



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Herefordshire College of Art and Design

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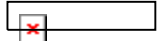
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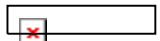
**Basic information about the college**



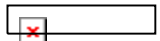
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Name of college:	Herefordshire College of Art and Design
Type of college:	Art and Design College
Principal:	Richard Heatly
Address of college:	Folly Lane Hereford Herefordshire HR1 1LT
Telephone number:	01432 273359
Fax number:	01423 341236
Chair of governors:	Professor Martin Pitts
Unique reference number:	130714
Name of reporting inspector:	Tony Davis
Dates of inspection:	24-28 November 2003

**Part A: Summary**



**Information about the college**

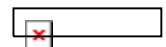


Herefordshire College of Art and Design is a specialist college in the city of Hereford. Established in 1851, it is the only specialist college for art, design and performing arts in the West Midlands. A new

College and the Herefordshire College of Technology. Students are recruited locally and regionally and also nationally for the higher education (HE) courses. Herefordshire is a rural and sparsely populated county with a population of 175,000. Approximately 55,000 people live in the city of Hereford, which is a significant cultural and artistic centre for the Marches region. In July 2003, the unemployment rate in Herefordshire was 1.6%, compared with 2.5% nationally. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Herefordshire is 0.9%, compared with 9.1% nationally.

The college offers a range of visual and performing arts courses. These include first diplomas in art and design and performing arts, national diploma in performing arts and the national diploma in art and design with a range of specialist pathways. The college also offer courses to prepare students for HE including foundation level 3 art and design and the national award in performing arts. The majority of the courses offered by the college are in visual and performing arts. In 2002/03, the college recorded 474 full-time students, of whom 284 were aged 16 to 18 and 190 were adults. There were also 476 part-time students, most of whom were adults. Some 62% of enrolments were at level 3, 5% at level 2 and 3% at entry level. Enrolments have increased overall by 22% in 2003/04. There is no vocational level 1 provision. There is a range of evening class provision which includes short leisure craft courses, life drawing and General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced-level (GCE AS and A-level) photography and a small franchise with a local community centre to provide short watercolour painting course. Students are able to study General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), AS and A2 English and a range of other additional qualifications available at the neighbouring technical and sixth form colleges. Some 59% of college funding is through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the college also has 217 HE students. The college employs 46 full-time and 73 part-time staff.

### How effective is the college?



The quality of provision is outstanding in national diploma foundation art and design. Provision is good in media, graphic design and photography and satisfactory in general art and design and performing arts. The main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

#### **Key strengths**

- much good teaching
  
- high standard of student work
  
- high pass rates on level 3 courses
  
- improved leadership
  
- good links with schools and the community

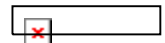
- o a rich artistic learning environment
- o very good support for students' learning and welfare.

**What should be improved**

- o attendance and punctuality of students
- o unsatisfactory accommodation
- o retention rates of adult students on level 3 courses
- o pass rates for key skills application of number
- o consistency of analysis and evaluation of college provision
- o central co-ordination of staff development.

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
Foundation art and design	<b>Outstanding.</b> There are excellent pass rates and very good retention

	rates on the full-time foundation diploma in art and design. Much of the students' work is outstanding and their critical review and evaluation skills are well developed. Much of the teaching is very good and tutors give outstanding oral feedback to students on their progress. Accommodation is overcrowded and there is insufficient emphasis on developing professional studio practice in preparation for HE or the design industry.
Media, graphic design and photography	<b>Good.</b> The retention and pass rates are very good across many courses and students in media, graphics and photography succeed well. Most teaching is good and students' work is of a high standard, but in weaker lessons, there is insufficient reinforcement of learning outcomes and students arrive late. Communication between the staff team is not always well co-ordinated.
General art and design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Much of the teaching and learning on the first diploma course is good and teaching on the Contact course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is innovative and effective. Students benefit from being taught by practising artists and designers and first-year students produce a good standard of individual work. There is insufficient development of second-year students specialist technical skills and some unsatisfactory teaching on year 2 of the national diploma. Attendance is particularly poor on year 2 courses.
Performing arts	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The good teaching helps students develop a good standard of performance and conceptual skills. Students benefit from collaborative work with the local community and cross-curricular projects in college. Student attainment in some areas is inhibited by inadequate accommodation. There are low retention rates on both courses.

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

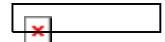
Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new principal was appointed in April 2003 and a new finance manager in September 2003. The college's revised strategic aims emphasise its commitment to raising the standards of teaching and learning and becoming a centre of excellence for the specialist practice of art. Enrolments have increased significantly in 2003/04. Financial management is satisfactory. Course-level management is satisfactory or better. High pass rates at level 3 have been maintained for the last four years for all students. There are indications that the low retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 are improving. The judgements in the college's self-assessment report are mostly accurate and development planning is leading to improvements. The priorities for the college are to improve the effectiveness of their approach to poor punctuality and attendance, to improve teaching accommodation and the rigour of target setting in quality assurance. Curriculum grades at inspection are satisfactory or better, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

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

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college works hard

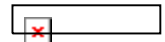
considered entering further education (FE). There are a growing number of courses designed to meet the needs of mature students and an effective course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Significant progress has been made in encouraging students from local minority communities to enrol on to college courses. The college has made slow progress in the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA). A recently revitalised college equal opportunities group is starting to address the college's wider responsibilities towards equality and diversity. However, there is poor access to some of the college's facilities for students with restricted mobility. The college has produced a suitable race equality policy to meet the requirements of the Race Relations Act, but the arrangements for its monitoring and implementation have yet to be implemented. There is also insufficient detailed analysis of data on age profiles, disability, gender and the ethnicity of students to determine the priorities for addressing such issues as under-representation. There is insufficient monitoring of adherence to the college's equal opportunities policy at course team level.

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



Students are well guided and effectively supported. Pre-entry and interview advice and guidance are impartial and informative. Course monitoring and guidance is thorough, though some assessment feedback to students could be more developmental. Student learning support is very effective and most students who receive the support complete their programme of study. Student welfare support is also good. Students appreciate and value the tutorial, guidance and support services available to them. The college policy on absenteeism and lateness, and the measures in place to tackle this persistent problem, are not consistent, sufficient or robust enough to fully address the issue.

### **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***

- creative and exciting environment
  
- opportunity to be taught by professional practitioners
  
- working relationship with staff, their approachability and support
  
- friendly and welcoming atmosphere

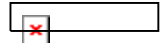
- responsibility they are given to manage their own work
- easy access to a range of practical workshops
- availability of cross-curricular resources
- canteen area.

