



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Burton College

### CONTENTS

---

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

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

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

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

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Construction](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Business \(including teacher education\)](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

[Hospitality, sport and leisure](#)

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

[Health and social care and public services](#)

[Visual, performing arts and media](#)

[Humanities, English and modern foreign languages](#)

[Literacy and numeracy](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

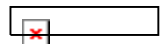
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

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

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

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

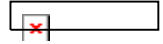
**Basic information about the college**



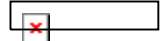
---

Name of college:	Burton College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Keith Norris
Address of college:	Lichfield Street Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE14 3RL
Telephone number:	01283 494400
Fax number:	01283 494801
Chair of governors:	Adrian Argyle
Unique reference number:	130809
Name of reporting inspector:	Paul Curry HMI
Dates of inspection:	12-23 January 2004

## Part A: Summary



### Information about the college



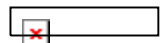
Burton is the largest provider of further education (FE) in east Staffordshire and offers a broad range of post-16 qualifications for school-leavers and adults. It serves the 100,000 population of Burton upon Trent and east Staffordshire and also draws students from south Derbyshire. The college's mission is to provide a diverse and flexible range of high quality education and training programmes to meet the needs of individuals, companies and the wider community. Provision has now been consolidated on to one campus following the completion of a £7 million building programme which includes new teaching accommodation for art, design and performing arts, hairdressing and beauty therapy and business and professional studies.

The college offers courses which range from basic skills and entry level to higher education (HE). The curriculum is organised into nine schools of study: art and design; basic skills and foundation programmes; business and professional studies; community care; construction; information technology (IT) and computing; leisure and hospitality; engineering and manufacturing; and sixth form and continuing education. In 2002/03, the college employed 17 managers, 155 permanent full-time equivalent lecturing staff and 85 full-time equivalent part-time lecturing staff. In addition, there were 131 full-time equivalent support staff.

According to college figures, in 2002/03, there were 4,493 enrolments of students aged 16 to 18 and 9,751 enrolments of adult students. Of the 14,244 total students enrolled, 11.7% identified themselves as being from ethnic minorities, compared to 4.2% in the population of east Staffordshire, but 22% in some particular wards in Burton. Nearly 60% of college students are female. As part of its strategy to widen participation, the college has extended community education provision in east Staffordshire and south Derbyshire with 3,535 students enrolled on community education programmes in 2002/03.

Manufacturing and construction industries employ approximately 36% of the east Staffordshire workforce and service industries employ 64%. The food and drink sector is of major importance to the east Staffordshire economy. The college is one of five FE colleges drawing students from south Derbyshire, east Staffordshire and north west Leicestershire. There are a significant number of local private training providers. All of the secondary schools in Burton provide education for young people aged 11 to 18. The secondary schools offer a range of general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at levels 2 and 3 and programmes for general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), advanced subsidiary (AS) level and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level).

### How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged that the quality of the curriculum was outstanding in media and good in science and mathematics; engineering; teacher education; hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual and performing arts; English, modern foreign languages and humanities; and literacy and numeracy. The remaining areas: construction; business; information and communications technology (ICT); hospitality, sport and travel; health and social care were satisfactory. Work-based learning was good

70% of teaching was judged good or better and only 3.5% unsatisfactory.

***Key strengths***

- high pass rates for students aged 16 to 18
  
- particularly good teaching and learning in English and humanities, visual and performing arts, literacy and numeracy
  
- extensive employer links
  
- successful promotion of social inclusion initiatives
  
- effective guidance and support
  
- much high-quality accommodation and learning resources
  
- strong and effective leadership and management
  
- outstanding provision in media.

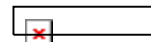
***What should be improved***

- low retention rates at level 2
  
- unsatisfactory provision in catering
  
- unsatisfactory achievements in some construction work-based learning and craft programmes

curriculum areas.

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

### Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Good.</b> High pass rates are a feature of AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Much of the teaching is effective and responsive to students' individual needs. A broad range of courses is offered; there is strong leadership and teamwork. There are low retention rates on AS-level courses; in some lessons there is insufficient student participation.
Construction	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Work-based learning contributory grade: <b>satisfactory.</b> There are high pass and retention rates on technician courses, but some unsatisfactory achievements on craft programmes and work-based provision. Teaching and learning are effective with good achievements in practical and key skills workshops. The range of courses is broad. There is a lack of planned work experience for full-time students and some unsatisfactory assessment and internal verification.
Engineering	<b>Good.</b> Work-based learning contributory grade: <b>good.</b> Most pass rates are well above national averages. Good technical expertise is demonstrated in teaching; specialist resources, particularly in advanced manufacturing, are of high quality. Links with employers are effective; work-based reviews are thorough. There are insufficient checks on students' learning in some lessons and shortcomings in equipment for motor vehicle engineering.
Business (including teacher education)	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teacher education contributory grade: <b>good.</b> There are good pass rates on most part-time courses, those on AS-level courses are significantly below national averages. Learning activities on teacher education courses are of high quality. The range of provision for adult students is broad. Some of the teaching on business courses is insufficiently stimulating and the use of ILT in business classes is underdeveloped.
Information and communications technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Success rates on the GNVQ foundation programme are good, however, pass rates on some level 3 courses are poor. Individual teaching and coaching for adults is good; learning support assistants effectively support students aged 16 to 18. Resources are used productively. Attendance and some retention rates are unsatisfactory; targets for adult students are insufficiently challenging.
Hospitality, sport and	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates and good standards of

