



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Preston 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](#)

[Construction](#)

[Business](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

[Sport, leisure and tourism](#)

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

[Health and early years](#)

[Visual arts](#)

[Performing arts](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Literacy and numeracy](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

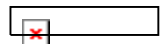
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03](#)

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

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

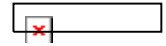
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

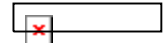


Name of college:	Preston College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Stuart Ingleson
Address of college:	Fulwood Campus Fulwood Preston Lancashire
Telephone number:	01772 225031
Fax number:	01772 225040
Chair of governors:	Mr J G Frew
Unique reference number:	130740
Name of reporting inspector:	Fred Brown
Dates of inspection:	10-21 November 2003

Part A: Summary

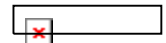


Information about the college



Preston College is a large general further education (FE) college serving the city of Preston and the surrounding area of central Lancashire. The college serves a population of approximately 250,000. Students are drawn from the local area, nationally and from overseas. The area depends heavily on manufacturing business services and retail industries. The college provides courses in all areas of learning, except land-based qualifications, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In most of the college's areas, it is possible to progress from entry level to level 4. The college is an associate college of the University of Central Lancashire. The college has a main site (Fulwood Campus) in the north of the city, a nearby site for visual and performing arts provision, and over 60 learning centres throughout the locality. Preston College Business Services Ltd manages the work-based learning. In 2002/03, 739 students were on modern apprenticeship programmes. The college has national contracts for training in construction and information and communications technology (ICT). In 2002/03, 31,143 students attended the college, which accounted for 68,331 enrolments. Of this total, 4,307 students were on full-time programmes and 73% of students were on programmes funded by the LSC. During 2002/03, there were nearly 14,000 enrolments on long courses. According to college figures, 74% of students were aged over 19 and 12.6% were of minority ethnic origin. Some 80% of student enrolments were on part-time courses. In 2002/03, the college had a total income of £33 million, including an LSC income of £19 million. The college employed an average of approximately 1,300 staff throughout the year, over 700 of whom were full time. The Preston borough has an unemployment rate of 2.9% while for Lancashire it is 2.4%. Minority ethnic groups make up 14.4% of the population of 138,000. In 2002, the proportion of school leavers with five or more grades at C or above for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was 49%; 4% of school leavers gained no GCSEs. The college gained Charter Mark recognition in 2002 and was first awarded Investor in People status in 1995. The college retained the Basic Skills Quality Mark when it was reassessed in May 2002. The college was the first college in the area to be re-accredited with the Careers Quality Kitemark. The recruitment and marketing team recently received the Matrix award for information, advice and guidance. The college mission is 'to work with the people of Preston and the region to improve knowledge and skill levels and increase the number of people with qualifications; and to sustain the breadth and diversity of a large comprehensive institution, without compromising on quality'.

How effective is the college?



Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be good in three of the curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in seven, with one curriculum area unsatisfactory. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- the extensive range of provision in the community and the workplace

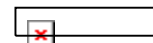
- good specialist resources
- good personal support for students
- the innovative programmes for students aged 14 to 16
- the quality of support for dyslexic students
- the strong marketing of provision.

What should be improved

- the quality and reliability of management information
- retention and pass rates
- the deployment of resources to achieve value for money
- the college's financial position
- the tackling of long-term weaknesses identified at the last inspection
- key skills provision
- quality assurance arrangements
- the monitoring of students' performance.

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

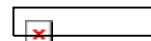


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Good. Teaching is good and is often inspirational, leading to a high overall standard of students' work and high pass rates on General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Laboratories are well equipped and the range of science provision is very wide, with extensive enrichment opportunities. Mathematics accommodation and resources are poor, limiting the range of teaching and learning activities. At course level, quality assurance documentation is inadequate.
Construction	Satisfactory. On-site assessment and training contributory grade: good. Pass rates are high on some courses, but they are low on others. Pass and retention rates are very high for on-site assessment and training (OSAT) provision but retention rates have declined on many college courses. There is good teaching of adult students. There are some poor levels of learning and attainment for students aged 16 to 18 and some uninspiring theory teaching.
Business	Satisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade: unsatisfactory. Pass rates are high on professional accounting courses but are low on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) business studies and accounting. Very few students get high grades and framework achievements by modern apprentices are low. Most teaching is good and inspires effective learning but there is insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT). There is a wide range of provision which includes specialist courses and progression opportunities.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Workplace learning contributory grade: good. Pass rates are high on most full-time courses but, with the exception of the workplace provision, there is poor achievement and retention rates are low on most part-time courses. Training and learning in the workplace are good but in many other lessons the work is not demanding enough. There are insufficient resources to support some main campus provision. Effective development of provision in the community and the workplace has successfully attracted under-represented groups into learning. Insufficient use is made of data to evaluate student performance.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good. Pass rates are high on most programmes in 2003. Retention rates have been low on AVCE programmes. Theory lessons are well planned and effective and students are well supported by the good

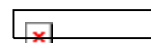
	specialist facilities, effective tutorials and the well-planned assessment. IT and library facilities are inadequate and key skills are not effectively integrated.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Unsatisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade: unsatisfactory. Retention rates are low on most programmes and for work-based learning. Pass rates are low for modern apprenticeship frameworks. There is some good teaching and learning in practical lessons but unsatisfactory teaching and learning of theory and key skills. Specialist resources are of a high standard and initial assessment is thorough. Individual learning plans for work-based learning are not sufficiently detailed to provide a sound basis for planning learning programmes.
Health and early years	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 and 3 care and level 3 early years have been consistently good. Teaching for students aged 16 to 18 is uninspiring but it is much better for adult students. There are insufficient classroom resources and a narrow range of teaching and learning methods in some lessons. Key skills are not effectively integrated with course programmes. The broad range of courses meets the needs of students and employers and there is thorough monitoring of students' progress.
Visual arts	Satisfactory. Retention rates are low on most courses although pass rates are high for those students who complete. Effective and supportive teaching helps students to develop good practical skills and produce high-quality work. Library resources are good and media facilities meet industrial standards. The narrow range of teaching methods used by some teachers inhibits effective learning. Students develop poor research and design skills on some courses.
Performing arts	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses, with a large number of high grades achieved in dance. Retention and pass rates are low on Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses. Very good teaching has encouraged the high standards of students' performance. There is very good specialist accommodation and equipment for dance and music technology, but accommodation for drama is poor.
Humanities	Satisfactory. Psychology contributory grade: good. Psychology students consistently achieve high pass rates. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on other GCE AS courses were low in 2003, but adult students who complete their courses achieve well. Retention rates on adult courses are low. Students' written and oral work in the sixth form centres in Muslim schools are of a high standard. The majority of teaching is satisfactory and there is some very good teaching of psychology. Learning resources are inadequate and action by programme teams to remedy weaknesses is ineffective.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high and improving, but retention rates are low. Students with additional support needs for literacy, numeracy, language or dyslexia benefit from good individual support. Initiatives to widen participation are effective and good enrichment activities help students' learning. In group sessions, teachers do not make sufficient use of different teaching methods and learning activities to meet the needs of individual students. Records of learning are insufficiently evaluative. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The college has undergone considerable organisational change. The process of management reorganisation has been conducted effectively. However, weaknesses in management and quality assurance which were identified at the last inspection persist. The quality of teaching and the college's retention and pass rates have declined over the period 2001 to 2003. The college has failed to meet some of its key performance targets in each of the last three years. The college's self-assessment procedures are generally reliable, although they failed to identify the significant weaknesses in leadership and management. Unreliable management information has hampered governors and managers in monitoring the college's performance. The college is in a difficult financial position, although it is recovering from its £2 million budget deficit earlier than anticipated. While the college may provide value for money for some adult students, overall, the college does not provide value for money. The college has successfully widened participation and developed effective collaborative arrangements with other providers of education in north-west Lancashire and extended its provision for students aged 14 to 16.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

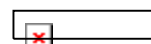


The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college has monitored students by gender, ethnicity, and socially and economically deprived postcode areas for the last two years. This has resulted in targets and an action plan for improvement. Curriculum areas draw up their own action plans but they are not uniformly good. Training has been offered to all staff but not all staff have yet attended training sessions. A management group reviews implementation of the action plan. Data on examination results and retention rates are not yet sufficiently analysed by social grouping, gender or racial origin and insufficient action has been taken to prevent the poor retention rates of particular groups.

The college complies with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001. It has a multi-faith prayer room and is active in celebrating religious festivals, putting on special events and providing staff with information. The college helps to meet targets of the Connexions service for including disaffected and 'at risk' young people into learning or training. In community provision, including centres in deprived areas, user groups are encouraged to give feedback on course quality and this is recorded in a variety of forms. The meetings of the managing diversity steering group provide insufficient evidence of improvements as a result of this feedback. Good links with schools ensure individual basic skills needs are identified prior to enrolment or progression to post-16 courses.

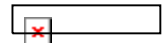
Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in access for students with restricted mobility. This includes the installation of lifts and improved links between new and old buildings by walkways and covered bridges. There are plans to improve the use of colour-contrasting in stairways and to increase the use of adapted equipment for disabled students in learning centres and dedicated classrooms. However, current improvements do not yet meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA), which the college does not have to meet until 2005, and the college has not yet produced an action plan in response to a recent access audit report. There is a need for further improvements to access ramps, the width of doorways, safe emergency evacuation refuge areas, disabled toilet facilities and signposting throughout the college. At the Park Campus, some music facilities are not accessible to all students.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Pre-entry guidance and support are good. Induction programmes are well planned and show good collaboration with subject tutors. Personal learning advisors provide good personal support and guidance; they monitor attendance and punctuality effectively. Initial assessment is thorough but is not always used well to monitor students' progress. The college provides a wide range of specialist support for individuals. Additional support staff are well qualified. A range of careers education and guidance is available, including close partnerships with Connexions personal advisers. Students receive good support with their applications for higher education (HE). The college provides good welfare services; these include counselling, childcare, free transport between sites and assistance in finding accommodation. Arrangements for recruiting and supporting students are good. The college provides impartial advice and information to prospective students. Most students value the advice they are given and find staff helpful. Students take part in an effective induction to the college and their subject area. Guidance and support for students during their studies are strong. There is a comprehensive and effective tutorial programme. Where appropriate, the tutorial programme provides preparation for HE and employment. Student attendance rates are slightly above national averages. Personal support for students is good. Good impartial careers guidance is provided by both careers staff and the college careers adviser. Arrangements for providing additional learning support are good but there are not enough resources to ensure that all those who need it receive it. The college does not measure the impact of additional support for literacy, numeracy, language or dyslexia on the pass and retention rates of students on college courses.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- friendly and supportive atmosphere and welcoming staff

- good support services and tutorial system

- good teaching

- the broad range of progression routes in the curriculum

- good organisation of work placements and sport enrichment opportunities

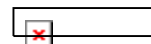
- childcare facilities

- high-quality inexpensive food
- transport arrangements to the college.

What they feel could be improved

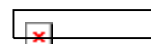
- more IT facilities for individual work
- social areas and a common room for mature students
- the overcrowding in the canteen
- the range and number of books in the library
- provision for key skills
- car parking arrangements
- lack of study rooms
- facilities for obtaining drinking water
- the number of changes made to time-tabled classrooms
- the problems caused by proximity of smoking areas to entrances.

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



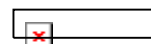
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

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	50	42	8
19+ and WBL*	59	38	3
Learning 16-18	53	37	10
19+ and WBL*	57	39	4

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 number of students who achieved a qualification increased from 21,012 in 2001/02 to 23,404 in 2002/03. Between 2001 and 2003, retention rates improved on level 3 courses and were slightly above the national average. However, in the same period, retention rates were below the national average and declined on courses at levels 1 and 2, and on short courses. Pass rates on level 2 courses were at or above the national average. However, at other levels, pass rates were at or below the national average. Overall, there is no evidence of an improving trend in pass rates in the three years to 2003, but the data for 2003 are currently incomplete.

16 to 18 year olds

2. The college offers a wide range of courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, 23% of the 2,464 full-time students were following courses at level 1, 27% at level 2 and 37% at level 3. Overall pass rates at levels 1 and 3 were below the national average in 2002, while overall pass rates at level 2 were above the national average. Pass rates declined on level 2 courses between 2001 and 2002. The pass rate at level 1 in 2003 is currently only 50%, well below the 2002 national average of 69%, although not all data has yet been entered.

3. At level 3, pass rates are high for GCE AS and A-level mathematics, biology, ICT and psychology but are well below the national average in law, sociology and business studies. The overall GCE AS pass rate is poor, at 68%. Pass rates are high for physical education, chemistry, mathematics, physics, computing, art studies and psychology, but low for business studies, law, history, critical thinking and religious studies. The proportion of students who achieve high grades at GCE AS and A level is small. At level 2, the GCSE pass rate at grades A* to C is low, at 30% in 2002. In 2003, the pass rate at grades A* to C for GCSE mathematics was low, at 21%. Many students follow NVQ programmes at level 1. Retention and pass rates on these courses were both well above the national average in 2002. Key skills achievements are poor. In 2003, the pass rate for key skills qualifications at level 3 was 14%.

