



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Capel Manor College

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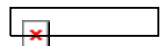
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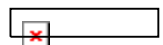
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Basic information about the college

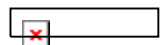


Name of college:	Capel Manor College
Type of college:	Specialist land-based further education college
Principal:	Dr Stephen Dowbiggin
Address of college:	Capel Manor College Bullsmoor Lane Enfield Middlesex EN1 4RQ
Telephone number:	020 8366 4442
Fax number:	01992 717544
Chair of governors:	Miss P Oborn, MBE
Unique reference number:	108318
Name of reporting inspector:	Peter Brook
Dates of inspection:	6 - 10 October 2003

Part A: Summary



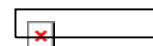
Information about the college



the London Borough of Enfield and there are two additional centres in west and east London. A new centre has recently been established in association with The Royal Parks in Regent's Park, Central London. Courses are also offered at an additional centre in Edmonton Green, run as a joint collaborative venture with two general further education (FE) colleges. The main campus is set in an estate and gardens of 12.5 hectares. The gardens are open to the public and attract up to 80,000 visitors annually. The college has the tenancy of a 73 hectare farm situated a mile from the main campus and has recently purchased a further 7 hectares of land adjacent to the college estate. Courses are offered in horticulture, landscaping, garden design, floristry, flower arranging, balloon display, countryside studies, arboriculture, animal care, equine studies and saddlery. Most subjects are offered from entry level to advanced level on a full-time or part-time basis. A range of short courses is offered for industry and local communities. A small work-based learning programme in landscaping started in August 2003. Some courses are designed to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A small collaborative arrangement is in place with a provider of first aid training. Capel Manor offers higher national diploma courses in landscape design and construction, countryside management (ornithology and urban green space management specialisms), horticulture (arboriculture) and saddlery technology. The college has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for horticulture, landscaping and garden design. Unlike the majority of specialist land-based colleges, Capel Manor is non-residential, with only a small number of students accommodated in private property lettings. The majority of students travel to study from across the Greater London region.

In 2002/03, there were 3,134 students enrolled on FE courses. Of these, 10% were on full-time programmes and 90% on part-time or short courses. Some 37% were on programmes at level 1, 41% at level 2 and 18% at level 3; 4% were enrolled on programmes below level 1. A further 51 full-time and 4 part-time students were on higher education (HE) courses. In 2002/03, 25% of students were from a minority ethnic group, 10% had a disability and 8% had a learning difficulty.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the overall quality of provision to be good. Floristry and garden design provision are outstanding. Provision is good in horticulture and satisfactory in arboriculture, countryside and environment. Whilst overall the provision in animal care is satisfactory, provision in equine studies is poor. The overall standard of teaching and learning is higher than the average for colleges of this type and particularly good for adult students. Retention and pass rates are good for adult students, but they are below average for some courses with students who are mainly aged 16 to 18. Leadership and management are good. There is effective leadership and governance and sound financial management. The main strengths and areas for improvement are listed below.

Key strengths

- high level of achievement by adult students

- good teaching and learning for adult students

- good range of specialist equipment to support learning

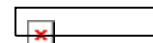
- good use of the gardens and amenity areas for teaching
- strong industrial links
- excellent floristry and garden design provision
- effective strategies to widen participation
- high level of individual support and guidance
- extensive use of patronage and sponsorship
- effective college management and governance.

What should be improved

- teaching, learning and attainment for students aged 16 to 18
- retention rates and achievement on some courses for students aged 16 to 18
- consistency of assessment and verification practice
- poor quality of equine studies provision
- consistency of management of health and safety
- completeness of quality assurance arrangements.

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

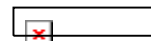
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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).

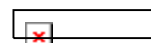
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Animal care and equine studies	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on saddlery and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1 animal care. Teaching of saddlery and animal care is mainly good. There is an effective summer school for animal care students, but some animal care and equine studies courses have declining pass rates. Insufficient emphasis is put on planning students' learning, and practical work and assessment on equine courses are poor. Health and safety practices are sometimes inadequate and strategies to develop equine courses are weak.
Arboriculture, countryside and environment	Satisfactory. Although satisfactory overall, retention and pass rates are low on some courses. There is a range of good practical resources, and links with industry are strong. Course organisation is good and ensures course viability and good interaction between students. Some lessons are poorly planned and there are some poor health and safety practices
Floristry	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are high on all courses, as are levels of students' attainment. Theory and practical teaching are combined well and good use is made of strong industrial links to enhance learning. There is excellent course management, including much good assessment practice. There is little level 1 provision.
Garden design	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are high on all courses. Lessons are well planned and resources are of a high standard. Teaching, learning and assessment are very good. Support and guidance are good and students make good use of peer support. Courses are well managed and there are strong links with employers.
Horticulture	Good. Pass rates on level 1 and level 2 part-time programmes are very good, but retention rates on level 3 programmes are low. The curriculum is well managed and students produce work of a high standard. Effective use is made of the good practical facilities for learning and there are good initiatives to widen participation. Assessment practice is poor for NVQs and insufficient attention is paid to individual learning needs in some lessons.

How well is the college led and managed?



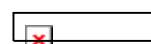
Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers provide strong leadership and set a clear strategic direction for the college. Communications within the college are generally good. Some quality assurance arrangements are incomplete or lack sufficient checks. Self-assessment is well established and generally accurate. There is good use of patronage and sponsorship to improve the quality of the students' experience. Management of the curriculum is good. All staff have a good understanding of the importance of meeting retention and achievement targets. There are very good links with industry. Monitoring of the implementation of some health and safety procedures is inadequate. The appraisal of senior managers and the governors' clerk by the governors is well carried out. There are no procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of induction of new staff or of staff appraisal. Financial management of the college is good. The college is in a strong financial position. At the time of inspection, attendance at classes was good and average class sizes were high. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



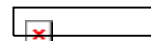
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college has made good progress in achieving its mission to provide a range of learning opportunities in land-based subjects to students across London. Students now include pupils aged 14 to 16, students with special learning needs, students aged 16 to 18 who may not have been successful at school and many adults returning to learning to improve their skills and return to work. Provision is offered at a range of venues and at times that fit in with family and employment commitments. Development of community-based learning has helped increase participation from minority ethnic groups who now make up some 25% of the student population. College publicity has been produced in community languages and students benefit from good progression routes within the college. Although retention and pass rates are good for adults, they are less good on some programmes for younger students where new groups of students have been recruited. Provision of basic skills support for most students is good. Monitoring of equality of opportunity is not well developed.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. Students are well informed about the choice of courses and have opportunities to learn about the college at open days, taster courses, activity days and summer schools. The support needs of most students are well met through attendance at the progression centre to improve basic skills, by the provision of specialist equipment or additional support in the classroom. Teachers are responsive to students' needs and support them well. Full-time and part-time students are entitled to academic and personal support through tutorial sessions. The setting of targets and action plans and the monitoring of students' progress are not always sufficiently rigorous. The college provides financial support for students who need it and funds the cost of childcare through access funds and bursaries from commercial sponsorship. Good careers guidance is available from teachers, the student guidance officer, Connexions and the North London Advice, Information and Guidance Network. Personal counselling is available through the college chaplain and the London boroughs' occupational health services.

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

- helpful and approachable staff

- college grounds, gardens and buildings

- the library - both the resources and the quiet space to work

- the support and advice available to students

- the friendly atmosphere

- the accessibility of resources.

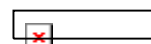
What they feel could be improved

- the quality, price, choice and opening times in the refectory

- difficulties with internet access and logging on to the computers in the library at the Capel Manor campus

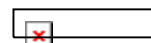
- female toilet facilities at the Capel Manor campus.

Other information



prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (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



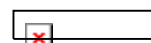
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

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	58	23	19
19+ and WBL*	76	21	3
Learning 16-18	54	31	15
19+ and WBL*	71	29	0

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses, in mainly land-based subjects. Work-based learning in amenity horticulture was started in August 2003. Most types of vocational courses are offered, including foundation programmes, NVQs, first and national diplomas, national and advanced certificate and a range of open college network courses. The college also provides courses leading to professional qualifications including those of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the Royal Forestry Society and the Arboricultural Association. Short courses leading to technical certificates are provided in many subjects, including pesticide application and the use of chainsaws. Courses are offered in most subjects at levels 1, 2 and 3. There has been considerable variation in success, retention and pass rates on long courses during the years 1999/2000 to 2001/02. College data for 2002/03 indicate that this trend has continued. In general, the pass rates on long NVQ courses are better than for other courses at the equivalent level.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Most students aged 16 to 18 are on foundation, animal care, equine studies and horticulture programmes and make up only 9% of the total student numbers. The number of students studying at

level 1 and below has increased to over 60 in the last 3 years. Many students enter the college with low levels of prior achievement and a range of learning difficulties. The college provides good personal and learning support on the entry level access to FE programme. Retention and pass rates remain well below the national average and declined significantly in 2002/03. The standard of work on the NVQ level 1 animal care course is good.