leisure	teaching and learning on travel and tourism programmes. Resources for sports studies are excellent. Retention rates are low on a significant minority of courses; provision in catering is unsatisfactory.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	<b>Good.</b> Work-based learning contributory grade: <b>good</b> . Pass rates at level 3 are excellent; teaching and learning and the standard of students' portfolios are good. Specialist resources are of high quality; employer liaison in work-based learning is effective. Retention rates on some beauty therapy courses are poor; target setting for work-based learners is inadequate.
Health and social care and public services	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates on full-time courses at levels 1 and 2 are excellent, but low at level 3. Teachers' professional knowledge is well used in lessons, but teaching methods are insufficiently varied. Staff absence has adversely affected students' progress. Links between work placements and college activities are effective as is support for individual students. Community provision is underdeveloped.
Visual, performing arts and media	<b>Good.</b> Media contributory grade: <b>outstanding</b> . Pass and retention rates on level 3 courses are high. Teaching styles are broad ranging and innovative; students are effectively supported and their engagement is outstanding in media. Students' work and oral skills are of a high standard. Retention rates on level 2 courses are low and there is insufficient provision for part-time adult students.
Humanities, English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> With the exception of AS-level geography, pass rates on many courses are high and improving. Retention rates on some courses are low. Teachers are enthusiastic and effective; the learning environment is attractive and well resourced. There is strong curriculum leadership and teamwork.
Literacy and numeracy	<b>Good.</b> Much of the teaching is of high quality; the range of programmes is broad and responsive to local needs. Support for basic skills students is good; curriculum management is effective. Some of the accommodation in the community is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT).

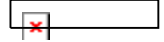
#### How well is the college led and managed?

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

The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. Meeting the needs of students from under-represented groups is a key strategic aim. There has been a considerable increase in community provision in recent years, with many students recruited from the most deprived wards in Burton. Courses are offered at a large number of outreach centres, and the college is involved in a number of collaborative ventures with schools to deliver family learning and basic skills. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is substantially higher than in the local community. There are good childcare facilities available at the college. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated, and there is a clear strategy to meet the obligations of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA), 2001. Access for students with mobility difficulties is good, with the exception of a small number of outreach venues. Policies are in place to promote equal

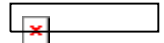
monitored.

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



The quality of support and guidance is good and highly valued by students. There is a wide range of support services available. The course and college information is well designed. Initial advice and guidance are good and students' needs are effectively assessed. Students receive an effective induction. Curriculum and support staff work well together to support and monitor students' progress. The use of additional support is high. The tutorial system is satisfactory. Strategies are in place to address the unsatisfactory retention rates.

### **Students' views of the college**



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

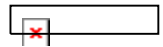
#### ***What students like about the college***

- welcoming and inclusive atmosphere
  
- friendly and approachable staff
  
- availability of additional support
  
- range of courses and vocational opportunities
  
- the variety of elective activities
  
- music in the cafeteria
  
- good facilities.

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

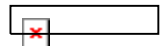
- lack of social room facilities
- insufficient car parking for students
- food prices too high
- extending library opening times for access students
- room clashes and some cramped space.

### **Other information**



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



<b>Aspect and learner type</b>	<b>Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %</b>	<b>Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %</b>	<b>Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %</b>
Teaching 16-18	68	26	6

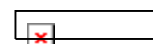


19+ and WBL*	84	16	0
Learning 16-18	66	28	6
19+ and WBL*	83	16	1

*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. Summary data for students' achievements for the period 2001 to 2003 demonstrate that pass rates for students are, in nearly all cases, above national rates. Retention rates are more variable: they are improving, but still just below national rates at level 3, they are declining to below national averages at level 2 and are above national figures at level 1. Using data from 2001 to 2003, which show the percentage of students who successfully achieve their qualification aim compared those who start, the college performs consistently above national average at level 1, and at level 2 for students aged 16 to 18. Success rates have improved at level 3 to a point where they are now above national figures, they declined at level 2 for adult learners in 2003 to a figure slightly below the national average. Overall attendance in the lessons observed was 80%, which compares favourably with the figure of 76% recorded at the last inspection. Attendance was highest in visual, performing arts and media, at 87%, and lowest in literacy and numeracy, at 73%.

2. The separate reports on areas of learning in part C provide more detail about students' pass rates and the standards reached on particular courses.