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

- size and quality of some teaching rooms
- teaching skills of some professional practitioners
- amount of tutorial and teaching time
- clearer guidance on how to improve their work
- consistency in the adherence to assignment deadlines
- adequate provision of essential studio materials
- induction into how to use specialist resources
- access to the Internet
- opening hours of the shop

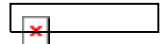
- o car parking facilities.

### Other information

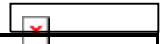


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must 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

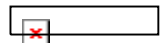


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	65	29	6
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0
Learning 16-18	52	44	4
19+ and WBL*	86	14	0

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

*\*work-based learning*

### Achievement and standards



1. Pass rates improved in 2002/03, for most students, to well above the national average when



students aged 16 to 18 studying at level 3 and for adults at level 2. The retention rate of adult students has been a significant issue for the college since 1999, with retention rates mostly well below the national average. However, at levels 1 and 2 there have been significant improvements, with the retention rate at level 2 now well above the national average of 71%, at 92%. The retention rates of adults studying at level 3, however, remains a significant issue, with over half failing to complete their studies in 2002/03. The retention rate of students aged 16 to 18 is at the national average for those studying at level 2 and 9% above for those at level 3.

2. The pass rates for students studying the wider key skills of working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving is good. The college has worked hard to integrate the key skills of communication and information technology (IT) into the students' main vocational curriculum, and for key skills communication the pass rates in 2002/03 have risen from 14% overall to 66%. In IT, however, pass rates fell from 36% to 29% for the same period. The college has failed to successfully raise achievement levels for key skills application of number. Whilst the college more than doubled enrolments on to application of number in 2002/03, no students gained the qualification. Of the 619 students who have worked towards application of number since 2000, only 5 have passed the qualification.

3. The college's retention and pass rate data was found to be mostly accurate. Senior managers closely monitor enrolments each month and in most cases the data held by curriculum managers matched the figures reported to senior managers and the governors.

4. The college does not have a systematic scheme for comparing students' final qualification grades with their previous achievements in order to measure progress or value added. However, overall, the monitoring of students' progress is good. For national diploma and foundation art and design students, the monitoring and evaluation of progress is frequent, extensive and thorough. However, for some general art and design students, the written feedback forms are not always fully completed and some students are not clear about how to improve their grades before the start of the next project. If students complete their courses and gain the qualification, they usually succeed in progressing to the next level of FE or HE.

5. The college has recognised students' attendance and punctuality as being a consistent issue since the last inspection in 1999. Whilst some progress has been made, particularly in performing arts, too many students are late for sessions and, in general art and design, attendance is very low.

6. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about students' achievements and the standards reached on particular courses.

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

7. The majority of full-time level 3 students aged 16 to 18 study towards the national diploma in art and design. This diploma consists of a general introductory period in which students experience a range of disciplines before choosing from the eight specialist pathways available. General art and design subjects, including fine art, fashion and clothing, textiles, three-dimensional (3D) design and design crafts are managed together, and the remaining multimedia, graphic design and photography pathways are managed together with GCE AS/A2 film studies.

8. In 2003, the pass rates on the national diplomas in graphic design and photography, GCE A-level film studies and GCE AS photography were 100%. Retention rates are generally good, and overall most students successfully complete their programme of study. Students produce good work and have a creative approach to understanding and experimenting with processes and materials. Most students develop good practical skills and demonstrate a good standard of technical knowledge.

9. For the students who remain on the general art and design national diploma pathways, the pass rates have been consistently high. However, the retention rate for general art and design students has consistently fallen from 2000 to 2003. In 2002/03, only half of the students completed their course successfully. The college has taken action and the improvement measures are having some effect. The number of students progressing into their second year has been significantly better this

year. The pass rate on the level 2 art and design course in 2003 was well above the national average.

10. There is a good standard of individual work from first-year national diploma students who are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Most students quickly develop an individual way of working and students' work is creative and innovative. Some second-year national diploma students have insufficiently developed core vocational skills. Attendance at second year classes is unsatisfactory. Register reports confirm the pattern of low attendance, particularly in fine art, fashion and clothing.

11. Performing arts students who remain on their course achieve well and produce a high standard of work. They demonstrate a good level of commitment to their studies and have high expectations of themselves. Retention rates, however, are low. In 2002/03, a third of all performing arts students failed to complete their courses. Whilst staff have a development plan to improve retention rates, only 75% of national diploma students progressed into their second year in 2003.

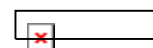
12. The diploma in foundation art and design studies has a mixture of students aged 16 to 18 and adults and all achieve excellent results. Students' achieve high pass rates and the proportion of high grades achieved is consistently well above the national average. For students studying part time, pass rates are high and retention rates are at the national average. Much of the work is outstanding and innovative. Students develop a very high standard of practical skills and their critical review and evaluation skills are well developed. They have a mature approach to their work and demonstrate a very high level of thoughtful and informed discussion.

### ***Adult learners***

13. The college provides three suites of evening courses in arts and crafts, lens-based subjects and computer graphics, most of which are college certificated. The arts and crafts and lens-based courses last for 24 weeks and are scheduled in blocks of 8 weeks. There are currently 192 students enrolled on these courses, however, the majority of the courses were between blocks at the time of inspection. Retention rates on the arts and crafts courses are good, at 81%, but low on the lens-based courses, at 58%. The computer graphics short courses last for three, five or eight weeks and the majority of students complete their course.

14. Students on the Contact course develop good practical skills through a range of arts-based activities and achieve well in the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) youth bronze award. Contact students also benefit from a range of collaborative activities with other full-time students of all levels including those studying for a degree.

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



15. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 59 lessons. The profile of teaching grades awarded was close to the national average at 70% good or better, 25% satisfactory and 5% less than satisfactory. A smaller proportion of teaching is good or better at level 2 than at other levels. On the foundation diploma course, teaching was very good, with 83% of lessons good or better. The lowest proportion of good or better teaching was in the general art and design area.

16. Much of the teaching is good. Many teachers are practitioners in the arts and in the best lessons this experience is used well to make learning interesting, relevant and demanding. In good performing arts lessons, students are engaged through dynamic teaching and encouraged to link theory with practice, developing sound research methods to support their performance work. Foundation diploma teachers have high expectations of their students and they use skilful questioning which elicits thoughtful and considered responses. Students on the first diploma in

design course make good progress in productive and enjoyable lessons. Project briefs are carefully planned to engage the interest of the group. In some general art and design lessons, teachers are not always sufficiently clear about the aims and objectives of lessons or their expectations of students. The potential for group debate and learning is sometimes missed through teaching to small numbers of students. On several courses, learning is affected adversely by poor punctuality and attendance. In a few lessons, students become passive and disinterested when teachers fail to engage them in learning activities. Lessons were observed on the applied GCSE art and design course, part of the college's vocational support for the increased flexibility partnership with local schools. Teaching and learning are good; students are gaining much from the vocational expertise of staff and enhanced resources which the college provides. Lesson grades for increased flexibility partnership courses are not included in the overall lesson grade profile of the college.