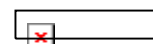
4. The majority of work-based learners are aged 16 to 18. Of the 283 students taking foundation modern apprenticeships in 2003, only 16% completed their training and achieved their NVQ qualification, and only 6% completed the framework. The corresponding figures for advanced modern apprentices were also low, at 37% and 8%.

Adult learners

5. Some 70% of the total enrolments were from adult students in 2002-03. The largest number of enrolments is at level 2. Pass rates on NVQ programmes are good. For example, the pass rate at NVQ level 2 was 88% in 2002, well above the national average of 72%. Retention and pass rates are very good for OSAT courses in construction. However, pass rates declined at all levels between 2000/01 and 2001/02 although they remain at about the national average. A large number of students is entered for qualifications at levels 1 and 2 in ICT each year but, with the exception of students who are studying in the work place, retention and pass rates are poor. Only just over half of the adult students following the Open College of the North West (OCNW) progression awards at level 2 or 3 in humanities complete their course. The retention rate on the OCNW qualifications at levels 2 and 3 is just over 50%.

6. Students' attainment is good in sports, leisure and tourism, performing arts and humanities. Students' personal and learning skills are developed well through effective group work in humanities and performance work in the performing arts. Students work well when undertaking practical activities, producing work of a high standard and with due regard to health and safety. GCE A-level chemistry students are able to use a range of spectroscopic and practical data to identify an unknown compound. In most lessons, students' written work is at the level expected for their courses. Students' written explanations are clear and well presented. The attainment of many older students is less satisfactory. Students develop an appropriate range of specific vocational skills, but do not have sufficient opportunities to develop wider personal and learning skills. Adult students have insufficient opportunities, other than formal assignment work, to attempt work for assessment.

Quality of education and training



7. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 241 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 54% of lessons, satisfactory in 40% and less than satisfactory in 6%. This is considerably lower than the national average of 63% good or better lessons for general FE colleges. Some 55% of the learning grades were good or better, 6% below the national average. Although not directly

previous inspection by the FEFC in 1998. Teaching and learning are better for adult groups than for students aged 16 to 18. In 59% of lessons for mainly adult groups teaching was good or better, compared with 50% for the 16 to 18 age-group. Students studying at entry level and level 1 receive worse teaching than at levels 2 and 3. The best teaching and learning are for adult students on level 3 courses, where over 70% of teaching is good or better.

8. Both teaching and learning are significantly better on GCSE, GCE AS and OCNW courses than on BTEC national and City and Guilds courses. Most unsatisfactory teaching and learning are on vocational GCE A-level, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced, BTEC first and NVQ level 3 courses, where over 15% of lessons are unsatisfactory.

9. The best teaching is on science and mathematics, business administration, sports, travel and tourism and performing arts courses. About one-third of the teaching in science and mathematics, performing arts and humanities is very good. The teaching of students aged 14 to 16 is good. Off-the-job training sessions for work-based learners in business administration and hairdressing and beauty therapy are good. Less than 40% of teaching in ICT is good but none of it is unsatisfactory. More than 10% of teaching in construction, sports, travel and tourism and hairdressing and beauty therapy is unsatisfactory. The teaching in practical lessons is generally better than the teaching of theory.

10. In the best lessons, teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods that keep students absorbed in their tasks. They have a practical emphasis, encouraging students to learn new or consolidate existing skills. The intended outcomes of the lessons are made clear to students. Teachers draw on adult students' own experiences to enrich the activities and lessons are set in an industrial or business context using a wide variety of teaching methods. Practical activities enable students to develop their group-work skills. Several students learn the techniques needed for professional teamworking by means of simulated industrial projects while developing both their social and professional skills. Some teachers use their specialist expertise to inspire students and this greatly enhances learning. In psychology lessons, students develop their analytical and evaluative skills and are required to work to a high standard.

11. In less effective lessons, teachers use a narrow range of teaching and learning methods. They fail to direct their questioning to particular students in order to check on their learning and they do not vary their teaching methods and the activities they set to take account of the individual needs of students. Theory lessons are uninspiring. In many lessons, presentations by teachers are too long and students are not set sufficiently challenging work. In some cases, the work set is too easy for the more able students. Teachers and students do not use specialist computer software to enliven learning and ILT is not effectively integrated with the programmes. Teachers do not take sufficient account of the differing skills and abilities of students or regularly check students' progress to ensure that everyone is learning effectively. Some sessions end without reviewing the work covered and fail to set the scene for next time. Students spend too much time on low-level learning activities such as copying notes from overhead transparencies or working from photocopied texts taken from study guides or textbooks.

12. Students make little progress in developing their key skills and do not see the relationship between their chosen course and the key skills they are studying in sport and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Achievements in key skills are poor. In health, students derive little benefit from their key skills lessons. Attendance at these lessons is poor. Teachers do not provide sufficient guidance on how or where evidence for key skills can be obtained.

13. The college expects 86% of teachers to be qualified teachers by the end of 2003/04. Many staff have recent industrial or commercial experience and are qualified assessors. Most staff have attended training but the evaluation of the benefits of attending is not sufficiently rigorous. There are insufficient staff to provide for the additional learning support needs of full-time students and to implement successfully the requirements of the new key skills strategy.

14. Most college facilities are accessible to people with restricted mobility but further alterations are required to comply with the SENDA. The standard of accommodation at the main sites is mixed. There are some spacious, well-equipped classrooms, well-maintained recreational areas and

excellent purpose-built specialist rooms in sport, hair and beauty, construction, science and dance. Students' work is prominently displayed in classrooms and corridors. An additional 450 students aged 16 to 19 on full-time programmes in 2003 has put further strain on existing classroom accommodation and resources at the main campuses. Some classrooms are too small for the size of groups the college has enrolled. The lack of storage space has resulted in overcrowding in some specialist workshops and classrooms, particularly in construction, hair and beauty, and the area for additional learning support. Learning is disrupted in some environments by noisy, poorly sound-proofed classrooms. Not all staff make good use in lessons of the enhanced ILT in classrooms. In ICT, the lack of computers and the outdated software at the two main sites are in contrast with the abundance of high-specification IT equipment, separate rooms for group work and low student to staff ratios in community learning centres. There is an oversubscribed, high-quality nursery prioritised for use by students. Improvements to resources have been hampered by financial constraints and these have adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning in many curriculum areas such as humanities, health and early years, sport, business studies, drama, mathematics and ICT.

15. The well-used learning centres have specialist equipment and resources available for students with visual and hearing impairments. There are ample well-designed areas for private study and group work but not enough IT facilities to enable all students to complete their coursework. The college has some very good interactive self-study learning resources on its website. Students can get access to learning materials from home and good use has been made of these. Much of the library book stock is over seven years old and is outdated.

16. Transport for students to college and between sites is well organised. There is adequate car parking for staff and students. Canteen facilities are available for students across the college but service is slow and seating areas are fully stretched at busy times. There are licensed facilities for adults and sports centre users. There are insufficient places for students to socialise outside of the canteen areas.

17. The college works with a large number of employers on a diverse range of activities. In 2002/03, 625 employers sponsored learners attending a college programme and 259 employers provided employment for modern apprentices. The department of workplace training offers training for employers and employees in the workplace and is currently working with over 250 private sector companies. Some of these are global multi-national companies. Much of the workplace training is in ICT from entry level to level 2. The department also contains a centre with a national reputation for OSAT in the construction industry. This operates throughout the local region and nationally and currently has about 3,000 learners working towards NVQ level 2.

18. Preston College Business Services, a wholly owned subsidiary company is responsible for work-based learning and modern apprenticeships. It is responsible for determining whether they will deliver the modern apprenticeships themselves or through the college's curriculum academics and centres.

19. Assessment procedures are clearly defined and there are detailed guidelines on how feedback should be given to students. Most students are informed about assessment schedules. For work-based learning in business, there is insufficient workplace assessment, employers are not sufficiently involved in the assessment process and there is not enough liaison with trainers on the most appropriate opportunities for assessment. Hair and beauty employers, however, are fully involved in reviews.

20. Most assessment practice is well managed. Students are set work regularly and this is marked promptly. Not all staff correct errors in spelling or grammar and some assignments were over-graded in humanities. Trainer comments for work-based learners in hair and beauty do not contain sufficient guidance on how to improve their written work.

21. There is good monitoring of students' progress on most courses. The performance of students is monitored by personal learning advisors. Most individual action plans provide a good basis for improvement but some plans are not sufficiently detailed. Individual targets are set for students with tutors during progress reviews, but these are not always communicated effectively to subject

teachers. Students aged 16 to 18 are consulted on their progress reports before a copy is sent to parents or guardians. Attendance at parents' meetings has improved considerably. In humanities, targets are used productively to influence the planning of teaching and learning. Reports on part-time students are completed twice a year and copied to employers, where applicable. In ICT, there is good monitoring of students' progress by tutors in community learning centres. On college ICT programmes, the monitoring of some students' progress through assignments is sometimes simply a 'tick-box' approach which gives no indication of the quality of performance. In workplace ICT training, there is rigorous initial assessment of students' prior knowledge, skills and aspirations and an excellent database to record all aspects of students progress.

22. The diagnostic assessment of students to determine additional learning support needs is thorough. All full-time and some part-time students are assessed to determine their level of basic and key skills. However, on some courses, such as visual arts, initial assessment is not consistently followed up for students. Not all students identified as having additional learning needs receive the support they need.

23. The staff shortages for additional learning needs have adversely affected some students. Information from pre-entry initial assessment is not shared with staff who manage learning programmes for some students with learning difficulties. In literacy and numeracy, there is extensive screening for dyslexia and an assessment of preferred learning styles. The quality of dyslexia support is very good. At the time of the inspection, 110 students were receiving dyslexic support.

24. Internal verification is effective in most areas, including work-based learning, and meets with the awarding body requirements. External verification reports are seen by the principal, the quality unit and the appropriate dean. Not all areas follow college verification procedures and some quality issues raised by the external verifiers in business and construction have not been addressed.

25. The college offers an extensive range of courses to meet the needs and requirements of regional students and employers across all curriculum areas. Progression opportunities from level 1 to level 3 in most curriculum areas are good. In business studies, sport, construction, health and early years, performing arts and ICT, progression routes are available to level 4. There are effective partnerships with community and workplace organisations to encourage under-represented and disaffected groups into learning and the college uses accessible venues for this provision. There are effective links with local Muslim communities in Blackburn, Bolton and Lancaster along with, mainly ICT, provision in 23 community learning centres for adults and in the workplace for employers. Basic skills initiatives for adults and disaffected young people successfully draw new students from deprived areas.

26. The college induction enables students to develop teamworking skills through a series of fun activities, including a college wide 'it's a knockout' competition. A wide range of enrichment activities is offered to full-time students and take up of these is good in sport, hairdressing, performing arts and literacy and numeracy but varies in other curriculum areas. College students have entered national competitions where they have won awards, including silver and bronze at the National Skills Challenge.

27. The good collaboration with 25 local schools has resulted in an extensive curriculum for over 1200 school pupils aged 14 to 16, 900 of whom are on the increased flexibility pilot programme. In addition, the college successfully offers a flexible curriculum for Year 11 pupils who are inclined to drop out of education. Retention rates on these courses are satisfactory and improving and there are good rates of progression to mainstream college courses. The college has good links with local employers and a newly accredited Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for retail in the town centre, which provides short courses in service procedures for a number of local shops and retail outlets.

28. The college effectively promotes its courses through an interactive website, video, regular mailshots, leaflet drops and a mobile marketing unit. Some information is available in large print for the visually impaired. However, publicity materials are not translated into local community languages.

29. Key skills provision is poor and pass rates are well below national averages. The college has recognised this and recently introduced a new policy but this has yet to have an impact on most full-time students. Key skills learning needs and previous achievements are not always sufficiently considered when enrolling students and this adversely affects attendance at key skills lessons. Not all teachers are trained to incorporate key skills into their subject lessons. Only five curriculum areas have access to a key skills champion. In psychology and performing arts, key skills are well integrated into subject lessons but there are no arrangements to share good practice through course teams.

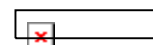
30. A comprehensive range of information leaflets is available to prospective students. Good impartial advice and information are offered to potential students. The advice centre offers well organised call in and phone inquiry services. Increasing numbers attend open days, school advice sessions and parents' evenings. Good measures have been used to welcome part-time students and the college has successfully recruited adult students from the deprived wards of Preston. The fortnightly newsletter helps encourage part-time students to feel part of the Preston College community and to make use of its support services. A dedicated handbook is produced for part-time students. The student services website is well used.

31. There is high-quality provision for students requiring additional learning support through specialist lessons or through the use of support teachers in subject lessons. The additional learning team are well qualified and regularly monitor their procedures and materials, including screening and diagnostic tests. Management information is not sufficiently used to measure the impact of support services, including the effect of additional support on retention and pass rates.

32. On-course guidance and support for all students are good. The tutorial programme is effective for both individuals and groups. There are arrangements to help students prepare for HE, including residential visits to Oxford and Cambridge. Considerable support is given to Year 11 school students and an increasing number progress to other college courses. Induction arrangements are good and there are effective arrangements to contact the parents of younger students whose punctuality and attendance is poor. Parents are given easy access to personal learning advisors and these measures have helped improve attendance across the college.