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

3. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 are very good when compared to national averages for FE colleges. At level 1, pass rates have improved over the last three years, with growing numbers of enrolments, and in 2003, at 85%, were well above the national rate of 69%. A recently introduced in-house value added system for measuring performance at level 1, also demonstrates that students performed above predicted levels in 2003. Similarly, at level 2, the pass rate in 2003 was much improved compared to previous years and, at 87%, is well above the national average. Data for all the main qualification types, for example, GCSE, GNVQ, and national vocational qualifications (NVQs), show that pass rates in 2003 are consistently above national rates. The highest number of enrolments for students aged 16 to 18 is recorded at level 3, with AS-level and GCE A-level subject entries forming the largest proportion of the total. The overall pass rate at this level over the last three years has averaged over 80%, again above the national average for FE colleges. Data which compare students' GCE A-level results with their GCSE scores on entry, show their performance is improving and significantly better than predicted in 2003. Value added performance over the last three years has been highest in art and design, media and law, but below expectations in business studies. At AS level on this measure, performance has been particularly good in psychology, but unsatisfactory in geography and physical education.

4. The college uses in-house value added measures of achievements for students aged 16 to 18 on vocational courses which relate GCSE or GNVQ foundation and intermediate grades to outcomes on level 2 or 3 programmes. Using this measure, national diplomas in graphic design and early years together with advanced vocational certificates in education (AVCE) in performing arts and travel and tourism have all performed particularly well. By contrast, the GNVQ intermediate programmes in art and design and business and first diploma for IT practitioners achieved negative value added scores.

5. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 are now good at level 1, where the figure improved from 72% in 2001/02, to 80% in 2002/03, which is now above the national rate. In particular, as a result of management intervention, GNVQ and NVQ retention rates improved significantly in 2003 to figures of 87% and 77%, respectively, compared to the previous year when they were both below 50%. At level 2, however, retention rates have declined over the last three years from 73% to 68%, below the national average. In particular, on NVQ programmes, the rate has remained below 50% for each of the last two years, and on GCSE courses during the same period, only two thirds of those starting completed the qualification. At level 3, retention rates have improved over the last three years to a figure which is now within 1% of the national average.

6. Key skills achievements in application of number, communication and IT are good at level 1 and, in the case of the latter two areas, also good at level 2. Although the pass rate at level 2 for application of number was higher than that nationally in 2003, it remained at only 28% of those who completed. No entries at level 3 are recorded for application of number and they are very small for IT. In communication, the success rate in 2003 was close to the national figure.

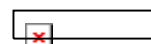
### **Adult learners**

7. Pass rates for adult students are good at all levels. The largest number of enrolments is at level 1 where 2,220 students completed their qualification aim in 2003. Of these, 76% were successful, a figure which is 6% higher than the national rate. Although pass rates have been declining at level 2, at 73%, they remain above the national average. On NVQ programmes at this level, the pass rate has actually improved over the period 2001 to 2003, to a figure of 77%, well above the national rate. At level 3, the overall pass rate of 81% in 2003 is 10% above the national rate and with large numbers of students. On general advanced vocational qualifications, the pass rate rose to 90% in 2003. On level 4 and 5 qualifications, pass rates have been consistently above national figures, although with relatively small numbers of students.

8. Retention rates at levels 1 and 2 show a decline over the last three years. At level 1, the rate fell from 82% in 2001/02 to 71% in 2002/03, although with much larger enrolments in 2002/03 compared to the previous year. Similarly at level 2, there was a 9% decline over the same period and the rate of 66% in 2002/03 is now below the national average. Retention rates on NVQ programmes at this level, for example, averaged below 50% in 2002/03; they were only 55% for GCSE subjects in the same year. The trend at level 3 over the last three years is an improving one with the headline rate now close to the national figure. Retention rates on GNVQ and NVQ programmes, in particular, have improved significantly at this level. On level 4 and 5 qualifications, retention rates remain unsatisfactory.

9. Of the 521 work-based learners, the largest proportion are in engineering, followed by hairdressing and construction. Success rates on modern apprenticeship programmes in hairdressing have improved to a position where they are now good. For example, in 2001 the success rate on the foundation framework was 73%, well above national figures. In engineering, successful completion on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes is now higher than the national average. In construction, pass rates are improving on both foundation and advanced programmes. On care programmes, with a smaller number of trainees, the achievement of the NVQ level 3 qualification is high, although framework pass rates are relatively low.

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



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 200 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 70%, satisfactory in 27% and less than satisfactory in 3%. It was excellent or very good in 30% of lessons. The proportion of teaching that was good or better is higher than the average for general FE colleges in 8 out of the 11 areas inspected. Teaching is particularly good in

languages. Overall there is more good, or very good, teaching on courses for adult students and work-based learners than on courses for students aged 16 to 18. In addition, for adult students, none of the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teaching was graded higher on courses at levels 2 and 3 compared to level 1.

11. In the most effective lessons, the aims and objectives are shared with students and their learning is checked throughout the lesson. Teachers acknowledge students' individual learning styles. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and successfully engage students with different levels of ability. Teachers provide students with innovative and challenging learning activities and give constructive feedback. Classroom resources are well used and there is a variety of teaching methods. There is good rapport between teachers and students and vocational facilitators are effectively used in the larger groups. Students are enthusiastic and work purposefully. In media lessons, students demonstrate sophisticated presentation and research skills. Approaches to the teaching of key skills vary across curriculum areas. Much work has taken place to integrate key skills into vocational subjects and this has been particularly effective in visual and performing arts.