3. Most students on level 2 and 3 courses make satisfactory progress in developing knowledge and understanding. Standards achieved in practical and theory lessons in animal care and horticulture are generally high, and good use is made of the college estate to support teaching. In animal care, national diploma students work carefully to ensure good husbandry and welfare of animals. On arboriculture courses, younger students integrate well with and benefit from the experience of older students. On equine studies courses, second-year students show little progression in development of riding skills. At level 2, pass rates were above the national average up to 2001/02, but declined significantly to below the national average in 2002/03. On most first diploma courses, pass rates are poor. On the national certificate in horse management, no students have passed in the last two years. At level 3, retention rates improved from well below average to average in 2002/03. Pass rates have been in the bottom 10% at level 3 but, although still below average, improved from 41% to 67% in 2002/03.

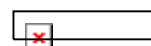
4. In 2002/03, the college offered all full-time students aged 16 to 19 an entitlement to the key skills of application of number, information technology (IT) and communication. Other students received support for work on their assignments through attendance at a drop-in centre. This year, the entitlement is being extended to cover all the key skills. Good progress has been made in establishing the key skills and convincing staff and students of their value. However, pass rates remain low. Plans to integrate key skills into vocational studies build well on the foundations laid last year. Key skills are integrated well on animal care courses.

Adult learners

5. Over 90% of students are adults, with 9% of these following courses at level 1, 70% at level 2 and 21% at level 3. Retention rates have been around the national average at all levels and improved to above average in 2002/03. Pass rates have been above average at level 1 and improved to 97% in 2002/03. Pass rates are in the top 10% of colleges at level 2 and improved significantly at level 3 in 2002/03 to over 80%. On short courses, pass rates are high. Retention rates are around average, compared with a very high specialist college average; they are over 90% for all groups for all years. College data for 2002/03 indicate that high retention and pass rates have been maintained. Significantly, there are good pass rates on many externally examined courses at levels 2 and 3. Traditionally, many adults study part-time land-based courses to gain skills and for interest but do not sit the examinations.

6. At all levels, students are highly motivated and achieve a high level of practical skills and a thorough understanding of the subject. On many courses, students achieve a far higher standard than that required by the course. For example, students on a level 1 saddlery course achieve a very high standard of leatherwork skills. Students' commercial awareness and teamwork skills are well developed. In floristry, a group of 30 advanced certificate students worked in groups to create 5 separate arrangements joined into an integrated display. In garden design, students ask challenging questions and are confident about expressing their own views about design principles. Arboriculture students develop good awareness of the importance of working in teams and make good progress in tree climbing skills after only a short time on the course. In horticulture, groups of phase 2 students constructed rock gardens to a high standard.

Quality of education and training



Teaching was good or better in 71% of these, satisfactory in 21% and less than satisfactory in 8%. Learning was good or better in 66% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 5%. In 6% of lessons, attainment of students was less than satisfactory, taking into account their abilities and the stage of the course. Attendance was similar to the average for land-based provision in 2001/02, at 85%. Attendance at animal care and equine studies lessons was lower than other areas at 77%.

8. Overall, a higher proportion of lessons were judged to be good or better than the national average of 62% for land-based provision in 2001/02. A lower proportion of lessons were unsatisfactory compared with the national average of 10%. The most effective lessons combine theory and practical elements and make effective links between the two. In one garden design lesson, the use of colour, texture and siting of plants in relation to design principles was particularly well applied. Good use is made of the college's extensive practical resources to enhance learning. In most lessons where teaching is satisfactory, insufficient account is taken of individual students' needs.

9. The standard of teaching of younger students is generally lower than for adults. Some 19% of teaching for students aged 16 to 18 was unsatisfactory and only 58% of lessons observed were judged to be good or better. Many younger students are not sufficiently challenged and motivated by their work in lessons. Much teaching is uninspiring and does not encourage students to work harder or more effectively to make progress. In one poorly planned practical equine studies lesson with heavy horses, the pace of the lesson was too slow, equipment was inadequate, learning was not adequately checked and students demonstrated poor knowledge of harness for the stage of the course they had reached.

10. The quality of teaching, learning and attainment is weakest for level 3 students. Of a total of seven lessons judged to be unsatisfactory, four were lessons for level 3 students and one for a mixed group including level 3 students. 14% of lessons observed at level 3 demonstrated unsatisfactory teaching and attainment and 10% unsatisfactory learning. In one level 3 animal care lesson on using signals to calm dogs, the lesson started late, safety practices were not properly enforced and students made little progress.

11. Adults are often taught well and demonstrate high levels of attainment. Overall, 76% of lessons for adults were good or better. In garden design and floristry where all lessons observed were for adults, teaching was good or better in 93.3% and 75% of lessons, respectively. These lessons were stimulating and the students generally responded well and learnt effectively. In garden design, effective use is made of students' own experiences and their understanding and imagination is stretched. In floristry, good use is made of high-quality teaching materials developed by teachers.

12. Lessons taught by full-time teachers are generally of higher quality than those taught by part-time teachers. Some 76% of lessons taught by full-time teachers were judged to be good or better, compared with 66% for part-time teachers. Both groups of teachers produced a similar proportion of satisfactory teaching. In garden design, where most teachers are part time, they use their industrial experience well to enliven their lessons and generate enthusiasm in their students. Some lessons taught by part-time teachers do not sufficiently involve the students. In an arboriculture lesson on the theory of biomechanics in trees, a lot of factual information was provided without sufficiently involving the students in learning.

13. The grounds of the main campus at Capel Manor are an excellent learning resource for horticulture, landscaping, garden design, arboriculture and countryside skills. There are extensive demonstration and trial gardens sponsored by a specialist journal and major horticultural companies. These include specifically designed gardens offering enhanced access for those with both mobility and sensory impairments. Workshops and practical areas are well resourced with a good range of machinery, hand tools and personal protective equipment. There are good resources for the animal care courses, including animal houses for exotics and rodents, kennels and an agricultural animal area. However, there are inadequate resources for the equine studies courses. The college has the tenancy of a 73 hectare farm situated about 1 mile from the main campus. The farm is in need of extensive renovation but difficulties with both funding and planning permission have delayed this work.

14. The college has two main additional centres. Gunnersbury Park in west London is used for

horticulture, garden design and floristry training. It has recently undergone extensive refurbishment, partly financed by CoVE funding, and facilities there have been much improved by the addition of new classrooms, a library and IT suite. Upminster Court in east London is used mainly for horticulture and floristry. It is a small centre, sited within the wing of a grade 2 listed house in Havering. It lacks library facilities and is poorly resourced compared with the other centres.

15. The learning resource centre has quiet and group study areas and an adequate range of books and journals for most courses offered. There is a progression centre offering a good range of specialist support for students with special needs. The overall ratio of computers to students is 1:8 and is adequate to meet the students' needs. There are insufficient information and learning technology resources and staff require further training to make the best use of the technology currently available on campus.

16. The college has an accommodation strategy and recent development of the main campus includes a new learning resource centre, garden design and floristry teaching rooms and a new refectory for students, staff and visitors. The new teaching rooms provide an excellent learning environment for floristry and garden design. With the exception of a few older buildings, most of the teaching accommodation is good. Exterior lighting for the paths from the teaching rooms to the car parks is inadequate for students attending evening courses. The college has recently carried out an access audit to check its compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The audit identifies several areas of the campus which require remedial work to improve access for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people.

17. There are sufficient well-qualified staff who have good industrial experience which they use effectively in their teaching. Currently, 72% of full-time and 47% of part-time staff either have or are working towards a teaching qualification.

18. There is good initial assessment of basic and key skills. This is carried out through the progression centre in conjunction with vocational tutors who mark the literacy and numeracy tests. Initial assessment is carried out during induction for all full-time and part-time students. Results are returned to tutors promptly and feedback to students is sensitively handled. There are, however, staff shortages at Upminster Court where some students identified as needing extra classroom support are not receiving it. There is little systematic initial assessment of vocational skills and aptitude. However, in floristry, students usually start practical work in the first lesson so teachers rapidly become aware of their abilities. There is no initial riding assessment on equine studies courses before recruitment and some students do not have sufficient riding skills for the courses they are enrolled on.