33. The college's welfare services include childcare, counselling, financial advice and advice for homeless students. Students have easy access to college counsellors and to specialist careers advice. The Connexions service provides a part-time support careers adviser who works with students identified as being at risk of leaving. The minority ethnic welfare officer mentors young Asian men and this has resulted in a significant decline in exclusions during the current year. The college seeks to re-enrol those students previously excluded to enable them to continue their education.

Leadership and management



34. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. In the two years since 2001, the college has undergone considerable organisational change. A new principal took up his post in January 2002. The management structure has been reorganised, with the aim of providing a clearer emphasis on the support of students' learning. The process was conducted effectively. Managers have been appropriately inducted into their new roles and many new teachers have been appointed. The new management structure encourages staff to work collaboratively and share good practice. In most areas, accountability is clear and communication between Deans and Heads of Provision has improved. Course management is satisfactory. However, in areas where the staff changes have been most pronounced, morale is low. Significant weaknesses in quality assurance and the monitoring of the college's performance and the inadequate emphasis on retention issues in action plans, which were identified at the last inspection, persist. The quality of teaching and learning, and

yet bringing about improvements. Overall pass rates on levels 1 and 3, and short courses and retention rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 for students aged 16 to 18 have fallen to below the national average. It is too early to measure the extent to which the new management structure will lead to improved performance, though students' attendance has improved following the introduction of more rigorous attendance monitoring, and the college is optimistic that this will raise overall retention rates.

35. The college's strategic plan is a straightforward document that identifies five strategic aims. Each of the aims is associated with clear numerical targets for improvement and these targets are incorporated into the college's operational plans. However, the college's target-setting procedures, and the subsequent actions taken to meet the targets, are ineffective. The college has failed to meet some of its key targets for student numbers, retention, achievement and attendance in each of the three years to 2003.

36. Members of the corporation are drawn from a variety of backgrounds in the local community and know the college well. Liaison between governors and senior managers is good and the strong governor links with curriculum areas are valued by managers. Governors are appropriately involved in setting the strategic direction of the college and in approving its key business targets. However, their oversight of the college, including its financial performance and academic standards, has been hindered by unreliable management information.

37. Quality assurance has had little impact on improving the overall quality of teaching and learning or addressing weaknesses in retention and achievement. The college has recognised this weakness and in September 2003 revised its quality assurance system. For example, the college identified that lesson observations carried out internally resulted in it overestimating the quality of teaching. The proportion of good, very good or outstanding lessons observed during the inspection was low. The procedures for course review have enabled curriculum managers to identify areas where performance is unsatisfactory. In health and early years and sport and leisure, these arrangements have been effective. However, at course level, procedures for target setting, action planning and the monitoring of progress remain unsatisfactory. Action plans give insufficient attention to the significance of low retention rates. This weakness was identified at the last inspection. The college's self-assessment report is aligned to the structure of the Common Inspection Framework and in most aspects provides an appropriate level of detail. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report but considered that weaknesses in teaching were understated.

38. The college has been slow to implement an effective appraisal system. Although guidelines have been in place, few teachers have completed the full appraisal cycle. With the exception of college senior managers, no appraisals were conducted in 2002/03. Revised appraisal procedures were introduced in September 2003.

39. The college's management information system has failed to provide accurate and reliable information for staff and governors in recent years. Teachers have little confidence in the data that are produced. For example, business studies teachers rely on their own informal records of students' achievements rather than the information produced by the college. The college has recently improved the accessibility of data for managers and has worked hard to improve the reliability of the systems which produce it. However, although management information procedures have improved, problems with data input have meant that the college has been slow to process its students' achievements data for 2002/03. There is now a central system for collecting daily attendance information which helps tutors to identify students at risk of not completing their course.

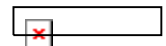
40. The promotion of equal opportunities and harmonious race relations in the college is satisfactory. The college amended its equal opportunities policy in September 2003 to respond to legislation in 2000 and 2001. It meets the requirements of current legislation, including SENDA. The college has begun to produce information on students' performance in relation to gender and ethnicity and is incorporating this information in its current cycle of course reviews. Training on equal opportunities has been offered to teachers, but not all of them have attended the training sessions. The college has recently appointed a minority ethnic support worker in response to concerns that some students were not confident of using the college's student support services. An equality and diversity manager has been appointed to lead and direct the changes in response to the new legislation. There are

effective procedures for responding to appeals and complaints. All complaints are taken seriously and most are reconciled within the college's published response time for dealing with complaints.

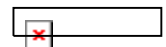
41. The college works in partnership with a wide range of institutions including schools, FE colleges and the local university to promote inclusion and increase the range of educational opportunities available to young people in north-west Lancashire. These arrangements have helped the college to successfully expand its provision for students aged 14 to 16. The college has strong links with the Muslim communities in Blackburn, Bolton and Lancaster. It provides programmes in five Muslim schools. Links with employers are good. The college has recently transferred some of its work-based learning provision to Preston College Business Services, a wholly owned subsidiary company of the college. Although the recorded achievements of modern apprentices are poor, the monitoring of students' progress and the more precise records of their achievements have enabled the college to identify the areas where further improvement is needed.

42. The college is in a difficult financial position, although it is recovering from its £2 million budget deficit earlier than anticipated. The discovery of an error in the interpretation of the LSC's additional learning support grant in 2002 led to the college's failure to meet its funding targets in 2001/02 and 2002/03 and made it liable to repay some £2,000,000 of funding. Increased enrolment of students aged 16 to 18 has enabled the college to reduce this deficit by more than half. The college forecasts that it will produce a small cash surplus by 2005/06. However, the college has no clear recovery plan and not all managers, governors and senior managers are sufficiently aware of the key measures that would contribute to that recovery. The college has not costed significant parts of its work, such as the provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 years in secondary schools. In 2003/04, the college has adopted a series of measures to save money, such as increasing the time that teachers spend in the classroom, reducing the hours on some courses and reducing the budget allocation to curriculum areas. However, the quality of teaching has been adversely affected by the subsequent reduction in resources and there are insufficient staff to meet the additional support needs of all of the students in the college. Retention and pass rates on many courses are low. The college does not provide value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- high standard of students' work

- good and sometimes inspirational teaching

- modern well-equipped laboratories

- good enrichment opportunities

- wide range of science provision.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory accommodation and resources for much mathematics teaching

- inadequate quality assurance at course level.

Scope of provision

43. There is a wide range of provision in science and mathematics. Some 1,500 students aged 16 to 18 are on science and mathematics courses, including over 500 students who are taking GCE AS and A-level subjects. More than 250 students aged 16 to 18 study GCSE mathematics. Some 300 adults follow a range of level 2 and 3 science and mathematics courses. The college also offers a range of day-release courses for dental, pharmacy and laboratory technicians and full-time national certificates and diplomas in a range of applied sciences. About 100 students in Muslim schools study GCE and GCSE courses in science and mathematics. This provision was not inspected.

44. Extensive enrichment opportunities include involvement in cosmic ray research with local and international partners, visits to a major radio telescope and to the Swiss centre for research on fundamental particles, visits to the local chemical industry, attendance at chemistry professional association lectures, a chemistry-at-work week held within the college, biology lectures in the locality and biology and geology field trips.

Achievement and standards

45. Pass rates for GCE AS and A-level courses are consistently high, with many students achieving passes at high grades. Retention rates for these courses are at or slightly above national averages. The overall pass rate at grades A to C for GCSE mathematics is below the national average, which is itself low. The pass rate for adult students on this course is high but for students aged 16 to 18 the pass rate is very low. Admission to the course is now restricted to students with grade D or E. Pass rates on national certificate or diploma courses are in most cases at or above the national average.

46. The pass rate on NVQ pharmacy services improved in 2003 to the national average. Attendance and punctuality of students aged 16 to 18 are very good but many adult students are late to their lessons. Progression to HE is good and many adult students progress from level 2 to level 3 courses.

47. Students' work in lessons is at least satisfactory and is often good. GCE A-level chemistry

students can use a range of spectroscopic and practical data to identify an unknown organic compound. Students aged 16 to 18 years produce good practical synopses and demonstrate correct technique in manipulating mathematical terms and scientific units. Adult students have very few opportunities, other than formal assignments, to attempt assessed work. Students regularly achieve gold, silver and bronze medals in the Mathematics Olympiad. In 2002/03, one student was within the top five students nationally for GCE A-level chemistry and GCE A-level further mathematics.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	273	247	237
		% retention	84	79	73
		% pass rate	36	36	36
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	32	71	96
		% retention	94	94	82
		% pass rate	90	78	70
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	41	63	74
		% retention	85	90	81
		% pass rate	80	77	82
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	44	90	133
		% retention	86	86	88
		% pass rate	58	71	63
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	*	21	45
		% retention	*	100	93
		% pass rate	*	100	100
NVQ pharmacy services	3	No. of starts	**	31	26
		% retention	**	0	73
		% pass rate	**	0	63

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

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

48. Most teaching is good or better and some of it is inspirational. For example, creative biological tasks, illustrated with excellent diagrams from Internet sites, helped students to explain why leopard tortoise tears are very high in salt and how the very high concentration of cell sap in aloe vera affects the osmotic relationships. In chemistry, a demanding session on infrared spectroscopy had a fascinating conclusion on how to use the technique to find the composition of the surface of Io, a moon of the planet Jupiter. NVQ pharmaceutical science students who were studying air handling and filtration found the subject easier to understand because explanations were illustrated by a high-quality computer presentation and a variety of the actual filters used by pharmaceutical companies.

49. Lesson plans and schemes of work are good across much of the science provision but they do not always indicate strategies for teaching which take account of the range of students' abilities. Occasionally, teaching is more directed to imparting knowledge than to developing skills and in these cases learning is not as good. Mathematics schemes of work lack detail and lessons make

very little use of IT or other learning aids, partly because these facilities are often not present in the teaching rooms. In some lessons this results in teaching that gives good support to enable students to develop their mathematical skills but which lacks inspiration. However, mechanics teachers use simple equipment to explain topics such as force diagrams for three forces acting at a point in equilibrium. This enlivens teaching and enables students to check their own sketch diagrams.

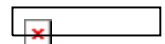
50. Teaching staff and technicians are well qualified and experienced. Laboratories are modern and well equipped, for example, enabling chemistry students to carry out instrumental analysis practical work and biologists to use a range of exercise physiology equipment. In contrast, mathematics is frequently taught in rooms without access to computers or even overhead projectors. Teachers have insufficient working space and inadequate computer access.

51. Students on level 3 courses have a regular programme of homework and tests, for which teachers provide detailed, constructive feedback. Procedures for marking coursework and for internal verification of vocational science courses satisfy awarding body requirements. Although students on adult and vocational courses receive relevant coursework assignments, they receive insufficient assessed work or tests to help prepare them for these assignments. There is insufficient monitoring of the performance of the large numbers of groups, sometimes on more than one site, following a particular GCSE or GCE A-level course. Students receive good support. Individual tuition can be booked through the advanced learning centre. Students value the support that they receive from their teachers.

Leadership and management

52. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership is good and staff work well together. Self-assessment reports have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Staff have taught extra hours to cover classes of colleagues during a period with significant absences due to serious staff illness. Informal analysis of group performance is undertaken within the subject area. However, documentation of quality assurance at course level is inadequate. Course files contain little information and there is no evidence of team-meeting minutes or information on the progress made by students across the various sites and teaching groups for a particular subject.

Construction



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

The contributory grade for on-site assessment and training is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation part 1 theory, NVQ level 2 plumbing and certificate in construction occupations

- very high retention and pass rates on OSAT

- good teaching of adult students

- the comprehensive range of provision from entry to level 4.

Weaknesses

- declining pass rates on NVQ level 1 decorative occupations and NVQ level 3 wood occupations
- uninspiring theory lessons affecting students' achievement and attainment
- insufficient use of ILT to help learning
- assessment on OSAT provision not always within the set target
- poor internal verification.

Scope of provision

53. The curriculum area offers a comprehensive range of provision from pre-entry to level 4. This includes bricklaying, wood occupations, painting and decorating, plumbing, gas installation and maintenance and electrical installation. Technician and professional courses are also offered. Higher national diplomas and certificates are linked with the University of Central Lancashire with franchised provision at the higher national certificate and foundation degree level. The demand for training in some areas has resulted in courses being over-subscribed, particularly in plumbing. The menu of short courses has enabled many students to gain full-time employment. There are 193 students aged 16 to 18 and 128 adults on full-time programmes; and 13 students aged 16 to 18 and 311 adults on part-time programmes. There are 150 students enrolled on gas short courses. Through the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) curriculum centre, the college has established good links with schools. More than 200 Year 10 and Year 11 pupils attend the college to study practical craft subjects as part of their school curriculum. The primary school initiative involves 1,700 pupils from 28 local schools attending `taster' programmes in bricklaying and painting and decorating. OSAT offers NVQ level 2 programmes through the on-site assessment fast-track process, on a part-time basis, to 3,000 experienced workers. OSAT offers programmes in 17 areas of construction. The New Deal (future build) programme has an intake of 15 clients undertaking NVQ level 2 qualifications. There are seven foundation modern apprentices on NVQ level 2 courses that are managed by the college's own managing agent, Preston College Business Services.

