



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

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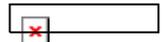
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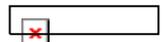
**Basic information about the college**



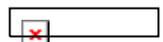
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Name of college:	Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	David Heaton
Address of college:	Vane Terrace Darlington Co Durham DL3 7AU
Telephone number:	01325 461315
Fax number:	01325 361705
Chair of governors:	Christopher Wiper
Unique reference number:	130662
Name of reporting inspector:	Christine Steadman HMI
Date of inspection:	10-14 November 2003

**Part A: Summary**



**Information about the college**



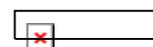
16 to 18 in Darlington and the surrounding area. Since 1993, the college has grown from 935 students of whom 903 were full time and aged 16 to 18, to the present position of 1,950 enrolments of whom 1,520 are full time and aged 16 to 18. The college is part of the Tees Valley local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and is the largest sixth form college in the Tees Valley. Approximately 70% of the area is rural with a population of 98,000, of whom 85,000 live in the town. Information from the government Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000) indicates that two wards within the borough are amongst the 5% most deprived areas in the country, with a further one in the worst 10%. Over 50% of the population of Darlington live in 13 wards within the worst 25% nationally, with the proportion of young people in these wards being high, at 24%. The gender balance of full-time students in 2003 was 56% female and 44% male, with 3.5% from minority ethnic groups which is higher than that of the local community of about 2%.

The college has thirteen 11 to 16 partner schools. Six are within Darlington, five in south Durham and two in North Yorkshire. In October 2003, 51% of the college's intake of students aged 16 came from partner schools in Darlington, 20% from other 11 to 16 schools and 29% from either maintained schools for pupils aged 11 to 18 or the independent sector. In 2003, the proportion of students leaving schools in Darlington with five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects at grade C and above was 50.8%, compared with the national average of 52.6%. Whilst the majority of students are full time and aged 16 to 18, the college makes a clearly focused contribution to adult provision within Darlington.

The college offers 35 subjects at General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level), 37 at GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS), 6 at Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), 6 at GCSE and 3 at the intermediate level leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ). In addition, there is a significant amount of enrichment provision including key skills and courses accredited by the Open College Network (OCN). There is also a foundation Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) course in art and design and access to higher education (HE) courses for adults in eight subjects. The college works collaboratively with the local general further education (FE) college to ensure that there are appropriate courses of study for young people and adults in the area.

The mission of the college clearly states that its purpose is to achieve and maintain excellence as a provider of education and, as a result, be recognised as one of the country's leading sixth form colleges. Its strategic objectives focus on the issues relevant to its mission, with particular emphasis on high standards of teaching, learning and student achievement.

### How effective is the college?



Provision is outstanding in mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT), creative and performing arts and media, and humanities subjects which accounts for over 70% of the college's student population. There is good provision in all the other areas inspected. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

#### **Key strengths**

- outstanding pass rates and high retention rates
  
- students achieve very well compared to predictions based on their entry qualifications

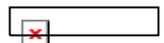
- very good progression to HE and employment
- ambitious new building programme
- very effective links with the local community
- excellent enrichment programme
- very good support and guidance for students
- outstanding leadership
- exceptionally focused and positive adult environment
- very effective financial management
- very capable and highly committed governors.

***What should be improved***

- access for students with restricted mobility.

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

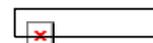
**Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**



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	<b>Good.</b> There are good pass rates in science, with very good achievement of target grades. Retention rates on GCE AS courses are low. The range of provision is good. Teaching is effective, however, specific support for the less able students is limited.
Mathematics and information and communications technology	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates are high and many students perform well above expectations. Teaching and learning are very good and students make highly effective use of learning resources. Management of mathematics and computing is very good, as is teamwork.
Business	<b>Outstanding.</b> Very good teaching results in good retention rates and outstanding examination pass rates. Highly motivated students make use of good quality learning resources. There is insufficient sharing of best practice across the curriculum.
Visual, performing arts and media	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass and retention rates are outstanding. In music, and drama and theatre studies, the high grades achieved are below the national average. The teaching of practical work is effective and exploratory. Students develop high levels of technical skills and produce innovative and sophisticated work. Courses offer students an extensive range of enrichment opportunities.
Humanities	<b>Outstanding.</b> There are high pass rates with an outstanding number of high grades in geography, law and psychology. Students do better than predicted from their entry qualifications. Teaching is very good and students have a very positive approach to learning. There is a very good range of resources to encourage and develop independent learning.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> There are very good pass rates on level 3 English courses and in GCE A-level French and German. The teaching in some subjects is outstanding. Students benefit from a wide range of subject-related enrichment and some excellent resources. There is insufficient sharing of good practice in English and modern foreign language courses and no use of information and learning technology (ILT) within English literature and some modern foreign language lessons.

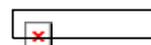
### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers have created a very positive staff culture with improvements in students' achievements as the main priority. Managers and teaching staff are committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of the college's work. Curriculum management is effective, although in a few areas opportunities to share good practice are missed. Retention and pass rates, including the performance of students when compared to predictions based on their entry qualifications, are high. Governors, managers and

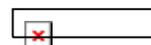
comprehensive. Self-assessment is thorough, particularly in terms of data analysis and the analysis of students' views, but the reports lack clear summaries of strengths and weaknesses. Equal opportunities are addressed through appropriate policies. Governance is effective. Financial management is very good. Taking into account staff deployment, class size and outcomes, the college provides outstanding value for money.

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



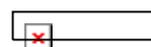
The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The college welcomes students with a range of abilities. A good range of courses is offered at level 3 and a reasonable range at level 2 for students aged 16 to 18. There are a small number of day and evening adult courses. Appropriate policies are in place for equal opportunities and race equality. The proportion of students of minority ethnic origin has increased in recent years and it is higher than that in the local population. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Many parts of the college are accessible to students with mobility difficulties and the new buildings will have full access. The race equality policy meets legal requirements. It has recently been updated and is linked to an action plan. Race equality is promoted through events led by the student association and through curriculum delivery, primarily the general studies programme, which most students study. Monitoring of students' performance is thorough including useful data based on gender and ethnicity.

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



Support and guidance for students are very good. All students receive a high standard of personal support from tutors and teachers. The tutorial arrangements are flexible and used very effectively to meet the needs of individuals. Counselling and welfare arrangements are well co-ordinated and carefully managed. The college provides very good impartial advice and guidance to current and prospective students. Careers education and guidance are excellent and students benefit from extremely effective processes for applications to FE, HE and employment. Appropriate learning support is available to all students. The work undertaken to maintain links with prospective students is outstanding. There are effective arrangements to accredit prior learning for new students. The induction programme is very effective. Widening participation is promoted through the provision of additional financial support for those who need it. The excellent monitoring of attendance and punctuality is particularly noteworthy.

### **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***

- the good reputation of the college

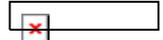
- the friendly atmosphere
- being treated like an adult
- the good choice of extra curricular activities
- the good facilities, in particular the library and access to computers
- the virtual learning environment
- the helpful and approachable staff.