19. Methods of assessment are appropriate to the courses offered. Students are issued with an assessment schedule at the start of their programme and, for most, assessment is an integral part of the learning programme. There is very good assessment practice in some areas but this is not sufficiently shared across the college. Rigorous assessment takes place on floristry and garden design programmes, with clear and detailed feedback given to students. In garden design, students are encouraged to evaluate the assessment process and give feedback to teachers. Assessments in animal care and saddlery are thoroughly marked with constructive feedback given to students. On equine studies courses, factual and spelling errors in students' written work are rarely corrected and little constructive feedback is given. In practical assessments for equine studies, students requiring excessive help to complete tasks are judged as competent. On some NVQ courses, a narrow range of evidence is used, feedback is very limited and there is some poor practice in recording competence.

20. In some areas, internal quality assurance of assessment is inadequate and the college relies excessively on external verifiers' reports to monitor assessment. An internal verifiers' steering committee oversees assessment procedures and disseminates and responds to external verifiers' reports. The internal verifier co-ordinator's role has been extended to cover all awarding bodies. The co-ordinator reviews external verifiers' reports and identifies issues and good practice. For some courses, however, external verifiers' reports are sent directly to the course manager and the co-ordinator is unaware of their content. The quality and scope of internal verification varies across and within curriculum areas. For example, in horticulture, internal verification practices on full-time

courses are satisfactory yet they are poor for NVQ provision. There is little evaluation of the quality of assessment in school self-assessment reports.

21. The college has a wide range of provision. Full-time and part-time courses are offered at several sites across London. The college offers a good range of land-based courses at levels 1 to 4, with a large number at level 2. The college has progressively extended its range of programmes and courses. These include provision for pupils aged 14 to 16, adults, work-based learning and substantial part-time provision. A thorough analysis of the needs of the local and wider London community has been undertaken. The college has established a range of flexible learning opportunities. It is particularly successful in meeting the needs of adult students. For example, an adult single parent had been attending a full-time course which proved difficult to manage alongside domestic responsibilities. She was encouraged to attend part time over two years. Whilst the range and quality of provision for adults is good, some provision for students aged 16 to 18, notably in equine studies, does not meet their learning needs or adequately prepare them for employment in the industry.

22. The college has successfully expanded the intake of students from groups who are not traditionally attracted to land-based courses and careers. It has been successful in increasing participation of students from minority ethnic communities, particularly at community-based locations. For example, at Gunnersbury Park, a number of students from the Asian community have been recruited to floristry and horticulture courses. Students from minority ethnic communities now represent 25% of students. Many students on floristry and garden design courses are women returning to study or planning a career change. A mature garden design student took early retirement from an office job. She has undertaken a series of courses over four years on a part-time basis and started a business with a fellow student. There is a significant programme for young and adult students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who represent 6% of students. These students gain confidence as they acquire good practical skills and relate to the wider student community of the college.

23. Links with industry and employers are very well established. Many sponsor a range of projects and college resources and some are represented on the board of governors. They provide employment opportunities for students. The college is well represented on a wide range of local, regional and national employer organisations and is involved in a range of innovative projects. The college is a lead organisation in the Green Heart Scheme, a London-wide initiative aimed at recognising and improving the skills of those working in the green and open spaces of London. Many tutors have strong links with industry. For example, in floristry and balloon artistry, many tutors also work in the industry and students benefit from their current expertise and contacts. Garden design students win numerous awards, including medals at the Chelsea and Hampton Court flower shows.

24. A recently introduced summer school provides a successful programme of induction for over 50 young school leavers. One young woman, a reluctant learner at school, joined an animal care course. She had attended the summer school and had appreciated the opportunity to learn. College data show that animal care students who attend the summer school are more likely to successfully complete their course. The enrichment programme is limited to activities linked to the curriculum. It includes relevant visits, trips and inputs from visiting speakers. However, there are more general induction activities for younger students which include water sports and a range of challenging outdoor activities.

25. Some 50 pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the horticulture environment and animal vocational enhancement (HEAVEN) academy run in partnership with local schools for one day a week. Students work towards practical skills tests and units from national land-based awards at levels 1 and 2 and receive literacy and numeracy lessons. They are provided with additional classroom support, and for those in the first year, the opportunity to participate in a college based project. Students enjoy coming to college. They are well taught and generally make good progress in an adult environment. They develop confidence and skills, for example, in handling and examining animals and writing up accurate notes. The college has well-established links with Education Business Partnerships and as a CoVE has a wide range of partners, all of which support work with young learners. The college is providing training for work-based mentors and taster days for local schools not yet involved in the partnership. In planning for the second year, partners have

recognised that many young people with challenging behaviour and complex learning difficulties could not be accommodated. The selection criteria for the second cohort have been agreed with involvement of parents and students.

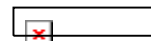
26. Prospective students receive helpful information about courses available and good advice in making their choices. The college has a programme of promotional events throughout the year. Staff represent the college at a variety of external events arranged by local schools, the LSC and the North London Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) network. In the spring and summer, advice sessions are held in the evenings at monthly intervals at all three main sites. Activity days are held twice a year on a Saturday at the Capel Manor campus. Staff and students provide taster activities for prospective students who can also visit the college on weekly open mornings between November and July. Basic skills and animal care summer schools offer students a variety of learning experiences. Most students who attend these succeed on the following full-time course. There are good links with local schools, community groups and employers. Promotional materials are attractive and informative. The prospectus is available on the college's website in large print. Vocational tutors work closely with support staff to provide thorough advice to help students choose a suitable course. The college has achieved guidance accreditation and is a member of the North London Information, Advice and Guidance network.

27. Students receive effective support to help them complete their courses. During induction, full-time and part-time day students complete a screening test to assess their needs for support in literacy and numeracy. Information given by students when they enrol is used to identify those who may need support because they have a learning difficulty, disability or medical condition. Students are interviewed to assess their needs and appropriate support is provided by suitably qualified, experienced staff through the progression centre. Literacy and numeracy sessions are included on the timetable for full-time courses. Students can drop in to the progression centre at certain times for help. Learning materials are available for students and tutors to use away from the centre. Liaison between vocational teachers and progression centre staff is good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support tailored to their needs. For example, five students with hearing impairment are being supported by specialists.

28. The tutorial policy sets out an entitlement for full-time and part-time day students to group and individual tutorial sessions and induction at the start of courses. Materials are available to help staff plan induction and tutorial activities to suit their students' needs. Teachers offer students good support during tutorials and willingly give help outside classes. Although students receive good support through formal and informal contacts with teachers, record keeping is not always complete. The setting of targets and action plans is not always sufficiently rigorous. Progress in carrying out actions agreed is not always monitored. Although personal tutors implement college policies to ensure good punctuality and attendance, late arrivals to lessons were commonplace during the inspection. Induction activities help students become familiar with the college and their courses. They are informed about the services and support available, such as that provided through the progression centre. A student handbook contains useful information about the services available and who to contact if they need help.

29. In 2002/03, financial support was provided through access funds and commercial sponsorship to 220 students with identified needs. Funded childcare was provided for 11 children of full-time students and 20 of part-time students. Personal counselling is available through the college chaplain and the London boroughs' occupational health services who refer students to other agencies if necessary. Teachers support students well and give them valuable advice and guidance on a variety of matters including careers. Course teams arrange visits from employers and professional organisations. To improve the careers advice for students, the college has appointed a part-time student guidance officer. Students were informed of this service during their induction, and of the improved careers information available in the library. If their needs for advice cannot be met by the college, students are referred to Connexions, or the North London Information Advice and Guidance Network.

Leadership and management



30. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college, which is enabling it to develop and widen participation in line with its mission. Governors and managers attend a well-organised annual strategic planning event each year. Governors clearly focus on strategic issues and understand the challenges the college faces. A recent pan-London skills audit and skills strategy effectively underpins planning activities. Extensive and strong links have been developed with land-based industries, local colleges and other national and regional strategic partners.

31. Governance of the college is strong. There is strong leadership from the chairman. Governors are clear about their role, confident in their independence and provide good direction. They have a wide range of relevant experience. Governors are well informed by managers and their infrastructure of committees. They are well prepared for their meetings, which are well organised and well attended. Governors value the support and work of the clerk who is thorough in preparing for meetings. Governors effectively monitor their own performance.

