



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Knowsley Community College

### CONTENTS

---

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Animal care and horticulture](#)

[Construction](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Business, administration, management and professional](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

[Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel](#)

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

[Health, social care and childcare](#)

[Visual and performing arts](#)

[Humanities](#)

[English and modern languages](#)

[Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities](#)

[Entry to employment](#)

[Literacy and numeracy](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

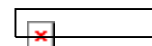
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2002/03](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

**Basic information about the college**

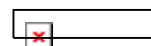


---

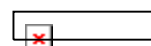
Name of college:	Knowsley Community College
Type of college:	General further education college
Principal:	Sir George Sweeney
Address of college:	Rupert Road Roby Merseyside L36 9TD
Telephone number:	0151 477 5780
Fax number:	0151 477 5784

Chair of governors:	Les Hill
Unique reference number:	130486
Name of reporting inspector:	John Evans HMI
Dates of inspection:	3-7 & 10-13 November 2003

## Part A: Summary



### Information about the college

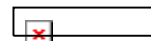


Knowsley Community College was formed in 1990 from the merger of Kirkby College of Further Education, Knowsley Central Tertiary College and the sixth forms of Kirkby schools. The college operates in a very challenging environment. Knowsley, in which more than 70% of the students reside, is one of the most economically deprived boroughs in the country. The unemployment rate for young people aged 18 to 24 is approximately 45% and the most recent census figures revealed that 40% of children lived in households where no adult was in employment. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is almost three times the national average at secondary level. Knowsley has a high percentage of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills: 22% and 20%, respectively, compared with 15% and 12% nationally. The level of qualifications in the borough is well below the national average. The pupil absence rate in local schools is the third highest in the country and only 30% of pupils leave school with five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications at grade C and above, compared with 51% nationally. The proportion of 16 year olds who stay on at school or college has risen to 58%, but this remains 26% below the national average.

The college provides courses in all the areas of learning funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In 2002/03, the college had 11,912 students, of whom 79% were aged 19 or over. Some 20% of all students studied full time and 80% studied part time in the day or evening. The highest percentage of enrolments, more than 60%, was at entry level or for qualifications at level 1. Some 63% of students are female. There is a broad gender balance on full-time courses, but women outnumber men two to one on part-time courses. Students from minority ethnic groups comprise a small proportion of the student body, which reflects the local population.

The college has two main campuses in Roby and Kirkby, and a smaller campus in Knowsley village for land-based courses. In 2002 the college re-organised into three sub-colleges: the Roby sixth form college, focused on the students aged 16 to 19; the skills and enterprise college, spread across the three sites, for work-related learning; and the adult and community education college, which provides adult 'return to learn' provision at both main sites and some 160 community venues. The college also has large numbers of work-based learners and a very large entry to employment (E2E) programme. It is a leading player in Knowsley Collegiate, an initiative involving all schools across the local education authority (LEA), in which the college makes a major contribution in providing courses for school students aged 14 to 16. The college's mission is, 'serving the learning needs of individuals and the community'.

### How effective is the college?



The inspection graded the quality of provision in 15 curriculum areas. Inspectors judged teaching, learning and attainment to be outstanding in two areas, good in eight, satisfactory in four, and unsatisfactory in one. The quality of work-based learning was satisfactory in three of the areas inspected and unsatisfactory in the fourth. The college's main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

***Key strengths***

- very high retention rates
  
- high pass rates on most courses
  
- students' very good progress from their starting points
  
- well-planned and effective teaching
  
- good accommodation and resources
  
- comprehensive initial assessment and good learning support
  
- effective use of value added processes to help students make progress
  
- outstanding responsiveness to the needs of the local community and employers
  
- significant and high-quality contribution to extending 14 to 16 learning opportunities
  
- good advice, guidance and support services, including high-quality student induction
  
- outstanding leadership and governance

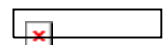
- robust and extensive quality assurance which effectively addresses weaknesses
- exceptional commitment to partnership and collaboration
- shared values and commitment to inclusion amongst all staff.

***What should be improved***

- achievements on work-based learning programmes
- pass rates on some courses
- students' attendance and punctuality
- unsatisfactory provision in animal care and work-based learning in construction
- use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons
- more consistent implementation of differentiated learning activities.

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**

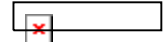


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well in most GCSE subjects and on the access to higher education (HE) course. Pass rates are unsatisfactory for some General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) subjects. Much teaching is good, particularly in statistics and on the access course, but teachers make little use of ILT. Assessment is good and students' progress is well monitored.
Animal care and horticulture	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Horticulture contributory grade: <b>satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates and good teaching on horticulture courses, which are enriched through local partnerships. Students' achievement is low in animal care, where there is much unsatisfactory teaching, poor development of practical skills and weak course management. Resources are inadequate in animal care and not used to best effect in horticulture. There is poor practice in assessment and in the monitoring of students' progress.
Construction	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Work based learning contributory grade: <b>unsatisfactory.</b> Pass rates at level 1 are high and students with low prior attainment make significant progress. Specialist facilities and technician support are excellent, but teaching methods lack variety. There is insufficient breadth of provision in carpentry and joinery. Curriculum management is very effective in widening access to learning. Achievements and the co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training are poor on work-based learning programmes.
Engineering	<b>Good.</b> Work based learning contributory grade: <b>satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates on many courses. Practical teaching is good and specialist resources for teaching and learning are of high quality. Individual learning plans and progress reviews are not thorough enough. Students have good work placements, but there are insufficient work placements for foundation modern apprentices. Curriculum management is good.
Business, administration, management and professional	<b>Good.</b> Retention rates are high, but pass rates are more variable. Most teaching is good and assessment is used very effectively to help students make progress. A wide range of administration courses are provided at flexible times both in the college and on employers' premises. There is insufficient tutorial support for part-time students. Curriculum management is good.
Information and communications technology	<b>Good.</b> Retention rates are high and pass rates on many courses are significantly above the national average. Most teaching is good. Outreach provision is extensive and a wide range of courses are available within the college and the community. Students progress well, but progression beyond level 2 by community-based students is poor.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high on most hospitality and tourism courses. Most teaching is good in both theory and practical lessons, but some theory lessons are too long for level 2 students. Resources are used well to promote good learning. Few part-time courses or courses below level 2 are available. Teachers have good industry links and display high levels of morale and commitment. Course management, including quality assurance, is good.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	<b>Outstanding.</b> Work based learning contributory grade: <b>satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are extremely high and are well above the national averages on all courses. Most teaching is good or better and the standard of practical and written work by students and work-based learners is high. Teachers and students adhere impeccably to industry standards of presentation and customer care. Specialist resources are

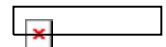
	excellent and strong pastoral and subject support helps keep students motivated. On work-based learning programmes, retention and pass rates are low.
Health, social care and childcare	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Work based learning contributory grade: <b>satisfactory.</b> There are high retention and pass rates on childcare courses. Pass rates on health and social care programmes are poor, with slow progress made by modern apprentices. Students develop a wide range of caring skills and competences which enable them to progress to further study or employment. Key skills are not sufficiently developed in vocational lessons. The college is very responsive to sector skills needs.
Visual and performing arts	<b>Good.</b> Retention rates are mostly high and there are high pass rates on most courses. Students achieve significantly above their expected grades on art and design, film studies and media studies courses. Teaching and learning are good on performing arts and levels 1 and 2 art and design courses. There are excellent resources and extremely high levels of student satisfaction. Good practice is well shared. There are low pass rates in key skills, which are poorly integrated on some courses.
Humanities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Retention rates are high on GCSE courses but are mostly low on advanced courses. Pass rates are high for most GCE Advanced level (A-level) subjects and history students achieve higher than their expected grades. Pass rates at GCSE are low and most GCE AS students achieve below their expected grade. Achievement on access courses is very high. Much teaching is good, but some is unsatisfactory. Subject teams are self-critical and have a strong commitment to raising achievement.
English and modern languages	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are generally high. There is much good and dynamic teaching in English, which results in high-quality classroom contributions from students. Good use of assessment is made to raise standards. Weaker lessons allow little or no opportunity for learners to participate actively. Some poor communications hamper the management of outreach language provision.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good: teachers and learning assistants communicate well with students and provide clear demonstrations. All students, regardless of their level of learning difficulties, are included well in every lesson activity and develop effective learning skills to meet their own personal development objectives. Lesson planning for the towards independence course does not always identify specific skills for development, which makes students' progress difficult to assess. Courses are designed to meet a broad range of individual students' needs and are well managed.
Entry to employment	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Retention rates are good, with a number of students achieving positive outcomes by entering full-time education or employment. Teaching is good across all aspects of the programme. The launch of the programme has been well managed through an effective partnership network. Planning of individual pathways is underdeveloped, with insufficient setting of short-term targets and weak reviews of students' progress.
Literacy and numeracy	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates are excellent and represent good progress towards national targets. Teaching is very good in most lessons. Learning resources are good and there are well-equipped specialist workshops. Value added processes are consistently applied across all courses and monitoring and measuring of students' progress is excellent. Good practice is well shared and curriculum management is very effective.

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



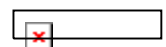
Leadership and management are outstanding. College management is highly responsive to national and local priorities. Shared values of inclusion, raising individual aspirations and supporting students to achieve are fundamental to the college and are well understood by staff and students. Quality assurance is rigorous, extremely comprehensive and very effective in raising standards. The college self-assessment report is self-critical and inspectors agreed with most of the grades awarded. Retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 and for adult students have improved year on year at most levels, and at all levels they are now significantly above the national average for similar colleges. The college's value added data clearly indicate that students with low prior achievement make significant progress. Achievements on work-based learning programmes, however, remain low. The college demonstrates an exceptional commitment to widening participation and to working in partnership and collaboration, for example, in the establishment of the Knowsley Collegiate for students aged 14 to 16 and in the provision of a very extensive literacy and numeracy programme. Governors are very well informed and monitor the financial and academic performance of the college closely. Curriculum management is mostly good and curriculum areas are very well supported by efficient and well-managed support services. Staff morale is high. Financial management is strong and the college provides good value for money.

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



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college is strongly aware of the social and economic context in which it works. There is an exceptional commitment at all levels to widening participation in one of the most economically deprived areas of the country. Over half of course provision is at entry level or level 1, reflecting the needs of the local community. Many of these courses are designed for adults considering re-entry to formal education. Courses are delivered in a wide range of outreach venues and in students' own homes, in order to attract students who would not otherwise attend the college. The college accommodates everyone wanting to learn; courses are never 'full'. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in promoting equal opportunities. The college has amended its equal opportunities policy and procedures to comply with recent race relations and disability discrimination legislation. Student data are thoroughly analysed by gender, ethnicity, age and disability. Non-discriminatory practices are firmly embedded across the range of college services. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been extended to accommodate a wider range of learning and behavioural difficulties. The college is making a significant contribution towards meeting national literacy and numeracy targets.

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

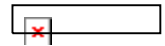


Guidance and support for students are very good. Initial advice and guidance are effective in directing students on to appropriate courses. The college provides a good range of specialist support services, which are well planned and efficiently managed. Students value the college counselling



careers advice and guidance are available to all students. Tutorial support for students is good in most curriculum areas, but in a few areas there is insufficient tutorial support for part-time students. Students receive high-quality inductions on to their courses and there are effective arrangements for late starters. There are clear and effective procedures for recognising poor punctuality and attendance, which have led to improvements. Learning advisers work alongside curriculum teams to provide additional pastoral support and motivation for students. Arrangements for additional learning support are good and literacy and numeracy support in lessons is sometimes excellent. Support services are continually monitored, evaluated and improved. Teachers provide much additional academic and pastoral support outside of lessons.

## **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***

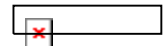
- approachable and supportive staff
  
- friendly and adult atmosphere
  
- the quality of teaching, especially practical
  
- encouragement and confidence gained from the internal value added system
  
- college facilities, especially access to information technology (IT)
  
- enrichment opportunities
  
- safe and secure environment
  
- inclusiveness of the college

- useful and informative inductions.

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

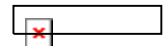
- space and the cost of food in refectories
- transport links and car parking
- provision of an Autumn half-term break
- three-hour lessons.

**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**



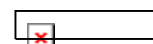
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	63	32	5

19+ and WBL*	73	23	4
Learning 16-18	61	34	5
19+ and WBL*	71	34	5

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

\* work-based learning

## Achievement and standards



1. The college offers a wide range of courses which may be studied on a full-time or part-time basis, at entry level to level 3 in all 14 areas of learning as defined by the LSC. In many instances, the college restructures national qualifications into learning programmes better suited to the needs of their students. This enables students to see the progress they are making more easily and gain accreditation which boosts their confidence at an earlier stage. The inspection sampled provision in 15 curriculum areas. Work-based training is currently provided in nine areas, with the largest numbers of trainees in construction, engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and health, social care and childcare.

2. Retention rates have improved in each of the last three years for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students at all course levels. Pass rates improved for both age groups at all levels in each year from 2000 to 2002. In 2002/03, retention and pass rates were significantly above the national average for colleges of a similar type for both age groups at all levels, on long and short courses. Rates of completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks, on the other hand, are low.

3. The overall level of attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was 75%, which is just below the sector average. The college closely monitors attendance and absences are promptly followed up. A wide range of strategies have been employed to try to improve the unreliable attendance and punctuality which is a characteristic of some of the groups of students the college has successfully engaged.

4. The college's internal value added system enables students' progress to be measured from their individual starting points. Most students make good progress at the college. Achievement by students with low prior attainment is particularly good in construction, literacy and numeracy, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and on the access to HE course. Inspectors found high standards of work in almost all curriculum areas.

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

5. In 2002/03, approximately 21% of students were aged 16 to 18. Enrolments were evenly spread between courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Just over 70% of students were on full-time courses. Overall, retention and pass rates are well above national averages. Retention rates have improved each year since 2000/01. Retention rates were just above national averages in 2001/02 but increased significantly in 2002/03. Retention rates are now above the national average by 10% at level 1, 14% at level 2 and 8% at level 3. In 2001/02, pass rates exceeded the national average by 16% at level 1, 12% at level 2, and 4% at level 3. This placed the college in the top 10% of colleges of a similar type at levels 1 and 2, and the top 25% at level 3. The pass rate for students aged 16 to 18 on short courses also placed the college in the top 10%. In 2002/03, the pass rate at level 3 improved by a further 6%. Pass rate data for levels 1 and 2 are not yet finalised.

6. On GCSE courses, the retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 declined between 2000/01 and 2001/02, while the pass rate remained 5% above the national average for similar colleges. Some 80% of full-time students at advanced level take GCE AS or A-level courses compared with 20% taking vocational courses. The retention rate on advanced level courses has steadily increased over the last three years as improvements in retention on GCE AS and A-level courses have outweighed some decline in retention on vocational courses. The overall pass rate for GCE AS and A-level courses has remained above the national average through modest but steady year-on-year improvement. On the other hand, the pass rate on advanced vocational courses fell dramatically by 15% in 2002 to well below the national average but improved significantly, and returned to the national average, in 2003.

7. Data which compares students' results on advanced level courses with their previous achievements at GCSE show that, overall, students achieve higher grades than expected at GCE AS and A level. The degree of improvement is considerable on art and design, English language, French, history, film studies, media studies and statistics courses. Students on drama, geography, physical education, psychology, sociology and several Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses achieve below their expected grade. Data for other subjects show students achieving results broadly in line with predictions made on entry.

8. The college has 535 work-based learners. Of these, 90 are advanced modern apprentices, 342 are foundation modern apprentices and 103 are on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training courses. The college is the largest provider of construction and engineering training in the region. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is low across all the curriculum areas inspected. In part, this is due to the poor levels of achievement of key skills but in some areas there is also slow progress towards NVQ achievement.