Achievement and standards

54. The pattern of pass rates varies considerably between courses. The pass rates on City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation part 1 theory have been consistently high. In 2002/03, the pass rates on NVQ level 2 plumbing and on the certificate in construction occupations were considerably

higher than the national averages. In the last three years, the pass rates for OSAT NVQ level 2 programmes in construction and civil engineering services, bricklaying and wood occupations have been high. By contrast, the pass rates on NVQ level 1 decorative occupations have sharply declined. This decline is also evident on NVQ level 3 wood occupations, where the pass rates have dropped to below the national averages.

55. Retention rates declined on many courses in 2003, particularly at level 1. However, they have been consistently high on the NVQ level 3 wood occupations course. Retention rates on OSAT provision improved considerably in 2003 and are generally good.

56. On New Deal programmes between 2000 and 2002, the percentage of starters achieving positive outcomes was well below the national targets. These programmes, offered in collaboration with the Gas and Water Industry National Training Organisation, have now been replaced by the New Deal (future build).

57. Most students work well in lessons, particularly in workshops. They develop a range of motor skills and produce practical work of an appropriate level. Students demonstrate that they can use tools in a professional manner and develop a range of hand skills, for example, the sawing and fixing techniques associated with hanging a door. In one lesson, students on NVQ level 2 bricklaying acquired trowel and levelling skills by constructing attached piers and chimney breasts that met industrial standards. Pupils from local schools are attending the college to sample building crafts. In a practical lesson, a group of one female and seven male pupils constructed two-brick pillar in stretcher bond. Well-motivated New Deal clients were able to cut, scribe and fix skirting and hang full-size doors to industrial standards. In a theory lesson, students worked effectively in small groups. Using their course notes, high-quality handouts and technical articles, they carried out combustion calculations, explored chemical processes and identified and described the operation of controls and safety devices.

58. Students' written assignment work is of a satisfactory standard. It is seldom word processed. Portfolios of work are variable in quality. The better portfolios contain assessment plans, narrative explaining photographic evidence of projects and cross-referencing of the contents. In some lessons, students arrive very late and this disrupts other students.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation	1	No. of starts	*	20	17
		% retention	*	100	88
		% pass rate	*	0	94
Certificate in construction occupations	1	No. of starts	98	223	139
		% retention	81	81	67
		% pass rate	65	61	77
NVQ plumbing	2	No. of starts	24	33	36
		% retention	63	73	50
		% pass rate	60	88	78
NVQ construction and civil engineering services (OSAT)	2	No. of starts	367	316	1,028
		% retention	86	76	94
		% pass rate	99	91	93
NVQ bricklaying (OSAT)	2	No. of starts	367	226	113
		% retention	86	78	87

		% pass rate	99	96	92
NVQ wood occupations (OSAT)	2	No. of starts	154	163	275
		% retention	84	64	91
		% pass rate	93	92	88
NVQ wood occupations	3	No. of starts	*	29	20
		% retention	*	97	95
		% pass rate	*	86	68

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

59. Teaching is generally satisfactory. The quality of teaching is better for adults than for students aged 16 to 18. Teachers often draw on adult students' own experiences to enrich the activities and lessons are set in an industrial context. The teaching of pupils aged 14 to 16 is good. Teachers have good differentiated learning material for this group and monitor individual pupils' progress closely. The quality of teaching for the New Deal clients often meets industrial standards. However, in these lessons, there is insufficient emphasis on health and safety standards. Although clients are provided with safety footwear, many do not wear them in the workshops.

60. Theory lessons are uninspiring. Presentations by teachers are too long and students are not set sufficiently demanding work. Some students lose interest and this affects the standard of their work and their ability to achieve. Teachers and students do not use specialist computer software to enliven learning and ILT is not effectively integrated into the programmes. A few lessons were particularly good. For example, in one lesson on gas installation and maintenance, the teacher shared well-defined learning objectives with students and used a variety of teaching methods designed to cater for students' different learning styles. Teachers effectively directed their questioning and made regular checks to ensure that students understood the work. By contrast, teaching on BTEC programmes was mundane.

61. Most teachers are well qualified with vocational qualifications and assessor and verifier awards. The construction area has a good range of purpose-built workshops. Most classrooms are drab and are not conducive to effective learning. They lack suitable displays of students' work and technical illustrations. There are adequate textbooks in the library and some supportive materials on CD-ROM to meet the needs of craft and technician students.

62. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Tasks in students' workbooks include assessment criteria. Most assignments are of an appropriate standard and are vocationally relevant. Teachers' written feedback is not always sufficiently detailed to help and guide students. The on-site assessment for OSAT provision is good and is based on observing naturally occurring evidence. However, arrangements for ongoing assessment do not always meet scheduled deadlines and this results in students making slower progress. Assessors give constructive oral feedback to employees. This is followed up by constructive and helpful written feedback

63. Internal verification on assignment briefs, portfolios and assessment decisions is poor. Not enough sampling by internal verifiers takes place while students are still working on their portfolios. Rather, internal verification takes place after assignments have been completed and assessed. Internal verification reports lack clear time-bound action plans. In some cases, the internal verifier had not commented on the absence of assessors' signatures and dates of assessment nor on the low quality of written feedback given to students. Internal verification for OSAT is effective. Internal verifiers provide good oral and written feedback to assessors.

64. Programmes meet the needs and interests of students and employers. Links with industry are productive. This has resulted in the donation of construction materials from for a number of national suppliers. For OSAT provision, the Union of Construction and Associated Technical Trades is the principal partner that provides support to networking with employers.

65. Support for students is mostly good. All full-time students have initial diagnostic assessment in communication and application of number. Induction programmes incorporate health and safety issues. Some tutorial support is inadequate and teachers do not share the good practice that exists. On some programmes, challenging targets are not set for students and there is no effective action planning. The teaching of key skills is ineffective and is not made a central part of vocational work. New Deal clients additionally have skills tests to determine their level and suitability for the programmes. On OSAT programmes, employees' prior knowledge and experience are recorded and an individual action plan is agreed between the employee, employer and provider whenever a skills shortfall is identified. Employees on OSAT programmes attend local colleges and test centres to meet key skills requirements.

Leadership and management

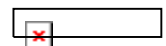
66. Features of the management of the construction programme are unsatisfactory. There is no effective management of craft studies for students aged 16 to 18 and communication between teachers and managers for this group is not effective. Relevant information is not cascaded to teachers in time and this adversely affects students. Course teams meet regularly and there are arrangements to share good practice. Course teams are satisfactorily addressing issues identified by external verifiers, including course withdrawals. Most staff have had reviews of their training and development needs during the last academic year but they have not been recently appraised.

67. The academy has been successful in widening participation. The number of female students has steadily increased in the last three years. There are currently two female teachers in construction. However, there are no effective strategies in place to address the imbalance in gender and ethnicity among teachers and students.

68. The construction self-assessment report is not sufficiently rigorous. There is insufficient attention to pass and retention rates and the teaching grade profile from internal observation is unrealistically high. There are insufficient judgements about the quality of assessment, internal verification and leadership and management.

69. The OSAT provision benefits from strong leadership and management. An open management style enables highly motivated staff to contribute to the discussion and the implementation of OSAT strategies. Performance indicators for enrolment, achievement, retention and assessors' productivity are set and evaluated. Although the OSAT self-assessment report addresses key issues, the judgements made are not expressed sufficiently clearly.

Business



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

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

Strengths

- good achievements on professional accounting courses

- good teaching on most courses

- wide range of provision

- effective individual support for students in lessons and in the workplace.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement on GCE AS business studies and accounting courses

- insufficient high-grade passes

- poor NVQ and framework completion on work-based learning programmes

- insufficient use of ILT to help learning

- ineffective quality assurance on courses for students aged 16 to 18.

Scope of provision

70. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses, from foundation to advanced and higher levels. Some 270 full-time and 730 part-time students are enrolled on business courses. The majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18; most part-time students are aged over 19. There are full-time courses in business and administration and part-time courses in business, secretarial studies, and accountancy. Some 162 students follow GCE AS and A-level courses in business studies and accounting. The college has recently replaced AVCE and GNVQ intermediate courses with national diplomas and first certificates.

71. A wide range of secretarial courses is offered from entry level to level 3, including text and word processing, audio-transcription and legal and medical secretarial programmes. Over 300 students are taking the professional accounting Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) course and specialist courses from the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuation. There are 49 advanced modern apprentices and 73 foundation modern apprentices on administration programmes and 13 advanced modern apprentices on accounting programmes. Good links exist with local high schools and courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 are taught both at the college and in the schools. There are 24 pupils studying a level 1 OCR administration course and the college supports the delivery of applied GCSEs to 152 students in school.

Achievement and standards

72. Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on professional accounting courses. However, pass rates for GCE AS business studies and accounting are well below national averages. On GCE AS and A-level and AVCE business courses most students fail to achieve the grade that would be expected based on their performance at GCSE. Retention rates are high on secretarial courses, with pass rates around the national average. The proportion of high grades on these courses is well below national averages. NVQ administration students based at college achieve well but for work-based learning, retention and pass rates are low. In 2002/03, only 2% of foundation modern apprentices and 4% of advanced modern apprentices achieved the complete framework. Students' attendance is good and is closely monitored by staff. Immediate action is taken to improve poor attendance by students aged 16 to 18.

73. In most lessons, students make reasonable progress. Students have a satisfactory understanding of business terminology and key concepts, and can apply these to case studies and other lesson materials. However, the analytical and evaluative skills of students aged 16 to 18 are poorly developed, and few of them are able to apply their learning to business situations. Adult students work well. Part-time students on the AAT course worked effectively and supported each other to produce draft financial statements but did not have the opportunity to develop presentation skills. In many lessons, the more able students are not given sufficiently difficult work to do.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in word processing	E	No. of starts	135	147	164
		% retention	68	71	64
		% pass rate	53	63	66
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	71	*	91
		% retention	86	86	67
		% pass rate	87	42	54
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	64	60	54
		% retention	72	73	83
		% pass rate	78	82	76
Word processing	2	No. of starts	87	63	64
		% retention	85	89	95
		% pass rate	72	84	67
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	56	57	42
		% retention	89	89	81
		% pass rate	76	61	81
NVQ administration	3	No. of starts	36	47	38
		% retention	86	81	50
		% pass rate	68	37	79
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	31	22	66
		% retention	77	68	77
		% pass rate	54	60	82
AVCE business (double award)	3	No. of starts	30	24	40
		% retention	53	25	70

		% pass rate	100	83	75
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

74. Most teaching is good. Lessons are well planned; schemes of work are detailed and include a range of teaching and assessment methods. In the best lessons, students take part in practical activities including group work, presentations and developing their office skills. In an AVCE lesson on customer services, students were effectively engaged in role play exercises to review methods of dealing with difficult customers. They worked purposefully; their ideas were clearly presented to the group and, with careful support from the teacher, the students made good contributions to developing the conclusions which emerged for the exercise. Issues on equal opportunities emerging from the scenarios were handled carefully and sensitively. Teachers provide good individual support to students in practical lessons. In less effective lessons, the work set is too easy for the more able students. Teachers talk too much and students have few opportunities to contribute.

75. The most common approach to teaching professional courses for adults involves teacher-led activities using notes and a whiteboard, with students' responses elicited through the appropriate use of question and answer techniques. There are few effective examples of the use of ILT to enhance learning. Teaching of pupils aged 14 to 16 is effective. Pupils praise the course, particularly the practical aspects of typing and reception work.

76. Off-the-job training for modern apprentices has improved recently and is now good. Training sessions are clearly structured and a range of activities is used to involve students in applying the basic knowledge they have acquired to their job roles and key skills. In an administration training session, students carefully considered the weaknesses in office filing and stationery systems. They effectively identified the problems and proposed methods for improvement. Tutorial support for work-based learners is effective and there is a new system in place to monitor their progress. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace of students' performance. Employers are not fully involved in the assessment process, and do not liaise with training staff in identifying and agreeing the most appropriate opportunities for assessment of performance.

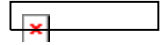
77. Assessment on college-based courses is satisfactory. Students' work is regularly, accurately and speedily marked but some of the written feedback from teachers is brief and is of little value to the students. Internal verification is comprehensive. However, there have been some inconsistencies in the marking of AVCE and GCE A-level coursework. Teachers have taken prompt action and new systems are now in place to address the weakness. Students' progress is regularly monitored, but many of the targets agreed with students are unrealistic.

78. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Many classrooms are too small for the size of the class, restricting the range of learning activities that can take place in them. The learning centre is well equipped and contains a wide range of business textbooks and periodicals. Access to computers outside lessons is difficult at peak times.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new managers for college and work-based programmes have introduced new systems but they have yet to have any impact on students' achievements. Communications have improved. Teaching teams work well together to develop resources and monitor students' progress. Teachers have limited access to centrally held management information and use their own data to review provision and set targets. Staff participate in the self-assessment process, with each course team completing a primary report which then feeds into an overall departmental report. However, the process lacks rigour, particularly in identifying weaknesses in teaching and retention rates, and actions for improvement are imprecise.

