with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The programme includes elements of vocational courses or GCSE courses provided through other curriculum areas. Approximately 60 students follow the programme.

155. The second aspect of foundation studies is the E2E programme, which was only recently established at the time of the inspection. The programme includes personal development, work experience and support for developing literacy, numeracy and language skills. It includes work-related skills, such as interview techniques, job search, equal opportunities and citizenship, and social skills, such as diet and nutrition, drugs awareness and personal hygiene. Taster courses are available in retail and warehouse, hairdressing, motor vehicle, construction, business administration, child care, care of the elderly and catering. Students can also take short accredited courses as part of the programme. These include CLAIT, basic food hygiene, first aid, health and safety, key skills IT and working with others. There is no fixed programme length and students may join at any time. There are about 90 students on the programme. The army preparation course is also offered as an E2E programme. The curriculum covers IT, basic skills, careers guidance and support, sports, physical training, field craft and exercises, and drill.

156. The third part of the foundation offer provided by the college is composed of outreach courses in the community for adults with learning difficulties. There are about 30 students on these courses.

Achievement and standards

157. There is good achievement of personal and social skills across most foundation programmes. For some students with severe communication difficulties, developing the ability to speak up in class is a significant achievement. Others with behavioural difficulties have learned to cope well within the college environment. Many young people demonstrate good teamwork skills. For example, the army preparatory E2E group have dealt with the challenge of a residential in Wales in adverse weather conditions, and of working as a team in competitive sports. Other E2E students on a catering placement demonstrated good teamwork in a busy refectory kitchen. For elderly members of the community with mental health problems, maintaining social and communication skills through outreach class activities represents satisfactory achievement. There is already some evidence of

satisfactory progression from the E2E programme. Of the 55 students who transferred to E2E from the life skills programme, 57% have entered employment, other FE courses, or work-based learning. Students' written work is of a satisfactory standard.

Quality of education and training

158. Much of the teaching on foundation programmes is good or better, but there is a small element of unsatisfactory teaching. The majority of teaching is well planned to meet a wide range of students' needs. Teachers reinforce learning from previous sessions and help students to develop their skills in small, manageable steps. For example, in a drama lesson, students with various learning difficulties and/or disabilities were gradually developing their communication skills and confidence as they work towards a video-recorded production of a short play. Lessons include a variety of activities including practical exercises, whole-group discussion, individual work and pair work. This variety gives students good opportunities to develop social skills, build confidence and work together as a group. Support staff work effectively alongside teachers to ensure that students who need extra help understand what they have to do and are able to benefit from lessons. Teachers make good checks on students' understanding during lessons through practical and group activities, and through the skilful use of questioning. This is particularly important for students who lack confidence or social skills and find it difficult to communicate easily. Poor group management in a minority of lessons affected the quality of learning, and some students made slow progress.

159. Teachers and support staff are adequately qualified and experienced. Resources are well used in many classes. Teachers bring in objects, such as a log covered in fungi for a horticulture lesson, to stimulate the interest of students. Teachers encourage students to search for information for themselves, using dictionaries and textbooks brought into class. Students in a child care class used shopping catalogues to research different kinds of baby equipment. A wide range of worksheets is used to support learning. In some cases, these take too little account of some students' literacy needs and are printed in too small a font size. Classrooms are well decorated and equipped to a satisfactory standard. Students have access to a rehearsal area for drama and a sports centre for the E2E army preparatory course. All areas used for teaching are accessible to wheelchair users, except for one narrow room, where desks have to be moved. This is an unsatisfactory arrangement.

160. A satisfactory range of opportunities for accreditation is offered. For example, young people following the care module on one of the college foundation routes can have their work accredited against NVQ units. This provides them credit against an occupationally recognised level 2 qualification if they wish to continue on this career path. The army E2E preparatory course is recognised by the army, and prepares young people for entry into army training. The college also offers OCN accreditation on this course.

161. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. College staff are accessible to students, who value their friendly, helpful approach. Staff have a very positive approach to helping students with difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve their potential. Staff work well with other agencies to offer suitable programmes and ongoing support to students. For example, staff have good links with the local Connexions service, the local Youth Offending Team and local schools. Through visits and open evenings, potential students are made aware of the various options open to them. The college establishes effective links with parents and carers as part of the process of identifying how best to meet students' needs and help them to progress. A detailed initial assessment takes into account the views of schools, parents and others, as appropriate. Induction is satisfactory. A tutorial programme ensures that support continues to be provided for students following the full-time foundation programme. There are effective review arrangements for E2E students.

162. Learning support tailored to the individual needs of students helps them settle in the college and achieve. In foundation lessons, support workers give students effective help with communication and with personal needs. Teachers and support workers liaise well to facilitate this support. Additional specialist support is given to students with dyslexia. Although some young people on foundation programmes receive literacy and numeracy support, information about their specific needs are not shared with classroom teachers. The 'basic skills' column of lesson plans is often incomplete or lacks sufficient detail. This reduces opportunities for teachers and support workers to

develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in the classroom. The learning objectives identified for those on E2E programmes are satisfactory.