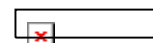
### **Adult learners**

9. In 2002/03, approximately 79% of students were adults, 93% of whom were on part-time courses. The majority of enrolments were at level 1. Large numbers of adults enrol on short courses. For example, in 2001/02, there were 5,548 enrolments by adults on short courses.

10. Retention rates were slightly above national averages at levels 1, 2 and 3 and for short courses in 2001/02. Following significant improvements last year the retention rates for adults are now some 17% higher than the national averages at levels 1 and 2, 18% higher at level 3, and 7% higher on short courses. Pass rates have been well above national averages for several years. In 2002/03, pass rates improved by 9% at level 1 to 23% above the national average and by 9% on short courses to 25% above the national average. The pass rates at levels 2 and 3 remained the same as the previous year: 9% and 14%, respectively, above the national averages. Retention rates on outreach courses, 91% in 2002/03, are excellent. Progression rates are mostly very good. Many students progress from non-accredited leisure courses to level 1 and level 2 accredited courses.

11. The retention and pass rates of adult students on GCE AS and A-level courses are slightly lower, by 3% in 2002/03, than for students aged 16 to 18. On most other types of course on which both age groups are well represented, retention and pass rates for adult students are generally higher than for students aged 16 to 18. For example, on GCSE courses, retention and pass rates in 2002/03 were 3% higher for adults than for younger students. On NVQ courses, the pass rate for adult students is broadly similar to the pass rate for students aged 16 to 18 at all levels.

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



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 284 lessons. Teaching was

colleges. Teaching was graded as very good or excellent in 27% of lessons, which is above the national average. The highest proportion of good or better teaching was in business, administration, management and professional, information and communications technology (ICT), hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual and performing arts and literacy and numeracy. The weakest teaching was in animal care and horticulture, where 27% was judged unsatisfactory. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching was also significant in construction and humanities. Learning was good or better in 65% of lessons observed, satisfactory in 30% and less than satisfactory in 5%.

13. Adults are better taught than students aged 16 to 18 and they also learn more effectively. Teaching in 77% of lessons for adults was good or better compared with 63% for students aged 16 to 18. In most curriculum areas, however, classes contain a mix of students aged 16 to 18 and adults. The best teaching and learning, significantly above the national average, is at entry level, and the least effective is at level 1. Teaching and learning are particularly strong on GCE A-level courses and generally least effective on GCE AS courses, where students take time to adjust to the level of work.

14. In the better lessons, teaching is well-planned and learning is stimulating and productive. Teachers recap previous learning, explain new ideas clearly and are skilled at ensuring that students understand them and contribute meaningfully in class. Understanding is checked regularly and thoroughly. Students make good progress in lessons; their time is well-managed and there is much mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers' expectations of all students are high. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, learning is outstanding, with many opportunities for students to gain important hairdressing skills in salons. Students are highly motivated and have excellent working relationships with teachers who deliver high-quality teaching and training. In business, administration, management and professional, lessons are well managed and there is very good involvement of all learners. Excellent use is made of realistic business environments to train students in new skills. In literacy and numeracy lessons, students have clear learning plans and well-thought-out individual objectives which help their learning to progress quickly. In hospitality lessons, there are clear strategies to cater for the needs of all students. Teachers assign cookery tasks according to ability levels and this allows them to spend more time with the students who learn more slowly.

15. In the weaker lessons, there are insufficient strategies to challenge and extend students across the range of abilities. Some more able students finish early and are left with little to do. There are no clear strategies to restructure teaching when it is known that some learners will be late. Although personal tutors have identified students' preferred learning styles, this information is not acted on to the same degree in all curriculum areas. Questioning by teachers is sometimes general and superficial, with students' understanding not being sufficiently checked. While there is sufficient access to ILT resources outside lessons, teachers make infrequent use of it in classrooms to promote learning. In animal care, too much ineffective teaching fails to engage students actively in lessons or provide them with appropriate opportunities to make progress. In some humanities lessons, students are not given enough support to develop the necessary skills of analysis, investigation and evaluation. In some very crowded construction lessons, learning is disrupted by students arriving late or leaving the classroom without the knowledge of the teacher. In health, social care and childcare, the progress of some students is slow owing to a lack of suitable work placements.

16. In some areas, the development of students' practical skills is too slow. For example, in construction and engineering, the lack of work placements can result in students having limited opportunities to apply practical skills within the vocational context. Students in construction do a lot of work on bench joinery, but this does not prepare them fully for the joinery skills required on building sites. In animal care, students do not have the animal handling skills required before undertaking their work placements.

17. The college has a comprehensive estate development plan. There have been significant accommodation improvements since the last inspection. These include the purpose-built sixth form centre at Roby, the construction and engineering centre at Kirkby and the 14 to 19 vocational centre at Kirkby. Most accommodation is of high standard, with well-furnished and well-equipped classrooms. One E2E subcontractor, however, has inadequate accommodation and some poor

learning resources. There is appropriate access for learners with impaired mobility to most of the college's main sites and outreach centres. Teaching and communal areas of the college are clean and tidy. There is a strong ethos of mutual respect in the college and facilities such as the coffee shop and refectory are shared by staff and students.

18. Access to computers is good, with one computer to every two full-time equivalent students and to every four members of staff. Computing software is of industry standard. Technicians are multi-skilled and provide very effective support. For example, when laptop computers are used in outreach centres, technicians deliver and set up the equipment prior to the start of the lesson. The college has an intranet site for both students and staff. A virtual learning environment is in the early stages of implementation and is not yet widely used by students. Students can access the virtual learning environment at college or remotely from home. Some subject areas hold a wide variety of learning materials whilst others are more limited to text documents.

19. The college has more than 500 teaching and support staff. Most teachers are well qualified; some 90% of full-time and approximately two-thirds of part-time teachers have a teaching qualification. The rest are supported by the college to achieve the qualification. Staff turnover is low. There is a good system for staff appraisal and development. Staff development activities have a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. The majority of teachers have undertaken recent industrial updating. It is not, however, a systematic part of professional development. Many staff have benefited from opportunities to take on new job roles within the college. At the senior level, many managers have changed their roles and taken on new areas of responsibility as part of their development

20. Specialist resources and equipment in most curriculum areas are at least good, and often excellent. However, resources for animal care and some horticulture courses are inadequate. The college has central learning resource centres at both main sites and has also recently developed curriculum-area-specific learning resource centres. Together these provide good drop-in access to computers for students. Resources for additional learning support are good. The quality and quantity of learning resources is at least satisfactory in most subjects, although students attending community venues have more limited access to textbooks.

21. There are comprehensive college-wide policies covering all aspects of assessment. Well-implemented procedures ensure a strong focus on students' individual needs at every stage of their learning, through integrated initial assessment, reviews, tutorials and feedback. Initial assessment includes diagnostic tests and learning styles analysis for all students and work-based learners. Subsequent reviews follow up identified needs effectively. Initial assessment on the E2E programme is particularly thorough and the results are shared fully with the students. However, this information is not yet systematically used to plan their learning effectively. In literacy and numeracy, initial assessment is extremely thorough and students' individual targets relate clearly to the national standards.

22. Assessment of students' work is good and sometimes exemplary. Assessment is well planned and work is marked and returned within strict time limits. Feedback is generally clear, detailed and constructive, and is valued by students as crucial in helping them to improve. At times, errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation are not corrected. Students are encouraged to evaluate the quality of their own work and to use the college's value added system to measure their progress. Thorough moderation ensures that students' work meets awarding body requirements and is marked fairly. There is comprehensive quality assurance of both assessment and moderation. Procedures for verification of assessment in work-based learning are good. However, there are too few workplace assessors in some areas.

23. The college has devised an effective value added system for assessing students' starting points, sharing these with students and using them as a motivational tool to measure progress and achievement. Many students enter the college with little prior achievement and low self-confidence. The system identifies a minimum level students should aspire to based on an analysis of their abilities, and monitors their progress against this. Students understand that these are minimum targets, and they are motivated to exceed them. The system is supported by clear and comprehensive documentation, such as the students' personal development portfolio, tailored to the

needs of different types of student. Reviews are regular and rigorous. They are effective in identifying any new problems and monitoring progress with existing ones. However, in some cases, improvement targets are set without the actions needed to realise them being identified. In a few cases, too many targets are set at one time. Extra support can be arranged at any stage. The college ensures that parents or carers are informed of students' progress wherever appropriate. Students show a good understanding of the assessment process, and view it as a form of support for their learning. They know what they need to do to pass their examinations and are able to measure their own progress against exam criteria.

24. Reviews for work-based learners are usually carefully planned but, because of constraints in the workplace, do not always take place on time. Some reviews are overly descriptive and do not provide a clear evaluation of the learning and progress made. They are not always used to plan the next stages of learning or to measure the progress made. New approaches to involving employers more fully in the review process are being developed.

25. The college is outstandingly responsive to the needs of the local community, schools and employers. Widening participation is a key priority for the college and some 52% of students study in over 160 neighbourhood centres, including 2 high street learning shops. For many, the existence of such centres is vital in enabling them to access learning. The college makes very good use of European funding to support new approaches to curriculum delivery and to help it achieve its strategic aim of contributing to local economic development.

26. The college is very responsive to the needs of employers and has developed its own company, Knowsley Associates Ltd, to provide training for employers. The college offers a range of business courses at employers' premises and recently provided a major ICT and basic skills training programme for a large motor manufacturer. Employers are kept well informed of the progress of their staff through regular meetings and reports. Through its successful workforce development scheme, the college works with companies and the Trade Union Council learning services to improve basic skills in the workplace. This work has been particularly successful in the hospital and care trusts with which the college works. The college has a contract to train nursing cadets for one of the local health trusts and provides specific training for many voluntary groups. For example, neighbourhood wardens have recently completed a customer care course. The college responds supportively to local initiatives. As a result of the borough employing large numbers of classroom assistants in primary schools, the college rapidly developed successful stage 1 and stage 2 courses for some 340 classroom assistants. The college supports new businesses well. It provides office space and business advice in the new Roby centre for up to ten micro-businesses operating in their first two years. Student entrepreneurs are able to plan and market their business and seek guidance on finance. Current occupants include a multimedia company and a nail technology centre.

27. The college provides a wide range of curriculum enrichment activities for students. In horticulture, students have the opportunity to work on community landscape projects. In hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, students regularly enter and win national cookery competitions and can take extra qualifications in football coaching skills. Students in visual and performing arts have many opportunities to perform publicly, visit the theatre and galleries and follow additional qualifications in digital imaging. The college also offers a good range of enrichment activities in sports and general interest including exercise to music, weight training, dance, drama and creative cookery. Over 25% of full-time students who started at the college this year regularly attend an enrichment activity.

28. All full-time students and work-based learners have an entitlement to improve their key skills in communication, IT and application of number according to their needs or requirements of their course. Pass rates on key skills courses are consistently high and have been above the national averages for the last three years. For example, in 2000/01, the pass rate was 90% in communication at level 1 compared with the national average of 37%, and 65% in application of number compared with the national average of 29%. Regular staff development is designed to improve the integration and assessment of key skills. In a few vocational areas, there is insufficient development and assessment of key skills. For example, in animal care and business studies, schemes of work and lesson plans do not include reference to key skills and students do not understand the relevance of key skills to their vocational studies. Most basic skills are delivered through pre-vocational, vocational and leisure courses. For example, students on a level 1 ICT course work through basic

skills materials to support their introduction to the computer.

29. The college makes a significant contribution to increasing the range of learning opportunities for students aged 14 to 16. About 800 pupils attend college for one day or half a day each week over two years. The college has built a dedicated centre for the teaching of these students, with exceptional facilities including a hair and beauty salon, catering kitchen, electronic laboratory and computing suites. The range of courses is excellent across the ability range, including those with special educational needs and the very able. Most qualifications provided are NVQs at level 1 or applied GCSEs. The response to local skills needs in construction and engineering is particularly strong. Other subjects available include catering, hair and beauty, health and social care, motor vehicle studies, ICT, electronics and manufacturing. Teaching for students aged 14 to 16 is good. Special visits and talks from industry specialists are provided for students. Teachers raise students' self-esteem and levels of confidence, especially among more disaffected learners, by providing sensitive support which encourages self-development. There are clear progression opportunities on to academic and vocational courses at the age of 16. The provision is well managed. There are clear communications between the partners in the collegiate, including prompt reporting of pupil absence and punctuality. There are frequent meetings and regular consultations about joint provision, planning and timetabling. For example, the college has ensured that students have easy access to bus travel after consultations with the schools showed that transport links were poor. Industrial representation on the executive committee is excellent, with representatives from large local businesses and private training providers.

30. Students receive very good guidance and support. The range of personal and specialist support services available to students is extensive. One student with severe hearing impairment was provided with a loop system in the classroom, specially adapted paper-based resources and laminated cards so that she could follow routines in a workshop situation. Students value and make good use of the student counselling service. The guidance team has achieved Matrix accreditation from the Guidance Accreditation Board for their work, which involves contributions from external partners in outreach centres. The careers education and guidance service has strong partnerships with local schools, Connexions, and HE institutions. Careers and job search resources are good. Staff conduct mock interviews with students and there is a centrally organised HE programme which includes visits, speakers, help with Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) forms and information about financial matters.

31. Initial advice and guidance are impartial and effective in directing students to appropriate courses. All students are interviewed and, where appropriate, teachers have additional training in interview techniques. Some promotional materials, such as the college prospectus, show little representation of diversity. However, new material has been developed by student services which does challenge stereotypes and promote equality of opportunity more effectively. Induction arrangements are managed centrally but tailored to the needs of individual curriculum areas. Induction is very effective in introducing students to their courses. Students find the information relating to college services and the essential components of their course very useful. Curriculum areas can bid for funds to support induction enhancement activities. One bid led to students visiting an outward bound centre and taking part in abseiling and night orienteering. After four to six weeks, students are asked to consider whether they are on the right course and guidance is available throughout.

32. Tutorial support for students is good in most curriculum areas. However, in a few areas, there is insufficient support for part-time students. Tutors are supported by clear centralised systems, schemes of work and access to relevant staff development opportunities. There are high-quality resources to support guidance and tutorial activities. These are produced centrally and are available in hard copy and on the college intranet. Staff receive regular updates on what is available.

33. Learning advisers work alongside curriculum staff to provide additional pastoral support, ensure that induction is delivered to late starters and provide motivational interviews for students experiencing difficulties. There are regular and productive meetings between all staff involved in support for students and good practice is shared. There are clear and effective procedures for recognising poor punctuality and attendance, which administrative staff follow up the same day with telephone calls and letters as necessary. Learner support funds are used effectively to enable

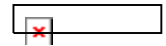


students to meet the costs of childcare, equipment and books.

34. Arrangements for additional support are very good. Support for literacy and numeracy includes individual and group work in workshops and individual support in lessons. Careful timetabling encourages students to consider additional support as an integral part of their vocational work. There are many examples of where appropriate and discreet support has enabled students to progress from foundation or part-time provision to intermediate and advanced level and to HE. Retention and pass rates for students receiving learning support are above the college average.

35. Feedback on student support services is sought and acted upon. Students complete feedback questionnaires and comment at focus groups on the delivery of key skills, basic skills and additional support arrangements. Links with other colleges provide 'mystery shoppers' who visit student services, unidentified, and give feedback on the service they receive. Students show a high level of awareness of, and satisfaction with, the services available to them.

### Leadership and management



36. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides well-informed leadership and a clear strategic direction which is highly responsive to local and national priorities. Shared values are fundamental to the organisation and are well understood by both staff and students. They focus on developing an individual's potential, raising aspirations and providing a successful learning experience which leads to achievement. All senior managers have a curriculum background which helps to ensure that educational priorities are paramount.