Information and communications technology



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

Contributory grade for workplace learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most full-time courses

- innovative and highly effective workplace training

- very good support for students

- good development of ICT provision in the community and the workplace.

Weaknesses

- poor pass or retention rates on most part-time courses

- insufficient challenge for students in many lessons

- insufficient ICT resources for some courses on the main site

- insufficient use of data to evaluate students' performance.

Scope of provision

80. The college offers a wide range of ICT courses. Some 582 full-time students are on GNVQ foundation, first diploma and NVQ level 2 IT service repair centre courses. Students at level 3 follow GCE AS and A-level courses in computing and ICT or the AVCE course. Part-time students can take courses at the main college campus, at one of 16 workplace IT centres located on employer's premises or at one of 27 centres in the community. Community venues include a major computer

store, a football stadium, schools and the city library. Locations are carefully chosen to encourage participation by under-represented groups within the community. Part-time adult provision includes introductory courses on computing and the Internet, the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) qualifications at levels 1 and 2, and European computer driving licence (ECDL) courses. Many courses are offered on a flexible attendance basis, with enrolments throughout the year. During 2002/03, over 8,000 students enrolled on these courses, with over 70% attending one of the community venues. A wide range of courses are provided for pupils aged 14 to 16, either at the college or on school premises.

Achievement and standards

81. Pass rates on most full-time courses are good. Pass rates on most level 3 courses are above the national average. The pass rate for GCE A-level ICT was 100% in 2003 and the pass rate for the AVCE double award in ICT was 91%. Retention rates on level 3 courses are mostly satisfactory. Pass rates on GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses have improved to above the national average. Retention and pass rates for the many part-time students on level 1 and 2 courses are low. For example, nearly 8,000 students have studied for an ECDL qualification in the past three years; overall retention rates have been low for three consecutive years, with only 45% of students completing the course in 2002/03. Of these, 77% achieved their qualification. During the years 2001 to 2003, over 6,000 students have studied for the level 1 CLAIT certificate, mostly at one of the college's community centres. The retention rate has been low and the pass rate has declined to well below the national average. Attendance on most courses is satisfactory.

82. Students at the college demonstrate satisfactory attainment. They use computers with confidence and most are able to demonstrate a good working knowledge of computer applications. In one lesson, students spoke knowledgeably about their approach to project work, which required them to design a commercial invoice system by integrating industry-standard software applications. Adult students quickly come to terms with new technology and are able to perform useful tasks on the computer. At one community session, some students had taken digital photographs of family or fellow class members and were able to manipulate the image, frame it and produce high-quality prints.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
New CLAIT	1	No. of starts	*	205	662
		% retention	*	76	59
		% pass rate	*	16	34
Start award in technology, computing and IT	1	No. of starts	2,694	1,657	2,481
		% retention	68	87	86
		% pass rate	79	82	85
GNVQ foundation ICT	1	No. of starts	28	43	29
		% retention	68	63	79
		% pass rate	37	85	96
CLAIT (short)	1	No. of starts	584	840	192
		% retention	71	73	54
		% pass rate	59	54	48
ECDL (one year)	1 and 2	No. of starts	228	2,179	1,488
		% retention	51	44	45
		% pass rate	41	64	77

GNVQ Intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	35	40	36
		% retention	83	70	75
		% pass rate	48	54	74
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	*	30	31
		% retention	*	90	97
		% pass rate	*	96	100
AVCE ICT (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	54	56
		% retention	*	59	57
		% pass rate	*	66	91

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

83. Most teaching is satisfactory, but little of it is good or very good. Although most lessons are carefully prepared, many fail to make much demand on students. There is sometimes a lack of stimulation and often a lack of urgency for the completion of class work. There is little use of presentations to take account of students' different learning abilities. Many whole-class and one-to-one support sessions lack sufficient checking of learning. Some sessions end without reviewing the work covered and fail to set the scene for the next lesson. Tutors rarely evaluate their lessons. In community venues, many students have been out of learning for some years and have no formal qualifications. They quickly gain confidence in the use of computers, assisted by short, well-planned taught sessions and aided by high-quality learning materials prepared by tutors.

84. Workplace training is innovative, highly effective and carefully matched to learners' needs. Rigorous initial assessment of learners' prior knowledge, skills and aspirations ensures that they are placed on an appropriate level of qualification. Tutors regularly teach short lessons which any student in the centre can attend. Learners with hearing and vision impairments are given additional support and provided with specialist learning aids. Workplace learners unable to attend a centre are given good support by distance learner tutors. Tutors have a good understanding of learners' needs and contact is frequent and effective.

85. Assessment is thorough and fair. Most work is carefully marked by tutors, often with helpful comments. Course documents and support material can be accessed and completed work can be submitted to tutors online. One tutor has set up a website that encourages students to comment on the quality of each lesson they attend. Students' progress is carefully monitored at all venues where ICT courses are taught.

86. There is very good support for students at the college and in the community learning centres. Additional learning support is available for those whose basic skills may prove a barrier to learning. Support is effective and unobtrusive. A useful induction handbook helps new students to identify their own preferred learning style and provides helpful hints for effective study. It also assists them to set a target grade for their course qualification. During their studies, students have good online support for their course, which can be accessed from home or college.

87. Staff are well qualified and experienced. There are insufficient resources to support some ICT provision at the main college campus. Most college computers have older versions of industrial-standard software and many are slow. Printing facilities for students, particularly for colour, are poor. In two lessons observed, there were insufficient computers for the size of the class. In another lesson, students were writing computer programs that could not be tested because of a lack of suitable hardware or software. Most community learning centres have very good resources, including up-to-date computers and software, colour printers, data projectors, digital cameras and

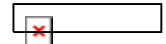
scanners. Resources are adequate in workplace learning centres and some equipment is of a very high standard, although the latest versions of industrial-standard software are not always available.

Leadership and management

88. The management of the ICT provision is satisfactory. Management roles are clearly defined and well understood, but there is insufficient use of data to evaluate students' performance and inform planning. There has been little analysis of the comparative success rates of the same ICT course offered at different venues. Regular attendance data for full-time students, allowing the early identification of 'at-risk' students, are not yet available to course tutors. Course quality files have a common format but are often incomplete, many lacking copies of external verifier reports, national benchmarking data and course data.

89. Managers have formed highly effective local and national partnerships that have encouraged under-represented groups into community education or workplace training. The centres have been successful in attracting large number of students. The establishment of workplace learning centres has resulted from partnerships formed with employers and trades unions. Close and productive working relationships exist between on-site tutors and employers, who are kept fully informed on all aspects of the training.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses in 2002/03

- high retention rates and good achievement on additional programmes offered to full-time students

- well-planned theory lessons

- broad range of work experience opportunities

- good specialist facilities that support learning

- well-planned and rigorous assessment

- effective tutorial system.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AVCE programmes
- some sports students' lack of punctuality
- insufficient IT and library facilities for independent learning
- poor integration of key skills.

Scope of provision

90. There is provision for more than 500 full-time and 100 part-time students in sport and 100 full-time and 10 part-time students in travel and tourism. Most full-time students are between the ages of 16 and 19. Full-time sport courses range from entry level to level 4 and include vocational access, NVQ sport, recreation and allied occupations at levels 1 and 2, BTEC first diploma in sport and BTEC national diplomas in both sport and sport and exercise science. GCE AS and A-level physical education can also be followed as part of an individually designed programme of study. Full-time travel and tourism courses are also available up to level 4, including progression through introductory, first and national diplomas. Part-time sports courses are available for adults in areas such as fitness instruction, and for pupils aged 14 to 16 and young professional footballers sponsored by the Professional Footballers' Association. A variety of part-time travel and tourism courses, such as overseas operations and air fares and ticketing, are available both day and evening.

Achievement and standards

91. There were high pass rates on most level 2 and level 3 programmes in 2002/03. Pass rates on AVCE travel and tourism are declining but remain above national averages. Pass rates on AVCE leisure and recreation have consistently improved in recent years from below the national average to well above, at 93%. Pass rates on the GCE AS physical education were high in 2003. Pass and retention rates have been high on NVQ level 2 sport and recreation programmes for the last three years and are consistently above the national average.

92. Retention rates are at or close to national averages for many courses. Retention rates are better on the BTEC national applied science (sport). Retention and pass rates on additional courses for students aged 16 to 18 are good, particularly on the community sports leader award and the travel agents certificate (primary).

93. Students develop a variety of practical, communication and group-work skills. Sports students show that they can correctly and safely set up and take down equipment and show good understanding of warm-up routines and stretching techniques. A group of NVQ level 1 sports

students demonstrated good coaching techniques with a group of primary school pupils. The portfolios of students on NVQ programmes are of a good standard. NVQ level 2 travel service portfolios are of a particularly high standard; they contain considerable evidence which is well referenced.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
BTEC first diploma in science (sport)	2	No. of starts	27	29	41
		% retention	89	62	78
		% pass rate	83	78	76
NVQ sport and recreation	2	No. of starts	35	29	26
		% retention	71	90	85
		% pass rate	88	96	82
AVCE travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	*	48	25
		% retention	*	50	56
		% pass rate	*	96	86
AVCE leisure and recreation	3	No. of starts	**	89	52
		% retention	**	52	58
		% pass rate	**	61	93
BTEC national diploma in applied science (sport)	3	No. of starts	40	**	17
		% retention	73	**	82
		% pass rate	97	**	71
GCE AS physical education	3	No. of starts	64	108	44
		% retention	95	93	84
		% pass rate	69	80	97

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

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

94. There is much good teaching and learning in lessons. Lessons are well planned and teachers set students demanding tasks. Students appreciate the wide variety of teaching methods used. Theory lessons are particularly well designed to provide variety, and to maintain students' interest and motivation. For example, in a sport lesson designed to help evaluate a team exercise, students were set a challenging task which involved them working in groups using certain basic items to prevent eggs dropped from the ceiling smashing on the floor. The groups worked very effectively and were all more-or-less successful. Observers from the class did not participate in the activity and were used to give feedback to their fellow students. From this experience, they were able to see the connections between this feedback and the critical analysis of their own sport performance which they had found difficult to articulate in a formal session. The students gained in self-awareness through this. There are a broad range of work experience opportunities, including those in on-site facilities as well as more extensive opportunities in the UK and abroad. Some teaching is unsatisfactory. Not all lessons are adequately prepared. For example, in one lesson, the teacher failed to check that the overhead projector was working properly and this adversely affected the whole lesson. Key skills are still poorly integrated into both sport and travel and tourism programmes

and many learners have a poor perception of key skills. There were very few achievements in key skills for 2002/03.

95. There are good specialist sport and travel and tourism facilities. The sports facilities, built since the last inspection, include a well-equipped sports hall, fitness suite, activity room and squash courts and an astroturf. These are very well used and are available for use by community groups. The travel shop provides an excellent work experience and work placement opportunity for students. As a fully commercial concern, it is an excellent on-site facility for holiday and travel bookings for students and the public. There are unsatisfactory IT and library resources for independent learning. Students expressed concern about the shortage of IT facilities for them to do their own work in college. In addition, the library is short of books and other learning materials for sports.

96. Assignments set in sport, travel and tourism are of a high standard and are divided into more manageable tasks for the student, with appropriate deadlines. Students spoke of how improved the assignment system was. Written feedback from tutors is detailed and work is returned promptly to students with action points for improvement. Assessment during the course is effective. In a level 2 exercise and fitness lesson, students who were recent starters were assessed in the college fitness suite carrying out a simulated induction including a full warm-up.

97. There is a broad range of provision for students aged 16 to 18 who have the opportunity to follow programmes from entry level to level 4. There is a vocational access programme at entry level, followed by the opportunity to progress through a vocational or academic route. Students value the broad range of choices, which enable them to decide where to specialise. There are good progression opportunities and a number of the current staff started as students at the college. There are good enrichment opportunities, particularly for sports students. A few activities are timetabled during the week but most are available on Wednesday afternoons.

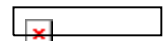
98. There is an effective tutorial system. There is good basic support for students with particular needs. Both staff and students speak highly of the effectiveness of the tutorial system. This has been well resourced by the college. Students are issued with student induction and progress planners which they use and update on a regular basis. Basic support is available for students identified with additional learning needs. A good basic mathematics lesson was seen for entry level sports students in which support was provided discretely and effectively for three students. The students showed good progress in the lesson and took pride in their work.

Leadership and management

99. Leadership and management are good. The two curriculum area managers have embraced the challenge of the reorganisation and regard it as a progressive step which rationalises certain roles and makes the college more prepared for future demands. There is a good spirit of co-operation linking programme managers, staff and students and the last speak highly of the friendly and supportive environment they find themselves in. Programme management has been effectively delegated to a tier of staff who are supportive of the system and feel that tasks have been allocated equitably. Targets have been set to improve participation by adult students, students from minority ethnic communities and male and female students in areas where there is a gender imbalance.

100. More consistent quality assurance procedures have also been introduced, but it is too early to see the benefits in terms of student performance.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning in practical lessons
- wide range of specialist resources
- thorough initial assessment.