17. The college has effective policies and procedures in place for the recruitment of suitable staff and all teachers, technicians and demonstrators have appropriate vocational qualifications. Many are current practitioners and bring a high level of specialist experience and knowledge to their work with students. The level of technical support is good. All full-time and substantive part-time staff discuss professional development needs with their line manager in their annual professional development reviews. Applications for professional updating are supported in most cases, and the outcomes have increased staff effectiveness for the benefit of students. The college arranges appropriate development events on central issues, such as disability awareness.

18. The specialist equipment in 3D design, textiles, printmaking, photography, and the Folly Arts theatre facilities are generally well maintained and appropriate to the levels of study. Recent investment has been made to upgrade the specialist computer-based design facility. There is insufficient specialist accommodation in many areas. Action has been taken to address recognised weaknesses, some of which are due to the recent significant increase in student numbers, but these have yet to have an impact. Workshops for ceramics, small-scale metal, and 3D design are cramped, and students do not have sufficient access. There is unsuitable accommodation in a few areas. For example, library accommodation is unsuitable for independent learning, though the book stock is good and staff are praised by students for their knowledge and support. Space is restricted, access to Internet resources is very limited and there are insufficient facilities for viewing video-based material. In performing arts, the dance studio does not have a sprung floor, restricting students' learning opportunities. There is no private room for students to meet staff from student services. Some of these meetings are held in a corridor, whilst others are scheduled to take place in another part of the college.

19. Appropriate access for those with restricted mobility is poor in some areas. Wheelchair users cannot access most teaching accommodation from the college's reception and have to leave the main building to do so. There is poor access to the print workshop, and the arrangement of the equipment in the 3D design workshop restricts safe access. The college recognises these weaknesses and is planning to address them.

20. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is satisfactory. All students attend a pre-enrolment interview and advice session where their course specific needs are assessed and discussed. There is a suitable and timely assessment of additional learning needs using standard test material which is administered and interpreted by the college's learning support team. The outcomes of initial assessment are used to plan an appropriate programme of support in conjunction with the course tutor and student. The take-up of additional support is generally good.

21. Overall, assessment is fair, accurate and timely. An appropriate range of assessment methods are used. In the foundation diploma programme, regular weekly seminars are used as the focus for group critiques and individual assessment. Staff take careful notes to monitor progress, and students complete self-evaluation forms prior to their major assessments. The quality of verbal feedback is generally satisfactory, though there are examples of rich and extensive feedback to students on the foundation diploma. The quality of written feedback is variable; however, in performing arts, assignment briefs are well designed and staff give students good developmental feedback. In media, graphic design and photography, students receive good guidance on how to progress. In the first-year general art and design programme, there is little written feedback and students receive insufficient advice about how to improve. Formal feedback to parents on the progress of students

under the age of 18 is given in two parents' evenings each year. Whilst additional regular contact is encouraged, parents are not provided with written reports.

22. Satisfactory procedures are in place to verify the quality of assessment, and these are effectively applied. Assignments are generally developed through team consultation, and approved by course leaders before being used. External verifier and examiner reports, together with national standards sampling reports are analysed by the head of academic affairs who then provides a report for the college's academic standards committee. Actions to resolve issues are set and monitored.

23. The college is actively engaged with its surrounding community in school-based activity to support the curriculum initiatives for young people aged 14 to 19. Following their previous involvement with an education action zone, the college is now part of a local increased flexibility partnership designed to build closer links between post-16 providers and to introduce a broader work-related curriculum at Key Stage 3 in schools. Programmes include the development of a model GCSE double award in applied art and design, with teaching input shared between the college and school, and the holding of performing arts and interior design taster courses in college for Year 10 pupils. 'Aims Higher' is an initiative designed to raise the attainment of low achievers and increase opportunities for progression from school to FE. Through this initiative, the college supports one school by providing staff to work directly with Year 10 pupils both in school and in college. The college also co-ordinates an art teachers' forum as part of this initiative. Teachers meet three times each year to discuss curriculum issues, maintain links and receive presentations from support agencies, such as the local arts development officer. Now part of the increased flexibility partnership, the college continues to offer a successful summer school for Year 10 pupils from across the region with around 170 pupils from 14 local schools attending the week-long event of creative activity offered in college studios by college teaching staff. This is the first experience of college life for many Year 10 school pupils. The college is aware that its active involvement in these activities contributes to a change in the perception of the college and its courses by those who might not have previously considered a career in the visual and performing arts. There has been a steady increase in applications and enrolments on to its full-time courses.

24. The college effectively promotes its full-time courses at levels 2 and 3 in local schools, at careers fairs and at college open evenings. Good links are maintained with the Connexions service. Applicant pre-entry guidance is impartial and comprehensive. All applicants are interviewed. Those who apply and indicate that they may have additional learning support needs are interviewed by both a course and learning support tutor. An initial identification of learning support needs can be made and the decision about the most appropriate level and course is discussed with the applicant and, if appropriate, parent or guardian. Students are supported throughout their programme of study.

25. The college provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of individual students. In particular, students seeking to progress from school-based learning to HE programmes in the visual and performing arts are well served by a range of appropriate full-time courses at levels 2 and 3. Students are also encouraged to enrol on a range of GCSE and A-level courses to increase their qualification portfolio and to complement their main learning activity. The long-standing entry level Contact course supports the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The course is placed at the heart of the college environment and has good links with other courses, students often being involved in cross-course projects.

26. Responding to identified need, a recently introduced level 3 two-year diploma in foundation art and design studies serves the interest of mature students seeking to develop skills, enhance qualifications and progression opportunities through part-time study. A one-year full-time performing arts course at level 3 has also recently been introduced in response to an increased demand from students over the age of 18 for a practice-based programme of study which prepares them for entry to the performing arts profession, to specialist drama schools or to HE. The college provides an adequate range of courses for mature students. A range of part-time evening courses are available including life drawing, jewellery, textiles and sculpture. In addition, one-year, part-time evening courses are offered in photography, including City and Guilds level 2 and GCE AS and A2.

27. A well-designed and varied enrichment programme complements full-time course curricular activity. Careful consideration is given to the structure of the enrichment programme, and links

between its programme and vocational coursework continue to develop. For example, a recent enrichment programme lecture on the *commedia dell'arte* supported a studio project on the human body in the national diploma in art and design course. Outside these curriculum links, the enrichment programme brings to students a series of events and activities they may not otherwise experience in their working week. A film club is a popular enrichment element, as is access to artists in residence at the college and visiting speakers from arts practice who provide insight into their work and its social/personal contexts. The range of the enrichment programme offers students the opportunity to enhance their cultural vocabulary whilst facing the broader social factors of diversity, health and well being and environmental sustainability. A recent visit to the Anne Frank exhibition at Hereford Cathedral was followed by cross-discipline coursework focused on discrimination and cultural diversity in society. It engaged students from across the range of full-time courses at all levels of study. In addition to the stand alone programme of activity, there are the good course-specific enrichment activities of visits to exhibitions and performances and contributions to the courses from practising artists, designers and performers.