37. Since the last inspection, the focus of the college's work has been in raising retention and pass rates and improving the progress made by individual students. The college has been very successful in pursuing these objectives. At all levels, retention and pass rates have been consistently and significantly above the national average for similar colleges. The college's own value added system clearly indicates that students with low prior achievement make significant progress. The college has consistently met and exceeded its enrolment, retention and achievement targets. Approximately 80% of students follow courses in curriculum areas where the provision is good or outstanding, 19% follow courses in areas where provision is satisfactory, and only 1% of students follow courses in areas where provision is less than satisfactory. The progress of work-based learners in achieving modern apprenticeship frameworks remains slow.

38. Strategic planning is extremely effective. The college has been quick to respond to national initiatives such as E2E and the national targets for literacy and numeracy. The college is very proactive in shaping the development of education and training provision in the area and has developed excellent partnerships with local employers and schools. As a pathfinder college, it has led the creation of the Knowsley Collegiate for approximately 800 pupils aged 14 to 16 in collaboration with secondary schools, the LEA and the local LSC. Strategic planning has guided major improvements to accommodation on the Roby and Kirby campuses to meet the increase in student numbers.

39. The college is exceptionally successful in widening participation. It has responded on a comprehensive scale to the need to improve local literacy and numeracy skills, including the setting up of learning shops on the high street and using ex-students as outreach workers to encourage participation. The college was able to provide immediate training in-house to employees facing redundancy in a large local company and it provides extensive basic skills training within companies as part of the local workforce development strategy. The college has rapidly developed the capacity to provide all E2E training for the Merseyside region and has consistently responded to significant increases in local demand for construction skills training. Such responses are indicative of its commitment to reversing the high unemployment and low skills base which characterise the local community.

40. The re-structuring of the college into three distinct divisions, the Roby sixth form college, the skills and enterprise college and the adult and community education college, has promoted greater teamwork and a stronger focus on curriculum quality in each area. Communication is particularly effective across the college sites, through a weekly bulletin, e-mail, and regular meetings and briefings including the principal's twice-yearly briefing to staff. Strategic aims, objectives and targets are succinctly communicated using a small gatefold leaflet. The principal is highly visible around the college and senior managers are very accessible. They maintain a high level of contact with students. Students' success and effective staff contributions are celebrated. Students respect the calm and ordered environment the college provides and show equal respect for the staff and for each other. The open and straightforward style of senior management is followed successfully by other managers in the college. Staff understand their roles and what is required of them. Managers are well regarded and staff morale is high.

41. Most course management is good and it is very effective in literacy and numeracy, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is less effective in a few areas. Good management of work-based learning in engineering has led to improvements through the appointment of a work placement co-ordinator and careful quality monitoring. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory overall, although inspectors found a few instances where communications with employers had been less than effective. Managers are given clear responsibilities and appropriate autonomy. Support services are very efficiently and effectively managed. Staff in these areas are well informed about the work of the college and are adept at identifying further improvements they can make.

42. The college has a well-established quality assurance system which is both thorough and highly effective in raising standards. Procedures are well understood and implemented by staff at all levels. Feedback from students through questionnaires and focus groups thoroughly inform the quality process. Self-assessment is rigorous. The grades awarded by the college in the self-assessment report closely matched inspection grades. Self-assessment is well supported by reliable information systems and a process of internal course reviews. Students' achievements and associated resource implications are evaluated at different times in the year. Course teams are self-critical and action planning is mostly very good, leading to marked improvements. A good system of internal lesson observations, including tutorials, ensures that all teachers are observed during the year. The internal grade profile was similar to that of the inspection, although the amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection was 3% less than in the college's own observations. Lesson observations undertaken by non-subject specialists on outreach courses are less effective in helping to raise standards. The quality assurance system is also responsive to change. Recent additions include new procedures for work-based learning and E2E, protocols for partnerships and a quality monitoring framework for 14 to 16 provision.

43. There is an extensive programme of staff development which is thoroughly evaluated and reported to governors. Staff development closely aligns individual development needs with the college strategic plan. There is an effective appraisal system linked to professional development. Teachers are encouraged to become external examiners or to engage in further qualifications and industrial updating. Much of the staff development and mentoring is focused on improving teaching and learning, ably supported by advanced teaching practitioners.

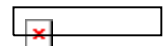
44. Governors have an excellent understanding of national and local developments and are appropriately involved in setting the strategic direction of the college. They work well with senior managers and receive high-quality information. Presentations from a range of college managers help to keep governors well informed about curriculum and college developments. Governors exercise their duties assiduously in monitoring the academic and financial performance of the college, bringing specialist knowledge and expertise to their role in committees. Inspectors noted that none of the sub-committees is chaired by a female governor. The annual governors' self-assessment leads to the clear identification of training needs. Governors have attended training on legal responsibilities in relation to special educational needs and health and safety alongside college staff.

45. Since the last inspection, the college has made good progress in promoting equal opportunities more effectively. The equal opportunities and diversity policy has been revised to reflect the

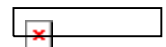
requirements of recent legislation on race relations and disability discrimination. The equal opportunities committee, which includes representatives from all curriculum and support areas, carefully monitors the impact of the policy and ensures best practice is shared across the college. There is a comprehensive programme of equal opportunities training. Good progress is being made in implementing the learning support action plan. Student and staff data are carefully analysed by ethnicity, gender, age, race and disability, and curriculum teams receive their own area analysis for appropriate action in their development plan. One outcome has been the development of a barber shop to encourage more young men into the hairdressing profession. The majority of students live in disadvantaged areas. Their retention and achievements are closely monitored and analysed. The retention rate for these students, at 82%, is close to the overall retention rate of 85%. Their achievements match the college's overall pass rate.

46. Financial management is strong. The college has retained its Category A status whilst investing substantially in new buildings and specialist equipment. All national pay agreements have been honoured. Reports to budget holders are reliable and accurate. Expenditure prioritises the needs of the curriculum. With high retention and pass rates and the significant progress made by students, the college provides good value for money.

### Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



#### Science and mathematics



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

##### **Strengths**

- very good achievement on the access to HE course
  
- high pass rates on most GCSE courses
  
- good teaching and learning in statistics lessons and on the access to HE course
  
- good assessment and monitoring of students' progress.

##### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory achievement on some GCE AS courses

- o insufficient use of ILT in lessons.

### **Scope of provision**

47. The college provides GCSE courses in mathematics and science for full-time students and in human physiology in the evening for adult students. A numeracy course is offered to students for whom GCSE is not appropriate. There is a wide range of GCE AS and A-level courses in physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and statistics. The college also offers a wide range of science and mathematics units as part of the access to HE course. These include human physiology, biology, health studies, statistics and mathematics at level 3 and biology at level 2, as well as core mathematics.

### **Achievement and standards**

48. There is good achievement on GCSE courses. Pass rates at grades A to C for GCSE mathematics, science and human biology have been well above the national averages in each of the last two years. Achievement in all the science and mathematics options on the access to HE course is very good, with most students completing the course and a near 100% pass rate for all subjects. There is good progression from this course to HE. Achievement on a number of GCE AS courses is low. For example, pass rates for biology, chemistry and mathematics are significantly below the national averages; this contributes to low rates of progression to these subjects at GCE A-level. Pass rates for most GCE A-level subjects are broadly in line with, or just above, national averages. In statistics, however, retention and pass rates are high; GCE AS students achieve significantly above their expected grades, and one GCE A-level student obtained the highest mark in the country for Assessment and Qualifications Alliance statistics in 2003.

49. The access to HE course is characterised by the high standard of class discussion. In one lesson which looked at the causes and prevention of cancer, students gave short presentations after some research in groups. With encouragement from the teacher, they were able to articulate their findings clearly and began to use more scientific language with confidence. In most GCE A-level lessons, students show good subject knowledge and a sound understanding of essential concepts. Mathematics students show good understanding of basic statistical ideas and techniques when calculating the variance of random variables. GCE AS science students are less secure in their understanding. Some do not have the basic knowledge that would be expected at this stage of their course

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	164	149	155
		% retention	75	66	82
		% pass rate	36	62	50
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	**	63	51
		% retention	**	75	73
		% pass rate	**	74	59
GCSE human physiology/human biology	2	No. of starts	28	***	17
		% retention	89	***	59
		% pass rate	48	***	80

GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	43	36	32
		% retention	79	64	84
		% pass rate	76	39	44
GCE A-level biology *		No. of starts	25	19	15
		% retention	56	84	87
		% pass rate	86	88	77
Access to HE (science and mathematics options)	3	No. of starts	71	129	123
		% retention	90	83	85
		% pass rate	100	100	99

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

\* retention rates for GCE A-level 2002 and 2003 are in-year

\*\* course did not run

\*\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

50. Much teaching is good. Teachers generally display very good subject knowledge and are able to explain scientific theory in a clear and logical way. Lessons are well organised and well structured. In science, a variety of tasks are used to sustain student interest during long lessons. In mathematics and statistics, the presentation of worked examples on the whiteboard sets a good example to students of how to set work out properly. In the best lessons learning is enhanced by good questioning of students. For example, in a lesson in which students had measured the rate of photosynthesis by oxygen production, the teacher followed up with an examination style question. Through a series of timely prompts, students were able to think the full response out for themselves and produced good written answers. In GCSE mathematics lessons, the teachers always ask students to explain their reasoning behind answers. In one successful lesson, in which students were calculating probabilities without the use of calculators, questioning by the teacher revealed a fundamental misunderstanding by some students of how to add decimals together. The teacher was then able to address the problem. In statistics lessons, there is a good dynamic between the teacher and the students, with plenty of positive feedback used to build students' confidence.

51. In less effective lessons, teachers do not question students sufficiently. In some science lessons, the tasks do not fit together in a coherent way, which results in learning which is not sufficiently sequential. Teachers do not make enough use of ILT in their teaching. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher sketched graphs by hand when the use of a computer would have accelerated the learning.

52. Teachers are well qualified in their subject. Most teaching is in specialist rooms. Laboratories are suitable for their purpose. Mathematics classrooms are well furnished but do not have computers readily available. Most students have new textbooks that are well matched to their needs and to the courses. Worksheets prepared by teachers are of a high standard both in content and presentation.

53. Students' work is assessed regularly and thoroughly in all subjects. Work is returned promptly to students accompanied by a coversheet giving the grade, information about what they could do to improve their work and the relevant references they need. Where appropriate, students are asked for corrected versions. Work is also clearly annotated, with small mistakes highlighted and written advice provided on more significant misconceptions. There are common assessment review points on all courses. These are used to identify any support each student might need. There are opportunities for students to transfer to more appropriate programmes, for example, from GCE AS mathematics to statistics or from GCSE mathematics to City and Guilds mathematics. Weekly assignments ensure that the assessment process keeps students well informed about their progress in relation to their target grades. Good assessment methods on the access to HE courses in have

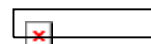
been highlighted in external moderation reports. In science and mathematics units, timed tests are the main method of formal assessment. Good internal moderation is supported by regular team meetings and cross-marking by other teachers.

54. Students are given clear advice and guidance about their course, what is expected of them and what they need to be able to do to be successful. Although a good range of GCE AS subjects is available, there are no alternative courses for those students with low GCSE grades who find the work too difficult. The college is aware of this problem and has started to enrol students with lower than average GCSE grades on three GCE AS subjects rather than four. Those who succeed at GCE AS and progress to GCE A-level are successful. Time-tabled support sessions are provided by subject teachers. A learning adviser is available to help students with more generic study skills. Students value the informal support given by teachers outside lessons.

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

55. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum manager sets a high standard. Courses are well organised and quality assurance processes are implemented rigorously. The self-assessment is comprehensive and self-critical. Action plans clearly identify targets for improvement and are well monitored. Teachers are appraised on an annual basis by the curriculum manager and find the process valuable. Targets, linked to staff development, are set for each teacher. More opportunities could be taken to share good practice.

### **Animal care and horticulture**



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

Contributory grade for horticulture is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in horticulture
  
- good teaching in horticulture
  
- good enhancement of the horticultural curriculum through partnership.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- poor achievement in animal care
  
- unsatisfactory teaching in animal care

- inadequate access to and use of practical resources in animal care and in some aspects of horticulture provision
  
- poor practice in assessment and monitoring progress
  
- weak course management in animal care.

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

56. The college offers courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in amenity horticulture, environmental conservation and arboriculture at its Kennels centre. There are currently 25 full-time students on this provision. A further 80 students are enrolled on work-based learning programmes and part-time courses, including outreach programmes in Netherton, Wigan and Barnsley. Short courses and industrial certificates are also available. Most horticulture students are aged over 19. Full-time courses in animal care at levels 2 and 3, through the Awarding Bodies Consortium (ABC), are provided at the Roby campus. Most of the 50 students enrolled are aged 16 to 18. There are also a small number of work-based learners in animal care.

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

57. Retention rates are satisfactory on most animal care courses, however, pass rates declined significantly in the last year compared with sector averages. Horticultural courses have variable retention rates but pass rates are high for all programmes. Poor pass rates in previous years for NVQ animal care were partly due to its inappropriate use as a secondary qualification. Standards of attainment in animal care are low, with little opportunity for students to develop practical skills. Horticulture students demonstrate high standards of practical skills. Students have adequate support to develop their learning and personal skills. Students' attendance during inspection was below the sector average.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in animal care and horticulture, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
ABC animal care	2	No. of starts	*	18	16
		% retention	*	89	81
		% pass rate	*	94	69
NVQ amenity horticulture	2	No. of starts	29	24	24
		% retention	38	63	46
		% pass rate	27	100	91
National certificate in horticulture	2	No. of starts	**	15	17
		% retention	**	60	76
		% pass rate	**	89	85
ABC animal care	3	No. of starts	**	26	36

		% retention	**	73	61
		% pass rate	**	79	86

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

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

\*\* course did not run

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

58. Teaching of horticulture theory and practice is good. Students have well-structured opportunities to learn new skills and show high levels of interest and commitment. Teachers plan learning activities well, enabling them to meet the needs of students working towards a variety of qualifications within a single lesson. Good use is made of real work tasks in practical teaching. In one practical class, involving the construction of a rose garden, level 2 students supervised level 1 and school students in small teams and rotated round the available jobs to gain a breadth of experience.

59. There is much weak teaching in animal care. Teachers fail to provide students with appropriate opportunities to learn. In the weakest lessons, students do not understand the tasks they are undertaking and time is wasted through poor organisation. Less successful teaching is characterised by ineffective use of questioning techniques, failure to meet some students' individual needs, insufficient use of visual aids and a lack of active participation from students.

60. Access to practical resources in animal care is poor. The lack of an on-site animal unit prevents students from having regular opportunities to handle animals and limits the development of skills associated with their routine care. In a national certificate lesson, students only had access to toy animals for first aid and were asked to develop their bandaging skills at home. This disadvantaged those without dogs as pets. There are no holding facilities for animals in classrooms, resulting in animals being unrestrained at times when they are not required for teaching. This distracts students and is potentially stressful for the animals. Arrangements for students to gain appropriate practical skills and related knowledge are unsatisfactory. Practical teaching is very limited on all courses.

61. Horticultural resources are poorly managed. Current standards of maintenance and utilisation are unsatisfactory. There are inadequate arrangements for plant identification facilities. Practical glasshouse space is not utilised to best meet the needs of learners. Students have limited access to horticultural machinery for operation and maintenance purposes. There are no drawing facilities or access to computer-aided design.

62. No teachers within either team have previous experience of national certificate or diploma courses. This has made it difficult for them to develop these courses appropriately. In animal care, the small size of the teaching team limits the range of skills available and results in large class sizes for practical handling.