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

- having more time to get from one lesson to another
- the car parking facilities
- more lockers for personal use
- more reliable buses
- longer opening times in the library for evening use
- the common room

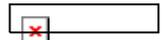
- o better canteen facilities.

### Other information



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

### Part B: The college as a whole



### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



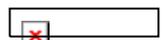
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	85	14	1
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**
Learning 16-18	83	16	1
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**

*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*

*\*\*no work-based learning and virtually all students were aged 16 to 18*

### Achievement and standards



18, who study subjects at GCE AS and A level. Approximately 15% of students aged 16 to 19 are studying at levels below level 3 and 8% of students are aged over 19. The college operates a first-come-first-served policy for all prospective level 3 students with the minimum of four GCSE at grades A\* to C entry requirements. However, most students start with at least six GCSE subjects at grades A\* to C. Almost all students gain the qualification for which they are aiming. The college's success rates place it in the top 10 colleges in the country.

2. Retention rates have improved at all levels over the last three years and are above national averages. The variations between the levels of course show a low of 78% for the access to HE courses to 100% for art foundation course, both with small numbers of enrolments. The major enrolments are for GCE A-level courses, with a retention rate of 96% and GCE AS courses, with a retention rate of 90%. A 92% retention rate for all level 3 courses is high, whilst for level 2 courses at 80.9% it remains satisfactory. Retention rate targets are set each year and the college has achieved them in almost all areas.

3. Pass rates have improved over the last three years. At level 3, these are now three percentage points above the high national figure of 89%. At level 2, they are outstanding at 89% in 2002 and 97% in 2003. These figures compare very favourably with the national average in 2002, of 84%. Approximately 55% of all courses within the college achieved a pass rate at or better than 95%. At GCE A level, 95% of students passed, whilst nearly 50% achieved high grades. At GCE AS, 78% of all students passed and about one third achieved high grades.

4. The college has the greatest number of GCE and Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) examination entries of any institution in Darlington. Approximately three quarters of all the entries made are made by Queen Elizabeth College students. In 2002, the average points score for each student at 320.3 is well above the national average of 280.3. Similarly, the average points score for each examination entry of 80.7 is above the national average of 77.2. Analysis of students' progression indicates that students on level 3 courses do very much better than might be suggested from predictions based on their prior attainment. There has been a dramatic improvement in this measure over the last four years with, on average, all students entered achieving a third of a grade better than predicted for them. The subjects that performed best in 2002/03, are geography, physics and geology, whilst there were very few subjects where there was a statistically significant poor performance.

5. Achievement of key skills level 3 qualifications is better than the national averages for both application of number and communications, at over 50%. These achievements have improved over the previous three years from below the national average. However, no student obtained the full award for information technology (IT) key skills at level 3 in 2002/03, whereas they have been better than the national figures for previous years. A decision has been made to change the qualifications for application of number and IT to equivalent courses assessed through final examinations only.

6. Students are confident and express themselves particularly well. They enjoy their learning, most developing an enquiring approach with good group and paired work. The college instils an approach to learning that ensures students learn independently. There is much effective work outside of the classroom either with direct teacher assistance or by students on their own.

7. Attendance rates are generally very good. The college quotes an attendance rate of 87.6% for 2001/02, which when compared with the attendance observed during inspection of 86% is close to the figure observed in other sixth form colleges of 84%. One of the lowest attendance rates observed was on GCSE courses, at 79%.

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

8. Teaching is good or better in the vast majority of lessons. It is outstanding in mathematics and ICT, and humanities, which involves over half of the student population. Teachers are very well qualified and show extensive knowledge and expertise across all curriculum areas. Many staff show technical expertise which is particularly evident in practical subjects. Additionally, a significant number of staff are particularly effective in their use of the virtual learning environment. Many staff

have additional specialist qualifications which they use to good effect. Where the use of technical equipment is integrated into lessons, it enhances the students' learning experience.

9. The majority of teachers plan very effectively and use their lesson plans to evaluate their own performance and students' attainment. In a minority of lessons, planning is less effective with the aims and objectives of the session not fully shared with students. Teaching styles are generally consistent with the needs of the students, although on a few occasions the individual needs of students are identified on lesson plans, but are not fully met.

10. Students are highly motivated and appreciate the opportunities given to them. The majority are fully engaged in the life of the college and manage their personal study time outside of lessons with confidence. Teachers provide stimulating activities, which engage and inspire students to achieve to their expected potential and in many cases they achieve beyond expectations. Students acknowledge the contribution teachers make to their learning and identify the knowledge and skills they have acquired.

11. Monitoring of students' progress is rigorous with detailed review of individual targets. Outcomes from such sessions are regularly updated and inform the next stage of the individual learning plans. Initial assessment is detailed and tailored to individual needs, following extensive liaison with feeder schools.

12. The working relationship between staff and students is excellent and is reflected in the very positive interactions observed in the majority of lessons. For example, in a business studies lesson, students very willingly completed a physical activity requested by the teacher and were then immediately afterwards able to discuss the implications of the activity in relation to their academic work.

13. Effective policies and procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of staff. Teachers are well qualified. Approximately a third of staff possess a higher degree. Teachers have relevant, recent vocational experience. For example, a number of art teachers have current experience as professional artists. Teaching and administration staff are encouraged to update their professional knowledge and skills by undertaking a wide range of courses. There is effective technical and administrative support. There is insufficient technical support for media studies.

14. College accommodation is well maintained and offers a good environment in which to learn. Teaching rooms are well equipped and suitably furnished. Practical sessions are undertaken in safe and clean working environments. There is a good range of specialist resources. Within mathematics and ICT, good use is made of interactive whiteboards. However, in some language classes, there is insufficient use made of ICT in lessons. Since the last inspection, the college has implemented plans to sell two buildings near to the main site and to undertake an ambitious redevelopment. The new building will include a sports hall and laboratories, as well as specialist and general classrooms. Two IT rooms are unsuitable for students with mobility difficulties. The west wing of the main site has some science laboratories that offer an inadequate learning environment. The college has plans in place to refurbish the west wing of the main site by August 2004, when the current work on the major new development will be completed. Students' work is displayed throughout the public areas of the college. In addition, classrooms are given effective subject identity by the judicious use of students' work. The reception area is welcoming and appropriately situated. A limited facility for students to mix socially is provided. Signage and remote door opening facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of students with mobility difficulties.

15. Since the last inspection, an IT centre has been built that offers good computer facilities for staff and students. The college has undertaken considerable investment to ensure that all parts of the college have access to IT facilities. Access to the Internet and e-mail is good. The recently introduced virtual learning environment is well used with students able to access it from their homes. Useful information is displayed on five television screens positioned around the main campus, but the screens are small and not suitable for students with visual impairment. Most resources are centrally catalogued and include an appropriate range of learning materials. Library resources are well managed, used and available during the day and two evenings a week. All teachers have good access to a computer workstation.