32. Some quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. The quality policy is thorough and detailed, and clearly sets out roles and responsibilities. Quality is monitored using the results of observation of teaching and learning, reports of external verifiers and moderators, surveys of key stakeholders and liaison committees. Good use is made of these measures to address issues that are raised. Inspectors found that the results of observation of teaching and learning were generally accurate. There is a quality cycle, which is used to good effect to meet quality requirements of the college. Governors audit the annual completion of this cycle. The results of student and staff satisfaction surveys are very positive. Where issues are identified, action is taken promptly to address them. There are detailed records of complaints received by the college and the actions taken. There are insufficient arrangements to ensure that quality processes are always completed fully and that best practice is effectively shared across the college. During inspection, inspectors found examples of both good and poor practice in assessment, internal verification, management of tutorials and punctuality of students. In some areas, insufficient emphasis is placed on internal verification to assure the quality of assessment. There are adequate arrangements to assess the quality of the college's collaborative provision. Revised service standards have been completed for four service teams, but have yet to be completed for the other college support teams. Many of the college policies and procedures are not dated and there is no indication to users when they were last subject to a review.

33. Self-assessment is well established. The college has worked collaboratively with other colleges to improve the quality of self-assessment. This has helped the college produce a more focused report, with judgements supported by evaluative evidence. Governors and senior managers effectively moderate the self-assessment report. Inspectors found the self-assessment report to be accurate in all the curriculum areas inspected.

34. Communications within the college are good. Senior managers have established good communication practices to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Heads of schools and centre heads meet with the deputy chief executive every three weeks to address operational issues facing the college. Managers receive helpful four-weekly briefings on the work of senior managers, personnel issues and policies and procedures. Managers meet every four weeks to consider a wide range of quality issues. Most schools have effective meeting arrangements and manage agreed actions well. Where staff performances or achievements are good, they are celebrated in the college. The academic board plays an important role in involving staff in the academic activities of the college. It receives and records key points from the minutes of the many steering groups and committees that operate in the college.

35. There is good use of patronage and sponsorship to improve the quality of students' experience. The college has greatly benefited from the generosity of a wide range of benefactors who have contributed considerably to the funding of new buildings, student bursaries and scholarships as well as very good learning resources. These include a wide range of high-quality demonstration gardens, materials and equipment and access to training opportunities both for staff and for students in workplaces.

36. Management of the curriculum is good. The curriculum is well organised and teachers work well. In the equine studies programme area, however, effective curriculum management is hindered by uncertainties about its future. The development plan, resulting from annual self-assessment, is used as a basis for producing the annual operating plan. It is regularly updated and is well used. Managers use management information effectively when making decisions and to monitor performance. The value of much of this information is not sufficiently recognised by some course managers, especially in reviewing course performance. All staff have a good understanding of the importance to the college of retention and achievement. Managers, senior managers and governors keep this under constant review, and prompt action is taken when issues are identified. This has resulted in an improvement in achievements at level 3. There is a clear strategy to ensure consistency of students' experiences at each college centre. There are good links with industry to support the curriculum through the use of industrial representation and liaison groups. The college is highly responsive to meeting the needs of the industries it serves.

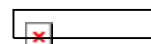
37. The arrangements for monitoring equality of opportunity are underdeveloped. There is a detailed equality of opportunity and racial equality policy that clearly sets out duties, roles and responsibilities of governors and staff. There is a clear implementation plan. Governors receive comprehensive monitoring reports on equality of opportunity and racial equality concerning staff. There are no arrangements for monitoring the policy in relation to students. The college is working with the local LSC to develop equality and diversity impact measures. There have been good developments in widening participation. There is an equality of opportunity steering group, which is supported by the Enfield Race Equality Council. Minutes of this group are reported to the academic board. Governors are aware of the importance of equality of opportunity, but the topic is seldom discussed at governors meetings. Recently planned training for governors was unavoidably cancelled and is yet to be rescheduled. College managers have recently received training which covered an update on the impact of recently introduced legislation but this has not been extended to all staff.

38. Monitoring of the implementation of some health and safety procedures is inadequate. The governors recognise the importance of health and safety in the college and have established a health and safety committee. There is no system to ensure that all new staff have received health and safety training as part of their induction. A programme of training to improve health and safety arrangements has been introduced, but does not include updating on the procedures for carrying out risk assessments for staff who are expected to complete them. Although there is a regular check on whether risk assessments cover all activities, there are insufficient checks to verify the suitability of risk assessments.

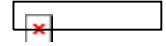
39. Staff development is effectively linked to the strategic plan, annual appraisal programme, annual course reviews and individual needs. The appraisal of senior post holders and the governors' clerk by the governors is clearly related to targets and performance measures and is well carried out. Different arrangements are in place for other college staff. All full-time and most part-time staff receive an annual appraisal. Monitoring arrangements do not assess the quality of the appraisal programme. Line managers are responsible for the induction of their new staff. There is an induction handbook that contains useful information but there are no procedures to evaluate its effectiveness or adequacy.

40. The financial management of the college is good. Both the senior management team and governors carefully manage income and expenditure. The college is in a strong financial position. Heads of school are set income targets. Where targets are exceeded, the school can invest a proportion of any surplus in additional resources. The college uses a wide range of consultants to support best value principles. At the time of inspection, attendance at classes was good and average class sizes were high. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the college is good. The college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Animal care and equine studies



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on saddlery courses
- improved retention and pass rates on NVQ level 1 animal care
- good teaching on saddlery courses
- good practical skill development on animal care courses
- good integration of theory, practical and key skills in animal care
- effective summer school in animal care.

Weaknesses

- declining pass rates on some courses
- insufficient planning of learning in horse management and animal care lessons
- poor health and safety practices
- insufficient regularity and range of practical work on equine studies courses

- poor assessment on equine studies courses

- weak strategies to develop equine studies courses to meet the needs of students.

Scope of provision

41. The college offers a range of courses in animal care, horse care and saddlery. There are 81 students aged 16 to 18 and 41 students aged over 19. The range of programmes includes: NVQ level 1 animal care; first diplomas in animal and horse care; national diplomas in animal care and horse management; national certificates in animal care and horse management; a national award in animal care; and certificates in saddlery and advanced saddlery. At the time of the inspection there were 88 students on animal care programmes; 22 students on programmes in horse care and management and 12 FE students following programmes in saddlery. There is a programme of animal care training for young people aged 14 to 16 run in partnership with a local school. A summer school is offered to all new animal care students and 40 students attended this in 2003.

Achievement and standards

42. Students achieve high standards of practical and theory work on NVQ level 1 animal care and saddlery courses. The pass rate for NVQ level 1 animal care has improved from 29% in 2000/01 to 100% in 2002/03. Both national and first diploma animal care students demonstrate high standards of practical work with a wide range of different species. They work carefully using good husbandry techniques and pay attention to the welfare of the animals at all times. Students have a good understanding of subjects such as nutrition and the necessity for dietary supplements for exotic animals. In theory lessons, students are able to relate topics to their practical work and often work independently to research assignments and complete workbooks. On saddlery courses, pass rates have been between 89% and 100% over the last three years for most courses. Students gain a good breadth of commercial skills through producing excellent bespoke leather goods as well as saddles, bridles and harness. They work at industry speeds and are enthusiastic and well motivated. The pass rates on both national diploma and first diploma animal care courses have declined over the last three years. No student has gained the national certificate in horse management since 2000/01. Most equine studies students have significant gaps in their practical and riding skills and make slow progress in theory classes. Attendance at many animal care and horse studies classes was significantly below that of the rest of the college.

A sample of retention and pass rates in animal care and equine studies, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ animal care	1	No. of starts	10	10	13
		% retention	70	60	85
		% pass rate	29	83	100
First diploma in animal care	2	No. of starts	21	19	24
		% retention	71	95	88
		% pass rate	100	94	62
First diploma in horse care	2	No. of starts	*	6	6
		% retention	*	33	33
		% pass rate	*	100	100

National certificate in horse management	2	No. of starts	7	5	5
		% retention	86	60	80
		% pass rate	100	0	0
certificate	2	No. of starts	5	9	7
		% retention	100	89	100
		% pass rate	100	100	86
National diploma in animal management	3	No. of starts	16	18	19
		% retention	38	89	89
		% pass rate	67	75	65

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

43. There is good teaching on saddlery courses. Students gain excellent levels of practical skills and take pride in their work. Work is planned to ensure all students are kept busy and are able to work at their own pace. Second-year students are set targets to complete tasks to ensure that they work at commercial speeds. Tutors set high standards and students are encouraged to solve problems as necessary. There is an excellent mix of tutor-led demonstrations and one-to-one support.