63. There is poor assessment practice in both animal care and horticulture. Horticulture students are provided with the awarding body documentation but assessment plans are not available to them. Animal care students are unaware of how and when they will be assessed and there are no written assignment briefs. The standard of assessed work on national certificate and NVQ programmes is satisfactory. Feedback on assessed work in horticulture is variable in quality and students are given little direction on how to improve their work. No assessed work was available in animal care at the time of inspection. A satisfactory system of internal verification is in place for all horticulture courses and verification meetings are held periodically to discuss assessment issues.

64. The effectiveness of progress monitoring through the college tutorial system is limited due to ineffective use of targets. All students receive regular personal reviews of progress and participate in the college's added value system. On horticulture courses, targets are rarely set and on animal care courses targets for development are often not sufficiently detailed to be of value to the student.



65. The range of horticulture courses is satisfactory. The horticultural curriculum is enhanced through good partnership links with local organisations. These provide students with realistic work projects, such as the use of community projects for hard landscaping and arboriculture work with local borough councils. Effective partnerships have broadened the range of horticultural courses available in response to local needs. For example, an NVQ course in environmental conservation recycling has been introduced at a recycling centre in Netherton. Such developments have widened access to training. Innovative approaches to timetabling provide horticultural students with a wide range of study options, despite low student numbers. Most qualifications offered are well suited to students' needs, but the accreditation used for the introduction to gardening course and for students aged 14 to 16 is not the most appropriate. Students aged 14 to 16 are successfully integrated into horticulture classes. Student progression in horticulture is satisfactory.

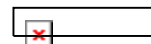
66. The range of courses is more limited in animal care. There are good levels of recruitment to all courses, but student choices are limited by the lack of a full-time course at level 1. There are no industry partnerships. Progression rates are poor; in 2003, only one-third of those studying at level 3 progressed to employment or further study. The provision of work experience is unsatisfactory. At the time of inspection, very few students had work placements arranged. The policy on access to key skills for animal care students is unclear. Students do not understand the key skills element of their programme. Some work-based learners are not working towards the appropriate level of key skills.

67. Teachers provide high levels of informal support for students. This is particularly important to horticulture students who have limited access to college-wide services. A student support worker visits the Kennels site weekly but there is a lack of understanding among staff and students regarding the support available. Animal care students have good access to college support services. There is a well-organised college-wide tutorial scheme which combines group sessions and individual reviews. This is offered to all students within horticulture and animal care. A comprehensive resource pack and student folder supports the tutorial programme. Some tutors are unable to deliver all elements of the programme adequately. For example, one equal opportunities lesson was unsatisfactory due to the teacher's own uncertainty about the subject.

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

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory in horticulture and unsatisfactory in animal care. The horticultural team meet regularly and follow up agreed actions. Course portfolios in horticulture are comprehensive and course management is effective. Animal care course management is weak. There is a lack of appropriate record keeping and records relating to work experience and assessment, for example, are inadequate. Course portfolios are incomplete and information is difficult to access. The self-assessment for these areas failed to accurately identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

### **Construction**



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

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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in 2003

- significant progress of students with low prior attainment
  
- excellent central technician support
  
- highly responsive curriculum management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- unsatisfactory work-based learning
  
- insufficient variety of methods of teaching and learning
  
- insufficient breadth of provision in carpentry and joinery.

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

69. The college offers a range of mostly full-time construction courses at foundation and intermediate levels. Courses cover carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, interior design, brickwork, general construction operations and electrical installation. There are 167 students on level 1 courses, 148 students at level 2 and 4 students at level 3. Of these, 80% are aged 16 to 18 and 20% are aged 19 and over. There are also 38 foundation modern apprentices and 4 advanced modern apprentices. The construction department also attracts some 250 students aged 14 to 16 from 18 partner schools who follow a programme of study designed to give them an insight into a range of construction trades.

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

70. Retention rates on most courses have fluctuated from year to year, but there is a general trend of improvement. However, the number of adult students starting construction courses is falling. Pass rates on several courses have been consistently high. The pass rate for NVQ decorating occupations has been significantly higher than the national average in each of the last three years. The pass rate on the intermediate construction certificate has been significantly above the national average for the last two years. Pass rates on most courses improved significantly in 2003 to levels well above the national average. However, the completion rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. At best, less than one-quarter of learners complete their framework.

71. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Students demonstrate competence with hand tools and most are able to use their skills with confidence and work safely. In practical lessons, students with low prior achievement make significant progress and demonstrate high levels of motivation. Brickwork students confidently produce brick and concrete walls with either square or irregular base plans; the work of more able students includes brickwork structures incorporating arches. On modern apprenticeship programmes, however, students are not sufficiently challenged.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 2380 sixteenth edition regulations	1	No. of starts	*	15	61
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	60	95
Construction crafts	1	No. of starts	116	29	15
		% retention	35	38	80
		% pass rate	76	91	67
Construction crafts	2	No. of starts	135	85	26
		% retention	37	39	96
		% pass rate	82	64	92
Interior design and decorating techniques (one year)	2	No. of starts	16	**	26
		% retention	88	**	73
		% pass rate	86	**	84

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

\* course did not run

\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

**Quality of education and training**

72. Most teaching is satisfactory, however, the proportion of good or better teaching is low. In the better lessons, teachers question students' understanding regularly and students are able to develop and demonstrate a high level of understanding of the subject. Students manage their time well and take responsibility for their own learning. Aims and learning objectives are clearly stated in lesson plans and usually shared with students at the start of lessons. On most courses, good industrial standards are set and teachers expect students to achieve them.

73. In weaker lessons, teachers fail to ensure that students of different abilities are actively participating in learning. In practical lessons, there is insufficient use of whole-group demonstrations at the start of lessons to prepare students sufficiently for the key practical tasks of the lesson. There is little variation in the teaching methods used in theory lessons. These lessons are very teacher-focused, with few opportunities taken to engage students more actively. ILT is very rarely used in lessons.

74. Specialist facilities at the Kirkby campus are very good and represent a further incentive for students from under-represented groups to attend the college. The resources enable students to develop practical competences to industrial standards. The central technician resource supporting all areas of construction is excellent. Technicians are multi-skilled and provide students with correct, up-to-date and well-maintained tools and equipment, which enables teachers and students to concentrate on the learning. Teachers are well qualified, although the number who have undertaken recent industrial updating is low.

75. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Practical work is regularly assessed. Students' written work is marked and returned with constructive comments. However, much recording of assessment consists simply of boxes being ticked to indicate competent performance. This does not illuminate improvements in performance, which would contribute to the preparation of progress reports and references. Nevertheless, students are aware of their progress and can readily identify what they need to do to improve. Internal verification is satisfactory. Few work-based learners are aware that they can use evidence from the workplace towards their qualifications. Most learners' portfolios are

not well constructed and contain an insufficient range of evidence. Not all learners visited in the workplace were studying key skills or had been assessed. Employers have expressed concern at the lack of regular feedback.

76. The quality of information, advice and guidance to students is good. Students have individual learning plans and have their essential skills assessed through initial diagnostic tests, the results of which are fed back to the students within a reasonable time. Students receive particularly good individual support. Working relationships between staff and students are good and encourage learning. Personal development portfolios are used effectively to record improvement targets and to track progress in terms of attendance and the standard of practical work. Students are inducted well on to courses and are aware of the full range of student support services available.

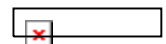
77. On-the-job training for work-based learners is of an unsatisfactory standard and students do not receive good support from college staff. Not all employers understand the requirements of the NVQ. For example, some are unaware that assessment can take place at work. Progress reviews for work-based students often lack rigour. There is little employer input into action plans.

78. Work-based learners follow a standard NVQ programme relating to their modern apprenticeship. Lesson plans make some reference to individual progress with classroom work, but take insufficient account of the progress, experience or breadth of the skills learners gain on site. For example, in carpentry and joinery, the bench joinery course taken by learners does not relate to the site experience provided, which is predominantly site joinery.

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

79. There is highly responsive curriculum management. The construction department makes a significant contribution to the college's strategic aim to widen participation. A large increase in the number of students aged 16 to 18 has been accommodated this year and the number of students aged 14 to 16 has rapidly increased. The former creates pressures on resources which were not fully resolved at the time of inspection and which reduced the quality of some of the teaching observed. Established teachers have adapted their teaching methods to facilitate this growth. The self-assessment process is well managed. All staff are involved in setting improvement targets. Course review and evaluation is effective in raising standards. Actions agreed in team meetings are properly planned and monitored. Work-based learning is poorly managed.

## **Engineering**



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

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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on many courses
  
- good practical teaching and training
  
- very good specialist resources

- effective curriculum management.

### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective implementation of individual learning plans and progress reviews
- insufficient work placements for foundation modern apprentices.

### **Scope of provision**

80. There are some 635 students enrolled across a range of motor vehicle, electrical and mechanical engineering courses. One-third of these are work-based learners on foundation modern apprenticeship, advanced modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes. For college-based students, the college offers full-time and part-time courses from entry level to level 3, but most students are taking qualifications at levels 1 or 2. Almost 200 students aged 14 to 16 are on engineering courses at the college.

### **Achievement and standards**

81. Retention rates are at least satisfactory on most courses. The retention rates on NVQ levels 1 and 2 performing engineering operations were very high in 2002/03, whereas retention rates on the City and Guilds motor vehicle progression award were very low. Retention of advanced modern apprentices is good. For the 2002/03 intake, retention rates varied from 67% for motor vehicle studies to 85% for electrical engineering. In the previous year, the retention rates were 67% and 72%, respectively. Pass rates are very high on many courses. In 2002/03, the pass rate was 100% on many full-time and part-time engineering courses. There is poor achievement by foundation modern apprentices. The framework completion rate for foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000 and 2001 is 22%.

82. The standard of students' practical work is good. Students at level 2 demonstrate competence in operating specialist equipment and completing the programme of skills' development assignments. For example, performing engineering operations mechanical students are machining relatively complex engineering components using industrial-standard centre lathes and milling machines.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ performing manufacturing operations	1	No. of starts	*	*	148
		% retention	*	*	99
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NVQ performing manufacturing operations	2	No. of starts	*	*	80
		% retention	*	*	99
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NVQ engineering	2	No. of starts	112	124	90

trades		% retention	67	60	71
		% pass rate	56	83	100
NVQ motor vehicle trades	2	No. of starts	29	44	15
		% retention	48	36	73
		% pass rate	57	69	100
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	25	21	**
		% retention	76	52	**
		% pass rate	95	91	**

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

\* course did not run

\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

83. Practical teaching and training are good. Work-based learners develop good practical skills by working alongside experienced colleagues. On most college courses, students work with interest through planned programmes which are effective in developing their confidence and competence. The teaching and individual guidance provided during these sessions are of a high standard. The teaching in theory lessons is more variable. In the best lessons, students' interest and learning is maintained through the use of a variety of techniques that involve a high proportion of student activity. For example, in one class, students were learning how to plot a computer-numerical-control tool path and, after a short but effective explanation by the teacher, they worked through well-conceived class exercises to develop the knowledge required. In weaker lessons, teachers talk for too long and students become disinterested. In some lessons, the question and answer techniques used are ineffective in engaging all students and participation is restricted to the more vociferous members of the class. Students develop IT skills through their key skills lessons, but make little use of them within their vocational subjects.

84. There are very good specialist resources within the new purpose-built technology centre. The centre includes mechanical, electrical and motor vehicle engineering workshops and a suite of mostly well-appointed classrooms. The workshops are spacious and equipped with a wide range of industrial-standard equipment. There is also an engineering learning centre, well equipped with computers. The facilities for teaching computer-aided design and programmable logic controllers are good, but there is little other engineering software available for students. Resources in the workplace are good. The college uses companies able to provide high-quality placements to train their apprentices. For example, garages with up-to-date maintenance and diagnostic facilities, hydraulic and pneumatic equipment manufacturers and manufacturers of components using computer numerical control technology. Teachers have up-to-date subject expertise and hold appropriate vocational, teaching and assessor qualifications.

85. Overall, assessment is appropriately planned and carried out according to awarding body requirements. Assessment on most programmes is flexible and at a time that meets the needs of the students. On college courses, assessment is used effectively to improve students' practical work. If students do not reach the required standards, further practice is often scheduled before they can progress to the next stage. Motor vehicle work-based learning assessment practices are good. Assessment observations are carried out in the workplace every two weeks. Assessment comprises of a good mix of observation, expert witness testimony, work job cards and questions on theoretical aspects of motor vehicle maintenance. Feedback to students on completion of an assessment is clear and concise. The process is quality assured by frequent internal verification. On NVQ level 3 work-based engineering, there is an over-reliance on witness testimony statements. Little assessment is carried out by direct observations and there is insufficient quality assurance through observation of assessors.

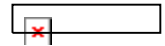
86. The range of programmes offered is satisfactory. Full-time programmes prepare the students for employment very well. The students can subsequently use the qualification they have gained as the technical certificate required by the modern apprenticeship scheme. There is extensive, high-quality provision in engineering for students aged 14 to 16 from local schools. However, there are insufficient work placements for work-based learners. Over 30% of foundation modern apprentices are without a work placement

87. Students are well supported throughout their course. Initial assessment is effective in identifying additional support needs and the provision of learning support helps students to achieve. There is good support for work-based learners. Reviews of learners' progress are undertaken frequently by occupationally competent staff. Learners are provided with the mobile telephone numbers of their assessors and appreciate this form of contact. There are weaknesses in the use of individual learning plans. Learning plans fail to set any form of interim learning targets to measure progress against and pay too little attention to the completion of key skills. Performance against targets is not evaluated rigorously enough at progress reviews or tutorials. Work-based learners do not automatically receive a copy of their completed progress review form.

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

88. Leadership and management are good. The trend in retention and pass rates is one of improvement and pass rates on many courses are high. Quality assurance procedures are implemented rigorously. Self-assessment is thorough. Appropriate areas of concern are clearly identified, prioritised and effective action taken. For example, significant improvements have been made to resources with the investment in the new technology centre. Key skills have been introduced earlier into the programme to improve the rate of framework achievements by work-based learners.

### **Business, administration, management and professional**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high retention rates
  
- good teaching
  
- assessment and monitoring which help students make good progress
  
- wide range of provision in administration, including community-based courses
  
- good curriculum and course management.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
  
- insufficient development of key skills
  
- insufficient tutorial support for part-time students.

### **Scope of provision**

89. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time business, administration, management and professional courses. There are 113 students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses provided at the Roby sixth form college. Some 578, mostly adult, students are taking part-time courses, either through the skills and enterprise college at the Kirkby campus or through the adult and community education college at both main sites and numerous community venues. Courses range from level 1 programmes in administration, office skills and book-keeping through to level 2, 3 and 4 programmes in business, business administration, accounting and management.

### **Achievement and standards**

90. Retention rates have improved over the last two years and are higher than the national average on most courses. Retention rates on word processing stage 1, text processing 2, GCSE business, and NVQ business administration and NVQ accounting at level 3 were all high in 2002/03. Pass rates on most courses at level 1 are broadly in line with, or slightly above, national averages. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 accounting and GCE A-level business studies are high. Pass rates on some courses, for example, text processing stage 2, word processing stage 1 and AVCE business have declined over the last three years. Pass rates on most other courses vary from year to year with no consistent trend. Achievement of modern apprentice frameworks has been poor in both accounting and administration. Many learners fail to achieve the key skills element of the framework or fail to provide documentary evidence of past achievements to satisfy the framework requirements.