16. There is no college-wide policy on assessment and monitoring of students' work, however, there are firm guidelines that all staff adhere to and understand. These guidelines are implemented in a variety of ways that meet the needs of courses and subjects. External verifiers' reports are positive about the quality of students' work and the standards achieved. The marked work undergoes a considerable amount of cross-moderation. Assessed work is well marked, giving students clear guidance on the ways in which it can improve. There are a variety of methods of assessment of students in use. Data based upon an analysis of students' entry qualifications lead to an initial target for each student. These targets are then reviewed at two other times in the year after formal internal assessments. Discussion with students take place at each stage and parents are informed of the progress made. Students have a very clear idea of how they are performing and how they might improve. Action plans are negotiated with each student at these various stages and at informal intermediate times.

17. There is a wide range of options available to students who wish to study an advanced level course. The range of science provision at level 3 is particularly good. Foundation level courses in mathematics and English are also available. Flexibility in setting the timetable provides students with a good range of provision. For example, 110 full-time students are able to study courses leading to AVCE awards alongside GCSEs. A small number of mainly short courses including computing, language and counselling are run during the evening when numbers permit.

18. A good range of enrichment opportunities are available that extend the curriculum. Activities are offered to enhance personal and cultural development and sporting ability. Enrichment activities are well publicised. Activities include membership of a college choir, orchestra, discussion forums and drama productions. In addition, a range of theatre and media visits are organised. Much of the enrichment programme leads to accreditation. For example, students are able to acquire additional qualifications, such as community sports leader awards, Duke of Edinburgh award and OCN certification in a range of modern languages. A good range of sports are undertaken at a nearby sports field or at alternative indoor venues. The chaplain, who is very active in the life of the college, undertakes a weekly service of collective worship. A programme of visiting speakers considers moral, spiritual and social issues and the experience and customs of other cultures.

19. There are very good links with external agencies. For example, a Darlington-wide prospectus is produced that provides information on local education opportunities. Regular and productive meetings are undertaken with staff from the local general FE college. The principal is the chair of the Darlington learning partnership. This has made a positive contribution towards ensuring coherence in the education offer within Darlington. There are well-established links with partner schools. Pupils regularly attend events at the college to raise awareness of the opportunities offered within FE.

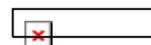
20. There are good links with HE institutions. A high percentage of students progress to HE courses. Since 1996, the college's 'business associates' scheme has encouraged employers to link with the college. Employers within the scheme sponsor prizes, supply visiting speakers and help with an extensive range of work experience placements. Employers' views are regularly surveyed and the results inform college planning.

21. Students, particularly at level 2, often do not achieve key skills at an appropriate level. Many students have failed to complete their portfolios of evidence. However, in some cases other qualifications have been achieved that are equivalent to key skills. The college recognises the inadequate completion of portfolios and has implemented strategies to correct the situation.

22. There is a high level of relevant and timely student support. All prospective students receive very good pre-entry guidance. The college has particularly good links with prospective students in partner schools. Each school is assigned a college tutor who acts in a liaison role and regularly visits the school. Interviews with prospective students are undertaken either at school or at the college. Further interviews are undertaken during a bridging course and at enrolment. Information from schools and the students' application forms are extremely well used to ensure the students choose courses and subjects that will help meet their career aspirations. All students receive appropriate initial assessment and accreditation of prior learning. A highly effective and welcoming induction is undertaken with all students. To better meet student needs, the college year has been adjusted to finish early in July and start in mid August.

23. Financial support is available to students through the learner support fund and a local charity. Students make good use of an independent counsellor. Careers education and guidance are very good. A highly experienced careers adviser provides an excellent standard of information and advice for students wishing to continue their education or who are considering alternatives such as employment or a 'gap year'. The career resources held in the library are well used and up to date. Students benefit from comprehensive and flexible tutorials that meet their needs. They have confidence that any issues raised with their tutor will be dealt with appropriately. The structure of the tutorial process has been changed to reflect the views of students. At the start of a students' course, very good use is made of tutorials to introduce them to a range of topics including rights and responsibilities, study skills, time management and curriculum vitae completion. Subsequent tutorials are tailored to meet the immediate needs of individuals or small groups of students. Tutors keep detailed logs of the work they have undertaken with students and regularly review the logs and activities with a principal tutor. The college ensures that students on evening courses have access to tutorial support through a subject tutor. Learning support is satisfactory, with an appropriate range of specialist learning materials.

## Leadership and management



24. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers have succeeded in creating a dynamic, positive culture and ethos. Teaching and support staff feel valued. Staff are consulted about many issues and their views are respected. Responses to a staff survey carried out in 2002 demonstrate that staff attitudes are more positive than those typically found in sixth form colleges. The principal is a motivational leader who sets high standards and has high expectations of his staff. Shared values are implicit in the behaviour of all staff. The management style is open, supportive and communicative.

25. The college recently produced a new mission statement and a good set of strategic objectives that are clearly focused on the quality of education. Governors, managers and staff all contributed to these through meetings and staff development events. These objectives are addressed through development plans. Monitoring of the implementation of these plans is thorough.

26. Retention and pass rates have shown consistent improvements over many years. Overall pass rates for long level 3 courses, such as those leading to GCE AS and GCE A-level qualifications, are high and have improved year on year. Retention rates are also above national averages. Students do much better overall on advanced level courses than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Demanding targets are set at all levels. Many of these targets are met, although occasionally very high targets are missed, usually by only a small margin. The quality of teaching and learning is better than that found in sixth form colleges inspected in 2002/03.

27. Curriculum management is outstanding in two of the areas inspected, good in three and satisfactory in one. Middle managers are enthusiastic in their pursuit of excellence and successfully create an atmosphere where teamwork and collaboration flourish. In most curriculum areas, subject team meetings are appropriately focused on teaching and learning, student views, attendance, progress and achievement. Schemes of work are modified to reflect best practice. However, in a small minority of cases, some opportunities to share good practice are missed.

28. Communications are very effective and include a short daily briefing with the principal, to which any member of staff can contribute. Minutes of these briefings are posted on notice boards and on the intranet which staff can access from home. A college calendar schedules formal meetings. Teachers value the approachability of senior managers. The line management structure is clear and roles and responsibilities are well understood. The senior management group meets weekly. Agendas are short and focused. Data is well managed. The management information system (MIS) is accessible to managers and some key staff. Other staff receive appropriate reports at intervals.

29. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and well documented. Detailed data relating to attendance and achievement is collated and made available to subject teams. Rigorous analysis of this data is a cornerstone of self-assessment. The views of students on a wide range of issues, including teaching, are also collated and analysed and contribute to judgements made about the quality of provision. Detailed action plans are drawn up at subject level to address issues raised through self-assessment. The self-assessment reports lack a clear summary of the key strengths and weaknesses of the subjects. All new staff are observed by the principal and managers and a good proportion of teachers are observed annually. However, at the time of the inspection, not all teachers had been observed within the previous 12 months. The grades awarded for internal lesson observations by college managers were more generous than those of inspectors.