44. Routine animal duties are well planned and organised. They take place within a good working environment and standards of animal husbandry are high. Students gain skills quickly and can work independently. Students develop skills with a wide range of animals and detailed records are kept of their progress. National diploma students carry out supervisory duties during their second year. In animal care theory lessons, tutors make good use of students' practical experience and link different subjects effectively. For example, in a nutrition class, students made ethograms on the feeding behaviour of different species. Key skills are well integrated with vocational work. Assignments indicate where key skills evidence is included and teachers make frequent references to key skills during lessons. Specific key skills classes are vocationally relevant and teaching is of a high standard.

45. There is insufficient emphasis on planned learning on animal care and equine studies courses. Lesson plans often do not detail the learning activities students will carry out. Equine studies learning plans contain insufficient detail and are not used by all tutors. Teachers often fail to check students' learning sufficiently. Written work in equine studies is not marked and returned promptly. Schemes of work are simply a list of weekly topics and do not state learning activities. In equine studies, too often students stand around for long periods waiting for slower students to complete tasks or the tutor to finish one-to-one instruction. Also in equine studies, there are poor strategies for dealing with disruptive students and the pace of lessons is too slow. During riding lessons, tutors often get students to carry out inappropriate activities and the standard of students' attainment is low.

46. The animal resources are good with a wide range of small, exotic and large animals. The enclosures are suitable for the species, well maintained and well managed. There are holding kennels for dogs used in practical sessions. Information on each animal is on display and students are encouraged to produce a range of educational information on each species. The classrooms are light and airy and include appropriate specialist areas such as laboratory facilities. There is an outdoor arena which is used by animal care students for dog training and by equine studies students. The saddlery resources are satisfactory but students sometimes work in cramped conditions and have to share tools. The library resources are satisfactory, with a range of suitable books and internet access for students. There are CD-ROMs and videos available but the list is not clearly displayed and not all students or staff understand how to access them.

47. Equine studies students do not carry out a sufficient and regular range of practical work in a realistic working environment. There are too few practical resources at the main college site and students cannot experience a range of practical tasks with a range of types of horse. The college has recently invested in an outdoor school and two more stables but the practical facilities are still insufficient for the courses offered. Students do not work at a suitable pace, even on the second year of their courses. A local riding school is used for equitation and some stable management, but it is not fully used to give students a suitable range of experience to become competent.

48. There are some poor health and safety practices. Students do not wear correct protective clothing when working with horses or other animals and are at risk of both injury and the spread of disease. Often, too few animals are used for the number of students in lessons, leading to over-handling, animal stress and biting. Some students are not supervised appropriately. For example, they put their faces too close to strange or new animals. Students sometimes wear excessive jewellery in the animal houses and smoke near horses. Broken equipment, including whips, is sometimes used. There are insufficient written procedures or risk assessments to guide staff when dealing with some students with disabilities.

49. Written work on animal care and saddlery courses is well marked and teachers give helpful feedback to students. Internal verification takes place and is usually effective in ensuring work is marked correctly. However, there is too much emphasis on verification of written rather than practical assessment. There is poor assessment practice on equine studies courses with insufficiently thorough marking of written work. Neither spelling nor factual errors are corrected and little feedback is given to students. During equine studies practical assessment, too much help is provided to students so that they are assessed as competent even though they require help to complete the task to an adequate standard.

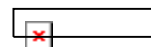
50. There is an effective summer school in animal care which covers study skills, careers information and an introduction to animal care. Students are assessed and given good guidance to help them choose appropriate courses. This has improved retention and pass rates on animal care courses. Numbers on horse management courses have declined. The national diploma has an emphasis on heavy horses, which does not meet the needs of local employers and has not recruited many students. Some local advertising of the equine studies programmes has taken place and short courses have been promoted, but many of these have not proved viable.

51. Induction for equine studies and the small number of part-time animal care students is ineffective. Some students leave soon after starting as they find the course more difficult than anticipated. There is no riding assessment on equine studies courses before recruitment. Part-time animal care students join full-time students to take specific modules. Where they have gaps in their knowledge, teachers have no planned strategies to address this. Regular tutorials are undertaken both within groups and individually. Tutors are readily accessible and students appreciate the help and advice they receive. Most tutorials are well recorded although follow-up from action plans is not always recorded. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities usually have appropriate additional support in lessons

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are separate meetings of the equine studies, animal care and saddlery teams every three weeks, which the head of school attends. The three teams and head of school meet as a group only infrequently. Meeting minutes are comprehensive but lack clear action plans or arrangements for monitoring. The self-assessment was thorough and identified many of the strengths and weaknesses found at inspection. Saddlery courses are run separately from the equine studies programmes and the leadership and management of these is strong. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between equine studies, saddlery and animal care. There are weak strategies to develop equine studies courses to meet the needs of students. Numbers of equine studies students have declined and retention rates are poor on equine studies programmes but there is no clear strategy to decide their future. There have been no formal meetings to decide future strategy between the staff and the head of school or senior managers.

Arboriculture, countryside and environment



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

Strengths

- good use of the industrial expertise of staff

- good use of practical training resources

- strong links with industry

- effective course organisation.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate for national diploma in arboriculture

- low achievement rate for certificate in arboriculture

- insufficient planning of lessons

- some poor health and safety practices in practical training.

Scope of provision

53. There are 168 students on courses in arboriculture, countryside and conservation. The majority of students are adults and 19 are female; 139 are on arboriculture, 23 on countryside and 5 on conservation courses. Arboriculture is offered as a national certificate and national diploma in forestry and arboriculture, a certificate in arboriculture, a technician's certificate in arboriculture and a diploma course in arboriculture. Countryside is offered as a national diploma in countryside conservation, a first diploma in countryside and forestry, and a national certificate/national award in countryside management. NVQs in conservation are offered at levels 2 and 3. A range of part-time

and short courses including chainsaw operation and pesticide application is also provided. A course for students aged 14 to 16 is run in conjunction with local schools, starting in February each year.

Achievement and standards

54. Retention and pass rates have varied considerably over the last three years. Retention rates on the national diploma in arboriculture course are low and declined to 50% in 2002. Pass rates on the certificate in arboriculture during the last three years have been low, whilst retention rates have remained satisfactory. Many students attend this course to gain practical skills and related technical certificates but do not complete the final examinations. Pass rates on the chainsaw and related operations short courses are high and are consistently above the national average. Achievement in key skills is low for the few students who take these qualifications. Little has been done to integrate key skills into other qualifications. The standards of students' work are at a level which would be expected of them at this point in their training. For example, students on the second week of the national diploma and certificate courses had already undertaken basic tree climbing training. Students are well prepared for future employment by the acquisition of work-related craft skills. Attendance is good, but many students arrive late to lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in arboriculture, countryside and environment, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in arboriculture	2	No. of starts	37	39	45
		% retention	62	85	76
		% pass rate	61	27	38
NVQ environmental conservation (one year)	2	No. of starts	20	16	4
		% retention	55	31	100
		% pass rate	73	100	75
Chain saw and related operations	2	No. of starts	*	27	39
		% retention	*	100	72
		% pass rate	*	89	82
National diploma in arboriculture (two year)	2	No. of starts	15	8	*
		% retention	73	50	*
		% pass rate	27	75	*
Technician's certificate in arboriculture	3	No. of starts	9	50	22
		% retention	78	75	77
		% pass rate	100	58	71

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

55. Most teaching is satisfactory or better and is carried out by enthusiastic and supportive staff. All staff are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Many are newly recruited from industry or HE and bring a range of skills and expertise that inspires learning. Some practical lessons, however, are not well planned. Lessons re-arranged due to poor weather conditions often have no plans for alternative activities. The replacement lessons are poorly planned and structured and are insufficiently effective. For example, a hastily arranged and poorly organised plant identification

exercise replaced a practical arboriculture class cancelled due to poor weather conditions. A number of theory lessons do not sufficiently involve the students and fail to stimulate learning. The better lessons use a variety of teaching styles and activities to challenge students. There is good rapport between the students and teachers. Students work well together and gain good communication and teamwork skills, which are highly relevant to the arboriculture industry.