91. Some students arrive late to lessons, missing important introductory material. But the level of attendance has improved this year and is now in line with the sector average for business. Students enjoy their courses and many make significant progress whilst at the college. Data which compares students' achievements with their grades on entry indicate that students on GCE AS and A-level and AVCE courses in business generally achieve the results expected of them. Students' work is of a high standard across all courses. Students' course files are well-organised and show evidence of good note-taking. Evidence compiled in NVQ portfolios is carefully arranged. Students demonstrate good levels of attainment. In one GCE AS economics lesson, for example, the students asked many perceptive questions and displayed a good grasp of relevant economic principles in relation to real-life monopoly.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Word processing	1	No. of starts	61	61	40



		% retention	70	85	95
		% pass rate	67	56	50
Medical audio transcription	2	No. of starts	*	33	25
		% retention	91	97	96
		% pass rate	80	81	79
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	38	39	55
		% retention	76	79	100
		% pass rate	66	48	55
AVCE double award / GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	57	50	63
		% retention	89	76	83
		% pass rate	55	58	83
GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	57	50	63
		% retention	89	76	83
		% pass rate	55	58	83
NVQ administration (secretarial)	3	No. of starts	19	27	21
		% retention	100	100	90
		% pass rate	84	85	37

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

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

92. Standards of teaching are high. Teaching is good or better in most lessons. In these lessons, teachers draw on their own and students' experience and use up-to-date business examples. Many lessons involve students successfully in their own learning. For example, in a level 1 administration lesson, the teacher provided students with a sheet of A3-size paper which they then folded in stages down to A8 size; at each stage students wrote down the size. This was then related to the various sizes of envelope, with students again writing down the sizes. The explanation of the appropriate usage of the paper sizes and related envelopes was then clearly appreciated by the students. This was a good example of the teacher tailoring the lesson to the preferred learning style of the majority of the group. In a GCE AS economics lesson, students asked many perceptive questions and displayed a good grasp of relevant economic principles in relation to real-life monopoly. Lessons are well planned and, in most cases, the lesson objectives are shared with the students at the start. In the better lessons, teachers successfully recap the learning at the end of the session and check that learning has taken place. The time dedicated by some teachers to helping students who are late or who have previously been absent to catch up on work missed can leave the rest of the class unproductively occupied.

93. Resources are generally good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in their subject and most have a recognised teaching qualification. Students have access to industry-standard IT equipment, but there is scope for much greater use of ILT in teaching and learning. Teachers have taken opportunities to update their commercial experience. However, there are insufficient appropriate placements for work-based learners and full-time students.

94. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is good. Assignments are returned promptly, marking is thorough and feedback is detailed and supportive. On the GCE AS and A-level business studies and economics courses, students benefit from a standard homework report-back format that provides both formative and summative assessment. Improvement targets are set in

conjunction with the students and detailed records of progress are kept. Administration students are set regular short-term targets that are rigorously checked. Initial assessment of full-time students is thorough and identifies appropriate support needs. Assessment is also used to identify each student's preferred learning style, which then enables teachers to tailor lessons, where possible, to the students' preferences.

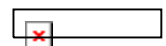
95. The curriculum offer broadly meets the needs of learners; most courses offer progression from one level to another. A good range of courses is provided on employers' premises. Six administration courses and three accounting courses are provided at community venues, with plans to offer two supervisory and several other courses in the community in the near future. These courses provide both students and employers with the opportunity to improve their training without the inconvenience of attending college. There are limited opportunities to study business at levels 1 and 2. The delivery and assessment of key skills is not well integrated within students' vocational studies.

96. Students speak highly of the support provided by teachers. Full-time students regularly have their progress reviewed. Personal issues which can impact on students' progress are often discussed. Part-time students can request tutorial support and some have tutorial time built into programmes. However, the availability of support and guidance for part-time students depends too heavily on the individual skills and commitment of their academic tutor. Good careers guidance and advice is readily available for all students. Most students have a comprehensive induction. Those that join late have only a brief induction. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 and employers of sponsored students are regularly informed of students' progress.

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

97. Curriculum and course management are good. The college's quality assurance procedures are implemented effectively. A detailed and self-critical programme review was carried out in November 2002. The comprehensive action plan that followed from this has been well-managed at section level to raise standards in many areas. There have been improvements in the management of key skills, work-based learning, schemes of work and the recording of progress. Attendance levels have improved in the current year. Resources are deployed in ways which support learning effectively.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good achievement on college and community-based courses
  
- good teaching and learning
  
- successful strategies to widen participation.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- o limited progression from level 2 to level 3 courses by community-based students.

### **Scope of provision**

98. The college offers a broad variety of computing and IT programmes for both students 16 to 18 and adult students. Courses available on a full-time basis include General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) foundation and intermediate, AVCE and GCE AS courses, Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma and national certificate in e-media, the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examination (OCR) certificate in computer installation and maintenance, national certificate for IT practitioners and a professional development certificate in computing. Part-time courses for adults include the Merseyside Open College Network (MOCN) introduction to computing modules, the new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course and CLAIT plus, integrated business technology (IBT), the European computer driving license (ECDL), computer maintenance, visual basic and City and Guilds e-qualifications. There are just over 1,800 students on ICT courses, of whom 63% are adults. There is a very small number of learners on work-based learning programmes in ICT.

### **Achievement and standards**

99. Retention and pass rates in most courses have shown continuous improvement over the last three years. For example, retention and pass rates in the one-year CLAIT course have improved from 72% and 62%, respectively, in 2001/02 to 88% and 70% in 2002/03. Retention rates on most courses are well above the national averages. Retention rates are particularly good on part-time courses, such as CLAIT and ECDL, with high student numbers. Pass rates on most courses are high. The pass rates on CLAIT, ECDL, IBTII and AVCE courses are significantly above the national averages. Retention and pass rates are also very high on the key skills IT courses. At level 2, for example, the pass rate is more than three times the national average. Retention and pass rates on work-based learning programmes are low.

100. Attendance and punctuality have improved over the past year. Students are highly motivated. The quality of students' work is particularly high on the courses in e-media.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	1,240	571	296
		% retention	72	78	88
		% pass rate	62	68	70
ECDL	2	No. of starts	146	227	274
		% retention	82	80	79
		% pass rate	76	88	70
IBT	2	No. of starts	117	64	25
		% retention	87	80	96
		% pass rate	47	51	71
Key skills IT	2	No. of starts	234	183	165
		% retention	88	92	93
		% pass rate	80	82	**
AVCE ICT (single	3	No. of starts	*	29	58

award)	% retention	*	90	90
	% pass rate	*	31	63

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

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

\*\* data not yet available

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

101. Teaching and learning on ICT courses are good. Teaching and learning are good or better in a large majority of lessons. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well developed. On full-time courses, teachers take into account the preferred learning styles of the students on the course and plan lessons carefully to enable students to use a variety of different learning styles. This helps to engage all students and encourages high levels of participation. In the better lessons, questioning is used to recap previous learning and to stimulate thought on new tasks. In many lessons, there is clear action planning which enables students to decide their learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson. Assignments used on the national certificate in e-media and first diploma in media provide students with challenging and satisfying work, for example, in enhancing picture quality with a variety of overlays and creating graphical images that fade and pulse. One first diploma student researched details of all Formula One racing circuits and profiles of the drivers and produced the findings on CD-ROM. In some lessons, more typically on part-time courses, there is an over-reliance on one learning method. There is little differentiated learning material available for students.

102. Full-time students benefit from very good resources that reflect current industry standards and provide good opportunities for network, installation and maintenance training. There are also good facilities for media students. Within this area, there is a 1:1 ratio of computers to students. Library resources are good, with a wide range of current publications. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in their field of expertise. Learners on work-based programmes receive off-the-job training in the business and technology room, which is well equipped with work stations and two support staff.

103. All students complete a basic skills initial assessment on starting their course. Full-time students identified as having potential additional support needs are referred to student services for more detailed assessment. All students are assessed to identify their individual learning styles. The personal learning plans of full-time students reflect their learning needs, and lesson planning takes this into account. Lesson planning on part-time courses is not as responsive to the results of learning styles assessment. Course assessment is good. Assignment briefs are clear and include opportunities for and advice on grading. Assignments are well structured and challenging. Assessment methods include a wide range of online tools designed to test students' knowledge and understanding. On the national certificate in e-media course, students regularly undertake short question and answer assessments online and receive the results within minutes. More formal assessment of completed work is carried out and good use is made of digital photographs to enhance the process. Marked work is returned to students promptly. Formal and informal feedback to students is clear and helpful, indicating how they can improve.

104. The college has effective strategies to recruit adult students on to a range of part-time IT courses at its main sites and at a large number of outreach centres located close to local communities. These centres are welcoming and supportive for students who are re-entering education after many years. Days and times of attendance are offered to suit students' personal needs. Laptops are used to provide training in students' homes. Detailed and user-friendly information on IT learning opportunities is widely distributed throughout the community. The college also responds to the IT training requirements of local businesses, such as hospitals and a soft drink manufacturer.

105. The range of full-time courses was significantly extended in 2002 at levels 2, 3 and 4. There are good progression opportunities at all levels for full-time students. There are insufficient opportunities

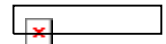
for community-based students to progress to level 3 qualifications. Opportunities available at the main college fail to attract community-based students who have achieved their level 2 qualification, due to poor transport links and a reluctance to leave the more social atmosphere found in the outreach centres.

106. Support for students is good. Full-time students with a range of additional learning needs, including dyslexia and basic skills, are well supported in lessons as well as having access to specialist workshops. For those part-time students who have additional learning needs, a learning support tutor is allocated who attends the outreach locations at regular intervals. A variety of guest speakers are invited to address full-time students during tutorials and provide information on career opportunities.

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

107. Leadership and management are good. There have been clear improvements in students' achievement. Team leaders have been appointed within the full-time provision to manage the implementation of the development plan and ensure targeted quality improvements are understood and pursued by all staff. Key weaknesses identified in the last self-assessment report, to which all staff contributed, have been addressed. New initiatives to further improve retention rates have been developed. Co-ordination of the extensive outreach provision is satisfactory.

### **Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on hospitality and tourism courses
- good teaching and learning in theory and practical lessons
- good use of resources to develop learning opportunities
- high levels of staff morale and commitment
- good course management and quality assurance.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- theory lessons that are too long for level 2 students.

### **Scope of provision**

108. The college offers a range of courses in hospitality, catering, leisure, travel and tourism and sport. Craft cookery is available at levels 2 and 3 on a full-time and part-time basis. There are GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in travel and tourism, and first and national diplomas in sport studies. There are small numbers of work-based learners in each of hospitality, sports and travel and tourism.

### **Achievement and standards**

109. Retention rates on most hospitality courses are just below the national average. On the GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering course they are above the national average. Retention rates on most other sports and travel and tourism courses are broadly in line with the national average. Pass rates are high on most courses. Pass rates on NVQ level 1, GNVQ intermediate and GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering courses are outstanding. They have reached 100% in each of the last three years. Pass rates on level 2 NCFE sport and leisure are high and have been above the national average for the last three years. Pass rates for GCE AS sport and recreation, on the other hand, have been poor for the last three years.

110. Students' attendance averaged 80% during the inspection. Students are highly motivated. Most work is well presented and of a high standard. Students use ICT well and their work includes very effective use of word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and databases. Students demonstrate good research skills and work effectively on their own and in small groups. Students on the GCE AS sport and recreation and NCFE sport and leisure courses display good practical and coaching skills and a well-developed ability to relate theory to practice. Catering craft students display high levels of culinary skills and achieve high standards in food production. Advanced craft students produce work of a very high standard.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ food preparation and cookery	1	No. of starts	16	22	42
		% retention	69	86	69
		% pass rate	100	58	100
Intermediate certificate in retail travel operations	2	No. of starts	38	17	25
		% retention	76	88	72
		% pass rate	90	100	78
NCFE sport and leisure	2	No. of starts	59	49	26
		% retention	78	69	84
		% pass rate	78	97	68
GCE AS sport and recreation	3	No. of starts	34	43	28
		% retention	88	74	78
		% pass rate	60	69	50
AVCE double award travel and tourism and precursors	3	No. of starts	34	43	*
		% retention	88	74	*
		% pass rate	60	69	*

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

*\* fewer than 15 starters*

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

111. There is much good teaching in both theory and practical lessons. Teachers have enthusiastic styles of delivery and demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge and technical competence. In the better teaching, key skills opportunities are identified by teachers, enabling students to map and record their key skills work appropriately. In good lessons, students are challenged and inspired by teachers. In one GCE A-level sport theory lesson that introduced the principles of reaction time and decision making, the teacher used a combination of techniques to maintain high levels of students' interest. Tasks were clearly explained and a stimulating introduction was provided that prompted intelligent and informed debate with the students. Once the teacher felt confident that the basic principles were understood, students were asked to identify how the knowledge could be applied. They then completed a number of practical exercises to determine reaction time. Throughout this, the teacher checked and reinforced students' previous learning through skilful questioning that linked the current activity to earlier lessons.

112. Teachers plan lessons to meet the diverse range of students' abilities and inclusive learning is well managed in many lessons. In one NVQ cookery lesson, the teacher successfully met the needs of four distinct groups of learners by giving additional tasks to the more advanced students, enabling more time to be spent with those students who required it. The good rapport between teachers and students promotes effective learning in the majority of lessons.

113. The range of food production, bakery and food service work environments provides students with good industrial experience and realistic assessment opportunities. There is a busy training travel shop that provides realistic work experience for travel students; a fitness suite enables sports studies students to develop relevant vocational skills, as well as providing recreational opportunities for college students; and a training restaurant serves members of the public. The mix of full-time and part-time teachers provides a balance that ensures stable course management and experience of current industrial practice. Teachers are well qualified and experienced.

114. Students' assessment is well planned and fairly administered. Students are aware of how much progress they have made towards their qualification. Teachers regularly set students work. Marked work is returned promptly; spelling and grammatical errors are corrected. Detailed feedback helps students to improve their performance. Meticulous progress records ensure that individual target setting and monitoring is effective. Students' attendance is closely monitored and absences are followed up on a daily basis. Parents are informed by letter where improvement is not achieved.

115. There is a wide range of courses at level 2 and a comprehensive programme of short courses. There are few courses at entry and foundation level. The range of part-time courses for adult students is limited. Sport students participate in team games and outdoor activities. Students on all courses are encouraged to enter cookery competitions and the catering section enjoys a national reputation for such activity. Students on the AVCE leisure and tourism course work well on real tasks, for example, organising and planning a complex event that involved dealing with external companies and providing a range of services for customers. There are good links with local schools. A Saturday morning cookery club provides learning opportunities for potential students.

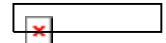
116. Additional support needs are identified early and accurately through initial screening. Both full-time and part-time students make good use of the additional support provided. In one lesson, additional support teachers provided literacy support for students needing to improve their GCSE English grades to enable them to progress to level 3 courses. In another lesson, an additional support teacher provided assistance in a costing exercise for package holidays, where prices had to be accurate in order to meet the lesson objectives. Subject teachers provide very regular and highly effective individual support to students.

### **Leadership and management**

117. Curriculum management is good. Courses are well planned and course teams meet regularly.

Teachers and support staff work well together and demonstrate shared purpose and commitment. There is a strong focus on improving retention and pass rates. New managers in the sports section have vigorously addressed the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Improvements have been made in health and safety, curriculum enrichment and key skills. In the travel and tourism section, there have been clear improvements in computer access for students and the management of students arriving late. Curriculum managers have good access to management information and use it well to monitor their areas of responsibility.

### **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**



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

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

#### ***Strengths***

- outstanding achievement on most courses
- high standard of practical and written work
- good teaching
- impeccable adherence to industry standards
- highly effective pastoral and subject support
- very good specialist resources
- quality assurance practices supporting high standards.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention and pass rates in work-based learning.



### **Scope of provision**

118. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses, including work-based learning programmes, in hairdressing, beauty therapy and other related therapies. Courses include NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 and a range of qualifications for other therapies; such as the Indian head massage certificate and diplomas in reflexology and holistic therapies. There are some 350 students on hairdressing courses, just over half of whom are aged 16 to 18. On beauty therapy and other related courses there are some 450 students, 56% of whom are adults. There are 32 learners on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes and 6 on the advanced modern apprenticeship scheme plus 20 learners on work-based NVQ programmes.