Weaknesses

- poor achievements on work-based learning programmes
- low retention rates on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses
- incomplete individual learning plans for modern apprentices
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning in theory and key skills lessons.

Scope of provision

101. There is a good range of courses, mostly leading to NVQ qualifications at levels 1 to 3. There are 300 full-time students, of whom 160 are aged 16 to 18 years, and 400 part-time students. Some 82% of part-time students are adults. Students benefit from the opportunity to study additional qualifications in cosmetic make-up, Indian head massage, style and dress hair and barbering. Preston College Business Services provides foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships for 155 students. Nearly 200 pupils aged 14 to 16 also follow courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy at the college.

Achievement and standards

102. Pass rates are satisfactory on most courses but are high on NVQ beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3. Retention rates are well below the national average on most hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Achievements on work-based learning programmes are poor. The quality of students' written and practical work is mostly good. Students develop the new knowledge and skills they require to progress to higher level courses or to employment. Attendance is low in many lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
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Certificate in hairdressing	E	No. of starts	17	23	19
		% retention	47	35	47
		% pass rate	88	63	89
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	1	No. of starts	57	44	22
		% retention	86	75	68
		% pass rate	71	88	87
NVQ hairdressing (two years)	2	No. of starts	43	53	20
		% retention	49	30	55
		% pass rate	90	69	73
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	70	90
		% retention	*	61	64
		% pass rate	*	88	90
NVQ beauty therapy (two years)	2	No. of starts	72	47	32
		% retention	62	40	38
		% pass rate	84	100	75
NVQ beauty therapy (three years)	3	No. of starts	**	*	18
		% retention	**	*	72
		% pass rate	**	*	92

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

103. Most teaching is satisfactory and in practical lessons it is good or very good. Practical lessons are well planned and teachers use a wide range of methods to encourage students to learn. In one successful lesson, students were required to manage the hairdressing salon. They had to identify the different job roles in the salon, and those who were acting as managers were required to delegate tasks to the others. These students were shampooing, cutting and blow drying clients' hair to a professional standard. Theory and key skills lessons are less effective because they do not involve all students sufficiently in the activities that have been planned. In one lesson on personal presentation and hygiene, a small group of students was allowed to dominate the discussion. The other students became inattentive. Students make little progress in developing their key skills and do not see the relationship between their chosen course and the key skills they are studying. Achievements in key skills are poor.

104. Assessment is accurate and fair. Assignments are marked constructively so that students know what they need to do to improve their performance. Internal verification is satisfactory. Students' progress is carefully recorded. Initial assessment is thorough. A wide variety of assessments is undertaken: during induction week for college students and before their employment begins for modern apprentices. The results of this initial assessment are used effectively to place students on an appropriate course and to identify any additional learning support needs that the students may have. The provision of additional learning support is unreliable and not all students who require support receive it.

105. Work-based learning assessors undertake thorough and effective reviews of learning and training with students and employers. In one review, the constructive comments of the assessor

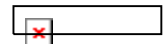
covered a number of relevant aspects of the students' performance, including attendance, attitude and the training provided by the employer. This analysis enabled the employer to identify what was needed to help the student to achieve the targets which had been set. Individual learning plans for modern apprentices are unsatisfactory. Many of the plans lack key details such as completion dates for key skills, planned attendance for off-the-job learning and learning review dates. Not all of the plans are up to date. The college has recognised this weakness and has now recruited more staff to oversee the progress of modern apprentices.

106. All teaching staff have appropriate qualifications and relevant experience. There is a wide range of specialist resources for hairdressing and beauty therapy. Students use a wide range of high-quality commercial products from well-stocked dispensaries. The purpose-built accommodation provides commercial salons that are easily accessible to students and clients. Some of the classrooms are too small for the groups which use them and there are no adequate storage facilities. Health and safety procedures are carried out effectively in most lessons and for all employers' salons.

Leadership and management

107. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are clear lines of management responsibility. There are regular meetings that are well attended by managers, teachers and support staff. For the majority of meetings the minutes are clear and well documented. The thorough self-assessment process involves all staff and provides a fair description of strengths and weaknesses. However, the significance of the weaknesses, particularly in relation to teaching, learning and students' achievements are given insufficient priority in the subsequent action plans. There have been recent changes to the management of work-based learning programmes and a thorough review of procedures has taken place, including the monitoring of students' progress. It is too early to assess how successful the new procedures will be in improving the quality of achievements in modern apprenticeship programmes.

Health and early years



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

Strengths

- very high retention and pass rates on NVQ programmes

- wide range of courses to meet local needs

- thorough and effective monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory range of classroom resources

- o insufficiently demanding teaching for more able students in some lessons

- o unsatisfactory arrangements for key skills.

Scope of provision

108. There is a wide range of courses which effectively meets local needs. There are currently 337 students aged 16 to 18 and 282 adult students following full-time courses, and some 775 adults on part-time courses. Full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 years include entry level Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) preparation for child care and Edexcel skills for working life (health and early years endorsement). At level 1, there is a CACHE foundation award in caring for children and the GNVQ foundation health and early years. Level 2 programmes include a first diploma in care, which is offered in conjunction with the local National Health Trust as part of a cadetship scheme. Level 3 courses include the AVCE health and early years, national diplomas in health studies and early years, and a CACHE diploma in child care and education. GCSE childhood development is offered at one Muslim girls' school. The college offers the vocational GCSE double award in health and early years in local schools as part of the increased flexibility programme for pupils aged 14 to 16. Courses for adults include NVQs in care, early years, care and education and playwork at levels 2 and 3. There is a wide range of National Council for Further Education (NCFE) accredited courses in subjects including midday supervision, childminding, early years practice, and skills for working with children and young people. Many of the courses for adults offered at the college are also offered in the community. A well-developed partnership between the college and the Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership helps to identify areas where the provision is needed.

Achievement and standards

109. Retention and pass rates are very high on NVQ programmes, particularly NVQ level 3 care, where the pass rate has been at 90% or better for each of the last three years. Retention and pass rates are above the national average on many courses, but have declined on some significant courses during the period 2001 to 2003. Retention rates are high on many part-time courses, for example, NVQ playwork and CACHE diploma in pre-school practice were both 100% in 2003. Retention rates are lower on courses for full-time students. In 2003, retention rates on GNVQ foundation and intermediate and AVCE health and early years were low. Progression rates are good. In 2003, 73% of students aged 16 to 19 who completed level 3 courses progressed to HE. Some 68% of students who completed NVQ 3 level qualifications progressed to senior positions in employment.

110. Students on most courses produce an appropriate standard of work. Assignments are well written and demonstrate good links between theory and professional practice. Adult students demonstrate a very good ability to reflect on their own life or work experiences and evaluate or test theoretical models against that experience. This leads to some very lively and stimulating discussions. On the other hand, students aged 16 to 18 are less able to construct arguments backed by evidence. Their attainment is much lower than that of adult students. NVQ students have gained City and Guilds medals of excellence.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	*	65	40

		% retention	*	75	83
		% pass rate	*	69	73
CACHE certificate in child care and education	2	No. of starts	42	28	47
		% retention	81	75	68
		% pass rate	88	52	81
Counselling skills introductory	2	No. of starts	121	103	124
		% retention	96	88	96
		% pass rate	99	96	93
Diploma in childhood studies / early years	3	No. of starts	31	42	43
		% retention	81	74	79
		% pass rate	96	90	94
NVQ care	3	No. of starts	29	61	61
		% retention	93	85	82
		% pass rate	93	94	90
National diploma in health studies	3	No. of starts	*	18	25
		% retention	*	72	64
		% pass rate	*	52	94

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

111. Most teaching is satisfactory although there is too little good teaching. Lessons are satisfactorily planned and learning objectives are clear. Teachers emphasise the need to work to the principles of good professional practice and ethics. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning techniques effectively. However, in many of the less successful lessons, students spend too much time in low-level learning activities such as copying notes from overhead transparencies or working from photocopied texts taken from study guides or textbooks. The lack of resources hampers students' learning. Students who complete their set tasks quickly are not given additional, more demanding tasks to do. There are insufficient materials available to help students who find the work difficult. Resources in the college library are no longer adequate because of the growth in student numbers. Students have good access to work placement experience. Work placements are well organised and provide students with an appropriate range of settings in which to develop their caring skills. Students derive little benefit from their key skills lessons. Attendance at these sessions is poor. Teachers do not provide sufficient guidance on how or where evidence for key skills competence can be achieved. The college has recently put into place new procedures which provide a closer link between key skills and the vocational context of care. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

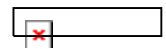
112. Assessment is well planned and feedback on assignments is detailed and thorough. Students are given advice on how they might improve their grades and, on most courses, spelling, punctuation and sentence construction are corrected. Assessment and internal verification on NVQ courses are very well planned and managed. The monitoring of students' progress is thorough and effective. Individual performance reviews are used by teachers to discuss progress with students. Learning targets are agreed at the end of each review and incorporated into the student's individual action plan. Students understand how their progress compares with what is required to achieve the qualification.

113. Students receive good guidance and satisfactory additional learning support. Induction is well organised and designed to meet the needs of both full-time and part-time students. It is effective in helping students settle into their course and in introducing them to the range of college facilities and services. Initial assessment helps to identify the additional learning support needs of students, but the additional learning support team cannot always satisfy the high level of demand for its services. Students do not always receive the support as quickly as they need it. New procedures to improve attendance have been effective.

Leadership and management

114. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum area has received a Beacon Award for its health and early years provision. Managers have received appropriate training to be effective in their roles. Communication is good. Quality assurance files are detailed and thorough. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the significance of some of the strengths in retention rates and achievement had been overstated. Strategies to promote equality are implemented in most aspects of the work in this area. However, there are few male students and no plans in place to recruit more.

Visual arts



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

Strengths

- students' high-quality work, particularly on adult courses

- effective one-to-one support

- good development of practical skills by most students

- good dedicated library and learning centre

- industrial-standard TV and sound recording studios.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most courses

- poor visual research and design development skills on some design courses
- narrow range of teaching and learning methods in some lessons.

Scope of provision

115. In art, design and media provision, there is a range of full-time courses at intermediate and advanced levels. In art and design, there are two specialist national diploma courses. There are three full-time adult courses offering progression from level 2 to level 3 and a range of part-time adult provision. GCE A-level provision is offered in art, design, media and photography.

116. There are currently 55 media and 154 art and design full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are 44 full-time and 60 part-time adult students on art and design courses. There are 221 students studying for GCE AS and A-level qualifications, including some students who are also on full-time courses. The college is developing a range of school 'taster' courses for 2003/04.

Achievement and standards

117. Pass rates for those who completed the course are good. In 2002/03 they ranged from 57% to 100%, with an average of 87%. These rates were above the national average for six out of nine main qualifications. Retention rates are low. In 2002/03 they ranged from 25% to 74%, with an average of 59%. Retention rates for this period were below national averages for eight out of nine main qualifications. However, average retention rates for students completing the first year of two-year full-time courses improved from 50% in October 2002 to 69% in October 2003. Enrolments also increased in 2003/04 by 18% overall and by 36% on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18.

118. Much work, particularly on adult courses, is of a high standard. It successfully builds on individual student's personal interests and experiences. The best work demonstrates strong research and development, as well as high levels of technical and other professional skills, such as drawing. Adult students improve their communication skills by critically reviewing each other's work and offering guidance on how to make improvements. Students on the adult art access programme produce work that is both sophisticated and expressive. Most students have attained appropriate levels and sometimes high levels of skill, knowledge and understanding. Graphics students show a good understanding of specialist IT software, which they employ to generate computer imagery of a high standard.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
National diploma in three-dimensional design (interior)	3	No. of starts	**	20	***
		% retention	**	40	***
		% pass rate	**	63	***
National diploma in graphic design	3	No. of starts	**	19	***
		% retention	**	63	***
		% pass rate	**	100	***
AVCE art and design *	3	No. of starts	16	19	16
		% retention	69	47	25

		% pass rate	82	100	100
AVCE media	3	No. of starts	*	26	8
		% retention	*	56	50
		% pass rate	*	67	100

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

* GVNQ advanced art and design changed to AVCE in 2002

** course did not run

*** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

119. Teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory. Students benefit from effective and supportive one-to-one-teaching. This helps them to concentrate on their tasks and to be clear about those areas where they need to improve.

120. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to experiment with the materials they use and foster the development of research techniques. Adult students, in particular, grow in confidence through this. In an adult embroidery class, one student had been persuaded from her school days that she had little ability in art and design. Through attendance at the class she had developed the confidence and technical skills needed to carry out complex visual research using a wide range of materials and techniques. Another adult student in the same group, with a degree in art history, is producing a high standard of experimental embroidery to interpret the work of famous artists. A graphics student was able to talk informatively about his ideas for designing a compact disc cover by referring to his design sketches.

121. Students learn the techniques needed for professional teamworking by means of simulated industrial projects. For example, media students worked effectively in two project groups to produce a television quiz show, playing roles that they had helped devise together. Each group switched from acting to filming roles. The students relished their responsibilities and enjoyed working with up-to-date equipment in a professional environment. They developed social as well as professional skills.

122. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods in some lessons. For example, contextual studies lessons invariably follow the same pattern and the teacher rarely draws out links between the studies and the other work that students are engaged in on their course. Some tutors do not ensure that all students contribute to group discussions. For example, a photography teacher failed to involve students sufficiently in a discussion on the work of famous photographers. Most exchanges were between particular students and the teacher rather than involving the whole group, and this resulted in a failure to grasp the opportunity for them to learn from one another. Some lesson plans do not define learning objectives clearly or identify appropriate teaching and learning methods. For example, poor planning in a media lesson resulted in students failing to complete, after an hour and a half, a task designed to take a half-hour.

123. On some design courses, the quality of visual research and design development does not meet required standards. A group of interior design students working towards an exhibition had well-developed technical skills but had underdeveloped research skills and produced weak design solutions.

124. Staff are generally well qualified and many are engaged in professional practice. The majority of art, design and media work takes place at the Park Campus, a dedicated centre for the visual and performing arts. The accommodation is good and helps to create a friendly and purposeful place for learning. There are good exhibition facilities and many teaching rooms have effective displays of work. The specialist library and learning resources provide high levels of support for the curriculum. The library has practical work areas and displays of students' work, and it sells art and craft materials; it is the base for the teaching support tutors. The librarian is a regular member of course

and management teams and the library develops resource packs for curriculum projects.

125. The media area is located in newly built accommodation. It houses professional-standard TV and sound recording studios, which significantly enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Up-to-date computers are of a high standard but there are not always enough for all students.

126. Assessment is carried out systematically and students are generally aware of assessment criteria and requirements. In several lessons, tutors explained the assessment criteria for current projects. The outcomes of initial assessment are not always systematically followed up for all students.

127. The range of provision meets the needs of current students in art, design and media at levels 2 and 3. There is some provision at level 4: a part-time foundation degree in architecture and interior design. There is a rich social and cultural mix of students of different age ranges. Students enjoy this diversity. Positive community links exist on some courses. On media courses, there are links with local community radio stations and plans to develop an Internet radio station. Current projects include producing a digital versatile disc for the Lancashire Constabulary in collaboration with another local college.

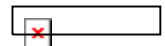
128. Prospective art and design students from school are not receiving sufficient expert advice and guidance based on a portfolio of their work. In spite of the open evenings, few take up the opportunity to receive specialist advice prior to selecting and starting their course. On-course support for students is good. Attendance is effectively monitored and followed up at course level.

Leadership and management

129. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good communication between management and staff; strategies for development are shared and this has led to an improvement in morale. Most managers are newly or recently appointed. The curriculum area has had three deans within a period of eighteen months. Middle managers recognise their responsibilities and are enthusiastic about the future prospects for their curriculum area.

130. New systems have been introduced to improve the collection and use of data and feedback from students. It is too early to assess how effective these measures will be in improving retention rates. The use of personal learning advisers has helped to improve the monitoring of punctuality and attendance. Key skills are not satisfactorily developed across all courses. Students express dissatisfaction about the consistency and quality of key skills support. Attendance at key skills sessions is irregular.

Performing arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- high standards of practical work, especially in dance lessons

- very good teaching and learning

- very good specialist accommodation and equipment for dance and music technology.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on most BTEC national diplomas

- poor accommodation for drama.

Scope of provision

131. The college offers a wide range of performing arts and music courses from entry level to level 4, which include a music and media vocational access programme, GNVQ foundation performing arts, BTEC first diplomas and national diplomas and GCE AS and A2 subjects. In addition, there are ballet, tap and modern dance graded examination courses. Students on full-time programmes have the opportunity to take an additional qualification, such as a GCE AS or an NCFE certificate. Enrichment opportunities include, for example, instrumental lessons and taking part in a large-scale college musical. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Of the 299 students, 108 study dance, 97 study drama and 94 study music. Most full-time adults study music; there are 45 studying music, 25 studying dance and 20 studying drama. There are no part-time students aged 16 to 18 and 33 part-time adults students. There is 1 school-aged student on the music and media vocational access programme and 99 students aged 14 to 16 participate in the school links taster programme in performing arts.

Achievement and standards

132. There are high pass rates on many courses, particularly in dance. For example, 100% pass rates were achieved for imperial society for the teaching of dance (ISTD) intermediate tap, and national diploma, GCSE and GCE AS dance. The proportion of high grades achieved in dance examinations are frequently well above national averages. For example, 92% for GCSE dance, 82% for ISTD national and 62% for ISTD tap. There are very high standards of performance work in classes throughout the performing arts and music area as a whole, with standards in dance classes being particularly high and professional. For example, in one ISTD intermediate tap lesson, students showed complete concentration and self-discipline in the rehearsal of their rhythmic response piece, producing polished, technically skilled work. Students love their work and are committed to achieving professional standards. Pass rates on the national diploma in music technology are consistently high, but they are unsatisfactory on other BTEC national diplomas. Pass rates were high on GCE A2 and GCSE drama in 2002/03. Retention rates are mostly satisfactory but there are low retention rates on the national diplomas in drama, music technology and popular music/music practice. Minimum target grades are set at entry, based on GCSE scores, and are used to motivate students. There is no analysis of the outcomes to assess the effectiveness of this approach. Student's personal and learning skills are developed well through performance and group work. There is no significant difference between the achievement of adult students and those aged 16 to 18. Most students are confident and enthusiastic about their work and are able to communicate well.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation performing arts and entertainment	1	No. of starts	**	18	***
		% retention	**	67	***
		% pass rate	**	75	***
Grades / class exams in tap dancing (one year)	1	No. of starts	27	23	104
		% retention	70	91	88
		% pass rate	74	67	71
BTEC first diploma in performing arts	2	No. of starts	22	***	30
		% retention	73	***	77
		% pass rate	94	***	87
GCSE dance	2	No. of starts	15	15	15
		% retention	87	80	100
		% pass rate	100	92	100
BTEC national diploma in drama*	3	No. of starts	28	21	20
		% retention	61	48	60
		% pass rate	100	100	83
BTEC national diploma in music technology	3	No. of starts	39	40	38
		% retention	59	63	61
		% pass rate	96	88	96
GCE AS drama / theatre studies	3	No. of starts	***	30	19
		% retention	***	90	89
		% pass rate	***	85	88

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

* BTEC national diploma in performing art in 2000/01

** course did not run

*** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

133. Most teaching is very good. Teachers have good specialist expertise, which inspires and motivates students. For example, in a dance class, students quickly learned a complex flamenco routine after a very polished demonstration by the teacher. In a popular music keyboard skills lesson, the teacher fluently accompanied students on a drum machine, varying speeds, while students practised their piece as a group and made very good progress. Lesson plans and schemes of work are detailed and include information on the preferred learning styles of the students. A few theory lessons lack the variety needed to keep students motivated. In a few lessons, teachers fail to question individual students directly to check on their learning. In most lessons, students work with dedication and enthusiasm. The work they produce, both written and practical, is of high standard and shows attention to detail. For example, many of the actors' logs for a drama production were beautifully presented, with excellent attention to detail. Performance work overall is of a very high standard. For example, 36 ballet students worked tirelessly and with professional concentration to complete barre exercises, followed by demanding work on balance and co-ordination. Technical theatre courses are well integrated with performance courses, to good effect. Beautiful full-size gates

were designed and built for the play *More Light* and the set for the musical *Fame*, produced in the summer of 2003, was greatly enhanced by the use of a full-sized car on stage, modified and set up by the technical theatre students. Students work well together in groups. For example, in one lesson, BTEC national diploma in music practice bands worked very coherently on the finer details of their songs for a forthcoming concert. There is a strong emphasis on the building of students' organisational skills and record keeping. Students keep detailed notebooks as an ongoing record for each lesson, and these are regularly checked by staff.

134. Teachers are well qualified, some with recent experience of professional dance, theatre and music. They take pride in being professionally aware and attempt to reflect this in the assignments they set for students. There is very good specialist accommodation in dance, with three purpose-built dance studios which are large, light and airy and fully equipped to professional standards. However, the small changing rooms are struggling to cope with the volume of students now in the department. There are three sound-proofed music studios which are equipped to industrial standard. Accommodation in drama is not adequate to meet students' needs. The floor of the studio theatre is poorly carpeted, is not safe for dance work and the area is too small for large productions. Use is made of a local theatre when possible. The backstage workshop is too small for large scenery construction. Some drama lessons take place in inappropriate rooms which are either too small or too public for performance work. Technical support in the department is good. The use of a professional accompanist in dance lessons greatly enhances the students' learning. There are not enough staff computers.

135. Assessment is thorough and most feedback sheets give useful points for development. Work is returned promptly and assignment paperwork is clear. Key skills communication and IT are signposted in assignment briefs with details of key skills assessment provided by the key skills champion. Teachers give detailed verbal feedback to students after many assignments. Drama students report very favourably on the supportive assessment they receive from their teachers after both practical and written assignments. The internal verification system is well developed and documented in course-quality files.

136. Courses are planned carefully to take account of a diversity of learning styles. Students are very satisfied with their choice of college and courses. The department has excellent industry links and strives to include outside professional input regularly. These include regular workshops from professional choreographers and a formal link with the Northern Ballet Theatre, and opportunities for students to perform publicly in outside venues. The technical theatre students have access to valuable work experience: for example, two students are going to Louisiana college in America next summer for an intensive five-week placement. Students aged 14 to 16 from local schools take part in short 'taster' programmes in the area. Students from one local school attend weekend and after-hours lessons in GCE AS drama. The enrichment programme includes instrumental lessons and the production of a big college musical. There is good internal progression from level 2 to level 3 programmes. Some 84% of BTEC first diploma students progressed to a level 3 programme at the college. Progression from level 3 programmes in drama and dance is good, with, for example, 64% of national diploma in performing arts students progressing to HE and 36% to related skilled jobs.

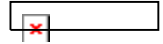
137. Tutorials are well used to monitor students' progress and there is a standard scheme of work for group tutorials. All students are screened on entry and those needing additional support receive help within three weeks of screening. The setting of minimum target grades at entry greatly assists students' motivation and the drive to achieve higher personal standards. Induction is effective and includes effective subject 'tasting'. Except in dance, there is no specialist auditioning system.

Leadership and management

138. There is strong leadership. Staff morale is good and teachers feel supported and valued. Communication across the department is good. There is a yearly programme of lesson observations from which teachers receive useful points for development. Teachers value their appraisals and performance reviews. There is good access to staff development. For example, as well as in-house training events, three members of staff are taking masters' degrees. 'Swap shop' meetings enable staff across the college to meet and share particularly successful teaching and learning ideas. Course reviews are used as a basis for the self-assessment report. Actions points successfully

implemented include the introduction of an entry level programme in music and media and increased 14 to 16 links. Equal opportunities and diversity are well addressed through course content in the variety of texts, music and dance styles used. There are plans to add a new dance course in South East Asian dance, possibly in the evenings, to enable more adults to attend.

Humanities



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

Contributory grade for psychology is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good achievements in advanced psychology

- consistently high retention rates on GCSE courses

- very good teaching of psychology

- good teaching of adult students

- responsiveness to learning needs of local Muslim communities.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on adult courses

- low pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 in 2003

- insufficient attention to the learning needs of more able students

- inadequate learning resources

- o ineffective action by programme teams to address weaknesses.

Scope of provision

139. There are 735 students taking humanities courses on the main campus. Some 60% of these are students aged 16 to 18 taking level 3 courses in geography, government and politics, history, law, psychology, religious studies and sociology. One-third of these students are studying psychology. There are 29 students aged 16 to 18 taking GCSE sociology or GCSE psychology; 21 adult students are taking an evening course in GCSE psychology; 33 are following an evening course in GCE AS law; 79 are taking an OCNW progression award in humanities at level 2; and 120 are taking the level 3 progression course. There are 24 students are following an access to HE course at level 3. In addition, a further 210 students aged 16 to 18 are taking GCSE, GCE AS and GCE A2 courses in five sixth form centres in Muslim schools.

Achievement and standards

140. The large numbers of students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level psychology courses consistently achieve pass rates well above the average for similar colleges. There were also high pass rates in 2003 for GCE A2 geography, sociology and law. There were poor pass rates for this age-group in 2003, however, for many GCE AS subjects. On GCE AS law, for example, the pass rate was only 30%; for government and politics it was 60% and for geography it was only 62%. More than 80% of those studying GCSE sociology failed to achieve a grade C or above. Students aged 16 to 18 in the sixth form centres in Muslim schools achieve high pass rates for advanced psychology and sociology. They are less successful in GCE AS religious studies. The retention rate on the OCNW qualifications at levels 2 and 3 is just over 50%. The pass rates are high for those that do complete.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Progression award humanities (one year)	2	No. of starts	60	57	81
		% retention	73	63	53
		% pass rate	95	83	93
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	58	44	21
		% retention	69	68	76
		% pass rate	48	57	38
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	69	121	106
		% retention	75	77	90
		% pass rate	83	77	78
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	42	44	83
		% retention	83	77	86
		% pass rate	54	91	77
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	38	62	96
		% retention	66	73	75
		% pass rate	56	40	30

GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	52	41	39
		% retention	65	88	85
		% pass rate	88	83	97
Progression award humanities (one year)	3	No. of starts	26	49	45
		% retention	65	84	53
		% pass rate	65	54	88

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

Quality of education and training

141. Much of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching. Psychology teachers are ambitious for their students and most of the teaching is very good. In psychology lessons, students develop their analytical and evaluative skills within a learning environment that requires them to work to a high standard. They work through challenging exercises that demand critical thinking and they get appropriate support. They enjoy their lessons. A group of students taking the GCE AS examination next January and the GCE A2 examination next June worked purposefully on a series of tasks relating to interview techniques. By the end of the lesson, they had all consolidated their understanding of research methods. A group of adult students learned how to achieve high marks for psychology assignments in a workshop, through the teacher's clear advice on structure. The tested their knowledge in an exercise requiring them to identify weaknesses in some mock essays. All the teaching of adult students is satisfactory or better. Teaching in the Muslim centres is stimulating and challenging and students clearly enjoy their learning.