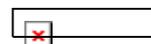
30. At the time of the inspection, the college system of staff reviews was about to be replaced with a new performance management system. Staff development is well planned and effective. A range of techniques is used to identify staff development needs. Much staff development is run within college. A particularly successful feature is the introduction of 'bite size' sessions, typically IT training offered at lunchtime. Staff have received training in the recently purchased virtual learning environment and in the use of electronic whiteboards. The integration of ILT into teaching and learning is promoted through sessions delivered by non-ICT specialists explaining how they use ILT in their own teaching. Useful good practice guides are also produced. New teachers have a structured formal induction and receive good support from line manager and colleagues.

31. The college has an equal opportunities policy, a race equality policy and a disability statement. Legislative requirements are met. The race equality policy is supported by an action plan. Support for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties is good. Race equality is promoted through the curriculum, for example, in general studies which the vast majority of students study. Students of minority ethnic origin have been invited to talk about their experiences in college and the equal opportunities committee follows up issues raised. Events to raise awareness are planned by the student association and supported by college management. The college charter includes a complaints procedure and the few formal written complaints received are handled appropriately.

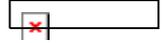
32. Governance is effective. The college benefits from the wide range of expertise of governors. The corporation has a strong focus on student achievements and experiences. The capital building project has received much attention and the financial implications have been carefully considered by governors. The corporation has prioritised maintaining the quality of teaching and learning and minimising disruption to students during the work. The academic standards of the college are subjected to close scrutiny and governors have a very good understanding of key issues. The student committee provides a useful forum for students to meet governors and share their experiences. Governors receive reports on curriculum areas, presentations from managers, sit in on lessons on occasion, and attend events such as college drama productions. Key performance indicators have been set for the full corporation and its committees and these are reviewed annually.

33. Financial management is very good. Funding targets have been exceeded for two out of the last three years. Operating surpluses have exceeded budgeted surpluses for the last two years. The college has held category A financial status for over three years. A local LSC review shortly before the inspection raised no significant concerns about the financial management and governance frameworks of the college. The financial implications of the building project, which involves a substantial short-term loan, have been carefully assessed. Taking into account the college deployment of staff, average class size and the outcomes in terms of retention and pass rates, the college provides outstanding value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



## Science



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

### **Strengths**

- good pass rates
  
- very good achievement of target grades
  
- good range of provision at level 3
  
- effective teaching.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on GCE AS courses in 2003
  
- insufficient specific support for less able students.

### **Scope of provision**

34. The college provides a range of courses for students aged 16 to 18 wishing to study sciences. GCE AS and A levels are offered in biology, chemistry, physics, science and geology. The college is one of the few colleges in the country to offer GCE A-level science. GCSE courses are available in single award science. The college also has adult provision, with an access course offered in human biology and an evening GCE AS biology class. There is no vocational provision.

### **Achievement and standards**

35. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses were high in 2003, at over 94%. However, there has been a decline in retention rates over the past year at GCE AS; retention rates were around national averages, although they are lower for GCE AS physics, chemistry and geology, at 78%, 86% and 82%, respectively. In GCSE science, results have varied greatly for the past three years, with 58% of students achieving grade C or above in 2003.

36. Pass rates at advanced level in science are good. They are around or above national averages in all subjects and have been consistently good for the past three years. In 2003, the pass rates for GCE AS physics, science and geology were around 100%, with pass rates for GCE AS chemistry

and biology comparable with national averages. At GCE A level, students were successful in all subjects, with more than 97% passing. For all advanced level courses, students have usually performed better than expected based on their entry qualifications.

37. Students make good progress in lessons and the work produced is of good quality. Practical skills are good, with students working safely in practical lessons, handling equipment and chemicals confidently. The links between practical and theory are clearly understood. Students answer questions confidently, asking challenging questions and using technical terms appropriately. Skills such as note taking and communications are also developed through teaching, with students confidently carrying out presentations within lessons.

38. Many full-time students progress to HE in science. For example, in 2003, 79% of advanced level chemistry students went on to HE, studying science-related courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	33	35	53
		% retention	82	80	81
		% pass rate	67	36	58
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	91	79	59
		% retention	88	97	78
		% pass rate	99	99	98
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	133	113	151
		% retention	88	88	87
		% pass rate	94	92	83
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	95	95	90
		% retention	91	83	86
		% pass rate	88	97	82
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	**	87	71
		% retention	**	99	94
		% pass rate	**	97	97
GCE A-level geology	3	No. of starts	**	25	15
		% retention	**	96	87
		% pass rate	**	100	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	**	63	55
		% retention	**	98	95
		% pass rate	**	100	98

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

\*\* in these years, the Advanced level was different to present A-level course

***Quality of education and training***

39. Overall teaching is judged to be good or better. This is consistent with the college's own internal observations. Teaching is generally effective and has a significant impact on learning, with high

levels of achievement. There are good schemes of work in place across all subjects. These show that a good range of activities are planned to take place within lessons. In one lesson, the teacher used a website effectively to demonstrate the structure and replication of DNA. Practical lessons are well organised, enabling students to develop skills in handling equipment and carrying out accurate measurements. Students handle equipment confidently and safely, taking care with their recording and presentation of results. ICT is frequently used for graph plotting and report writing.

40. Students are well prepared for external examinations through the regular use of testing and practice examination questions. In some lessons, the tasks set are routine, with little to stretch the more able or support the less able students. Staff are using ICT effectively, within science teaching, embracing the opportunities provided by the use of the college's virtual learning environment and the availability of data projectors in all laboratories.

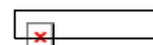
41. The staff are experienced and well qualified. There is a good range of resources available. The in-house written resources designed by teachers are of a high quality. These are used effectively within lessons to check on learning. Each room has interesting subject material on display, including students' work. Teaching rooms and laboratories are well equipped. However, the accommodation in biology and chemistry is poor. These facilities are dated, with poor and inflexible seating arrangements, limited storage available and poorly positioned computers. The college plans to address these inadequacies through the new build currently underway.

42. Assessment is effective in science and coursework meets awarding body requirements in full. Marking and commentary on students' work helps them identify how well they have done. There is regular use of testing and frequent use of past examination material. Students' achievement and progress is monitored on a regular basis with individual targets set. Strong working relationships are established. Students are well prepared for progression to HE courses. Study skills support is available for less able students, but there is no formal curriculum support available despite the increased number of weaker students. Revision sessions and some support sessions take place at lunchtime or after college, but they are not available throughout the year for each subject. Students value greatly the informal support that they receive. There is a range of science enrichment activities available to students, including visits to lectures at local universities, geology field trips, developing industrial projects and a visit and talk by two Russian cosmonauts.

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

43. The management of science is good. Standards and achievements have been maintained over several years. Regular meetings take place, and there has been some sharing and dissemination of good practice on the use of ICT in science teaching. This has enabled rapid progress, with staff sharing resources and ideas. There are good schemes of work in all subjects, which are shared. The monitoring of students' progression is good. The self-assessment process involves all teachers, and is accurate in its overall judgements. However, it does not fully represent the key strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum area and is mainly data driven. The development plans need to identify more clearly weaknesses and areas for development. Within science, equality of opportunity is good, with teachers aware of individual student needs.