### **Achievement and standards**

119. There is outstanding achievement on most courses, with pass rates significantly above the national average. The pass rates on NVQ hairdressing at levels 1 and 2 were 100% in 2003. On NVQ beauty therapy at level 2 and on the manicure certificate, pass rates were 97% and 96%, respectively. Retention rates have improved over the last three years and are above the national averages on all but a few courses. Retention and completion rates for the modern apprenticeship framework are low.

120. A high standard of work is achieved in practical sessions. For example, students in their eighth week of training on the NVQ hairdressing course at level 2 were able to demonstrate vertical rolls on long hair and re-styling on mid-length hair. There is excellent development of students' professional interaction and rapport with clients. Some students manage two or three clients within a session. Work-based learners achieve a high standard of on-the-job practical skills.

121. There is good progression from the 14 to 16 provision, through all levels and into employment. For example, in hairdressing, 82% of students progressed from level 1 to level 2 last year. In beauty therapy, 85% of level 2 students progressed to level 3 and 100% of level 3 students gained employment.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ hairdressing (short)	1	No. of starts	30	19	47
		% retention	97	63	100
		% pass rate	100	92	100
NVQ hairdressing (2 years)	2	No. of starts	48	52	59
		% retention	33	56	63
		% pass rate	81	86	100
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	66	28	37
		% retention	50	68	78
		% pass rate	76	100	97
Manicure certificate (short)	2	No. of starts	64	43	58
		% retention	77	84	97
		% pass rate	82	47	96
NVQ hairdressing	3	No. of starts	20	17	23
		% retention	85	71	78
		% pass rate	88	92	100

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

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

122. Lessons are well planned and teaching is highly effective. Students receive constructive feedback both during and at the end of lessons. Students learn well in class and remain interested and motivated by the teaching. Professional standards in both hairdressing and beauty therapy are strongly promoted. The professional appearance of both staff and students is exemplary. Students across the curriculum area, including students aged 14 to 16, adhere to the uniform code and have modern, well-styled hair and make-up, which promotes a professional image. Students are highly motivated and respectful towards each other and teachers. Students on the work-based hairdressing programmes value their off-the-job training and enjoy attending college. Most work-based learners gain very valuable experience in busy salons where they can observe a range of good hairdressing skills, although there are insufficient linkages between their on-the-job and off-the-job training. Written work is clearly marked with constructive comments on how the student can improve.

123. Teachers are well qualified and have detailed plans for continuing professional development. The specialist accommodation is spacious and well resourced, reflecting the best industry standards in decor. On the Roby campus, there are six hairdressing salons including a dedicated barbering salon, and five beauty therapy salons including a specialist nail clinic. New hairdressing and beauty therapy facilities on the Kirkby campus are used to provide courses for students aged 14 to 16. There are good arrangements for the storage of students' belongings.

124. ILT is used throughout the curriculum. All portfolio contents and assignments are word processed. All salons are linked to the computerised booking system. Photographic images of clientele are captured and stored on the facility. The sound system is also managed through this technology. The hair and beauty area in the college's virtual learning environment holds schemes of work and tutors' notes and provides instant access to subject-related websites. Students use this facility to extend their learning and to catch up when they have missed a lesson. Students have good access to computers within learning resource centres on each campus.

125. Standards of assessment are good. Assessors provide students with detailed and supportive feedback. Parents are kept well informed through parents' evenings and twice-yearly progress reports. Students have individual progress reviews every six weeks, based on the college's value added system. The process is used to set targets, plan actions and their achievement, and plan for assessment. It is very effective in motivating students. The tracking of students' progress is very thorough. Internal verification is well planned and effective. On work-based learning programmes, there is slow unit completion. Assessments are carried across a spread of elements, but there is insufficient emphasis on the completion of whole units. Progress reviews provide vague targets which lack realistic, timed deadlines. Students whose targets are not met are not challenged appropriately.

126. There is an annual hair and beauty show which involves all students and last year attracted an audience of 1,000 people. Curriculum enrichment is extensive. Students visit trade fairs, have visits from technical consultants and have opportunities to take complementary qualifications such as NVQ customer service and product-related short courses. Timetabling is not sufficiently responsive to the needs of students with family commitments, with lessons normally starting at 9am. Students with family responsibilities are permitted to arrive late, however, the lesson time is lost and is not regained. The college has links with 47 employers who provide work placements. There are two work-based assessors within these workplaces. There are some 250 students aged 14 to 16 on courses in hairdressing and beauty, in purpose-built accommodation. These students attain a high standard of practical skills and professionalism.

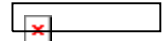
127. Students have a thorough initial assessment during the induction process. Induction is held over a four-week period, after which a 'right choice' interview is held to confirm the suitability of each student's original choice of course. This period is also used to identify the additional support needs of students. Learning support is effectively integrated into vocational lessons. Students have good

access to the range of student support services and are well informed about the support available. Teachers provide good support which is sensitive to individual circumstances and is valued by students.

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

128. Leadership and management are very good. A more strategic approach to retention has helped to achieve significant improvement on most courses. Quality audits and compliance checks are extremely thorough and lead to clear improvements. Self-assessment involves all staff and the current report is open and self-critical, recognising, for example, the weaknesses in work-based learning. Equal opportunities are well promoted and well monitored. Teachers promote good health and safety practice in all practical sessions. There is some ineffective communication with employers of work-based learners.

### **Health, social care and childcare**



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

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

#### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates on childcare courses
  
- good development of caring skills
  
- good assessment practice on college-based courses
  
- effective target setting for students
  
- good response to sector skills needs at levels 2 and 3.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on health and social care courses
  
- slow progress of students on modern apprenticeship programmes

- poor co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learners
  
- limited key skills development in lessons
  
- small classrooms constrain learning activities on several courses.

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

129. The health and social care section offers courses from entry level to level 3 on a full-time and part-time basis and work-based learning programmes. Childcare and education courses include the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) foundation in caring for children and the certificate and diploma in childcare and education. Health and social care courses include GNVQ foundation and intermediate and AVCE single and double awards. NVQs are offered at levels 2 and 3 in care and early years. The college is part of a consortium with a local health trust and other colleges to provide a cadet nursing programme. Short courses are developed to meet identified training needs in the childcare sector as they arise.

130. There are 171 students aged 16 to 18 and 53 adult students on full-time courses. A further 100 students aged 16 to 18 and 30 adult students are on work-based learning programmes. Of these, 73 are foundation modern apprentices and 5 are advanced modern apprentices; the remainder are following national vocational qualifications at level 2 or 3.

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

131. Students' achievement on childcare and education courses is good. The pass rate was 100% on three of the four childcare and education courses in 2003, and in line with national average on the fourth. On full-time health and social care courses, retention rates have sometimes been low, and pass rates have generally been high. In 2003, this pattern was reversed, with high retention rates but pass rates falling to below national averages. A minority of students fail to achieve their qualification within the expected timescale. On modern apprenticeship programmes, learners achieve slowly. Learners on the programme for nine months still have not had any units awarded.

132. Students develop the essential range of skills for working in the care sector. They are able to relate their life and work experience effectively to their studies. Students plan their work well and, at level 3 in particular, develop good research and analytical skills. Students at all levels are enthusiastic and confident when working in groups and presenting their findings. Students develop some good teamwork and problem solving skills, however, these are not accredited. Progression to further study and employment is good.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
CACHE foundation studies caring for children	1	No. of starts	18	27	27
		% retention	83	18	63
		% pass rate	67	68	100
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	18	*	17

health and social care		% retention	56	*	53
		% pass rate	80	*	67
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	*	17	16
		% retention	*	82	88
		% pass rate	*	93	100
NVQ early years	3	No. of starts	12	24	42
		% retention	67	63	100
		% pass rate	88	87	100
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	25	*	17
		% retention	58	*	88
		% pass rate	86	*	60

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

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

133. Teaching and learning are good on college-based courses. In the better lessons, teachers provide a range of learning activities to meet the needs and preferred learning styles of students. For example, with a group where the predominant learning style was auditory, the teacher took care to read the short instructions for an exercise before handing out the worksheet. The teacher used focused questions to check and extend understanding. Not all teachers take account of identified learning styles when planning lessons. In some lessons, teachers make good use of their professional experience to illustrate points well and to reinforce the learning. For example, in a lesson which explored attitudes towards homeless people, the teacher skilfully drew on professional knowledge and experience to enable students to correctly identify a range of possible reasons for becoming homeless. A series of activities encouraged students to review the social and emotional issues whilst identifying the possible effects of being homeless on the health of the individual. Students responded positively, with their ability to empathise clearly improving as their awareness increased.

134. At times, teachers make excessive use of open questions addressed to the whole group and consequently fail to adequately check individual understanding and attainment. In a few lessons, students spend too much time copying down notes. Opportunities to develop students' key skills in vocational lessons are neglected.

135. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Individual training and development needs are effectively identified through the appraisal system. Teachers take opportunities to update their vocational experience. Resources are satisfactory. A designated resource room provides a good range of learning materials to supplement those in the learning resource centre. However, work-based learners experience some difficulty in accessing college resources. Handouts and slides are well produced on computer to improve clarity and interest. However, the use of the interactive whiteboards and presentation software is not yet routine. Some classrooms are too small for the size of groups and this limits the range of possible learning activities.

136. Assessment is satisfactory. Assignments designed for students are vocationally relevant and are at an appropriate standard for the stage and level of the course. Students are encouraged to use computers to present assignment work and many use the Internet as an additional tool for research. Feedback to students is constructive and helps students to improve their work. Most students are clear about the progress they are making and areas they can improve. Internal moderation is effective in affirming the validity of assessment grading. On work-based learning programmes, a shortage of qualified assessors is slowing down the achievement of modern apprentices. There is

over-reliance on written work and little use of witness testimony in learners' portfolios.

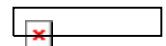
137. The range of courses between entry level and level 3 is good. The curriculum offer is very responsive to the significant skills needs identified in the sector, especially in relation to care and nursing. A wide range of enrichment activities is provided for full-time students, including a visit to Dublin by health and social care students to compare different approaches to health care. Visiting speakers from local organisations help to broaden students' understanding of current issues in health and childcare. Students can re-sit GCSE subjects and take additional GCE AS and A-level courses, where appropriate. Full-time students have a period of work experience; but difficulty in finding sufficient suitable placements slows down the learning of some students. There are strong links with local schools and some 42 students aged 14 to 16 are following vocational courses in this curriculum area.

138. Support for students is good. Initial guidance enables students to make an informed choice about their course of study and career pathway. The 'right choice' interview enables students to review their choice of course early on and to change direction where appropriate. Diagnostic tests are used effectively to identify additional support needs and inform individual target setting. Appropriate learning support is provided and students' progress is carefully monitored through regular tutorials or work-based supervision. Effective targets for work-based learners help to ensure that their written work is completed on schedule, but the assessment of their practical skills is more limited. Students feel that the formal and informal support offered by teachers and specialist staff keeps them motivated and helps them to achieve.

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

139. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new manager and a significant number of new teachers have recently taken up post. New and part-time teachers are given good support and have gained a quick appreciation of the quality processes. The self-assessment report accurately evaluates the provision. Actions to address most of the weaknesses identified have been implemented. Course management has been improved. The college is taking steps to address the ineffective co-ordination of college-based and workplace training for modern apprentices.

### **Visual and performing arts**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most courses
  
- high levels of achievement relative to prior GCSE grades in art and design, film and media studies
  
- good teaching in performing arts and on level 1 and 2 art and design courses
  
- good development of performance skills at level 3

- good progression rates from level 1 through to HE.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates on the first diploma in performing arts and the national diploma in popular music
- inconsistent integration of key skills.

### **Scope of provision**

140. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in the visual arts, media, performing arts and music. Full-time courses include: GNVQ foundation in performing arts at level 1; GCSE art, NCFE popular music, and first diplomas in performing arts, acting and popular music at level 2; and GCE AS and A-level art, drama and theatre studies, film studies and media studies, national diplomas in performing arts and music practice, and the diploma in foundation studies in art and design at level 3. Part-time courses, available at entry level to level 3, are provided in the community as well as at the main college sites.

### **Achievement and standards**

141. Retention rates are above the national average on most courses, but retention rates are low on the AVCE media and communications and popular music courses. Pass rates are high. For example, the pass rates on GCSE textiles and media studies, GCE AS fine arts, drama and media studies, GCE A-level art and design and media studies, GNVQ foundation performing arts, GNVQ intermediate media, the national diploma in drama and the diploma in foundation studies all reached 100% in 2003. Pass rates on MOCN courses in the community are excellent; one group of students in sheltered accommodation are all on target to achieve a level 1 qualification. Most pass rates are above national averages. Pass rates are low on GCSE performing arts, first diploma in performing arts and the national diploma in music.

142. The average attendance in lessons during inspection was 81%, which is above the national average for these courses. Most students arrive on time for lessons and there are clear strategies to address poor punctuality in art and design and performing arts. The standard of student work in all areas is high, and level 1 and level 2 art and design students display very good creative skills using colour. Media students demonstrate good analytical and reasoning skills in their commentaries. In 2003, a high proportion of students progressed to art courses in leading HE institutions or to professional training courses.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
City and Guilds 7803 creative skills theatre costume	1	No. of starts	20	15	16
		% retention	100	93	88
		% pass rate	100	100	100
First diploma in	2	No. of starts	19	17	22

performing arts		% retention	68	94	68
		% pass rate	62	88	53
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	34	27	15
		% retention	68	44	93
		% pass rate	83	100	100
Diploma in foundation studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	51	54	37
		% retention	90	80	86
		% pass rate	98	95	100
GCE AS film and video production	3	No. of starts	42	38	38
		% retention	95	79	76
		% pass rate	95	93	93
GCE AS fine art	3	No. of starts	47	50	23
		% retention	87	72	96
		% pass rate	88	86	95

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

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

143. Teaching and learning are good in most lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching or learning was observed during the inspection. Teaching is planned to meet the needs and interests of students. Schemes of work are informative. Teaching teams work very effectively to plan the curriculum. Some student groups are very small, which inhibits group work and limits the sharing of ideas. Lesson plans are consistent, but some lack detail about the teaching and learning methods that will be used. Most students are highly motivated, feel rewarded by the learning experience and speak highly of the teaching they receive. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching styles, and encourage students' development of analytical and critical reasoning skills and creative thinking. Many students effectively take responsibility for their own learning. In one lesson, for example, second-year performance students were able to work creatively and autonomously on a production of *Wind in the Willows*. Students are taught the formal elements of art and design and are able to apply this knowledge when evaluating and assessing their own work.

144. Art and design students are set challenging colour exercises from observation and colour analysis which result in ambitious and creative pieces of work. In performing arts much of the teaching is set in a practical theatre context. Students respond very positively to this and demonstrate good independent learning skills in exploring the context of their roles.

145. There are excellent specialist workshops, studio resources and equipment. Most accommodation is good, with an excellent performance space, media classrooms and suites for audio and video. There is an increasingly high-specification range of well-maintained technical equipment. Teachers are well qualified and collectively have a broad range of industrial experience. Rationalisation of staffing issues in performing arts has had a significant impact on course stability. The large proportion of new teachers in performing arts and music are supported to gain a professional teaching qualification.

146. Assignments are designed to a high standard. Practical art and design assignments often integrate historical perspectives and contexts. Thorough assessment and internal verification procedures are in place. Verbal and written feedback is provided on all assessment activities. There are particularly good examples of written feedback in performing arts, where good analysis of students' learning is supported with clear advice on how to improve. Internal moderation and verification are effective in assuring high standards of assessment. The monitoring of students'



progress is rigorous and well documented. The customised value added system is used as a diagnostic tool in identifying students' achievements in a supportive way.