28. Pre-entry advice and guidance are good. Prospective students are given every opportunity to seek and receive advice to identify the most appropriate course of study to meet their ambitions. All applicants are interviewed and individuals seeking advisory interviews are accommodated whenever possible. Advice and guidance are comprehensive and impartial and some students are redirected to other courses in the college, or at a nearby college, which better serves their needs. The college's printed course publicity is satisfactory and their website is currently undergoing development.

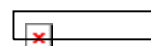
29. Course induction programmes are thorough. Students are introduced to the college services, key personnel, their course of study and its demands. Students are issued with a college diary, college regulations, policies and procedures and contact points. They take part in exercises and activities to encourage them to settle quickly into studies and to form as a group. There are very good arrangements to identify and support students with additional learning needs. Support arrangements are well co-ordinated and the vast majority of those who accept support complete their programme of study. Learning support staff are based within teaching studios, with each member of learning support staff supporting a particular course or group of students. All learning support is sensitive to students' individual needs.

30. The college has not sufficiently addressed the issue of poor punctuality and absenteeism. Daily class registration and the immediate telephoning of absent students together with the introduction of assessment penalties have not made a significant impact on the rates of absenteeism on some courses. The college has an absence policy, but many tutors have developed their own resulting in inconsistent practice.

31. The college provides good support for students' welfare. Students have good access to the college's academic counsellor and a range of other specialist advice from within college and from external organisations. Students speak highly of the ease of access to these services and the value they place on them. Whilst staff who provide the student welfare service meet on occasions to exchange information, there is no formal structure where all can review, discuss and consider ways in which the welfare service might be improved.

32. Careers advice and guidance arrangements at the college are very good. Students are well served by visiting speakers from HE institutions, talks from practising professionals and visits to careers fairs and HE open days. A representative from the Connexions service visits the college one day each week to offer support to students. Students benefit from staff's detailed knowledge of art and design HE nationally.

## Leadership and management



experienced significant financial difficulties and recruited some new senior staff and governors. In the last three years, the college failed to meet its enrolment targets which led to a 29% reduction in funding. In 2003/04, enrolments have increased by 22%. A new principal was appointed in April 2003 and a new finance manager in September 2003. The principal and governors have made significant progress in redefining the strategic direction of the college and securing financial solvency. The changes to the college are being managed sensitively and effectively and staff have been fully consulted throughout the process.

34. The college's revised strategic aims emphasise its commitment to raising the standards of teaching and learning and becoming a centre of excellence for the specialist practise of art, design and performing arts. The revised operational plan and the arrangements for the monitoring of strategic targets have yet to be implemented.

35. Most communication is good. Staff and senior managers work closely. The principal has adopted an effective open management style and holds weekly briefings. There is a regular cycle of meetings at all levels in the organisation. However, some meetings are informal and insufficient records are kept to monitor progress on agreed actions. On some courses, the communication between staff and students is not sufficiently co-ordinated. Staff receive a weekly bulletin which keeps them informed of forthcoming events.

36. Governors and senior managers work well together and operate within a sound framework for governance. Recent appointments and the reshaping of the committee structure have provided a more focused approach to the work of the governors. The low attendance at governors' meetings in the past has now been resolved with the new appointments. Governors are committed to continuous development and use their skills and expertise effectively to monitor the college's academic and financial performance. Improvements to the scheduling of reports enable governors to work more effectively. Governors receive good advice from an independent clerk. Recent training for governors has included equal opportunities and presentations from curriculum managers.

37. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. At course level, staff are self-critical when identifying strengths and weaknesses. Clear priorities for action are identified and progress on their resolution is monitored in course team meetings. The data for monitoring student retention and pass rates are accurate. However, challenging retention rate targets are not being used effectively to monitor the performance of two-year courses and trends over time. For example, the target set at the start of a course is not fixed for its whole duration and is adjusted throughout the year to reflect declining retention rates. Course audits are carried out each term and results are carefully monitored and moderated by the head of academic affairs and the academic standards committee, with regular reports on progress given to governors. The rigour with which course reviews are completed varies across course teams. Judgements are mostly accurate and development planning is leading to improvements. A revised programme of internal lesson observations has been recently introduced. Feedback from these observations is given to course teams in the form of overall strengths and weaknesses. There is insufficient focus, however, on the development needs of individual staff. Outcomes of observations are not adequately used to inform judgements on teaching and learning in the self-assessment report.

38. The college's computerised management information system is reliable. The data used by most course teams is consistent with the data held centrally. The majority of the data used for self-assessment is robust and enables managers to make informed decisions. Staff access to the management information system is limited, resulting in some delays in statistical returns to curriculum teams. Student attendance is monitored weekly by course staff through manual subject registers. Senior managers review attendance on a monthly basis, but this is not sufficiently effective and attendance in some areas continues to be poor. The range of financial reports available from the management information system is limited and managers are not making full use of reports to analyse the effectiveness of course costs or staff utilisation.

39. Equal opportunities and diversity are a focus of the college's strategic objectives and the open admissions policy encourages a wide range of students to apply and enrol. There is a range of policies which include procedures for dealing with grievance, student discipline, harassment and disability. Staff have received training in disability issues and the college completed a disability audit

and action plan in October 2003. At curriculum level, there is a satisfactory response in assignments to the equality and diversity agenda. Governors approved the race equality policy in October 2003, but the arrangements for its monitoring and implementation have yet to be implemented.

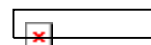
40. Leadership and management of most curriculum areas are good. The recent introduction of course leaders has been effective in providing better management and monitoring of improvements. However, some significant weaknesses are yet to show sufficient signs of improvement, including issues with some of the key skills. Staff teams share good practice and teachers are encouraged to team teach so that students can benefit from a wider range of specialist skills. Effective support is provided for new staff. Students have also benefited from developments in the curriculum and the re-organisation of resources which may have contributed to improved retention rates.

41. The college's arrangements for staff development are satisfactory. The annual staff development plan is clearly linked to the college's strategic aims and objectives and individual staff development applications are reviewed against these priorities. Staff are supported to continue with their individual creative research and they have a high level of up-to-date professional experience. The annual professional development review includes all full-time staff and those part-time staff with a significant contract. However, there is insufficient central co-ordination of staff development. Some 25% of teaching staff do not have, and are not working towards, a teaching qualification. Individual performance targets are not set for teaching staff and their teaching performance is not sufficiently reviewed. There is no system in place to evaluate the cost effectiveness or value added to the college of the training programmes or the appraisal process.