### **Mathematics and information and communications technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- excellent pass rates

- high retention rates on full-time advanced level courses
  
- very good teaching and learning
  
- highly effective use of learning resources
  
- very good management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- no substantial weaknesses.

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

44. The college offers a good range of advanced computing courses for full-time students, with about 300 students studying for GCE AS and GCE A-level computing or AVCE in ICT. There is appropriate provision which meets the needs of adults. Approximately 60 students study in the evenings for ICT qualifications, including courses for beginners, the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), an access to HE course and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). Over 100 students study GCSE mathematics each year and a further 190 study mathematics at advanced level for pure, mechanics and statistics qualifications, a small number of whom study further mathematics qualifications.

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

45. Retention rates are at or above national averages on nearly all courses and are very high on GCE AS mathematics and computing and the AVCE ICT courses. They are lower on some evening ICT courses. Pass rates on full-time computing and mathematics courses are consistently very high, with between 90% and 100% pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics and computing and on the AVCE ICT course. The proportion of students gaining high grades in GCE AS computing, GCSE mathematics and both levels of GCE advanced mathematics is well above that of similar colleges. In GCE A-level computing, the proportion of students gaining high grades was lower than expected in 2003. Value added data show that most students perform consistently well above expectation. One recent mathematics student entered the college with an intermediate grade GCSE and gained a grade A at advanced level and a grade 2 in an extension paper two years later.

46. Students on full-time computing courses produce very good written work and a high standard of practical work. They use software with confidence, develop good research skills through the use of the Internet and produce creative documents and web pages. Students produce coursework which is designed for real end-users. This requires a high degree of reliability, which meets the needs of local businesses. Mathematics students have good problem solving skills, analyse and present data and perform calculations accurately and produce a high standard of coursework for external examinations.

47. Attendance during the inspection, at 85%, was above average for similar courses, and in many lessons was over 90%. Over 90% of full-time students progress to university to study for a range of mainly science, mathematics or computing-related degrees. A small number enter employment in IT-related jobs.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
OCR CLAIT	1	No. of starts	172	58	30
		% retention	71	85	80
		% pass rate	73	80	71
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	139	130	129
		% retention	83	86	81
		% pass rate	71	79	70
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	159	144	118
		% retention	85	89	93
		% pass rate	88	81	85
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	56**	91	74
		% retention	79	99	96
		% pass rate	100	99	99
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	90	91	58
		% retention	88	91	95
		% pass rate	97	90	82
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	60**	58	50
		% retention	82	100	94
		% pass rate	96	97	94
AVCE ICT double award	3	No. of starts	*	23	37
		% retention	*	79	95
		% pass rate	*	96	100

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

\*course did not run

\*\*in these years, the Advanced level was different to present A-level course

***Quality of education and training***

48. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers prepare their lessons well and use a variety of classroom activities to motivate students, including very effective use of interactive whiteboards, group work and individual tasks matched to student abilities. Effective use of questioning helps students to show their understanding and knowledge. Teachers encourage and value students, which helps them work to a high standard. In most lessons, teachers help students to make decisions for themselves and make good progress. Teachers provide extra support through two extra weekly mathematics classes. Students successfully develop a high standard of individual IT key skills through the use of learning material and challenging tasks in key skills lessons. In one

lesson, computing students successfully reinforced their understanding of binary trees through a number of short tasks, including group work, a computer simulation and a card game in which students had to role play at being computer pointers to show how the computer stores such data. In a successful mathematics lesson, students made good progress in the solution of trigonometrical equations through clear explanations from the teacher, working with other students on written exercises and through the visual experience of a computer graph-drawing package. Evening class students make rapid progress in developing their IT skills and creative documents through clear teacher demonstrations, constant praise and encouragement and the use of good quality learning material. In a small number of lessons, teachers do not sufficiently match activities to the needs of the students and often spend too much time on instruction and students spend too little time on practice.

49. Students make very good use of computers and library resources outside of lesson times to research for assignments and to develop their coursework. They access teaching notes, presentations and assignments through the college's virtual learning environment which they also access from home. All classrooms and computer laboratories are well equipped, most with interactive whiteboard facilities and there are useful wall displays. Teachers are appropriately qualified, experienced and all undertake personal development. Many are external moderators and examiners and use their knowledge to help students meet high standards.

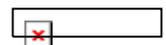
50. Initial assessment is used effectively to identify students' IT skills and subject knowledge. In mathematics, students with poor algebra skills take a bridging course before starting their GCE AS studies. Teachers make good use of information from partner schools to identify and support weaker students. Homework is regularly set and carefully marked, and teachers give accurate and useful written and verbal feedback, which helps students improve. Students appreciate the encouragement from teachers to achieve high standards.

51. Teachers and personal tutors effectively help students identify and meet challenging personal targets which are reviewed each term. Students are aware of their own progress and value the support, freely given, by teachers.

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

52. Curriculum leadership and management are outstanding and there is effective teamwork. Teachers prepare and share computer-based learning material, undertake rigorous course reviews and closely monitor student progress. Challenging college-wide targets on attendance, retention and pass rates are met. Teachers prepare adequate schemes of work, although these do not always indicate how teaching is to be matched to students' needs or where key skills can be developed. Teachers carefully analyse attendance patterns and pass rates and prepare accurate annual self-assessment. They also carefully monitor assignments to ensure that there is no bias and that they help students to reach high standards.

### **Business**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- outstanding pass rates
  
- good retention rates

- very good teaching
- highly motivated students.

**Weaknesses**

- insufficient sharing of best practice.

**Scope of provision**

53. The business and leisure curriculum area includes GCE AS and A-level courses in business studies and economics, and vocational courses in business and leisure and tourism. There are currently 113 students enrolled on GCE AS business studies, 61 on GCE A-level business studies, 27 on GCE AS and 11 on GCE A-level economics. Within business, there are also 14 GNVQ intermediate students and 32 studying for the AVCE (double award) in business. Leisure and tourism is offered at both intermediate and advanced level, with AVCEs available as both single and double awards. In total, there are 20 students enrolled on the intermediate programme, 78 on leisure and recreation and 54 on travel and tourism. There is no level 1 provision.

**Achievement and standards**

54. There are good retention rates on the majority of business and leisure courses reflecting the commitment of students to their studies. The retention rate on AVCE business (double award) is outstanding, at 83%, against a national average of 60%. Pass rates are well above the national average for sixth form colleges for AVCE business, GCE AS and A-level business studies and leisure and tourism programmes, with a good proportion achieving high grades. In 2003, all 98 students who finished the GCE A-level business studies course passed. GCE AS economics also has a pass rate well above the national average, but the pass rate for GCE A-level economics fell from 100% in 2002, to 91% in 2003. This is below the current national average of 96%. Students do better than predictions based on their entry qualifications. This is noteworthy on GCE AS and A-level business studies, and leisure and tourism courses.