56. Good use is made of the college estate and an extensive range of off-site practical teaching facilities. These range from the use of mature trees in the college grounds for arboriculture to local parks and gardens for fencing and conservation work. These resources provide real work settings for practical instruction. A good variety of learning resources, tools, machinery and equipment are available. There is a lack of undercover areas to allow practical training to take place during unsuitable weather conditions. There are sufficient well-qualified staff to cover the range of courses and training provided and all staff have appropriate industrial experience. Most staff have teaching qualifications and newly appointed staff are working towards a teaching qualification or appropriate assessor and verifier awards. Specialists working in industry teach technical aspects of courses such as the arboriculture technicians certificate. Library resources on the main campus are adequate. The Upminster Court centre does not have sufficient library resources and there is poor access to IT for both staff and students. There are some inadequate learning materials which have poor illustrations or are poorly reproduced. Health and safety practices are sometimes poor during practical training; students work in dangerous areas without sufficient protective clothing such as hard hats. One student got into difficulty whilst climbing a tree and the tutor was unaware of this. There is inappropriate storage of some equipment, including hard hats stored in a secure cupboard alongside petrol cans.

57. Assessment methods are varied and are sufficient to meet the requirements of courses offered. Good use is made of assignments for national certificate and diploma courses. They are clearly written and easy for students to follow. NVQs are assessed using real practical work tasks, however, some new teachers are not yet aware of the full range of assessment possibilities and requirements for NVQs. Regular training is provided for staff in assessment requirements and setting standards. Students are given the opportunity to submit evidence of past achievement for accreditation on their current course. On externally examined courses, examination preparation is started early in the year to encourage students to sit for and succeed in the final examination. Students' progress is monitored well through assignments, oral assessments and individual progress reviews.

58. A good range of courses is provided to meet the needs of industry, students and employers. There is a range of entry and progression opportunities including provision for pupils aged 14 to 16, students aged 16 to 18 and adults. Students can progress from level 2 to level 4 at the college. There are progression routes to HE at a number of local or national institutions. Students can attend courses in various ways, through day release from employment, on a full-time basis and as part-time students. All students are offered a range of additional qualifications which enhance employment opportunities, including units from other related courses, chainsaw certificates and chemical application training.

59. The college has good links with industry. It was highly commended in a national education award for its links with the local arboriculture industry. The college supports small to medium sized businesses in a variety of ways. For example, free or subsidised training and regular seminars on current topics affecting the industry are offered to employers and students. A very informative free newsletter for employers, students and college staff is produced to inform and update them on current industrial matters, to advertise local arboriculture businesses and publicise students' achievements. This newsletter is fully sponsored by local businesses.

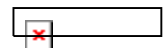
60. Support for students is good. All students have good access to help and support on personal matters, such as travel and financial matters, as well as support for their course of study. Tutors, learning support staff and the head of school are all easily accessible to students and often provide support outside of lessons. There is also a drop-in support centre located on the main campus. Specialist staff are available to provide dyslexia support. Support for students with learning difficulties or those needing training in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is also provided. Group tutorials take place each week and each student receives a personal tutorial once every six weeks. During these tutorials, progress on the courses, equal opportunities and any

personal issues are discussed.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is effective course organisation. Students on courses with small numbers have lessons together for shared subjects to maintain the viability of the courses. Additionally, students benefit from sharing their experiences, knowledge and skills. Mature members of these groups have a positive influence on the younger students and this results in improved learning for these students. Internal verification is sufficient on most courses and meets awarding body requirements. Internal verification is insufficiently thorough on the NVQ. Staff and resources are well managed and there is a sufficient supply of resources to meet course and students' needs. Staff are kept up to date via e-mails, news letters and regular staff meetings. All teaching staff receive an annual appraisal and the required staff development which is identified from the appraisal. Staff attend technical updates and trainer and assessor workshops on a regular basis. Targets are set for recruitment, retention rates and achievement, which are discussed at staff meetings. The management information system is not yet fully used by all course tutors to support this process.

Floristry



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates

- good attainment by students

- good integration of theory and practical teaching

- effective use of strong industrial links to enhance learning

- good assessment practice

- excellent course management.

Weaknesses

- o limited range of course provision.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers courses in floristry, including floral art and balloon display, at Capel Manor, Gunnersbury Park and Uxminster Court. Full-time courses at Capel Manor include modern retail floristry at level 2, which combines a national certificate in balloon display and an advanced national certificate at level 3. These have replaced NVQs at levels 2 and 3 and the national certificate in professional floristry previously offered. There are currently 93 students enrolled, 17 of whom are aged 16 to 18. Part time courses are run at all three centres and include day-release and evening classes. These include the national certificate as well as flower arranging and balloon display at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are currently 241 students enrolled, of whom 7 are aged 16 to 18. There is no full-time provision below level 2, but a series of 12-week taster courses at level 1 are run at Edmonton Community College, mainly recruiting students attending ESOL courses. Some 42 adult students are currently on these courses. An adult access course at entry level is also run at Capel Manor, with 32 students recruited. There are no work-based learners

Achievement and standards

63. Retention and pass rates are high on full-time and part-time floristry courses levels 1, 2 and 3. Levels of student attainment are high in floristry classes, particularly in practical work. In one class of about thirty students on an advanced national certificate course, students worked in groups of five to create five separate arrangements joined together into an integrated display using modern design styles. These were displayed in the main reception area. All six groups achieved a high standard of work, most of it close to a commercial standard, showing considerable imagination and design flair. Both floristry and balloon display students regularly win awards in national and international competitions. Key skills are offered to full-time students, but there is poor achievement of awards.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ floristry	2	No. of starts	47	56	36
		% retention	91	95	72
		% pass rate	100	91	100
Floral arts intermediate	2	No. of starts	12	12	13
		% retention	92	83	85
		% pass rate	100	100	92
Creative studies certificate in design and craft, balloon display	2	No. of starts	82	115	134
		% retention	84	82	80
		% pass rate	93	93	93
National certificate in professional floristry	2	No. of starts	26	29	6
		% retention	88	93	50
		% pass rate	100	89	100
Floral arts, advanced	2	No. of starts	12	18	7
		% retention	92	89	100
		% pass rate	100	94	100
National certificate in	2	No. of starts	*	*	62

floristry	% retention	*	*	81
	% pass rate	*	*	86

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

64. There is a lot of good teaching, with effective integration of theory and practical aspects of the course in all floristry and balloon display classes. Staff incorporate a high degree of commercial realism into their teaching, with constant emphasis on costing all work and discussing the costs of production relative to retail value. Good use is made of high-quality teaching materials developed by teachers, including standard sets of handouts and assessment schedules for all courses. Students respond enthusiastically to the teachers, are well motivated and learn effectively from this professional approach. In a small minority of theory lessons, teachers fail to sufficiently involve all students. There is good integration of communication and numeracy into some of the vocational teaching. The small amount of structured key skills teaching is done in the context of floristry.

65. All staff are well qualified and have appropriate vocational qualifications for the subjects and levels they teach. They have relevant and recent industrial experience. Many are part time and work in the floristry or balloon display industries. Full-time staff maintain close contact with industry and regularly update their skills. All full-time teaching staff are qualified as teachers. A number of staff have left in recent years to take up responsible posts in industry. Several part-time staff are new to teaching and are undertaking teacher training. There is good support from two technicians, who also run the college floristry shop which occupies a prominent site close to reception. The teaching facilities at Capel Manor are purpose-built and provide an excellent learning environment. Those at Upminster and Gunnersbury are adequate but not of the same standard. The learning resources are excellent at Capel Manor, helped by sponsorship from industry. They are adequate, but limited, at Upminster Court.

66. Much assessment is of a very high standard. Internal verification is comprehensive and effective in maintaining standards and providing good quality control for assessment. External verifier reports are extremely positive. The good practice identified in floristry has been disseminated to other areas of the college and to other colleges. Assessment is rigorous with regular standard setting days and good use of cross-marking, particularly of practical work. Feedback to students is prompt and, in most cases, provides detailed guidance as to how they can improve their performance. All assessments are well planned and full details are provided at the start of each course to all students. Assessments are well integrated into schemes of work and are used to enhance learning.

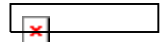
67. Strong industrial links are used to ensure that the provision is meeting the needs of local industry. A good example of this is the recent replacement of the NVQ level 2 in floristry by the modern retail floristry course combining the national certificate in floristry with awards in balloon display at level 2. Arrangements are being made to enable balloon display students to take the Certified Balloon Artist (CBA) award through the college. There is good progression from level 2 to level 3 and to employment or self-employment, but there is no provision at level 4.