12. In the less effective lessons, teaching strategies fail to engage students. Teaching sometimes follows a routine of exposition followed by small group work and recap with little use of other activities such as case studies or simulations. Students can be overwhelmed by too much information and there is insufficient checking and consolidation of learning. Less confident students do not contribute sufficiently in lessons allowing the more articulate to dominate. In some curriculum areas, for example literacy and numeracy, there is insufficient use of ILT to support learning. In business lessons, students do not make routine use of the Internet for research. The management of learning is poor in catering and the standards set are insufficiently demanding.

13. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. Many regularly undertake relevant industrial updating. All teachers are qualified or are working towards a teaching qualification. Some part-time staff also work in relevant sectors of business and industry. There are an adequate number of qualified assessors in most areas of the college. The learning resource centre incorporates library resources, the learndirect centre and two further floors of computing facilities. The book stock is wide ranging and well used by students across most curriculum areas. The college has significantly invested in the development of a sophisticated managed learning environment to provide more resources in an electronic format which are easily accessible by students and staff on the college's website. Increasing use is being made of this medium with materials for over 150 courses now available. Access to the learning resource centre can be difficult at peak times or when groups have timetabled classes in the facility. The ratio of computers to students across the college is currently good, and most staff also have ready access to computing resources. Hardware and software are of a commercial standard. There is effective use of some high-quality learning materials, interactive whiteboards and data projectors in many lessons.

14. Much of the specialist accommodation at the college is of high quality. Some excellent facilities exist for sports, visual and performing arts, hair and beauty and some engineering workshops. There is also a new sixth form centre with flexible accommodation options. Very good nursery facilities also exist, with 44 places for the young children of students and staff. In many teaching rooms, there is good use of appropriate displays of students' work, supporting a welcoming learning environment. In a small number of curriculum areas, where numbers have grown quickly, there are some classrooms that are too small for the size of some teaching groups. Café and restaurant accommodation for students are generally good, although there are no social room facilities. At the main college site, there is ready access for students with restricted physical mobility; at some outreach centres access is more restricted.

15. Assessment is fair and accurate in most areas of learning. Full-time students receive clear assessment schedules and are aware of assessment requirements. However, there have been some unsatisfactory assessment practices in construction on work-based learning provision and on NVQ programmes in IT. Most teachers give thorough, timely and developmental feedback to students on their work and how it can be improved. Students in science and mathematics and in visual, performing arts, and media receive particularly good verbal and written feedback on assessed work. Some assessment feedback to full-time engineering students is not sufficiently thorough and teachers do not provide students with adequate guidance on how they might improve

their work.

16. Students' progress is effectively monitored in most areas, although target setting for adult students in ICT is insufficiently specific. Information gained through the assessment of students aged 16 to 18 is used to regularly report progress to parents. Parents' evenings are well attended. The college sends regular progress reports to employers who sponsor students. Internal verification and moderation procedures have recently been strengthened and are thorough in most areas of learning. Some construction craft areas have suffered from a national shortage of qualified teaching and assessment staff. All external verification reports are considered by the principal and relevant heads of schools. Arrangements for the collection, analysis and reporting of value added information are well established for academic and vocational courses.

17. The college provides an extensive range of courses which meet the needs of students, the community and local employers. Good internal progression between levels occurs in many curriculum areas. A detailed curriculum mapping process has led to an improvement in the number of level 1 courses, although some gaps, for example in sport, still remain. In hospitality, sport and leisure; health and social care; and visual and performing arts, a narrow range of part-time courses is offered. There are good school links programmes available enabling pupils to participate in vocational and occupational training. Participation is high in health and social care; hospitality, sport and leisure; engineering; and construction. There is also an entry level programme aimed at disaffected pupils aged 14 to 16. Academic courses for students aged 16 to 19 are located in a dedicated sixth form and continuing education school. These courses are well subscribed.

18. The college is socially inclusive, offering community-based provision in many areas, with ICT taught in 25 community venues, and a substantial family learning programme in 11 local schools. There are currently over 3,000 students studying on community-based courses. This represents a substantial area of growth for the college. Much community-based activity takes place in areas of high deprivation. The college is responsive to employers with a range of bespoke courses to meet specific training needs. There are proactive employer advisory groups in most vocational areas. Work-based learning numbers are highest in engineering, construction, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The college has operated as a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in advanced manufacturing production for nearly two years. In partnership with local employers and Stoke College, it has recently been awarded CoVE status in construction. There is a good range of enrichment and additional learning activities, although take up in some curriculum areas is low. Some schools provide additional short courses such as first aid and risk assessment, allowing students to gain further skills and qualifications.