55. Students generally achieve good standards in their work. For example, in an economics lesson, students progressed from knowing very little about macroeconomics to being able to enter into discussions confidently about the selection and analysis of economic tools to influence inflation and unemployment. Business studies students make confident use of business vocabulary. Progression to HE and employment is very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	18	15	17
		% retention	89	87	88
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	146	144	104

		% retention	95	91	90
		% pass rate	97	97	93
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	**	106	98
		% retention	**	98	96
		% pass rate	**	100	100
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	41	25	26
		% retention	95	88	96
		% pass rate	92	86	88
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	**	25	11
		% retention	**	92	100
		% pass rate	**	100	91
AVCE (double award) business	3	No. of starts	*	18	12
		% retention	*	72	83
		% pass rate	*	100	90
AVCE (double award) travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	*	19	10
		% retention	*	68	90
		% pass rate	*	100	100

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

\*course did not run

\*\* in these years, the Advanced level was different to present A-level course

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

55. There is much very good teaching, which enables students to learn effectively. Lessons are carefully planned with a well-chosen variety of activities to create stimulating changes of pace and focus. Teaching is set in a vocational context. For example, in a travel and tourism lesson, students were asked to identify the environmental impact of tourism on Thailand after a popular film was launched. Students drew their conclusions by watching a clip from the film, and reading a related newspaper article. Visiting speakers enhance the students' experience. For example, lecturers from a local university give talks to business students on trade unionism and the European monetary fund.

56. Good use is made of ILT in leisure and tourism classes. For example, in one lesson, the teacher demonstrated how to navigate web sites for locating air routes between Paris and London. Teachers effectively relate theory to topical media issues. In business, digital photographs of local organisations were used to test students' recall of logos. Teachers are attentive and provide good support to students in and out of lessons.

57. Students are well motivated and work industriously in lessons and in their own time. They value their very positive relationships with staff. However, the needs of a small number of students are not being met. For example, in some lessons, a few more able students are not sufficiently challenged and slower learners do not complete tasks. Opportunities are missed to develop students' key skills through vocational units.

58. Teachers are well qualified. The individual training needs of staff are identified through staff reviews with line managers. All staff produce learning materials and powerpoint presentation to a high standard. Economics students have access to high-quality course materials on the newly introduced virtual learning environment.

59. Accommodation is good. Base rooms are well equipped with networked computers, projectors, reading materials and attractive wall displays. Leisure and tourism base rooms have displays celebrating the achievements of past students.

60. Students are assessed regularly, although assessment is not formally documented. Work is promptly marked and returned with useful comments that help students to improve their performance. Progress is carefully monitored through formal subject reviews and any cause for concern is followed up through the tutorial process. Internal verification is informally carried out by agreement between colleagues.

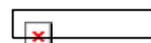
61. Students' needs are met through the delivery of a flexible combination of qualifications. Equal status is given to vocational and academic qualifications. Students can access a range of enrichment activities in addition to their core learning, many of which lead to qualifications. For example, leisure and tourism students all achieve the Tourist Board Welcome Host qualification prior to work placement.

62. Good advice for prospective students is available through open days and links with local schools. A useful bridging course enables students to sample a range of options before confirming their subject choices. Support for university applications is very good.

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

63. Leadership and management are satisfactory for the curriculum area overall. There is a very good team spirit. Performance targets for students are set and monitored regularly. Teachers have a strong achievement focus. Staff value the support of governors. Individual courses are well led, but there are insufficient opportunities for course teams to exchange ideas. Meetings are infrequent and best practice in teaching and learning is not shared across the programme area. Internal verification processes are not standardised.

### **Visual, performing arts and media**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- outstanding pass rates
  
- outstanding retention rates
  
- excellent teaching of practical work
  
- innovative practical work produced by students

- o extensive enrichment opportunities linked to the curriculum.

### **Weaknesses**

- o high grades below the national average in music, drama and theatre studies.

### **Scope of provision**

64. An extensive range of level 3 courses and options are available. There is no provision below level 3. Approximately 240 students take advanced level courses in art and design. There are GCE A-level options in graphics, media, fine art and textiles. For the last three years the diploma in foundation studies art and design has attracted over 30 students each year. There are 128 students taking media studies at GCE AS and 107 at GCE A level. AVCE media is offered as a double award, but it has not recruited sufficient students to start in September 2003. The single award is offered as a two-year programme. There are 17 students taking GCE AS music, but only 8 are taking the full GCE A level. GCE AS drama and theatre studies numbers have significantly increased this year to 54. Students who wish to specialise in performing arts can take performance studies at GCE AS in addition to drama and/or music. There is a leisure key board course for adults in the evening. Many students are involved in the extensive enrichment opportunities on offer. The art department regularly organises community projects and has won a prestigious national prize for the UK Japan Collaborative Arts project, which the department initiated.

### **Achievement and standards**

65. Pass and retention rates are very good. On most courses, students achieve a proportion of high grades that are well above national averages. Achievement in the diploma in foundation studies in art and design is outstanding, with pass rates of 100% for three years. In 2003, all students who started courses leading to GCE A-level drama and theatre studies and AVCE double award in media passed. Results at GCE AS and A level in media studies consistently exceed national averages for retention and pass rates. In 2003, the number of students achieving high grades in media studies at GCE AS was 20% above the national average. GCE AS performance studies has exceeded national averages for pass rates and retention rates for three years. In GCE AS and A-level music and GCE AS drama and theatre studies, students do not achieve the grades that would be expected based on their performance at GCSE.

66. Students have developed an impressive repertoire of techniques in art and design. They produce innovative work in a variety of media. They are prepared to experiment with colour and materials as early as the first term of the GCE AS course. Students on the diploma in foundation studies course produce work that displays a high level of technical skill and originality. Practical projects in media studies are carefully researched and the final products are sophisticated and effective.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	84	99	157
		% retention	86	98	93
		% pass rate	88	97	97
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	87**	65	76
		% retention	62	97	97

		% pass rate	100	98	99
Diploma in foundation studies art and design	3	No. of starts	31	39	35
		% retention	100	97	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	32**	27	27
		% retention	88	100	100
		% pass rate	89	96	100
AVCE media double award	3	No. of starts	*	19	18
		% retention	*	53	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE AS performance studies	3	No. of starts	43	36	35
		% retention	93	100	94
		% pass rate	100	97	97

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

\*course did not run

\*\*in these years, the Advanced level was different to present A-level course

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

67. Teaching is well planned and effective. Much of the teaching of practical work is outstanding. Teachers of art emphasise the importance of personal research. For example, students wrapped members of the public in paper and then took photographs of them. The results of this work were recorded in impressively detailed sketchbooks. Teachers are very aware of the interests and skills of their students and are at pains to ensure that they maintain ownership of their work. There is a noticeable and healthy absence of any uniform house style. Media students are provided with detailed handbooks for each unit studied. Guides to key software packages are put online. The media studies department put all lesson notes and key documents on to the college's virtual learning environment. Students use this facility extensively both in college and at home. In theory lessons, there is some well-organised group work. Data projectors are effectively used. Students are very enthusiastic and self-motivated. There are very good working relationships between the students themselves and the students and their teachers. Teachers listen to students and clearly respect their views. In a small minority of lessons, there is a lack of variety in the learning styles employed and this leads to students losing concentration. Schemes of work are not written to a common format and some are too general with no reference to specific learning activities.