68. There is good initial screening for literacy and numeracy. Effective follow-up interviews are arranged with staff at the progression centre and with tutors, to establish any need for learning support. This is normally provided promptly. There are, however, staff shortages at Upminster Court where two students identified as needing extra classroom support are not receiving it. There is no formal testing of vocational aptitude on entry, although students usually start practical work in the first lesson so teachers rapidly become aware of their abilities. Support for students, including those on part time courses, is good. Students speak highly of the personal support offered by teachers. Many tutorials do not set targets and action plans.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are outstanding. The head of school provides strong, clearly focused leadership to a small closely knit team who work effectively together. Course files and all associated documentation are of a uniformly high standard. Standard sets of handouts and assessment schedules are produced for all courses. Staff meet regularly in small teams to review specific topics but there are few meetings of the whole team due to reliance on part-time staff and the spread of provision across three sites. Course managers carry out course reviews after consultation with other staff and the student course representative. Good use is made of extensive student survey data. There is no formal industrial advisory committee but local employers are invited to the college to attend demonstrations by well-known national or international florists or balloon artists. These meetings are used to discuss and review course provision. The course reviews are qualitative rather than quantitative and do not use college data to compare with targets or benchmarks. Staff are, however, well aware of any small deviations from the normally very high retention and pass rates and prompt action is taken to address these.

Garden design



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates

- very good teaching and learning

- high-quality resources

- rigorous assessment

- strong links with employers

- very good support and guidance

- effective course management.

Weaknesses

- o no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

70. The college offers a range of daytime, evening and short courses at levels 1 to 4. During 2002/03, there were 282 students at Capel Manor and Gunnersbury Park undertaking courses in garden design, planting design, garden history and botanical illustration. Some 99% of students are over 19. The largest age-group is between 30 and 50. They have a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. Those employed in the industry attend courses to improve design skills or plant knowledge. There is an introductory computer-aided design (CAD) course for qualified garden designers who wish to add computer drawing to their existing drawing skills. Other students include those planning a career change, women returning to study and people seeking to improve their skills and knowledge for leisure purposes.

Achievement and standards

71. Retention and pass rates are at or above the national average and in many cases very high. For example, in phase 2 plants and planting in 2002/03, there was 100% retention of 61 students. Retention rates on CAD short courses are high. On average, level 2 long courses had 90% retention rates and 83% pass rates and level 3 courses had 84% retention rates and 95% pass rates. Students work together well in lessons. They listen carefully and ask searching questions of staff. The standard of work is extremely high. In 2003, phase 2 garden design students won a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show for a sensory garden and three silver medals for small courtyard gardens. Two students won a gold medal and the prize for the best water garden at the Hampton Court flower show. Attendance is high, at over 90%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Foundation garden design	1	No. of starts	62	55	54
		% retention	82	80	94
		% pass rate	88	91	80
Phase 2 garden design	2	No. of starts	88	87	83
		% retention	81	93	86
		% pass rate	97	93	86
Phase 2 plants and planting	2	No. of starts	69	63	61
		% retention	71	86	100
		% pass rate	93	83	84
Introductory garden design	2	No. of starts	*	28	95
		% retention	*	82	87
		% pass rate	*	96	77
Garden design	3	No. of starts	*	20	44
		% retention	*	55	84
		% pass rate	*	100	95

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

72. In a very large proportion of lessons, teaching was good or better and in many it was very good and outstanding. Lessons are well planned and demanding. Teachers are confident, give clear explanations and demonstrate thorough professional knowledge. They emphasise the importance of meeting clients' needs and illustrate lessons with reference to the work of well-known designers and gardens. Theory and practice are well integrated. In one class, the use of colour, texture and the siting of plants in relation to design principles were particularly well applied. In another, the teacher explained the use of form in garden design by drawing round the contours of trees and shrubs in a prize-winning garden, projected onto a screen. Teaching styles are adapted to meet the needs of different groups. On the introduction to CAD course, the use of a computer projector to show the teacher's screen to the full class is used to good effect. Good use is made of students' own experience. Group activities are well managed. Students are highly motivated and work enthusiastically. In the best lessons, students' understanding and imagination is stretched. For example, in one foundation garden design lesson on negative spaces and the landscape, the teacher encouraged students to lose visual preconceptions and draw the space behind an object. Within half an hour, they all produced an attractive display. There were no unsatisfactory lessons; however, unsatisfactory aspects of work in a few lessons included teachers talking too much and answering their own questions, and spending too long on one topic.

73. High-quality specialist resources enhance learning. There are extensive physical resources on the main campus which provide an excellent learning environment. The college houses the National Gardening Centre, national plant collections, over 60 small demonstration gardens, trials gardens sponsored by a gardening magazine, 30 acres of landscaped gardens, and garden design studios. Accommodation on the main campus comprises two design studios for 42 students with A1 and A2 retractable drawing boards and display boards of students' work. There is a further overflow room containing drawing boards purchased with CoVE funding. The IT suite has up-to-date computers with CAD packages. Handouts and other materials are of high quality and support students' learning well. The library and design studios have a good selection of textbooks. Commercial sponsorship and support from employers are outstanding. There is significant ongoing capital investment at Gunnersbury Park, partly financed by CoVE funding. This includes the development of a library and IT centre and classrooms, one with retractable drawing boards. Two full-time and two regularly employed part-time staff are complemented by hourly paid staff at both sites. Teachers are well qualified and most are working in the industry. They adopt a professional approach. Some are former Capel Manor students. A member of staff designed a garden at Westonbirt Arboretum Summer Festival and a Gunnersbury Park staff member won a bronze medal at Chelsea this year.

74. Assessment is rigorous and industry related. For example, students on the phase 2 garden design course are taught draughting techniques and then undertake a series of assignments including town garden and mixed border planting plans. Practical assignments are reviewed annually for relevance and there is a uniform approach to their presentation. Course handbooks contain detailed assessment schedules for the year. The best assignments recognise that students come from different backgrounds. For example, in a first assignment on draughting techniques on the phase 2 course, there is a more complex plan for students who have previously undertaken the foundation course. Students produce work of a high standard. In a few cases, there is an over-emphasis on presentation rather than accuracy. Teachers provide constructive written feedback. Students' views on the design and marking of assignments are sought through a systematic feedback process. Assessment records are detailed.

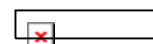
75. Students are enthusiastic about the courses and the help they receive from teachers. Care is taken to ensure that students settle into their studies quickly. Teachers have high expectations of them. Day, evening and short courses are offered at the main centre and at Gunnersbury Park. Some of the classes are repeated and there is flexibility in attendance for students who are unable to attend on their chosen day. There is an effective interview process which ensures students are placed on appropriate courses. Additional short courses such as introductory and advanced IT, which cover scanning, using digital cameras and creating business stationery, are well subscribed. There are visits to famous gardens, opportunities to work with college sponsors and afternoon and evening classes in botanical illustration. Courses have a good reputation with industry. The college recently gained a special award from a landscape trade association.

76. Support and guidance are good. Prospective students are invited to the college for an informal meeting. Application forms are scrutinised by a vocational tutor and students are offered suitable courses depending on their qualifications and experience. For example, before students progress to the phase 2 garden design and plants and planting courses, they are advised to follow the foundation garden design or RHS certificate courses. Students receive a comprehensive induction to the college. This includes literacy and numeracy diagnostic testing. Students are offered learning support, which is well managed and effective. Tutors regularly provide reports on students' progress. There is underdeveloped formal recording of the range of good support provided. Course handbooks are comprehensive. Guidance and advice for current students wishing to progress are good. Careers advice is available from staff and visiting professionals. Employers regularly approach the college for students to work on projects. Many students progress directly to HE, employment, self-employment or work on projects leading to employment.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are outstanding. Financial management is effective in developing resources. The self-assessment report is accurate. Course management and assessment are rigorous. Communication is effective between all staff and between the two sites. Staff regularly receive updates on strategies and future events. Accountabilities are clear within the school management structure. Teams meet regularly and staff are involved in planning. Teams follow college procedures for review and evaluation. Courses are modified continuously following feedback from students and industry. Staff are fully aware of students' performance, however, there is some confusion regarding the entry of course data. Observation of teaching and learning is accurate and is confirmed by external validation. There is good peer support. Extensive opportunities for professional development include attendance at seminars, overseas visits for professional updating and recruiting, teacher training and support for HE. The school has comprehensive and effective employer and industry networks, which include strategic partnerships with local companies and HE. The curriculum area is an effective part of the CoVE initiative.