19. Pre-entry information and guidance to potential students is wide ranging, including an informative prospectus, a website, individual guidance interviews, presentations from staff and tours of the college by students. Student admissions are managed centrally and include interviews with specialist curriculum and support staff. There is comprehensive initial assessment at enrolment for literacy and numeracy, dyslexia and language needs, and students preferred learning styles. The results are effectively shared with students and appropriate support given in class and through workshops in the learning resource centre. Induction is well structured. Last year it included a fun day which was particularly well received by students and staff.

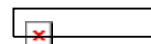
20. Students on the main campus have convenient access to a wide range of support services including additional learning support, counselling, careers and HE advice, individual and group tutorials and a 44-place nursery. Students in the community have less comprehensive support and travel to the main site is not always convenient. The college is developing an online support service for all students including those in the community. Full-time students have regular individual and group tutorials in addition to their course of study. Tutorials are purposeful and follow the college policy and standard documentation. Tutorials in the sixth form centre are not always well attended. Those tutorials observed by inspectors were judged to be mainly satisfactory.

21. Additional learning support is highly valued by students and well used. Students with disabilities and those living independently receive good support. Inspectors observed the effective delivery of additional support in lessons and in the learning resource centre. One modern apprentice learner with dyslexia was effectively supported at the workplace. Care students who had difficulty taking

notes in lessons were able to use laptop computers. A signer was observed supporting an enrolment interview. However, hospitality students had less effective numeracy support in their lessons.

22. The college recognises that retention rates are unsatisfactory at level 2 and several initiatives have taken place to improve them. Students at risk of withdrawing have their attendance monitored and they are provided with additional tutorials. Cash vouchers are used to reward students when they complete their course. Some successful initiatives have improved the retention rate of 'at risk' students. For example, students accessing the learning support fund have recorded retention rates of 88%. Students with personal and welfare difficulties are effectively supported by the student services team. The director of students' services is also the child protection officer. The counselling service is well used by students. Staff are readily available to help and there is a wide range of information in the student centre. The college makes good use of external agencies in supporting students, including the two local Connexions teams. Support and guidance are effectively managed between student services and curriculum teams. Feedback from students is regularly sought and the service evaluated. Attendance is closely monitored and prompt action taken on absence. Since the last inspection, attendance has improved by 4%.

## Leadership and management



23. Leadership and management are good. There has been good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Student success rates are improving and are now consistently above the national averages. Student numbers are increasing as the college responds positively to social inclusion initiatives and local skill shortages. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Plans to locate the college on one site in Burton have been achieved and the college now benefits from high quality accommodation and resources. Retention rates at level 2 are below the national average. In most curriculum areas, quality assurance procedures are applied rigorously. However, in a minority, self-evaluation is insufficiently objective.

24. The college benefits from strong and effective leadership from the principal, senior managers and governors. Strategic plans set a clear direction to deliver the values and priorities of the college and link well to operational plans for the college and the subsidiary plans for each school and business support area. They are understood and supported by staff. A high priority is placed on social inclusion, for example, through the rapid development of community-based IT provision located in seven socially disadvantaged wards in Burton. A college culture has been successfully fostered which is welcoming and supportive to both students and staff and in which continuous improvement is held as a central value.

25. Governors have a good understanding of the college strategic plan and are appropriately involved in its creation and approval. They set challenging, but realistic, targets and effectively use key performance indicators, which they have approved, to monitor students' performance as well as the corporate performance of the college. The standards committee regularly receives presentations from curriculum managers and systematically reviews quality assurance reports and feedback from student, parent and employer questionnaires. Governors are selected carefully for the skills they can bring to the college and are paired with a specific part of the college each year to enhance their knowledge of the college. New governors have an extensive individually designed induction programme.

26. The college has developed a range of productive external partnerships. Strong and effective links with employers reflect the college's focus on responding to local skills shortages and the national skills agenda. In addition to some excellent individual relationships with locally based employers, including some multinational companies, the college has nine employer advisory groups which are mostly well supported and meet twice a year to advise college staff. Positive partnerships have also been formed with community organisations, for example, enabling the college to

contribute to local developments relating to re-generation and racial equality. Good working partnerships exist with local secondary schools, for example, through the increased flexibility programme, and with the consortium of Staffordshire colleges. An effective partnership with Staffordshire University supports a growing cohort of students following HE programmes at the college, as well as local schools.

27. Curriculum management is good in most areas of the college; it is satisfactory in construction, business and IT, but unsatisfactory in the relatively small provision of catering. The management of work-based learning is good in engineering and hairdressing. The nine heads of school meet regularly with cross college curriculum managers under the effective leadership of the deputy principal. Each curriculum team has a schedule of meetings, mostly weekly, which are well managed to enable staff to contribute to the planning and monitoring of courses and to review students' progress. Responsibilities for staff are clear and well understood. There are opportunities for staff to share good practice and in the best examples there are regular discussions of teaching and learning strategies. Good teamwork is evident in most areas and is valued by the staff. The college operates procedures to encourage part-time staff to play a full role in the curriculum teams. In construction, the organisation of work-based learning has been unsatisfactory; in ICT there were some weaknesses in quality assurance and equal opportunities. In catering, actions to address some poor achievements have not, so far, been successful.

28. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures exist for quality assurance. Governors, managers and staff are fully engaged in these processes. Out of 11 areas of learning graded, inspectors agreed with 7, but awarded one grade lower in 4. In the majority of self-assessment reports, there are robust judgements which lead to action plans to address weaknesses. However, in art and design, business, hospitality, leisure and sport, and IT, judgements were not always sufficiently self-critical or evaluative. Value added data is used thoroughly, not only for GCE A-level subjects, but also for students studying vocational qualifications. The well-established college learning observation scheme has contributed to raising standards in teaching. The percentage of teaching sessions judged to be good or better improved from 60% at the last inspection, to 70% in this inspection. However, the college internal scheme consistently produces a substantially higher grade profile, which compromises its effectiveness.

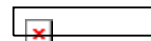
29. Staff development and appraisal are very effective. There is extensive and regular participation in external and internal programmes by all staff. The comprehensive annual college staff development programme places considerable emphasis on sharing good practice within and between teams and has a strong focus on raising standards of teaching and learning. The high level of support through staff development is very positively regarded by all staff.

30. The college has comprehensive and clear policies and plans in place to promote equality of opportunity. The college meets the requirements of SENDA and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, and has made good progress in addressing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. All self-assessment reports and action plans are required to address equal opportunities issues. Student performance is regularly monitored according to gender, ethnicity, age and disability and any areas of concern targeted for action, for example, extra support has been provided to younger male students in engineering, art and AS-level classes, resulting in considerably improved retention rates. Whole college staff development has been provided to raise staff awareness of equality issues. Nevertheless, there is under-representation of females in senior management and the governing body. The student services team produce regularly changing displays relating to festivals in the range of religions and cultures represented in the local community. The college has introduced several initiatives to address gender stereotyping in curriculum areas, but these have not significantly changed patterns of student participation.

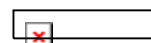
31. Management information systems have improved significantly since the last inspection. Managers, staff and external agencies are now provided with timely and accurate data. There is a wide and developing range of reports available and they are used well by many staff for planning and quality assurance processes, including tracking and supporting students. Financial management is strong. The college is in a strong financial position and is able to fund its strategic plan. Resources are used effectively and efficiently through the application of a well-established course costing process, which continues to be refined. Where class sizes are small, this is planned, accepting

higher costs where necessary to deliver the priorities in the strategic plan. The college provides good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science and mathematics



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

#### **Strengths**

- high pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses
- much effective teaching which is responsive to individual needs of students
- broad range of courses
- strong teamwork and leadership.

#### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on AS-level courses
- insufficient participation by students in some lessons.

#### **Scope of provision**

32. The college provides a broad range of science and mathematics courses at levels 1, 2 and 3; they are well subscribed. Level 1 courses offer progression to GCSE or access study routes. Mathematics, science, human physiology and health courses are offered at GCSE. Students who obtain a grade D in GCSE mathematics retake the subject over one year; those with a grade E study over two years. The timetable is organised so that students can move between levels when appropriate. Courses leading to AS-level and GCE A-level qualifications are offered in all science

subjects and mathematics, although numbers on chemistry and physics courses are relatively small. A foundation of advanced mathematics course supports the delivery of a two-year qualification in AS-level mathematics or as a qualification in its own right. The science and mathematics area also contributes to teaching on the access to HE programme. A 'mathematics for nurses' course is offered for part-time evening study.

### **Achievement and standards**

33. Pass rates are high on most courses. For example, 100% pass rates were recorded for all GCE A-level subjects in 2003. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics and science subjects improved in 2003 to above national average levels, but the pass rate in GCSE human physiology and health has declined over the last three years. Pass rates in the biology component of the access to HE course are very good. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory, although they are low on AS-level courses, particularly biology and mathematics. Action has been taken to address this weakness and the retention rate of the current cohort is much higher in both subjects. In AS-level and GCE A-level biology, students achieve much higher grades than predicted by their GCSE results; in other subjects they achieve marginally better outcomes.

34. Science students develop good practical skills, carrying out experiments safely and competently. The overall standard of students' work is high, with proper attention to presentation and explanation of methods. Progression is good within the college and to HE. For example, of the students studying biology on the access to HE course in 2003, over 80% progressed to nursing courses or science-related degrees.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	174	144	177
		% retention	77	69	68
		% pass rate	37	44	45
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	*	27	32
		% retention	*	67	72
		% pass rate	*	39	35
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	17	28	18
		% retention	59	43	78
		% pass rate	80	58	71
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	26	22	34
		% retention	77	59	59
		% pass rate	35	62	80
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	25	30	46
		% retention	72	80	61
		% pass rate	94	71	89

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

35. There is much effective teaching which is responsive to the individual needs of students. Most teachers have productive working relationships with their students, based on mutual respect.