142. In many of the lessons, students are active. In a very good history lesson, GCE AS students were fascinated by a collection of primary sources which recounted in graphic detail the horrors of child labour in Preston in the Nineteenth Century. They worked enthusiastically in pairs categorising the different types of problems caused by child labour and made good progress in sifting and evaluating evidence.

143. On courses other than psychology, planning for students aged 16 to 18 does not take into account the range of ability within the groups. In a number of lessons, the needs of brighter students are not catered for. Often students of very different abilities have to work at the same pace through the same material. In one lesson, for example, a more able student waited for 10 minutes for other students to complete the task. In other lessons, students were insufficiently challenged by undemanding tasks or questions that required simple one-word answers.

144. Accommodation is mostly enlivened with displays of students' work. Some accommodation for adult students provides a dull learning environment. Learning resources are inadequate. The library stock is limited in range and in quality. There is restricted access to computers in both the classrooms and in the sixth form learning centre. There is little evidence of the integration of ILT into teaching and learning. Schemes of work make very little reference to video material and none was used during inspection week. There are not enough class handouts and this adversely affects learning.

145. Most marked work gives good indications to students of how to improve. Marking in law and religious studies is not as thorough as in other areas. With the exception of history, spelling and grammar are not usually corrected. Work by GCSE sociology and psychology students has not been marked in line with the board's standards.

146. There are insufficient subject-specific enrichment activities. Key skills are integrated into lesson planning and are evident in classroom practice. Much attention, for example, is given to the development of oral communication.

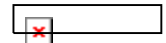
147. Most teachers know their students well and there is much good individual subject support.

Psychology students can get help with their work from a specialist psychologist based in the learning centre. Subject guidance at enrolment for students aged 16 to 18 is good. Not all adult students have an initial guidance interview and there is no initial assessment of adults on part-time courses. Good additional support is given to students with specific learning difficulties.

Leadership and management

148. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Humanities subjects are well co-ordinated within the recently established A-level centre. Weekly meetings of the programme area co-ordinators with the head of the centre are business-like and focus closely on the quality of the students' experience. The humanities self-assessment report is rigorous in its analysis of strengths and weaknesses and action planning is thorough, though some actions have not been carried out. Management and quality assurance are less strong at programme-team level. Meetings are infrequent and are not always held at times when part-time staff can attend. With the exception of the psychology team, insufficient planning of teaching and learning is done within programme teams and insufficient action is taken to address poor achievement. The social science team, for example, has taken no action to address the poor pass rates for GCE AS subjects. Some new teachers in law are working in isolation from other staff. Schemes of work for psychology and sociology are helpful planning documents. The law scheme is too general and does not show how the differing learning needs of the range of students will be catered for.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high and improving pass rates

- good individual additional support,

- good initiatives to widen participation

- good enrichment programme.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates on most courses

- insufficient differentiation of teaching methods to meet the needs of all students in whole-class lessons

- o insufficiently evaluative records of learning

- o some unsatisfactory accommodation.

Scope of provision

149. The college offers literacy and numeracy programmes for adults in the college, in community venues and in the workplace. There is also individual and in-class support for students on other college programmes. There are 700 adults and 300 students aged 16 to 18 on programmes for literacy or numeracy. Students aged 14 to 16 are taught alongside students on other programmes. All students have the opportunity to work towards accreditation from entry level to level 2. There are 560 students receiving on-course or individual support for literacy or numeracy. The college offers a basic skills summer school. The dean of essential skills manages literacy and numeracy provision with six managers, seven team leaders or programme co-ordinators, and forty teaching staff and one administrator. Additional support for literacy, numeracy, language and dyslexia is managed by the dean of additional support with five co-ordinators, six team leaders, four administrators, twelve teaching staff, six signers and nineteen learning support assistants.

Achievement and standards

150. Pass rates for qualifications in literacy and numeracy for students aged 16 to 18 on the vocational access programme are high and improving. Students' attainment and development of literacy and numeracy skills in sessions are satisfactory. An incentive scheme has been introduced to help improve the retention rates and achievement of these students. Students who return to their programme after the main holiday periods and whose attendance, behaviour and progress have been satisfactory are awarded a £20 token at the beginning of the new term. Pass rates for qualifications in literacy and numeracy for adults are high and students make satisfactory progress in lessons. Their standards of attainment are good. Standards of attainment for students with learning difficulties are unsatisfactory. Session times have been arranged to fit in with workers' shift patterns and lifestyles to help retention and increase enrolment. The college does not measure the impact of additional support for literacy, numeracy, language or dyslexia on the pass and retention rates of students on other college courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in mathematics (one year)	E	No. of starts	122	146	170
		% retention	69	72	68
		% pass rate	46	59	89
Certificate in English (one year)	E	No. of starts	124	144	174
		% retention	71	74	72
		% pass rate	66	54	100
College certificate in literacy (one year)	E	No. of starts	168	240	312
		% retention	78	75	71
		% pass rate	89	99	100
College certificate in	E	No. of starts	93	112	73

numeracy		% retention	80	84	55
		% pass rate	74	97	100
College certificate in literacy (one year)	1	No. of starts	171	41	47
		% retention	83	66	57
		% pass rate	92	100	96

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

Quality of education and training

151. Teaching and learning are good in individual learning support sessions for students with dyslexia, numeracy, literacy or language needs. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and use a wide range of teaching strategies to support students. In these sessions, skilful tutors use students' coursework and vocationally relevant material to carefully develop individual skills, which helps the students to become more independent. Students value highly the support they receive.

152. For students aged 14 to 16 and those aged 16 to 18 on the vocational access programme, literacy and numeracy teaching is appropriately contextual. For example, in a literacy lesson for plumbers, the students were asked to identify the main points in a vocationally relevant video which they watched. On the leisure and sports option, students were asked to consider how flagging devices are used in advertisements. On the workplace programmes, some learning is customised to meet the needs of the students in the workplace. For example, there is a literacy programme for care staff which concentrates on improving literacy skills for report writing.

153. In whole-class sessions and classes for students with learning difficulties, teachers fail to vary their methods and the learning activities they set sufficiently. For example, in one adult numeracy class, the tutor led a whole-class question-and-answer session for 45 minutes to introduce the concept of measurement. There was no individual work or work in pairs and no other teaching methods were used to develop or check students' understanding. In a numeracy lesson for students with learning difficulties, the objective was to ensure that students could tell a quarter past and half past the hour. One student could already tell the time using an analogue clock and became bored and disruptive when asked to complete tasks that were too easy. Teachers and learning support staff do not have shared strategies for the management of students with behavioural difficulties who disrupt the learning of other students.

154. There are good enrichment activities that extend students' learning. Students have good opportunities to apply the skills they have developed by organising and taking part in educational visits. Students use numeracy skills, such as reading timetables and estimating and costing visits and transport, and use literacy skills, such as writing and telephoning for information when planning a visit. The basic skills summer school is used as an enrichment programme for students who have been on other term-time programmes.

155. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory. Some teaching rooms in vocational areas are inappropriate for the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills. One room that is used for teaching in the engineering block is a closed gallery over an engineering workshop. The room is very small and hot and fumes coming into the room from the workshop below smell strongly of oil. The extractor fan in the room has been broken for some time, and some students complained of headaches and became tired and distracted. The essential skills open learning resource centre is designed for independent study and workshop teaching. However, with current space shortages, it is being used to teach two classes at a time. The noise level is distracting and prevents tutors and students from adequately hearing each other. While there is enough ICT hardware available, there is insufficient use of ICT literacy and numeracy.

156. Teachers are well qualified and most have undertaken training in the national core curriculum. However, tutors have not yet undertaken training in the pre-entry curriculum. Well-qualified teachers provide additional support for literacy, numeracy, language needs and dyslexia, and they have a

good level of additional qualifications such as dyslexia and British sign language. However, staffing shortages in additional support are negatively impacting on the ability to provide adequate support to all identified students.

157. Tutors' records of learning in lessons and the six-weekly reviews are insufficiently evaluative, and are not adequately used to record progress or form a basis for teaching and learning. Tutors' records are mostly descriptive and concentrate on the recording of tasks undertaken and not on the careful monitoring and measurement of the development of skills. All full-time students are screened for literacy, numeracy, language and dyslexia through a thorough initial assessment. This information is used by additional support staff in the production of very detailed learning profiles, which are distributed to vocational and academic tutors. However, staff shortages have reduced the additional support team's ability to produce these profiles. Teachers working with the students with learning difficulties in the essential skills faculty have not been provided with profiles, or with information gained in the pre-entry and on-entry assessment, from which to effectively plan learning.

158. There are some good initiatives to widen participation and engage more students in improving their literacy or numeracy skills. Literacy and numeracy programmes in the college are well organised into levels of learning to form homogenous groups to help improve retention rates and to enable students to progress from one level to another. Times of classes take into account the different work styles and lifestyles of students. Enrolment in this programme area increased in 2002/03 by 200 students. The workplace programme is working with employers and provides 30-hour customised training programmes to develop employees' literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace. The workplace team are committed to attracting new students and have produced some good promotional materials. They are actively involved in local partnerships and initiatives such as the brokerage scheme. The college is working with five employers providing nine sessions engaging sixty students. In 2002/03, the workplace programmes involved 150 students.

Leadership and management

159. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers and co-ordinators in the area have an open, honest style of management and have identified in a thorough self-assessment many of the weaknesses found at inspection. However, in the college's scheme of observation, much higher grades were awarded to teaching and learning than that found by inspectors, and feedback given to staff offered little supportive development. Staff development in the programme area has focused on training in the core curriculum. There is no overall staff development plan based on a needs analysis or programme development plan. Staff have not been appraised in the last year. The recently introduced mentoring scheme for new staff gives very good support to staff to help them develop their skills and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The reorganisation of the programme area gives specific programme management for the development of community and workplace literacy and numeracy provision and for the development of provision for students aged 16 to 18 and adults in the college. However, the community and workplace co-ordinators have two line-management structures, which does not help to support the development and improvement of the basic skills provision as a whole. There is insufficient quality assurance of key student processes, such as individual learning plans and records of learning. Targets for retention and pass rates are not clear or fully understood or used by staff. There is inconsistent internal verification of the college-accredited programmes across the provision, although some further staff are being trained as internal verifiers. Course reviews are satisfactory.

Part D: College data

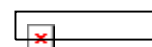


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	26	30
2	30	33
3	35	10
4/5	0	0
Other	9	27
Total	100	100

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	1,001	1,671	5
Land-based provision	2	102	0
Construction	500	4,595	10
Engineering, technology and manufacture	543	786	3
Business administration, management and professional	757	2,339	6
Information and communication technology	1,757	8,259	20
Retailing, customer service and transportation	6	60	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	766	1,184	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	399	1,669	4
Health, social care and public services	394	3,840	9
Visual and performing arts and media	1,404	2,833	9
Humanities	1,875	965	6
English, languages and communication	1,412	624	4
Foundation programmes	2,047	458	5
Unknown area of learning	1,621	5,214	14
Total	14,484	34,599	100

Source: provided by the college in Autumn 2003

* figures are 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
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,421	1,780	1,961	3,231	3,052	4,670
	Retention rate (%)	79	75	63	71	63	60
	National average (%)	76	75	76	73	69	70
	Pass rate (%)	64	68	66	68	72	70
	National average (%)	65	69	71	66	68	71
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,775	1,752	1,994	3,744	6,225	7,816
	Retention rate (%)	76	76	71	66	61	56
	National average (%)	72	70	72	70	68	68
	Pass rate (%)	71	81	76	73	80	75
	National average (%)	67	69	71	64	68	72
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,716	2,782	3,157	1,945	1,853	2,282
	Retention rate (%)	70	75	77	73	70	71
	National average (%)	67	71	77	69	68	70
	Pass rate (%)	80	78	76	73	74	69
	National average (%)	75	77	79	66	69	72
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	235	167	150
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	83	78	73
	National average (%)	*	*	*	67	67	68
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	65	75	46
	National average (%)	*	*	*	58	55	56

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 1999 to 2002: College ISR.

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	57	34	7	101
Level 2 (intermediate)	58	36	5	72
Level 1 (foundation)	47	52	0	34
Other sessions	36	56	8	25
Totals	54	40	6	232

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