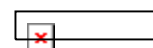
163. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans on the full-time foundation programme. Eight weeks into the course, many new students did not have individual learning plans covering all their needs and clearly identifying their learning objectives. The outcomes of initial assessment are not used to prepare a co-ordinated plan that sets out specific learning objectives for each student. Consequently, there is no clear basis for reviewing students' progress. Teachers were beginning draw up plans at the time of the inspection.

Leadership and management

164. The leadership and management of the area are good. Effective links have been established with other curriculum areas within the college to enable students to try out specialist courses or, when they are ready, to pursue accreditation. The result of this flexible and individualised approach is that students do not feel labelled and can move easily between programmes if that is appropriate for them. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and there is good communication within teams. In addition, there are effective links with other curriculum areas. Arrangements for introducing the new E2E programme have been effective. The college has built on its life skills programme to offer a good personal development programme. Good links have been established with local employers to offer work placements for E2E students.

165. Quality assurance is effective. There are good arrangements for gathering the views of students. Staff across the area contribute to self-assessment. Staff development is satisfactory. Many teachers and support staff have received training on important recent developments, such as literacy, numeracy and language support, and on disability awareness legislation. In addition, staff have good access to advice and guidance on dyslexia through the college dyslexia co-ordinator. The induction programme for new students reinforces the importance the college places on equality of opportunity.

Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- much good teaching in discrete provision in the community

- excellent engagement with the community

- very good links with local employers

- high levels of achievement leading to significant gains in confidence

- effective use of self-evaluation by students

- wide range of teaching and learning resources.

Weaknesses

- poor uptake of learning support in learning centres

- insufficient monitoring of students assessed as needing support

- insufficient integration of literacy, numeracy, language and key skills support in some vocational areas.

Scope of provision

166. The college provides discrete courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL at pre-entry to intermediate level. There is excellent engagement with the community and very good links with employers. Learning ambassadors are used as role models to encourage and recruit other learners. Courses are offered at the college's two main sites in Nuneaton and Hinckley, its six main outreach centres and forty other community-based venues. Many rural communities have no access to public transport. The college provides transport to enable students to reach classes. Some 400 students are enrolled on discrete community-based literacy and numeracy courses and a further 300 on ESOL courses. The college provides support for employers, including the local hospital, through its basic skills in the workplace programme. Courses are provided on employers' premises and offered flexibly to accommodate the shift patterns of employees. The college has good links with the army and delivers ESOL classes and language support for Ghurkha soldiers and their wives. All full-time students are assessed for their literacy and numeracy needs and support is offered through the college's learning resources centres at the North Warwickshire College and Hinckley College sites. During the 2002/03 academic year, 1,691 students were registered for key skills qualifications in communication and application of number. In five of the college's curriculum areas, key skills are taught as part of the main vocational programmes; in the remainder they are taught by a central team of teachers. Some 60 work-based learners, who do not attend college, are also provided with support.

Achievement and standards

167. Retention and pass rates are high for discrete courses. An increasing number of students are being entered for the national tests in literacy and numeracy. Retention and pass rates are above the national averages for similar programmes. Students who are submitted for key skills tests in communication and application of number consistently achieve higher pass rates than the averages for the accrediting board. Students make progress against the targets set in their individual learning plans and pass rates for external qualifications are high. Learners are empowered by their learning experiences at the college; individuals who have previously been unable to read have gained employment. In ESOL lessons, students gain confidence and develop good communication skills and satisfactory reading and writing skills. Literacy and numeracy students work well on individual

tasks related to their needs and make steady progress. Students have well-ordered folders of work and use dictionaries and thesauruses to build and develop vocabulary skills effectively. Attendance at lessons at community venues is good, but enrolment in these classes is low ranging, between five and seven students. Overall attendance in lessons is low, at 74%.

Quality of education and training

168. Teaching is mostly good or better, but there are also a minority of unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable about students' strengths, weaknesses and learning difficulties. Teachers plan individual tasks for students well and help them to develop study skills. A wide range of teaching approaches, such as discussions, interviews and role play, is used to develop students' skills and meet their personal needs and aspirations. Good use is made of computers and a wide range of appropriate software packages. ESOL lessons are well planned to enable students to develop the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. A group of adults, for example, learnt to use the present perfect tense, adjectives and superlatives through questioning each other in small groups, taking notes and preparing written questions. Similarly, in literacy lessons, students are given a variety of tasks to practise their oral and written skills and, in most lessons, students contribute readily to discussions. In less effective ESOL lessons, teaching is pitched at the level of the least able students in the group and the tasks set do not keep the more able students occupied. In the best key skills lessons, collaboration between the key skills and vocational teachers is used effectively and teaching is clearly related to the vocational area. In these lessons, customised materials are used effectively by students to develop the skills required to support achievement in their vocational area. However, in weaker key skills lessons, students do not see the relevance of the qualifications. In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions and use a variety of approaches to monitor students' progress. In community-based classes, adults are enthusiastic and eager to learn and many ESOL students develop good rapport with their teachers, and ask questions and seek clarification during lessons.