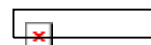
42. Financial management is now satisfactory. However, during the last three years the college failed to meet its enrolment targets which led to an operating deficit. This trend has been reversed through increased student enrolments in 2003/04 and some staff redundancies. Rationalisation of the curriculum has reduced the number of poorly performing courses. Budgets for consumable items are delegated to course managers and are closely monitored.

43. Curriculum grades at inspection are satisfactory and better. Class sizes during the inspection were slightly larger than the sector average. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Foundation art and design



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

#### **Strengths**

- excellent achievement
  
- much outstanding and innovative work

- well-developed student critical review and evaluation skills
  
- very good teaching
  
- outstanding oral feedback to students on their progress.

***Weaknesses***

- overcrowded accommodation
  
- insufficient emphasis on developing profession studio practice.

***Scope of provision***

44. On the full-time foundation diploma in art and design studies course, there are 70 students aged 16 to 18, and 19 adults. The part-time foundation diploma course has 36 adults in the first year and 21 in the second year. Specialist workshops are arranged for students to develop particular skills and interests, for example, extra classes are available if required in the use of image manipulation software. The enrichment programme includes a film club, a performance programme and educational visits to museums and galleries in Cardiff, Birmingham and Oxford. The programme of visiting artists and design practitioners and lecturers from HE has included a recent lecture by a former student, now a successful product designer, who gave current students a good insight into concepts, prototypes and the sale of intellectual property rights.

***Achievement and standards***

45. Achievement is excellent. Most students pass the qualification and the proportion of high grades awarded is consistently well above the national average. The pass rate for part-time students is also high and retention rates are at the national average. Much of the work is outstanding and innovative. Sketchbooks are used well for research, the recording of ideas and for experimentation with materials. The critical review and evaluation skills of students are well developed. They have a mature approach to their work and demonstrate a very high level of thoughtful and informed discussion. Practical skills are of a very high standard. Portfolios include outstanding examples of textiles and written work. One student made well-crafted and evocative silk hangings based upon the origins of garments. They included careful layering, stitching and text. Photography, photocopies and drawings are combined very effectively with image manipulation software to develop unusual and personal images. One student had taken the concept of a clothes line as her starting point to convey days of the week through the image of washing on a line.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Diploma in foundation	3	No. of starts	64	66	61



studies art and design 1 yr	% retention	94	91	89
	% pass rate	98	93	98

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

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

46. Teaching is very good and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of their students and use highly developed and precise questioning which demands thoughtful and considered responses from students. There is a strong and effective focus on developing and understanding the theory and potential of visual imagery. Teaching is based substantially around a tutorial approach which ensures tutors have a good knowledge of individual students and their different ways of working. This approach enables staff to respond effectively to students' needs. Challenging individual targets are negotiated and revised as students' skills and experience improve. Teachers help develop a working environment in which students have the confidence to experiment and take risks. In a life drawing class for part-time students, the teacher introduced the lesson by saying 'When you stop thinking about what it should look like, you start thinking about what it could look like'. Students then launched themselves into the activity unselfconsciously with great confidence using balls of cloth dipped in paint, large brushes and the broad side of pastels.

47. Discussion is often led by students and guided by teachers, who are ready to stand back and allow discussion to flow whilst ensuring that quieter, less confident students are skilfully drawn in. In a discussion about a recent research project, there was a careful explanation of how to find links between different subject matter. The explanation was effectively illustrated by a range of images and examples of sequential drawings by previous students. Careful and thorough evaluation is integral to all activities. Students are encouraged to keep a reflective journal, and complete evaluation sheets each week. In the critical reviews and seminars, students discuss their own work and that of other students. In one review, adult students presented their work-in-progress on the subject of memories. They shared ideas, reported on visits to exhibitions, books referenced, and used their wealth of experience for the benefit of each other. Communication key skills is integrated fully and effectively into the course. In one survey project, a number of students have corresponded directly with practising artists and designers. However, there is generally insufficient reference to the work of other artists and designers by students in other day-to-day work.

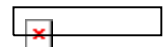
48. Accommodation is overcrowded due to an increase in student numbers in 2003/04. There is insufficient access to computers, the Internet, tools and equipment in the site allocated for foundation diploma students. The production of large-scale work is restricted due to pressure on space and the remote location from workshops. The studio area is affected by invasive noise from the corridor. The seminar room is small, with too few seats for the group size and no access for those with restricted mobility. The staff workroom can only be entered by going through the seminar room. The life drawing studio has recently been refurbished, but is small and has little natural light. Life drawing lessons for full-time students have yet to begin. Part-time foundation students have no regular place to work. At the nearby main college building, there is a good range of equipment and facilities for print, ceramics and other specialist workshops which are well managed, but are sometimes crowded. Technical demonstrators are knowledgeable and experienced. Students speak highly of the helpful library staff. Progression to HE is good.

49. Tutors give outstanding oral feedback to students on their progress which is extensive, rich and challenging. In one example, a student who was struggling to develop her drawings, benefited from a timely intervention by the tutor, who helped her to prioritise the images for quality and relevance. The monitoring and evaluation of student progress are frequent, extensive and thorough. Students complete feedback sheets each week when they receive their assessments, and at the end of each stage of their course. Their evaluations are discussed before major assessment stages. Standardisation of the marking of work is thorough and staff discuss students' work together and share good practice. Initial assessment is effective. Students' additional learning support needs are effectively identified and some students receive support for dyslexia or help in the organisation and planning of projects and written assignments.

### **Leadership and management**

50. There is strong leadership and good management of the course. There is a strong staff team who work well together. As part of their quality assurance arrangements, a recent internal college review considered aspects of teaching and learning and encouraged staff to reconsider some aspects of their teaching. In response, opportunities have been created for staff with complementary skills to teach in teams, give seminars with other staff and share good practice. Much teaching is to individual students and as a result there is some duplication of effort and coverage. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for good time management, but this is not always successful. The tutorial-led teaching approach allows some poor punctuality to occur of which staff are too tolerant. These shortcomings do not develop good working habits in preparation for HE or the design industry. The self assessment of the provision is thorough, though there are no formal arrangements for reviewing any progress made on the improvement recommendations. Students have a good understanding of equality and diversity.

### **Media, graphic design and photography**



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

#### **Strengths**

- good achievement for national diplomas in graphic design and media production
  
- high pass rates for national diploma in photography
  
- high standard of student work
  
- good teaching in film studies.