68. Teaching spaces are generally spacious and attractive. Staff are well qualified and some of the art staff currently work as professional artists. There is an art technician who helps students with their practical work. There is no dedicated media or performing arts technician. There are a number of art studios that provide flexible spaces. Versatile gallery spaces inspire students to produce large-scale work. Art students have access to a suite of computers equipped with relevant software. A major building programme is underway which will allow the art department to move to the main college site from their current base where many studios are inaccessible to wheelchair users. Students have good access to cameras and video editing machines.

69. Assessment processes are rigorous and students' progress is monitored regularly. Assignments are detailed, clear and well planned. Students know what they need to do to improve. They meet regularly with tutors to review progress and set targets. Feedback on students' work is detailed and constructive. Both the media studies and art departments employ tracking sheets to monitor their students' progress on ongoing projects. They are particularly useful where a group is taught by more

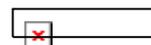
than one teacher. External verifiers' reports are uniformly positive.

70. Students are given plenty of help. Media studies and art departments run drop-in sessions at lunchtime and after college when students can seek help from staff or work independently. Extra revision classes are put on prior to examinations. In music, peripatetic staff give additional help to students preparing for performances. Students value the advice they receive in relation to careers and HE. In 2003, all the students on the diploma in foundation studies art and design course gained places in HE.

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

71. Leadership and management are very effective. Teamwork is strong. There is a shared philosophy that puts the students' needs first. All staff are involved in reviewing schemes of work and producing course self-assessment reports. Self-assessment reports tend to be very data driven and do not have a sharp focus on improving teaching and learning. There are regular, minuted course meetings that often record very detailed analysis of approaches to teaching and learning. Staff are encouraged and supported in applying for training and the college itself puts on short lunchtime courses. All staff received training in the college's new virtual learning environment and are consequently confident in its use. The course leader for music works within the creative arts area which inhibits the sharing of good practice and collaboration with other performing arts subjects.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very high pass and retention rates
- excellent proportion of high grades for law, psychology, geography
- students exceed target grades and make substantial progress
- very good teaching
- very effective development of independent learning
- an extremely positive approach to learning.

## **Weaknesses**

- no significant weaknesses.

## **Scope of provision**

72. The college offers a wide range of humanities courses at GCE AS, GCE A level, and GCSE for full-time students and access to HE for part-time students. Approximately 1,250 students are enrolled on to humanities courses. There are 461 students studying psychology, 257 studying law, 277 studying history, 163 studying geography and 51 following religious studies courses. There are also 44 students studying on part-time access to HE courses in law and psychology.

## **Achievement and standards**

73. Retention rates are at or above the national averages. Pass rates in all GCE AS and A-level humanities subjects are above national averages for sixth form colleges. High grades in psychology, law and geography are outstanding. Students have performed better than expected when compared to predictions based on their entry qualifications.

74. In all but two lessons, standards of attainment were good or better. Students have an extremely positive attitude to work. In geography, students successfully apply interpretative skills in map work and in the analysis of population statistics. Students in psychology effectively applied their knowledge on theories of sleep to studies on sleep deprivation. History students had an impressive understanding of the symbolism in Tudor portraiture, which they were able to clearly explain to others. Religious studies students demonstrated a mature understanding of the concepts of Jewish law and were able to analyse primary source material effectively. Students skilfully applied their knowledge of legal cases to aspects of defences related to manslaughter and insanity.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	154**	104	137
		% retention	66	95	97
		% pass rate	96	97	99
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	212	229	273
		% retention	83	89	89
		% pass rate	81	93	96
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	144	136	166
		% retention	86	93	88
		% pass rate	83	98	88
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	94	95	100
		% retention	91	97	91
		% pass rate	99	100	99
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	155	153	173
		% retention	93	92	91
		% pass rate	97	93	90

GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	115**	115	103
		% retention	80	97	100
		% pass rate	95	97	99

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

\*\*in these years, the Advanced level was different to present A-level course

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

75. Teaching is very good. All lessons were judged to be good or better and were characterised by thorough planning and very effective delivery. Some very good direct teacher exposition was employed in all subjects. Teachers demonstrated a good command of subject knowledge. There is mutual respect between teachers and students. There is very good individual support and encouragement given to students in lessons. In psychology, there was exceptionally skilful and sensitive management of discussions on the clinical characteristics of eating disorders, using homework tasks to check understanding on physical and psychological characteristics. This was further developed and extended by powerpoint slides and structured tasks. In the introduction to an appreciation of Philip II's character, there was very impressive use of historical terminology and good cross referencing to previous lessons to enhance and consolidate student learning. In religious studies, there was excellent use of powerpoint to illustrate the differences between good and evil. This included appropriate reference to academic and scriptural sources that were carefully explained to students. This led to purposeful group work in which students undertook research and subsequently presented thoughtful opinions. In a small minority of lessons, there is some ineffective management of group work. For example, in a lesson on sleep theories and during a discussion of a defendant's lack of control students were not kept on task sufficiently.

76. Humanities staff are well qualified and experienced. Resources, accommodation and equipment are very good and assist learning. The library is well stocked and computer facilities are excellent. Staff and students use the developing virtual learning environment well. There is access to the Law Society's and other legal websites and good powerpoint presentations have been developed in most humanities subjects. Students are provided with appropriate subject texts and journals and there are very good libraries within teaching bases.

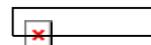
77. There are clear guidelines on assessment. Schemes of work and lesson plans refer to assessment objectives and procedures. Record sheets are used effectively to record students' progress and include suggestions for further development. The work from students on religious studies courses is marked thoroughly with areas for improvement identified. A comprehensive handbook for geographers enables students to develop a range of subject-related skills and techniques. Very effective psychology module booklets incorporate review and consolidation work, which considers students' individual learning styles. Law module booklets and schemes of work do not relate sufficiently to the needs of all abilities.

78. There is a broad range of enrichment activities to enhance learning including geography field trips to the Lake District, history trips to London, Berlin and Madrid, conferences and theatre visits, and religious studies visits to Durham University and places of worship.

### **Leadership and management**

79. Leadership is strong and dynamic. Organisation is of a high standard. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. There is effective teamwork and sharing of good practice between and across subjects. Teachers have collaborated on the production of module booklets, work on learning styles and ideas for developing the virtual learning environment. The self-assessment process is rigorous. The report is comprehensive with the thorough analysis of data at every level. This data is contextualised against both college and national averages. Action points emanate from the self-assessment report. There is an acute awareness of the needs of the disabled and those with learning difficulties. Resources are deployed very efficiently and effectively.

## English and modern foreign languages



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

### **Strengths**

- very high pass rates and achievement of high grades on many courses
- highly effective teaching in many subjects
- very confident and well-motivated students
- very good range of resources effectively supports learning
- substantial levels of subject-related enrichment.

### **Weaknesses**

- limited use of ILT during lessons in some subjects
- insufficient sharing of good practice within the curriculum area.