169. The area is well resourced. Much of the accommodation is good and the community outreach centres are at least satisfactory. Students have access to laptops in classes and work-based venues. Students at the main college sites are able to access websites dedicated to literacy and numeracy development. There is a wide range of good paper-based materials in the college's well-resourced learning resources centres. ESOL teachers use ESOL core curriculum and a range of teacher-produced learning materials. All ESOL classes are equipped with audio equipment for developing students' listening skills. Literacy and numeracy teachers have undergone the literacy and numeracy core curriculum training and ESOL teachers are qualified to teach English as second language.

170. Initial and diagnostic assessment of students' literacy and numeracy and ESOL levels are good. In some community venues, ESOL levels are not assessed until some weeks after students enrol on courses. Information gained through assessment is used to prepare individual learning plans for students. In a minority of cases, the targets set are too general and lack specific short-term goals to help students make progress. Targets are reviewed at the end of each term but for students working at entry levels 1 and 2, the targets need to be reviewed more frequently. Individual learning plans produced for some ESOL students do not pay sufficient regard to the student's long term aims and students seeking employment are sometimes unclear about the language skills they need. Students' progress is monitored through records of their work during lessons and achievement of their individual targets. Students record the work they have done carefully but the internal verification procedures for internal awards are not sufficiently rigorous. Full-time students diagnosed as requiring literacy and numeracy support are offered support on a one-to-one basis through the college's central learning resources centres, but many decline the support or fail to attend.

171. Individual teachers support their students well and students on the main college sites have good access to specialist advice. Students following courses at community venues have limited opportunities to receive guidance on learning and careers opportunities. Progression routes from ESOL courses to mainstream education and training courses are not sufficiently clear.

Leadership and management

172. Leadership and management are good and managers at all levels are committed to helping students of all ages acquire life skills. The way in which the college works to support different communities is exemplary. Teachers work together well and share resources and good practice. Quality assurance procedures are carefully implemented and the effectiveness of the teaching, learning and learning opportunities provided are carefully assessed. The college had changed its management structure just prior to the inspection. There are three operational plans covering basic and key skills, ESOL and community-based basic skills. A steering group, chaired by an assistant principal, co-ordinates activities across the area. It is too early to judge the impact of the changes. There is, however, insufficient tracking of students who are diagnosed as needing support but who decline the offer, and insufficient assessment of the extent to which key skills support brings about the necessary levels of improvement in their literacy or numeracy levels. There is insufficient integration of literacy, numeracy, language skills and key skills support in most vocational areas.

Part D: College data

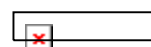
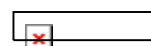


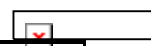
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	28	51
2	39	29
3	32	11
4/5	0	1
Other	1	8
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in Autumn 2003

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



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%) *
Science and mathematics	464	1,247	5
Land-based provision	19	580	2
Construction	98	255	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	151	966	3
Business administration, management and professional	225	2,038	7

Information and communication technology	933	5,333	18
Retailing, customer service and transportation	46	480	2
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	490	1,738	6
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	426	536	3
Health, social care and public services	316	2,746	9
Visual and performing arts and media	730	1,869	8
Humanities	331	703	3
English, languages and communication	563	900	4
Foundation programmes	880	84	3
Unknown **	1,691	7,592	27
Total	7,363	27,067	100

Source: provided by the college in Autumn 2003

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

** college data for 2002/03 did not show any unknown enrolments.

Table 3: Retention and achievement 2001/02

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,025	842	804	5,228	3,657	2,118
	Retention rate (%)	81	73	80	81	63	79
	National average (%)	76	75	76	73	69	70
	Pass rate (%)	83	82	77	80	77	82
	National average (%)	65	69	71	66	68	71
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,977	1,745	1,542	4,225	3,202	2,309
	Retention rate (%)	81	76	76	78	71	72
	National average (%)	72	70	71	70	68	68
	Pass rate (%)	69	70	80	72	72	78
	National average (%)	67	69	71	64	68	72
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,497	2,098	1,717	2,501	1,870	1,455

	Retention rate (%)	68	74	79	73	70	76
	National average (%)	67	71	77	69	68	70
	Pass rate (%)	75	70	79	67	72	84
	National average (%)	75	77	79	66	69	72
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	205	122	108
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	78	70	61
	National average (%)	*	*	*	67	67	67
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	64	88	97
	National average (%)	*	*	*	58	55	56

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 1999 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)	69	28	4	102
Level 2 (intermediate)	71	23	6	69
Level 1 (foundation)	67	27	6	45
Other sessions	81	17	2	59
Totals	72	24	4	275