Lessons are well planned and structured with clear aims that are shared with students. The outcomes from the assessment of students' work and their views on learning styles influence the planning and format of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of methods and encourage students to contribute their ideas and think for themselves. All contributions are valued and effort is praised. In most lessons, teachers skilfully question students to challenge and stimulate them. For example, in a very good biology lesson on genetics, the teacher catered for different preferred learning styles by making use of video footage, group work, an overhead projector, a genetics card game and computer exercise. In addition, there was a question and answer session in which the students wrote their answers on small personal whiteboards which were held up for the teacher to see. This ensured that everyone participated and the responses prompted lively discussion. The technique of using individual whiteboards is very effectively used throughout the curriculum area. In a foundation mathematics lesson for adults, the students were sufficiently confident to express themselves mathematically because of the supportive environment fostered by their teacher. Answers were very skilfully and sensitively elicited from the students, giving them ownership of the learning. In some lessons, there is insufficient participation by students. Teachers do not actively involve students in learning and do not extend their scientific and mathematical thinking. Questioning is not used effectively to support, check and reinforce learning.

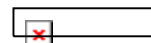
36. The quality of equipment and learning resources is satisfactory. There are dedicated rooms for mathematics and science teaching. Some are equipped with a data projector and interactive whiteboards; portable equipment is available for other rooms. There is use of ILT to enhance teaching, but its use throughout the area is in the early stages of development. Classrooms are pleasant and have commercially produced posters and some students' work on the walls to create a stimulating learning environment.

37. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Students are given minimum target grades based on their GCSE results and these are referred to in reviews which take place at least once a term. There is a common policy for setting and marking of homework and the grades awarded are compared with minimum target grades so that students can track their progress. Work is regularly set, marked and returned promptly. The comments by teachers include pointers for improvement. There is good additional support for students in the learning resource centre and from learning facilitators in practical lessons. Students are very positive about the support they receive. There are procedures for following up poor attendance which result in students with significant absence being provided with extra support.

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

38. There is strong leadership and very good teamwork. Teachers are mutually supportive and pool resources and ideas. Good practice is shared both informally and formally in regular team meetings. The resulting minutes are detailed and include action points. Lines of management are clear and channels of communication are good. All teachers, full time and part time, are involved in strategic and curriculum planning. Through self-assessment, areas for improvement are identified and action is taken to address the issues raised. For example, modifications were made to the entry requirements for GCSE mathematics in order to improve retention rates. There is a rigorous classroom observation and appraisal system for all teachers.

### **Construction**



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

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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on technician courses
- good achievements in practical and key skill workshops
- effective teaching and learning
- broad range of courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on some craft courses
- low completion rates on work-based learning
- some shortcomings in the assessment of work-based plumbing
- no work experience for full-time students.

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

39. The school of construction provides a broad range of craft and technician programmes from foundation to higher level study. Different modes of attendance are possible including full-time, part-time and evening study. The main programmes of study comprise: national certificates in construction, civil engineering and AVCE at level 3, together with craft courses in bricklaying, electrical installation, plumbing, painting and decorating, and wood occupations. Full-time students are disadvantaged by not having a planned programme of work experience. Courses are located on two sites: the main college campus and a local annex which houses painting and decorating. At the time of inspection, there were 746 students enrolled, of whom 299 were full time. In addition, there are 97 trainees on work-based learning routes and 60 school pupils, aged 14 to 16, study on vocational taster courses at the college. Very recently, in conjunction with Stoke-on-Trent College, funding was provided to develop a CoVE in construction crafts across Staffordshire.

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

40. Technician courses have high retention and pass rates; carpentry and joinery craft courses also enjoy good levels of success. However, on some other craft courses and work-based learning, pass rates have been unsatisfactory. For example, level 2 electrical installation and NVQ 1 decorative occupations courses have both experienced low pass rates for two years; level 2 and level 3

plumbing and NVQ 2 brickwork qualifications had zero pass rates in 2003. Significant staff changes have adversely affected these achievements; these problems have now been addressed with new teachers in post. In addition, many of the students on these courses are still continuing with the aim of eventually submitting assignment and portfolio work to achieve the qualification aim. The overall framework completion rate for work-based learning in construction now demonstrates some improvement; employers commented favourably on the practical skills and personal development of trainees.

41. There are some good achievements in practical workshops, particularly those for carpentry and joinery and electrical installation. Most work-based learning students are highly motivated and are developing good practical craft skills. One work-based learner at level 2, for example, is making such good progress that he has been given the responsibility for organising the production of staircase materials in a large industrial carpentry and joinery workshop. Another was able to work to industrial standards by completing a large timber-stud partition unsupervised. Key skills are well demonstrated. For example, in one IT workshop for NVQ 2 plumbing students, all were able to research the Internet for gas safety information which was subsequently used in a powerpoint presentation. The college has enjoyed considerable success in regional construction skills competitions with students winning a number of awards.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	*	34	21
		% retention	*	53	86
		% pass rate	*	50	61
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	30	27	20
		% retention	7	67	55
		% pass rate	50	28	91
City and Guilds 2360/2 electrical installation	2	No. of starts	29	23	20
		% retention	100	78	100
		% pass rate	52	28	25
BTEC national certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	24	19	17
		% retention	42	100	94
		% pass rate	60	68	81
BTEC national certificate in civil engineering	3	No. of starts	18	22	17
		% retention	39	64	76
		% pass rate	100	100	92