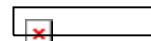
147. Recruitment to courses is strong in art and design and media, and is improving in performing arts and music. A wide range of enrichment activities is available to students, including theatre and gallery visits, residential visits to London, visits from touring theatre companies and opportunities to perform. Much of this activity is subsidised by the college.

148. Individual support for students is good. The arrangements for additional learning support are excellent. Students are very appreciative of the amount of informal support provided by teachers. Considerable time is devoted to helping ensure that students are able to meet assessment deadlines, supporting students in preparing interview portfolios and audition pieces, and providing advice on career routes.

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

149. Curriculum and course management are good. Courses are effectively planned and quality is well monitored. A culture of continuous improvement has been fostered and the sharing of good practice is widely encouraged. Teaching teams work closely together to develop annual plans and design assignments. Good data analysis informs target setting and self-assessment.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very high achievement in the humanities units of the access to HE course
- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses in 2003
- high pass rates and added value on GCE AS history course
- very high retention rates on GCSE courses
- good teaching of GCSE and access courses
- thorough monitoring, assessment and review of students' progress

- self-critical subject teams with strong commitment to raising achievement.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates for some advanced level subjects
- low GCSE pass rates
- low achievement on GCE AS geography, psychology and sociology courses
- insufficient attention in advanced lessons to the range of students' ability
- under-use of college-wide services to support students' learning.

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

150. The college offers a good range of courses at levels 2 and 3. Some 70 students are taking GCSE courses in geography, law, local history, and sociology. About 300 full-time students, mostly aged 16 to 18, are taking advanced level courses in geography, history, law, psychology and sociology; one-third are studying psychology. Small numbers of students are on GCE AS courses in citizenship, European studies and general studies. There are 30 adult students taking evening courses in GCE AS law and psychology. Some 26 students are taking an introductory evening course in psychology and 24 students are following humanities options on the access to HE course.

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

151. There are very high achievements in the humanities units of the access to HE course. For the last three years, a large proportion of students completed the course. All passed and virtually all have been successful in gaining a place at university. Retention rates on GCSE courses are consistently high. With the exception of sociology, however, the percentage of students achieving grade C or above in 2003 was unsatisfactory compared with the national average for further education colleges. Retention rates on several advanced level courses are unsatisfactory. In 2003, retention rates were particularly low on GCE AS geography and sociology and on GCE A-level geography and psychology.

152. The average GCSE score on entry to the college, for students taking advanced level courses, is significantly lower than the average for the sector. History students consistently achieve grades that are significantly higher than those predicted by these scores and for two out of the last three years all those who completed their GCE AS and A-level course passed. In 2003, GCE A-level pass rates were also outstanding for law, and good for psychology. In contrast, over the last three years, students taking GCE AS geography, psychology and sociology have achieved significantly lower grades than predicted by their GCSE scores. Students of GCE AS law significantly underachieved in

2003, and the pass rate for GCE A-level geography was low.

153. Many students prepare their work conscientiously. Some students hand in work that is incomplete or poorly presented. A number of students demonstrate good powers of analysis and evaluation and a thorough understanding of the topic. A significant number, however, have a poor grasp of sentence structure and their attainment is undermined by weak spelling. Some geography students have difficulty with even the simplest of calculations. Oral skills are generally weak: particularly in some GCE subjects where responses are often brief and hesitant. In contrast, a group of access students engaged in role playing the introduction of a private members bill to abolish 'mischief night' were articulate, confident speakers, able to put forward and defend a point of view cogently.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	59	65	24
		% retention	63	56	75
		% pass rate	57	30	22
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	76	76	70
		% retention	88	62	70
		% pass rate	91	23	54
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	25	28	34
		% retention	88	50	65
		% pass rate	82	82	64
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	17	17	24
		% retention	88	71	75
		% pass rate	100	100	78
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	35	63	54
		% retention	86	54	81
		% pass rate	53	82	70
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	39	51	16
		% retention	51	90*	75*
		% pass rate	80	80	92
Access to HE (humanities and social science options)	3	No. of starts	26	55	21
		% retention	85	89	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

\* retention rates for GCE A-level 2002 and 2003 are in-year

***Quality of education and training***

154. Just over half of the teaching is good or better and a small minority is unsatisfactory. The best lessons actively engage students in learning at a level appropriate to their ability and interests. In a very good GCSE geography lesson, for example, students used their knowledge of Liverpool city centre and Knowsley borough to learn about threshold populations required for different goods and

services. In a GCE AS psychology lesson on memory processing, students extended their understanding by working through a series of short, enjoyable exercises, supported by clear explanations from the teacher. Lesson planning and delivery often does not take into account the range of abilities within a group. Though the majority of students have modest qualifications at GCSE, a significant minority have achieved higher grades. In some lessons, students whose responses have made clear that they have a good grasp of the topic are not given more demanding exercises to do while the teacher reinforces the learning of the rest. In many lessons, students are the passive receptors of teachers' talk. They are seldom given the kind of support that helps them to think through issues themselves, and have insufficient opportunity to develop the necessary analytical, investigative and evaluative skills.

155. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and many are examiners for the awarding bodies. Psychology and sociology are well resourced with books and journals. The range of resources for geography, history, law and access courses is narrower. The subjects are based in a modern suite of classrooms. Each room has a subject identity and most are enlivened with stimulating displays, including students' work. Classrooms are well equipped with whiteboards and overhead projectors, but access to the mobile interactive whiteboard is difficult.

156. The academic progress of students is monitored closely. Good use is made of value added data in all courses to set targets and help students recognise whether or not they are achieving their full potential. During subject reviews, students assess their own progress and set targets for improvement. Teachers make constructive comments, but specific actions to be taken are often not recorded and it is unclear how the targets will be achieved. Students' work is generally marked thoroughly and constructively. Good use is made of a common GCE A-level feedback sheet to give students clear information on how their assignment grade compares with their target and to tell them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

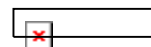
157. Programmes of study are responsive to the prior achievements of students and to their particular circumstances. Flexibility in drawing up their individual programme of study allows students to take either three or four GCE AS subjects or, in a small number of cases, two GCE AS plus two GCSE subjects. The access to HE course allows learners to complete it in one or two years, depending on their commitments. Enrichment programmes available to humanities students include options linked to their career aspirations.

158. Pre-course guidance is good. All access students are interviewed prior to enrolment and undergo effective diagnostic assessment to ascertain their need for literacy and numeracy support. All these students work towards the City and Guilds level 2 test in literacy and numeracy. GCSE and GCE AS students receive good guidance in making subject choices in an initial interview and at enrolment. Initial assessment of the learning needs of GCE AS students has not been successful in identifying all students who need extra help in English to support attainment at level 3. Humanities teachers do not make sufficient use of cross-college learning support and mentoring services. Only five students have been referred for such support this term. There is good support for psychology students re-sitting GCE AS modules in January. They receive timetabled individual support for their revision and work to an action plan which is monitored weekly. Much informal subject support is provided outside the classroom.

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

159. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject team meetings are held at a time when part-time teachers can attend and, in the case of psychology, have a good focus on teaching and learning. The college-wide quality arrangements are well implemented. Course reviews are thorough, though potentially useful pointers for improvement are missed by not analysing examination results by gender. Subject teams are self-critical and produce well-conceived action plans for improvement. However, the self-assessment report does not identify key weaknesses in achievements and over-states strengths in teaching and learning. Weaknesses in teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection report have not been rectified. Sharing of good practice between subjects is limited.

## English and modern languages



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention rates on most courses
- high pass rates
- very high levels of achievement on GCE AS and A-level English language courses relative to prior GCSE grades
- high standard of oral work in English
- good and dynamic teaching in English
- good use of assessment to raise standards.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient involvement of all learners in languages lessons
- slow progress for some learners
- some poor communications and organisation in outreach languages provision.

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

160. The humanities department offers GCSE and advanced level courses in English language and literature, communications, French and Spanish, at one of the main campuses. These courses are

studied by some 480 students, most of whom are full time and aged 16 to 18. English is also studied on the access to HE course. An extensive range of language courses in Spanish, French, Italian and German are provided in the community by the adult and community education college. This amounts to some 30% of the college's languages provision and includes 350 adult students studying Spanish and Italian at entry level. English and communications represent two-thirds of the provision in this curriculum area.

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

161. There has been a clear trend of improvement in both retention and pass rates over the last three years. Retention rates on most courses are high. Retention rates on GCE AS courses and some outreach language courses are below the national average. The majority of students make good progress. Pass rates are high, and clearly above national averages for the sector, on almost all courses. Many full-time students have below average GCSE results on entry. GCE AS and A-level English language students consistently achieve significantly higher grades than predicted from their GCSE scores. Many students achieve beyond their own expectations. Some students have progressed from entry level through to HE and in some cases have returned to teach their new skills in the community. Most full-time students progress to HE after completing their GCE A-level course.

162. Most students studying English demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of their subject. The quality of students' oral work is particularly high. Students organise their own work and make presentations to peers confidently and competently. There is a good deal of self-evaluation and peer assessment in lessons, demonstrating students' ability to criticise constructively. Access students show increasing confidence in their newly acquired skills and participate fully and cogently in discussions. Most students demonstrate a very good awareness of appropriate register. Listening skills continue to be developed through teamworking exercises.

163. Students in language classes generally make good progress, but their contributions in lessons are restricted. In Spanish lessons, most students demonstrate good pronunciation and intonation, but students of French demonstrate a greater propensity for errors when speaking and many lack confidence in their oral skills. Most students demonstrate a good ability to understand their target language when it is written and spoken. However, students' ability to express themselves in the language is less developed.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
MOCN Spanish	1	No. of starts	28	56	89
		% retention	100	89	91
		% pass rate	100	100	98
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	18	35	32
		% retention	39	49	91
		% pass rate	96	65	66
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	168	166	142
		% retention	85	72	81
		% pass rate	56	45	55
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	85	82	89
		% retention	93	73	73
		% pass rate	96	95	100
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	57	62	45
		% retention	89	69	76

		% pass rate	100	81	79
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	67	63	58
		% retention	54	92*	97*
		% pass rate	81	93	98
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	40	40	30
		% retention	65	88*	93*
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

\* retention rate for GCE A-level 2002 and 2003 is in-year

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

164. The quality of teaching in English is very good. The proportion of good or better teaching is much higher than the national average. Teaching in the large majority of language lessons is at least satisfactory, but some teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are well constructed. Teachers of English make particularly good use of the whiteboard, often using schematic and diagrammatic notes to aid students who learn visually. Much of the teaching in English is dynamic and inspirational. Students respond well to this and take responsibility for their learning by undertaking research and discussing this in lessons. Many lessons are well managed, facilitating active participation without allowing any one group or individual to dominate.

165. In languages, many lessons are tightly controlled by teachers. Students spend a good deal of time working on written exercises and aural comprehensions, but have little opportunity to expand on their oral skills in an experimental way. Most spoken contributions are answers to teachers' specific questions. In some lessons, students are only marginally involved. They show interest in their work, but make little contribution to class activities. Some less-confident students do not speak in class at all, or reply in English when asked questions. Students' errors in grammar and pronunciation are often not corrected, and are therefore reinforced through constant use.

166. In some lessons, particularly in outreach language provision, the progress of some students is slowed by having to repeat routine work because other students have missed lessons or arrive late. Some students finish tasks ahead of others and have nothing to do until their peers complete the exercises.

167. Teachers on GCSE, GCE AS and GCE A-level language courses are well qualified and very competent. They are either native speakers or fluent speakers of the target language. Most advanced level lessons are conducted through the medium of the target language, with judicious use of English where this is appropriate. On GCSE and outreach language courses, there is insufficient use of the target language. On outreach language courses there is insufficient standardisation of practice. For example, the quality of handouts varies significantly between teachers. Some of the lessons are poorly structured and some teachers have an insecure understanding of the languages they are teaching.

168. Little use is made of ILT in English lessons. In languages, the college intranet is being developed to allow students to work on exercises, find interesting websites and revise work. This development is in its early stages, but already students are able to access and use a wide range of materials. There are good resources within the college for languages. Students can use a study room with a television equipped with satellite and video. There is a well-used mini-lab, and students can borrow videos, cassettes, CDs, books and magazines from the department.

169. Assessment practice is good, and students know their starting point and the progress they are making. There is much high-quality feedback to students, but in a minority of cases it is formulaic

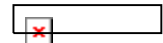
and unhelpful. Students are able to map their progress against examination criteria and understand exactly what they have to do in order to achieve. There are induction packs for late starters and the college has good strategies for ensuring that students who miss lessons can catch up with minimum disruption.

170. The college has modified its provision in response to local need. For example, many outreach courses are provided in the daytime rather than the evening to accommodate students who are nervous about going out in the dark. Language provision is not comprehensive. In recent years, enrolments in French have fallen, and German is not being offered at GCE AS or A-level this year because of low demand. All courses are available to both part-time and full-time students. Students on outreach language courses appreciate the unique, nurturing environment they can learn in and many wish to continue their studies in this environment. However, their opportunities for progression are currently limited to leisure classes, which they regard as insufficiently challenging, or GCSE, which they perceive as too academically focused.

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

171. The management of English and language courses within the college is good. Course reviews and self-assessment are thorough and self-critical. High retention and pass rates have been maintained over time. Quality assurance procedures are effectively implemented. There are some good strategies for sharing good practice, particularly among the newer English staff. The management of outreach language courses is just satisfactory. There are occasional breakdowns in communication; part-time teachers have insufficient opportunities to develop their professional skills and to share good practice; lesson observations are not carried out by subject specialists, resulting in feedback which is inadequate to support improvement in teaching and learning.

### **Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- students' good progress towards personal development objectives
- well-developed understanding of health and safety
- teachers' effective communication and demonstrations during practical sessions
- effective inclusion of the full range of students in lesson activities
- good combination of programmes to meet individual students' needs



- good management of the pre-foundation courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- underdeveloped planning for, and assessment of, lesson objectives in basic sessions of towards independence.

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

172. The learning support department provides discrete pre-foundation courses for about 60 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students with moderate learning difficulties usually study for one year within the preparing for employment programme at entry level 2 or 3 before moving on, mainly to other college courses. Students with more severe learning difficulties usually study for up to three years, starting on the towards independence programme and sometimes moving on to the certificate in life skills and workright qualifications. Students are mainly taught at the Roby site, where there are two classrooms, an independent living flat and a learning centre allocated for their use. The students also have opportunities for learning within the college's vocational areas.

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

173. The vast majority of students make good progress towards achieving suitable, pre-foundation qualifications. They show a good understanding of the key elements of their courses and have a good sense of preparing for the future, especially when they are planning to progress onto more advanced courses within the college. Students also make good progress in their personal development. They are acquiring important learning skills which help them to understand the content of their courses. Students listen well, especially at the start of lessons, and they are able to recognise key instructions. They know the importance of personal organisation and most take responsibility for their files and other materials. For many of the students with severe learning difficulties, this represents a significant step in achieving greater independence.

174. Students watch demonstrations carefully and show a good ability to follow the guidance they have been given in the use of equipment. They know that potentially dangerous workplaces and domestic environments require safe practice, and the majority are able to explain the importance of following rules. Students are adept at recognising health and safety pictures and symbols. More able students read better when the material is closely related to a practical activity and they make more effective use of associated information, such as pictures and diagrams, when they are able to understand its immediate relevance. Students have a good knowledge of the basic terminology associated with vocational areas. They often make specific and accurate use of words to refer to particular processes in a much more sophisticated way than is apparent in their day-to-day communication. Attendance during inspection was 80%, slightly below the national average for similar provision in other colleges.