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient reinforcement of learning outcomes
  
- lack of punctuality by students
  
- ineffective staff communication.

### **Scope of provision**

51. The college offers the full-time specialist pathways of multimedia, graphic design and photography from the national diploma in art and design and evening provision in photography and digital imagery. Most students on full-time courses take additional qualifications such as GCE AS or A-level film studies, photography or English and also work towards a range of key skill awards. A small number of part-time students attend GCE AS or A-level courses and there are some adult students attending short introductory courses in digital imagery. In total, there are 112, students of whom 18 are adults and 25 study part time.

### **Achievement and standards**

52. Pass rates on most courses are good and in many cases are consistently above the national average. In 2003, the pass rates on the national diploma pathways of graphic design and photography, GCE A-level film studies and GCE AS photography were 100%. Retention rates are generally good and, overall, most students successfully complete their programme of study.

53. Students produce good work. A creative approach to understanding and experimenting with processes and materials is encouraged on all courses. For example, the well-equipped printmaking studio and letterpress area are used to explore a variety of print and typographical techniques to develop design ideas. Graphics students produce exciting designs for book jackets and posters which contrast the surface qualities of simple screen-printing and carefully placed computer-generated letters. Most students develop good practical skills and demonstrate a good standard of technical knowledge. For example, in photography, students effectively use carefully arranged studio sets to explore the theme of multiples by controlling lighting effects to produce highlights and contrast. Students demonstrate a working knowledge of a range of camera formats and can calculate complex exposure settings to produce mood and atmosphere in their photographs.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in media, graphic design and photography, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
National diploma in media production (now multimedia)*	3	No. of starts	16	10	18
		% retention	56	80	66
		% pass rate	100	100	83
GCE AS photography	3	No. of starts	**	36	58
		% retention	**	36	74
		% pass rate	**	69	98
GCE AS film studies	3	No. of starts	46	33	19
		% retention	61	76	63
		% pass rate	100	80	100
GCE A2 film studies	3	No. of starts	**	11	11
		% retention	**	82	82
		% pass rate	**	100	100
National diploma in graphic design	3	No. of starts	19	20	21
		% retention	89	90	90
		% pass rate	94	95	100
National diploma in photography	3	No. of starts	24	19	11
		% retention	68	84	73

		% pass rate	88	94	100
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* figures relate to advanced General National Vocational Qualification medial for 2001/02

\*\* course did not run

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

54. The standard of teaching is good in many lessons. Teachers give good individual guidance to students and encourage and challenge them to develop a creative and speculative approach to their work. Teachers emphasise the value of visual research and help students to develop their ideas through appropriate demonstration and the development of technical skills. In one film studies lesson, the concepts of character and hero were vividly illustrated using carefully prepared video clips. The session provoked an enthusiastic group discussion and helped to deepen students' understanding of the subject. In other similar situations, however, this same approach was frustrated by students arriving late and low attendance.

55. Groups are often small and become dispersed across a range of specialist facilities during the course of a lesson. Most students work well independently and are able to carry out purposeful and productive activities. In some lessons, however, students are insufficiently clear about the aims and intended learning outcomes, and teachers do not consistently check the development of their understanding.

56. Most students have their own workspace or base room, which they greatly appreciate. However, some students do not take advantage of the opportunity to display their work-in-progress and benefit from, or contribute to, the sharing of ideas with other students. The reception area is often used to exhibit the work of professional artists and illustrators which contributes to the creative and stimulating environment for students. In some parts of the building, there are also exciting displays of students' work. National diploma students are introduced to the whole range of specialist workshops and practical facilities throughout their first year. They make good use of the professional software in the computer suites and produce a good standard of work which often combines digital imagery, illustration, typography and moving images. Printing is managed well and students have the opportunity to make large-scale colour prints. Some computers, however, are old and the quality of screen displays on many machines is not sufficient for some multimedia applications. There are insufficient computers with Internet access for student research. The photography studios are spacious and well equipped and students have access to a wide range of cameras and equipment. However, some accommodation is unsuitable for its intended use, and on one occasion a thoughtful and carefully prepared lecture on new-wave graphics was spoiled by poor projection and inadequate blackout facilities.

57. Staff are knowledgeable about their subjects and have a range of experience as teachers, artists and designers. They provide students with a good level of individual support and students value the friendly and caring atmosphere in which they study. Many teachers are active practitioners in their own field and in the best lessons this experience is used well to make learning more interesting and demanding.

58. Specialist staff promote their courses by visiting the college's feeder schools and attending school open days. Summer courses at the college provide the opportunity for students to work in the college's studios prior to application and enrolment. Staff interview all applicants and consider their portfolio of work before recommending the most appropriate programme of study. Most students felt well informed about their study options before they enrolled.

59. Tutorial support is effectively integrated into each student's main programme of study. This individual subject-based support is a major part of the department's teaching and learning strategy. Tutorials work well on most courses and include the monitoring of students' progress, achievement and, when appropriate, their broader personal issues. Students value their tutorials. In the 2001 self-assessment report, staff highlighted students' poor achievement of key skills. The key skills provision was subsequently integrated into the main diploma curriculum. There has been a significant increase

in the proportion of students who have successfully achieved their key skill communications qualification, however, whilst enrolments on to the key skills application of number qualification increased, no students achieved.

60. Students' literacy and numeracy abilities are assessed during their induction to the college. These arrangements for initial assessment are effective in highlighting students who may require further diagnostic assessment or additional learning support. All students are offered a confidential interview with their tutor and the member of the learning support team attached to their subject. Virtually all of those who accept this additional support complete their programme of study. Advice on choosing subject options and progression is comprehensive. Staff have good knowledge of HE provision and effectively support students in the preparation of their portfolios of work to present at interviews. Progression to HE is good.

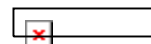
61. Many staff are experienced assessors and external verifiers and their assessment and grading of work is good. Through the work-based tutorial system, staff encourage students to be self-critical of their work; this is particularly strong in year two. However, there is insufficient group discussion and evaluation of work and ideas. Work is marked carefully and promptly. Most students found assessment feedback to be good and considered staff to be accessible and supportive. However, project briefs do not always refer clearly to the assessment criteria.

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

62. The management of multimedia, graphic design and photography is good. Most students have benefited from the recent curriculum developments and the re-organisation of resources. The opportunity to study for additional qualifications has been introduced successfully and the accommodation for first-year students has improved.

63. The project themes, activities and assignments in the early stage of the national diploma course are appropriate to provide multimedia and graphic-design students with a rich and intensive experience. However, there is ineffective staff communication between course team members during this early period and poor day-to-day co-ordination of activities. Whilst the self-assessment report is comprehensive, it did not identify some of the key weaknesses highlighted by inspectors. There is also insufficient formal action planning to improve provision and poor punctuality and attendance remain as issues.