Horticulture



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

Strengths

- very good pass rates on level 1 and level 2 part-time programmes

- good teaching and learning on level 1 and level 2 part-time programmes

- effective use of good practical facilities

- good range and quality of teaching materials

- good initiatives to widen participation

- o good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- o low retention rates on level 3 programmes
- o insufficient attention paid to individual learning needs in many lessons
- o poor assessment practice in NVQs.

Scope of provision

78. The college offers a range of full-time courses from entry level to level 3. These include a vocational foundation certificate, a first diploma, and national certificates and diplomas. Part-time courses lead to NVQs in landscape and horticulture at levels 1, 2 and 3, the RHS general and advanced certificates and diploma in horticulture; a level 2 practical gardening certificate, and courses in landscape and organic gardening. Clear progression opportunities are available at all levels and students can progress to HE courses at the college. Courses are offered at the main campus, Gunnersbury Park, Upminster Court and other centres in greater and inner London. Ninety four percent of the 803 students are over 19 years of age. Of these, 148 are studying courses at level 1, 514 at level 2 and 141 at level 3. There are 103 full-time students. A work-based learning programme for 24 foundation modern apprentices was started in August 2003. Additional qualifications are available to full-time and part-time students including those needed to meet legislative requirements. The college is a CoVE for horticulture, landscaping and garden design.

Achievement and standards

79. Pass rates are consistently high on all level 1 and level 2 part-time programmes, which cater for the majority of students. The majority of level 2 students sit an externally set and marked examination. Retention rates are low on level 3 programmes. Pass rates on the first diploma are consistently poor. Rigorous diagnostic tests are used prior to the start of the course and strategies have been implemented to ensure that students are on the correct level of course. The majority of full-time students progress to employment and/or further study. Attainment, particularly in practical skills, is high on most courses. Students demonstrated proficient use of hand tools in single digging and other practical tasks. Most students work hard and responsibly and demonstrate high standards of written work. Some students, however, do not attend all lessons punctually throughout the day. Students' progress in key skills is good. In one lesson, students downloaded statistical information from the internet and manipulated the data in a simple word processed report.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ amenity horticulture	1	No. of starts	48	49	63
		% retention	85	80	71

		% pass rate	66	59	80
Certificate and practical certificates in gardening	1	No. of starts	115	159	208
		% retention	93	85	85
		% pass rate	90	90	91
First diploma in horticulture	2	No. of starts	7	12	11
		% retention	57	83	82
		% pass rate	50	70	22
NVQ in amenity horticulture (all options)	2	No. of starts	26	103	71
		% retention	73	76	77
		% pass rate	79	99	93
General certificate in horticulture	2	No. of starts	224	248	348
		% retention	73	76	73
		% pass rate	80	71	74
National diploma in horticulture and landscape studies	3	No. of starts	5	18	21
		% retention	60	83	67
		% pass rate	67	85	79
Advanced certificate in horticulture	3	No. of starts	*	13	30
		% retention	*	92	63
		% pass rate	*	50	84

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

80. Most teaching and learning is good, with the best lessons being practical or a mixture of practical and theory. Teaching materials are of a high standard and are shared between staff and centres. In the best lessons, a wide variety of teaching methods are used. In one class, a teacher used a variety of activities, including a short revision test and a simple experiment, to demonstrate the process of osmosis. There is some unsatisfactory teaching on level 1 and level 2 full-time programmes for students aged 16 to 18. The less effective teaching uses a narrow range of teaching strategies. In one lesson, the teacher read the contents of a handout to the class and there was little involvement of students. Standard lesson plans are used but teachers do not always identify individual learning needs and styles. In one lesson where a student with a hearing impairment was assisted by a signer, the teacher made little attempt to engage with the student directly. In lesson plans there is a misunderstanding between aims and objectives, and schemes of work are little more than lists of subjects.

81. Effective use is made of the extensive amenity areas, demonstration gardens, grounds and practical facilities. Good use is also made of sports turf and amenity areas in parks and gardens near to the centres for practical work. There is a good range of plants, and new teaching facilities have recently been developed as part of the CoVE initiative at Capel Manor and Gunnersbury Park. A new landscape unit with two classrooms and a large covered workshop has just been completed and is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of practical skills training. Students speak favourably about the new facility. In one lesson, students with learning difficulties practised vocational skills in a protected work environment. They gained confidence and developed proficiency in the use of basic hand tools in soil preparation for flowerbeds. The range of hand tools, small machinery and equipment is adequate to support learning at Capel Manor and Gunnersbury Park.

The level of books and journals is satisfactory. Some of the general teaching rooms used by horticulture are of poor quality, and do not provide suitable learning environments. One classroom has a low ceiling which is a safety hazard. The majority of staff are suitably qualified with good industrial experience.

82. Most assignments on full-time courses are well written and are appropriately challenging. Full-time courses have clear assessment plans, and students receive detailed, constructive feedback. There are good links with key skills in some assignments. First diploma students created a plant database using digital images and advanced IT skills. The majority of part-time students are following externally examined courses and in-course assessments effectively prepare them for the examinations. Assessment practice for NVQs is poor. A narrow range of evidence is used and students do not adequately use tasks completed in the workplace. Not all evidence is signed off in portfolios. Feedback is not given by assessors. Candidate logbooks had been pre-signed by students prior to completion of evidence summaries. Internal verification of NVQs lacks rigour and does not identify weaknesses or improve the quality of assessments.

83. There are good initiatives to widen participation. The college has out-centres at Gunnersbury Park and Upminster. Courses are also run at an allotment site in Edmonton for minority ethnic groups and refugees. The Greenheart scheme attracts volunteers and modern apprentices and provides opportunities to train to craft level in greater and inner London. There is work with an environmental charity in Camden and Islington to run short courses for Bengali and Somalian students. A project in East London is providing NVQ training for refugees. The college is represented on the London Benchmarking Group and have carried out training needs analyses to 25 small and medium sized businesses.

84. All students receive an initial diagnostic assessment at enrolment, which is used to determine support needs for basic and/or key skills. In some cases, a suitable level of qualification for the student is also determined. Assessment of vocational skills at entry is not as widely undertaken. Students are supported through additional study support, individual tutorials and action plans, which are recorded. Monitoring of achievement of actions agreed is not always carried out. Some action plans do not contain specific target dates for achievement. In some cases, action plans do not set sufficiently challenging targets for the students.

Leadership and management

85. Curriculum management is good. The head of school provides strong leadership, there is a good team ethos and communication is good. Regular school and course team meetings focus on students' performance. Course review and evaluation are good and include input from students and industry. Staff have a good understanding of the use of data to evaluate retention and pass rates. These are discussed at team meetings to focus on improvements and to compare with national averages to guide self-assessment. NVQ courses are not as well managed and some college policies and procedures for assessment and verification are not complied with. Health and safety management and awareness among staff are satisfactory. Staff do not always fully understand the importance of risk assessments in providing safe systems of work and learning. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily across all courses. Regular staff appraisal is carried out by the head of school which focuses on staff development. The self-assessment report was not sufficiently self-critical but did identify the key strengths. The two key weaknesses identified in the last inspection are still evident, but progress has been made towards addressing them.

Part D: College data

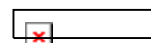


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18	19+
1	55	36
2	23	46
3	21	18
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
Total *	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

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

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%) *
Science and mathematics	21	1	1
Land-based provision	251	2,151	78
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	0	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	0	0	0
Information and communication technology	19	1	1
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	0	0	0
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	15	305	10
Visual and performing arts and media	1	51	2
Humanities	19	1	1
English, languages and communication	26	1	1
Foundation programmes	194	18	7
Total	546	2,529	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	22	51	51	89	127	158
	Retention rate (%)	77	75	95	80	87	78
	National average (%)	83	84	81	74	80	70
	Pass rate (%)	65	58	66	85	79	89
	National average (%)	65	69	76	65	66	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	97	102	80	672	644	955
	Retention rate (%)	81	75	81	75	75	78
	National average (%)	77	77	77	69	71	71
	Pass rate (%)	76	87	83	86	88	84
	National average (%)	74	73	76	69	69	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	28	33	53	121	149	213
	Retention rate (%)	54	45	74	71	62	72
	National average (%)	71	71	75	62	69	64
	Pass rate (%)	47	73	41	65	69	57
	National average (%)	79	80	82	63	67	68
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	34	28	21
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	94	93	90
	National average (%)	*	*	*	**	**	**
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	91	100	89
	National average (%)	*	*	*	76	**	**

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).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

** data unavailable

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)	66	21	13	29
Level 2 (intermediate)	71	25	4	49
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	4
Other sessions	67	0	33	3
Totals	71	21	8	85