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

175. Teaching is good on all of the pre-foundation courses. Staff know students well and establish strong relationships with them. There is a good understanding of their learning difficulties and activities are usually at the right level of difficulty for the students' range of abilities. Teachers show a good awareness of students' individual learning objectives for personal development and basic skills, often planning their lessons around these objectives. Teachers' planning for pre-vocational and vocational learning is good. They plan carefully for the small steps in students' learning, making thorough references to the specific skills students are expected to learn in each lesson. In the basic

units of the towards independence course, especially where students are encouraged to know themselves and those around them, teachers' planning tends to describe the content of lessons rather than making reference to specific learning objectives. Lesson planning is less effective in describing how students will progress than in vocational lessons.

176. Teachers provide good introductions to lessons. Their language is clear and instructions are precise. Demonstrations of the use of equipment, such as in cooking and photography, are particularly good. Students are provided with step-by-step guidance, including clear advice on the operation of equipment. Teachers and support staff ask questions in a direct manner which students can readily understand. This encourages students to make relevant responses, demonstrating the level of their understanding. All staff work hard to include each student in activities, often providing additional encouragement to those who are more reluctant. Students with substantial communication difficulties are usually given a good amount of time to answer questions, although support assistants are occasionally over-eager to prompt them.

177. Teachers are thorough in their evaluation of each lesson. Where their planning makes detailed references to the skills students are expected to acquire, the measurement of students' progress is thorough. Where planning is less precise, as in some 'towards independence' lessons, there is less information about students' progress and an over-emphasis on students' attitudes to learning.

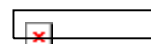
178. There is a good level of staffing for pre-foundation courses. Support assistants are well deployed and students with more severe difficulties often receive one-to-one support. The recent expansion in the number of rooms available for teaching has helped to provide a satisfactory amount of space, although the newer rooms have yet to be fully equipped. There are good arrangements for students to access vocational areas on the college site, where they are able to practice skills in a genuine work environment.

179. The recent expansion in the range of courses available has resulted in good arrangements for students to progress to more advanced learning. The certificate in life skills and workright courses provide suitable progression from towards independence. Several students study a combination of courses that meet their needs and interests. Students studying preparation for employment receive good advice about the other college courses they can undertake.

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

180. The pre-foundation courses are well managed. There are good arrangements for the co-ordination of all programmes, which are overseen by experienced members of staff. The department has a clear aim to develop courses which meet the needs of students with a wider range of learning difficulties. This aim is being successfully pursued, as is evident in the improvements to the courses and the accommodation available to students. Staff share in this commitment to students' needs and are keen to promote equality of opportunity for students, regardless of their level of difficulty and/or disability. There are good arrangements for the professional development of staff, particularly in terms of increasing their understanding of students' special needs. Self-assessment is thorough and reliable in its identification of strengths and weaknesses. The internal monitoring of teaching has improved the curriculum manager's knowledge of staff and has strengthened the department's unity of purpose.

### **Entry to employment**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention rates
- wide range of positive outcomes
- good teaching
- effective development of the programme through partnership arrangements.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient planning of individual learning programmes
- some weak reviews of students' progress
- poor resources and learning environment at one sub-contracted centre.

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

181. The E2E programme began three months prior to the inspection. Development and delivery of the programme is through the Knowsley Provider Network. The college is the contract holder and lead provider, but also sub-contracts provision to three private training companies and one charitable organisation. The partnership is working towards common themes within a framework which includes basic programme content, documentation and procedures. Each contractor is responsible for the recruitment of their own trainees. There are currently 351 trainees on the programme. The largest proportion, some 150 trainees, is based at the college, with the rest spread between the four partner providers. Learning programmes for individual trainees are based on their individual needs. Students follow three independent core strands in basic and key skills, vocational skills, and personal and social development.

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

182. There is good retention to date on the E2E programmes at all providers. Current retention rates range from 63% at one sub-contractor to 82% at the college. This represents a significant improvement over earlier programmes designed to attract similar types of students. Out of 101 trainees who have left since the programme started, 63 have achieved part or all of their intended learning outcomes and have progressed to full-time education or training or have entered employment.

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

183. There is good teaching, both in discrete E2E lessons and in the vocational options taken by E2E students. A wide range of activities is used to stimulate the trainees' interest. In one lesson, trainees practiced their knowledge of driving test theory using CD-ROM. This provided them with a good opportunity to develop their keyboarding skills and ability to retrieve and store information. In another lesson, a group of trainees explored cultural beliefs and produced a wall display about the Hindu festival of Divali to raise awareness across the organisation. Trainees were able to develop their research and communication skills and demonstrate good artistic and presentational abilities. Trainees' job search skills and awareness of the roles involved in their preferred career options are developed through good one-to-one coaching. Three trainees who had chosen the hair and beauty vocational option were encouraged to evaluate their choice and identify specific tasks they needed to develop or improve on. They found the exercise stimulating and gained useful experience of structured discussion while sharing their findings with each other.

184. Teachers have a good awareness of the individual needs of trainees, including their preferred learning styles. There is some good use of differentiated learning materials, but this does not consistently cater for all trainees. Learning support assistants and team teaching are used effectively to support trainees in a range of settings.

185. Initial assessment is thorough and individual results are recorded in detail. Trainees are aware of their results and know what skills they need to develop or improve. The outcomes of initial assessment are not fully used to inform trainees' learning plans or to identify short-term learning targets for trainees to work towards. For example, where an assessment identified a need to develop certain specific numeracy skills, this was not used to inform the setting of individual development objectives in money management or techniques for measurement. There are missed opportunities to assess trainees' skills and record their progress.

186. The E2E programme is continuing to be developed to meet individual and community needs. Initial curriculum planning has been effective in providing trainees with appropriate opportunities to develop their social and personal skills alongside their basic skills and to enable them to experience a broad range of vocational tasters and placements to help them prepare for employment. All providers have a wide range of trainee support mechanisms in place and are knowledgeable about specialist support services. Trainees have good access to specialist agencies that provide support to young people with emotional, social and behavioural problems, including drug misuse, homelessness and crime. Information and good practice is well shared at regular partnership meetings.

187. At this stage in the development of the initiative, there is insufficient planning of individual learning programmes. Activity plans are not always used to plan individual learning and trainees do not consistently evaluate the skills they have learnt. Progress in one-to-one sessions for individual trainees is not fully recorded and evaluated or used to plan what the trainee needs to develop next. There is insufficient individual planning of the three programme strands of basic skills, personal and social development and vocational options. Trainees are not fully aware of what their individual aims and objectives are within each session they attend or what aspect of their personal and social development, for example, teamwork skills, is being developed.

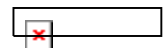
188. There are some weak reviews of trainees' progress. Fortnightly and monthly reviews are not always completed and therefore opportunities to evaluate each trainee's learning and monitor their progress against the key objectives negotiated in their E2E 'passport' are missed. The reviews that have taken place lack any evaluation of how successful each trainee has been in developing or acquiring skills. There is little evaluation of the learning that has been undertaken by individual students. Reviews are not used to recognise successful achievement or to plan future learning.

189. Resources to support the programme are generally satisfactory. However, accommodation and resources are poor at one sub-contracted centre, which impacts on over 80 students. Some classrooms are poorly ventilated, making lessons uncomfortable for trainees. The layout of classrooms is poor, and access to learning materials is limited. There is no opportunity in two classrooms to access IT to allow trainees to learn more independently. Some learning materials and handouts are poorly reproduced and are over-complicated for trainees of this type.

## ***Leadership and management***

Management of the E2E programme is good. The establishment of such an extensive programme in a short space of time is indicative of highly responsive leadership and management. There are clear management and committee structures for the programme and communications are good across the provider partnership. Frequent partnership meetings have a clear focus on continuous improvement. Realistic development objectives prioritise effective quality assurance. Quality standards and procedures have been drafted, but have yet to be properly tested. Internal auditors from all five providers have been specifically trained in quality assurance for the E2E programme. The first quality audit, conducted on the E2E passport, did highlight the main weaknesses identified in the inspection. There is an action plan to address these weaknesses and a comprehensive range of staff development activities has been organised.

## **Literacy and numeracy**



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

### ***Strengths***

- excellent retention rates and achievement
  
- very good teaching and learning
  
- very good resources
  
- excellent assessment, recording and monitoring of students' progress
  
- very effective use of value added measures
  
- highly effective management

### ***Weaknesses***

- limited provision in the evening.

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

190. The college provides a comprehensive range of full-time and part-time basic skills courses to help to address the low literacy and numeracy skills within the local community. There are some 530 students on adult basic education courses or receiving literacy and numeracy support; 230 are aged 16 to 18 and 300 are adults. Most courses lead to one of a range of City and Guilds awards, including the national tests. The majority of courses take place during the day, though evening classes are available on one of the main college sites. In addition, a further 1,200 students are developing their literacy and numeracy skills within the context of vocational or leisure courses.

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

191. Retention rates are high and are well above the national averages for similar colleges. Students work successfully towards their individual learning targets and can enter for external qualifications. Students make very good progress in lessons. Attainment is good or better in three-quarters of lessons. Achievement of national qualifications is excellent. In 2002/03, almost 3,000 students achieved a City and Guilds 3792 qualification in literacy or numeracy at entry level, level 1 or level 2. Significant numbers of students have successfully completed the new national tests in literacy and numeracy. The pass rate for key skills communication and application of number at levels 1 and 2 is more than twice the national average. The college makes a significant contribution to local LSC targets for basic skills improvement. Students at all levels share a strong sense that they are making good progress.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
City and Guilds 3792 certificate in adult literacy (short)	E	No. of starts	*	*	70
		% retention	*	*	87
		% pass rate	*	*	100
City and Guilds 3792 certificate in adult numeracy (short)	E	No. of starts	*	*	380
		% retention	*	*	97
		% pass rate	*	*	100
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	291	213	132
		% retention	68	71	83
		% pass rate	77	90	**
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	341	229	141
		% retention	72	76	75
		% pass rate	82	65	**
National test in literacy (one year)	1	No. of starts	*	*	701
		% retention	*	*	82
		% pass rate	*	*	98
National test in numeracy (short)	1	No. of starts	*	*	348
		% retention	*	*	76
		% pass rate	*	*	89
City and Guilds 3792 certificate in adult literacy (one year)	1	No. of starts	*	*	108
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	95
City and Guilds 3792	1	No. of starts	*	*	32

numeracy (one year)		% pass rate	*	*	91
---------------------	--	-------------	---	---	----

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

\* course did not run

\*\* final pass rate not yet available

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

192. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy lessons are consistently very good. Teachers develop very detailed lesson plans which identify clear learning objectives for each student. Each student has an individual learning plan with a programme of work derived initially from a thorough diagnostic assessment. Learning plans are clear and detailed, with challenging individual goals. All learning targets are mapped to the national standards. A minority of individual students' targets are too general and unrealistic. Most lessons include an excellent range of student activities, with group work, paired exercises and individual work used effectively by teachers to enable students to achieve their learning goals. The preferred learning styles of the students are taken into account in planning lessons. In one lesson, the teacher used a powerpoint presentation to give a good visual example of fractions.

193. Resources for the teaching of literacy and numeracy are very good, both at the main college sites and at community venues. Literacy and numeracy courses are timetabled in good classroom accommodation as well as in the excellent and well-equipped learning resource bases which are used for drop-in workshops for adult basic skills students. These are equipped with computers with Internet access and appropriate learning programmes, together with practical mathematics equipment and well-designed worksheets. Teachers integrate the use of computers effectively and students are encouraged to use the wide range of software available. The team of full-time, well-qualified teachers are highly committed and provide very effective support to students. Basic skills champions, trained and mentored by the basic skills co-ordinator, have responsibility for improving the capability of vocational course teams to provide literacy and numeracy support.

194. The assessment, recording and monitoring of students' progress is excellent and the quality is consistent across all programmes. The college's internal value added system provides a very useful tool for monitoring and measuring the progress of each student towards their individual goals. It is understood and valued by students and teachers. It enables students to see the progress they are making more clearly and this boosts their confidence and motivation. It is a model of good practice and generates a detailed record of individual students' progress. One student on an adult basic skills course has been attending college for two years. In that time, she has improved her skills in letter writing and form filling, achieved her first qualification and improved her confidence to such a degree that she recently successfully stood for election as president of the students' union. Regular feedback from tutors during lessons helps to ensure that students understand and have true ownership of their learning. In a few cases, individual learning targets are not specific or linked to review.

195. The college has created a wide range of opportunities for adults to access basic skills courses. In addition to the provision at the main college sites, students can develop their literacy and numeracy skills at a large number of community outreach centres: through family literacy programmes, in several learning shops in local towns and through courses delivered on employers' premises. However, evening class provision is very limited. The college is pro-active in seeking to engage hard-to-reach adults. An innovative 'hit squad' delivers short taster courses in the community. Schemes of work for pre-vocational courses and leisure courses within the adult and community education college have been mapped to basic skills standards. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed on entry to these courses and support is given where appropriate. Literacy and numeracy has yet to be fully embedded into mainstream vocational courses.

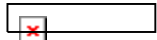
196. Initial assessment and support systems for students on courses at level 2 and below are very good. Diagnostic assessment of students on basic skills courses is effective and leads to well-written targets on individual learning plans. A strong, well-qualified team of tutors effectively manage the

process of initial assessment and additional support. Students receiving additional support have the opportunity to achieve certification through the national tests.

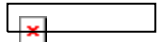
**Leadership and management**

197. Leadership and management are very good. There are clear and effective structures for the co-ordination of both basic skills courses and additional learning support. All teaching and learning support staff are involved in implementing highly effective quality assurance procedures. Staff appraisal links strongly to improvements in teaching and learning. The dissemination of good practice is excellent. Individual learning plans motivate students and the monitoring of progress against targets is exceptional.

**Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03**



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	38	62
2	30	15
3	25	9
4/5	0	1
Other	7	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in Autumn 2003*

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2002/03**



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%) *
Science and mathematics	789	1,957	13
Land-based provision	106	118	1
Construction	185	142	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	242	427	3
Business administration,	670	1373	9



management and professional			
Information and communications technology	679	1,134	8
Retailing, customer service and transportation	216	258	2
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	647	770	7
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	820	757	7
Health, social care and public services	149	363	2
Visual and performing arts and media	619	289	4
Humanities	445	95	2
English, languages and communication	724	181	4
Foundation programmes	1,219	6,411	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,510</b>	<b>14,275</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in Autumn 2003

\* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

**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	1,950	1,308	1,091	4,158	3,827	3,042
	Retention rate (%)	73	66	76	68	67	75
	National average (%)	74	75	75	70	73	73
	Pass rate (%)	59	71	82	70	74	83
	National average (%)	64	64	66	65	68	69
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,786	2,051	2,180	2,454	2,813	2,183
	Retention rate (%)	77	70	72	74	64	71
	National average (%)	69	70	70	68	70	69
	Pass rate (%)	74	79	80	67	76	79
	National average (%)	66	67	68	65	65	69
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,133	1,718	1,645	1,148	1,009	1,034

	Retention rate (%)	69	71	76	77	77	74
	National average (%)	62	67	75	67	67	70
	Pass rate (%)	74	78	77	75	85	83
	National average (%)	69	70	73	63	65	69
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	132	70	71
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	69	59	80
	National average (%)	*	*	*	66	65	70
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	47	56	40
	National average (%)	*	*	*	50	49	49

*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 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.*

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

*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled*

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

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Teaching judged to be:</b>			<b>No of sessions observed</b>
	<b>Good or better %</b>	<b>Satisfactory %</b>	<b>Less than satisfactory %</b>	
Level 3 (advanced)	67	28	5	105
Level 2 (intermediate)	68	29	3	100
Level 1 (foundation)	59	29	12	42
Other sessions	76	24	0	37
<b>Totals</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>284</b>