### **General art and design**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good teaching and learning on first diploma in art and design course
  
- innovative and effective provision for contact course students
  
- good enrichment from practising artists and designers

- good standard of individual work by first-year students.

**Weaknesses**

- Unsatisfactory teaching in second year
- Insufficient development of specialist skills in textiles, fashion and fine art
- Poor attendance in some second-year pathways.

**Scope of provision**

64. The general art and design subject area offers mainly full-time courses. There are 111 students aged 16 to 18, on either the first diploma in art and design or the national diploma in art and design. The national diploma in art and design has a range of specialist pathways including fine art, fashion and clothing, textiles, 3D design and design crafts. There are 23 students aged 19 and over on the college entry level Contact course, designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Around 130 adult students attend the part-time evening classes which include jewellery, ceramics, printmaking, stained glass, fashion and life drawing. None of these evening classes were running at the time of inspection.

**Achievement and standards**

65. For the students who remain on the national diploma in art and design pathways, the pass rates have been consistently high. However, the national diploma retention rate has consistently fallen from 2000 to 2003. In 2002/03, only half of the students completed the course successfully. The college has taken effective action to improve retention rates and the number of students progressing into their second year has improved significantly to 86%. Achievement on the level 2 art and design course in 2003 was well above the national average.

66. Contact course students develop skills through a range of arts-based activities and achieve well in the ASDAN youth bronze award. Students' printmaking of images of fish, cards and textiles are outstanding. There is a good standard of individual work from first-year national diploma students who are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Most students quickly develop an individual way of working and students' work is creative and innovative. Some second-year national diploma students have insufficiently developed core vocational skills. There is an over-reliance on images from magazines and the Internet with little development before moving to finished pieces. In fashion and clothing, students have insufficiently developed pattern cutting and sewing skills, limiting creative development and confidence. In textiles and fine art, students often do not have the technical experience to realise ideas to a high standard. Attendance in some second-year pathways is unsatisfactory. Register reports show that there is a pattern of low attendance, particularly in fine art, fashion and clothing.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
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*GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	21	17	16
		% retention	76	65	88
		% pass rate	63	64	93
**National diploma in art and design (fashion and clothing, textiles, 3D design, 3D design crafts, fine art)	3	No. of starts	51	51	43
		% retention	65	59	51
		% pass rate	97	97	100

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

\* no longer running, replaced by first diploma in art and design 2003/04

\*\*in 2001 GNVQ advanced, national diploma 16 unit replaced in September 2002 by 18-unit qualification

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

67. Much teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Many teachers and workshop staff are practising artists or designers and enrich the work of students through discussion. This can provide an introductory stimulus to a project or give students information about working as a designer. Students benefit from sensitive individual teaching in the development of their ideas and they readily combine theory and practice. A second-year national diploma student working on the subject of environment, matter and anatomy has developed sketchbook work from road markings, effectively using the stimulus of Vasarely and Bridget Riley's work.

68. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in the second year where students are working on longer projects and the aims and objectives of each lesson are insufficiently clear. Students progress slowly and do not carry out sufficient research or organise their preparatory work effectively. In the first year, there is little group teaching to provide students with a knowledge of practical skills or fundamentals of visual language. In a natural-form project, the more capable students were able to use drawings from the botanical gardens as a starting point and develop ideas using 3D models and textiles. One student produced a chair constructed from metal which combined fragility of form with functional practicality. However, not all students are capable of making the links between a broadly based brief and the development of their own work and there is insufficient timely intervention from teachers to ensure that all students have both the visual language and technical skills to fully develop their ideas.

69. Project briefs for the first diploma in design course are challenging and students find the content engaging and produce interesting and lively work. Students carried out good research on a visit to a museum and produced their own masks from wood, clay and paper. For a project called 'objects in a box', each student had brought in their own attractive still-life pieces as starting points for their ideas. Students are encouraged to take risks and not to be daunted by unfamiliar media or difficulties of construction. There is an emphasis on enjoying work, for example, one student's project on the theme of fragments had suspended some constructed models reminiscent of large puppets above her workspace. The finished student work from these projects, however, is poorly presented and inappropriately stored. Students on the Contact course are fully integrated in to the life of the college and particularly enjoy ceramics, making jugs in the studio alongside HE and foundation diploma students. The course was recently recognised for its good work and was a runner-up for a Beacon Award.

70. Accommodation has improved since September 2003, but some studios are overcrowded with insufficient storage. All students have personal workspaces, but there is insufficient flexible space to display drawings and to work on a larger scale. There are very good specialist workshops with good technical support for printmaking, 3D, small-scale metals, textiles and ceramics. The time-tabling of the workshops is not managed well and students use them on a first-come, first-served basis,

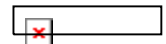
restricting the development of some students' practical skills and more ambitious work. Teachers are well qualified in their subject areas and have considerable professional experience, however, some do not have a teaching qualification and are not working towards one.

71. Students' work is regularly assessed and returned on time. Students are clear about what is required for assessment and an appropriate range of assessment methods is used. Written feedback forms are not always fully completed and some students are not clear about how to improve their grades before the start of their next project. There is good learning support for students, and the initial screening process is effective in identifying those who need support. Enrichment is good. Students attended a lecture by a well-known visiting artist on masks, mime, comedy and movement, listening with real engagement as the artist gave an illustrated talk about his graphics work using animated letter forms. Tutorial support is valued by students and advice on how to improve their work is readily available. During individual tutorials, second-year students are given good guidance by tutors to help them with their HE applications.

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

72. Course management is satisfactory. Course teams share a clear vision about the student experience. Teachers readily discuss problems as they arise, but some communication between staff and students is insufficiently co-ordinated when informing them about changes to planned activities. The course level self-assessment report provides a sound basis for improvement, although insufficient attention is given to improving students' lack of punctuality and attendance. All full-time, and substantive part-time staff are appraised and the outcomes are used to prioritise staff development activities which are taken up and valued.

## **Performing arts**



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

### ***Strengths***

- much good teaching
  
- much development of performance and conceptual skills
  
- productive collaboration with the community and the profession.

### ***Weaknesses***

- student learning restricted by some accommodation
  
- low retention rates.



### **Scope of provision**

73. The college offers full-time courses leading to the first and national diplomas in performing arts and the national award in performing arts for part-time students. Following a review of the curriculum offer in 2003, the national award was introduced and the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate in performing arts was replaced by the first award. The college's Contact course, for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, includes some study of the performing arts. As part of the college's increased flexibility partnership work, it provides performing arts based vocational education for pupils aged 14 to 16. There is no evening provision. All of the performing arts courses are based at the main college centre and most of the students are aged 16 to 18.