### **Scope of provision**

80. Students study GCE AS and A-level English language, English literature, French, German, and Spanish courses. GCSEs are offered in English and Spanish. An 'Essential English' course offers key skills level 2 for students with low GCSE entry grades. OCN modules are available in Spanish, Italian, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. These provide good opportunities for additional accreditation for students following other programmes. Opportunities for adults include an access to English course, and evening classes in GCSE and GCE AS English language and Spanish, and OCN modules in French, Spanish and Italian.

81. There are over 1,000 students on English and modern foreign language courses. Modern foreign language students represent a third of the total of students aged 16 to 18. Two thirds of the students aged 19 and over are studying foreign languages.

### **Achievement and standards**

82. Achievements are very high on many courses in English and modern foreign languages. Pass rates and the proportion of high grades in GCE AS and A-level English language and English literature, and GCE A-level French and German are well above national averages. GCSE English pass rates are also above average. GCSE Spanish results are more variable, but were above average in 2003. Students who are entered for GCE AS in modern foreign languages at the end of their first year achieve good results. Others are successful in their second year. Teachers place a strong emphasis on achievement through helpful references to examination requirements. In English lessons, students take part in genuine, intellectual debate and they use technical terminology with confidence. Modern foreign language students employ a very good range of vocabulary and idiomatic language within written and oral work. They develop fluent oral communication skills and demonstrate good understanding of complex grammar.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	54	92	96
		% retention	80	84	86
		% pass rate	70	53	54
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	118**	72	76
		% retention	85	99	96
		% pass rate	99	99	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	49**	28	29
		% retention	84	96	93
		% pass rate	88	100	100
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	16**	9	18
		% retention	56	78	100
		% pass rate	100	86	88
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	164	121	186
		% retention	85	91	91
		% pass rate	97	99	96
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	95	106	97
		% retention	92	92	90
		% pass rate	99	100	100
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	95	106	97
		% retention	92	92	90
		% pass rate	99	100	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	75**	88	83
		% retention	72	97	94
		% pass rate	94	100	100

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

\*\*in these years, the Advanced level was different to present A-level course

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

83. There is much highly effective teaching and learning in this curriculum area. In the best lessons, activities are varied and conducted at a good pace. Teachers demonstrate enthusiasm and high levels of technical knowledge. They successfully use questioning techniques to probe understanding, encourage exploration of issues and involve all students. In an English language lesson, students worked independently on coursework, comparing the language used by two different people or groups. Students were thoroughly engrossed in, and enthusiastic about, their work. The topics covered were interesting and wide ranging and the work produced was of a very high standard. There were comparisons between: Tony Blair's and George Bush's speeches in the lead up to the war against Iraq; the language patterns of Darlington and York football supporters; and the cookery books written by different chefs. In a French lesson, the topic of immigration was studied in a lively and varied way. Students were able to look at information and French news video clips projected on to a whiteboard from the Internet as well as handouts containing current statistics. This stimulated much interesting and lively discussion in French. A minority of teaching is less effective; a number of lessons are too teacher centred and not sufficiently varied. In a high proportion of lessons, activities end too abruptly: students do not have the opportunity to feed back ideas or to consolidate what they have learnt.

84. A broad range of resources assist learning on English and modern foreign language courses. There are extensive texts and reference books for students of English. Language assistants provide individual support for students in preparation for oral examinations. Student booklets include tips for essay writing, study skills, and examination requirements. There are also self-study exercises which allow students to progress at their own rate. Carefully structured planning and progress sheets guide the students through the completion of English language coursework. Most handouts used in lessons are of a very high standard, and worksheets, student planners and useful Internet links are available on the virtual learning environment in some subjects. A few teaching rooms are cramped, and this restricts some learning activities. In some subjects, however, students have no experience of the use of ILT during lessons. Schemes of work for these subjects make no reference to the use of ILT resources. Some subject rooms are well equipped with ILT facilities, but these are not shared with subjects in the same curriculum area.

85. There is much good practice in the assessment of English and modern foreign languages. Standards and methods of assessment are shared among staff teaching the same subject. There are regular progress checks and the marks awarded accurately reflect the quality of the students' work. In the best examples, work is carefully annotated and teachers explain clearly how work could be improved. A small number of the assessments are less effective: in such cases spelling and punctuation are not corrected and the comments are minimal and do not help students to improve.

86. There is a very good level of subject-related enrichment. Students of French benefit from work experience in Rouen and Lille, including work in cafes, a solicitor's office, a dog grooming parlour and an international business centre. Students of German take part in activities arranged through the town twinning links with Mulheim an der Ruhr. Students are also involved in positive links with local schools: students of French are involved in a national pilot scheme teaching French in local primary schools and students of English literature have taught Shakespeare to Year 8 pupils. English students visit universities and theatre productions. Students of English literature studying First World poetry go on a three-day tour in the area of the Ypres Salient.

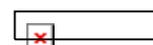
87. There is a very good level of support provided for English and modern foreign language students, both during lessons and at other times. Teachers provide additional help outside lessons and in modern foreign languages there are workshops during lunchtime, and individual tuition from language assistants. The essential English programme has very strong links with the study skills support team; this enables those with low GCSE grades to progress to level 2 key skills or to a GCSE programme during their second year at college.

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

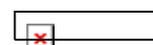
88. Leadership and management of English and modern foreign languages are effective. Teachers share responsibilities and teamwork contributes to the very good development of resources.

Meetings include discussion of students' progress, coursework, students' views, study skills and resources. Equality and diversity issues are discussed in some depth. These discussions include multicultural and gender-related issues within the curriculum both as a vehicle for linguistic development and as part of the study of different language styles. However, there is insufficient discussion of teaching strategies. In the self-assessment report, although there is detailed scrutiny of data, there is insufficient analysis of teaching and learning. The college's lesson observation process includes only a very small number of observations each year. There were no observations of teachers of English literature during 2002/03. Teaching grades awarded by the college are higher than those awarded by inspectors.

#### Part D: College data



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



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	2	43
2	13	17
3	85	40
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in 2003*

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



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,170	28	17
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	0	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	259	27	4
Information and communication technology	621	55	10
Retailing, customer service and	0	0	0

transportation			
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	221	0	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	87	2	1
Visual and performing arts and media	638	16	9
Humanities	2,430	356	39
English, languages and communication	1,020	74	16
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Unknown area of learning	37	11	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,483</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2003

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
		<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	139	29	25	86
	Retention rate	96	72	100	80	68	100
	National average	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate	94	100	60	72	70	88
	National average	70	66	71	67	70	75
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	403	355	342	43	45	63
	Retention rate	73	81	83	53	73	81
	National average	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate	97	87	89	70	79	75
	National average	80	85	84	70	68	71
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	2,070	5,178	4,805	118	157	144
	Retention rate	78	84	92	69	67	83
	National average	75	80	89	63	64	69
	Pass rate	86	93	93	75	86	86
	National average	85	86	88	65	67	75

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*.

**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)	87	12	1	97
Level 2 (intermediate)	63	37	0	8
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	2
Other sessions	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>107</b>

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