### **Achievement and standards**

74. Students who remain on their course achieve well and produce a high standard of work. They demonstrate a good level of commitment to their studies and have high expectations of themselves. Students work in a productive environment in which they feel confident to take risks and stretch their abilities. In a first-year singing lesson, the teacher helped students to develop their breathing and vocal techniques through a series of progressively more challenging exercises. All students worked hard to develop their skills and understanding, including the less confident singers. Teachers develop a working culture in which high standards of teamwork, a strong sense of individual responsibility and a commitment to self-evaluation are the norm. In one practical unit, students form a theatre company and are allocated individual responsibilities including running warm-up sessions, organising theatrical props and collecting work.

75. Retention rates are low. In 2002/03, a third of all performing arts students failed to complete their courses. Whilst staff have a development plan to improve retention rates, only 75% of national diploma students progressed into their second year in 2003.

76. The communications, IT and wider key skills are effectively integrated into the curriculum. Pass rates on the wider key skills of working with others, problem solving and improving own learning and performance are good, and improving on key skills communication. Students continue to be entered for key skills numeracy, though virtually all students fail to pass this qualification. Attendance for lessons during the week of inspection was 85.6%.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GNVQ intermediate in performing arts	2	No. of starts	15	8	17
		% retention	80	88	65
		% pass rate	83	100	82
Business Technology Education Council national diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	*	26	32
		% retention	*	72	66
		% pass rate	*	95	92

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

\* course did not run

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

77. There is much good teaching. The best lessons are well planned and characterised by dynamic teaching which effectively engages students in learning activities. Most teachers effectively check

students' developing understanding and allow time at the end of their sessions for students to reflect on, and evaluate, their learning. Students develop good performance skills, and their practical work consistently reflects good professional practice. In a technical theatre session, the teacher set a time-constrained task of plotting a series of lighting states and chases. Through this, students effectively developed their working practices and their ability to work quickly and effectively as a team.

78. Students develop their conceptual skills and are encouraged to link theory with practice. Good research methods are developed to support students' creative work, the results of which are often shared with the rest of their group. Students are generous and sensitive in giving and receiving constructive criticism. In one session, a group debated their research findings on the subject of roles and responsibilities in a performance company. The exercise included a debate on whether or not it is possible to train to be a director. Students were passionate about their standpoints, yet respectful of the views of others. In another lesson, acting students showed a mature willingness to analyse critically the emotional credibility and physical transformation achieved by their peers in solo 'hot-seating' character exercises. They used appropriate technical vocabulary to comment constructively on what they observed.

79. Some full-time students benefit from working with, and facilitating the development of, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on the college's Contact course. The full-time students involved help to produce a number of multi-disciplinary projects throughout the year. These projects help to develop the students' interpersonal and leadership skills and also to set their own learning in context.

80. In less effective lessons, students are too passive and are not sufficiently challenged to develop their understanding or techniques. Some teachers control activities to the extent that students become disengaged. In one lesson where students were preparing for the culmination of their project, the teacher's feedback on their performances failed to help them identify areas for improvement.

81. All staff have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. They have a good awareness of professional theatre practice and continue their own professional development. Staff are deployed well, with some team teaching on combined unit projects and regular input by individual staff to each other's classes.

82. There is a range of specialist accommodation, including the Folly Arts Theatre which is a good versatile space with industry-standard equipment. Some accommodation, however, is not suitable for its intended use and seriously restricts student learning. The dance studio is small and has a concrete floor which, for health and safety reasons, is unsuitable for anything more than basic movement studies. Several rooms lack the privacy required for concentrated work; one drama studio is a thoroughfare and staff offices are situated within another. The music studio is too small for the scheduled class sizes. Sound-proofing is poor between several rooms used for practical performance work.

83. Assignment briefs are clear and student assessment and verification is thorough. Much of the oral and written feedback is detailed and focuses students on their areas for development. Students are clear about how to achieve high grades in their work. Good use is made of student self-assessment, and peer assessment. In one lesson, students were filmed performing solo exercises and then paired with a colleague to review each other's performances. Some students feel that the deadlines for the submission of work are too easily moved and that rules and sanctions are inconsistently applied.

84. There are productive working relationships with the local theatre and a community dance company which enable some students to experience a range of professional and complementary activities which broaden their learning experience. Performing arts students frequently collaborate with art and design, or media students. For example, a dance/video collaborative project involved dance students choreographing work specifically for the camera; this work was then story-boarded and a shooting script developed for a media production crew who then filmed and edited the work. The finished product and the associated research, development and evaluative phases were used

by students on both courses as evidence towards unit assessment.

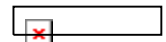
85. Pre-entry advice and guidance are thorough. The cross-course workshops during the induction period help establish the importance of collaborative working. Students are very appreciative of the academic and personal support they receive from staff.

86. Students attend regular tutorials at which their progress and personal developmental needs are discussed. Learning support is well designed and responds to curriculum needs and individual students' learning styles.

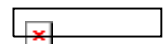
### **Leadership and management**

87. Performing arts' work is well managed. There is a strong emphasis on cross-disciplinary teamwork. A number of units from the national diploma are taught together within the framework of a production project which replicates professional practice. Staff seek to continuously improve provision through self-assessment, and monitor progress throughout the year. The strategy to improve student retention rates has included changing the level 2 qualification, contacting students on the first day of an unauthorised absence and the early identification of students who are at risk of leaving their course. It is too early to judge the overall impact of these changes, though 25% of national diploma students left before the start of this, their second, year. There is good promotion of equality and diversity. Some of the performing arts areas are not accessible to students with restricted mobility.

### **Part D: College data**



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



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	20	14
2	39	46
3	32	13
4/5	0	14
Other	9	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in 2003*

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



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
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	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	237	28	11
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	0	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	0	0	0
Information and communication technology	0	0	0
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	0	0	0
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	42	2	2
Visual and performing arts and media	429	672	46
Humanities	135	24	7
English, languages and communication	427	54	20
Foundation programmes	309	56	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,579</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2003

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	6	1	2	72	33	32
	Retention rate	50	100	0	56	58	47
	National average	83	84	81	74	80	70
	Pass rate	100	100	0	55	84	93
	National average	65	69	76	65	66	77
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	62	69	98	76	81	44
	Retention rate	68	77	85	47	22	50

	National average	77	77	77	69	71	71
	Pass rate	83	85	71	50	67	64
	National average	74	73	76	69	69	74
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	201	303	297	74	99	89
	Retention rate	77	66	73	66	56	53
	National average	71	71	75	62	69	64
	Pass rate	90	95	90	69	80	89
	National average	79	80	82	63	67	68

*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 specialist 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.

**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)	70	26	4	50
Level 2 (intermediate)	40	40	20	5
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	3
Other sessions	100	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>59</b>

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