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

42. Two thirds of teaching is good or better, the remainder is satisfactory. The best teaching is characterised by thorough lesson planning and preparation, together with a broad range of classroom activities. The best learning occurred with part-time students from industry who were able to bring and use their own work roles and responsibilities to add a real dimension to discussion and debate. During one plumbing theory lesson, for example, a knowledgeable and experienced vocational teacher used to good effect, students' knowledge of domestic hot water systems to support the design of model systems according to the size and layout of different properties. Key

skills are taught effectively. In one mixed-ability key skills communications class, for example, a group of construction apprentices achieved good written and word processed work on appropriate topics such as job applications, hobbies and vocational health and safety.

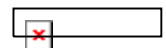
43. The carpentry and joinery and electrical installation workshops are well equipped with specialist equipment. Students' working space in the brickwork and painting and decorating workshops is more restricted. Facilities for ILT are also underdeveloped. Work-based learners are provided with appropriate industrial placements which enable a wide range of practical skills to be developed, resulting in the production of relevant work-based evidence. Significant difficulties have been encountered appointing teachers for brickwork and plumbing courses. This has resulted in periods when students' work has not been properly assessed or internally verified. This problem has now been addressed with new staff appointed who can act as assessors. Internal verification is currently contracted out to a third party.

44. On work-based learning, reviews of students' progress are thorough, although there is some unsatisfactory target setting and monitoring of individual learning plans in plumbing. A system for the screening of individual learning needs and students' preferred learning styles operates successfully. Students who have difficulties with basic skills are provided with additional individual support. The system is monitored carefully with students receiving copies of their personal progress sheets. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Full-time students have weekly tutorials when individual learning plans are discussed, whilst for part-time students this occurs at monthly intervals and is combined with reviews from managing agents. A successful strategy is in place for dealing with poor punctuality and attendance. Part-time students are required to have an attendance card signed by college staff for presentation to employers and non-attendance, without good reason, can result in a loss of wages. Work-based learning trainees are provided with a review programme which ensures that they are regularly monitored and scrutiny of records confirmed that most are meeting the milestones in their individual learning plans.

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

45. Leadership and management are satisfactory and include work-based learning delivered through the 'Newstart' business development unit. Good communications are aided by frequent course, school and work-based learning team meetings. An active industrial advisory board ensures courses are responsive to the needs of local employers. A system of governor involvement with the curriculum schools is in place and the nominated governor for construction plays an active part in school events. Appropriate procedures are now in place for the management and organisation of work-based learning after some disruption to learners' progress caused by the inadequacies in assessment and internal verification.

## **Engineering**



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most courses
  
- good technical expertise demonstrated in teaching

- high quality specialist resources
  
- very thorough and frequent work-based reviews
  
- effective employer links.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient checking of students' learning during lessons
  
- shortcomings in equipment for motor vehicle engineering.

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

46. Engineering offers a comprehensive range of courses from introductory to degree level. There are 106 full-time and 148 part-time students. A further 182 learners are enrolled on modern apprenticeships in a range of engineering disciplines, including motor vehicle, engineering and polymer technology. Full-time courses include NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in performing engineering operations, an intermediate certificate in engineering technology, first and national diplomas in motor vehicle studies and a national diploma in electronics. Part-time programmes comprise NVQs, national certificates in polymer technology, mechanical, manufacturing or electrical engineering. Computer-aided design, fabrication and welding are also offered. Specialist courses, such as those for multi-skilling and moulding techniques, have been developed through the CoVE in advanced manufacturing production, in close consultation with local employers. Insufficient use is made of additional qualifications, for example, those in health and safety, to support the main programmes of study.

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

47. High pass rates are a feature of most courses. Pass rates on the national certificate and diploma in engineering, for example, reached over 90% in 2003; on the computer-aided drawing course, 100% pass rates have been achieved during the last two years. Retention rates are good on the national diploma, but have been unsatisfactory on the basic engineering competences course. This latter course has now been withdrawn. The successful completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks has been improving and is now significantly better than the national average. Pass rates on those courses covered by the CoVE are all of a high standard.

48. Students demonstrate a good development of practical skills in fabrication and welding, automotive engineering, electronics and mechanical engineering. In the workplace, the standard of learners' practice is consistently high. Written work is at least satisfactory, and much is of a high standard. Attendance in lessons averaged 77%, a figure comparable to the national average for engineering.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ in performing engineering operations	1	No. of starts	*	21	30
		% retention	*	38	90
		% pass rate	*	63	52
City and Guilds 2010 basic engineering competences	1	No. of starts	27	32	**
		% retention	74	69	**
		% pass rate	40	45	**
First diploma in engineering (motor vehicle studies)	2	No. of starts	41	26	28
		% retention	78	85	82
		% pass rate	81	95	87
City and Guilds 2290-02 fabrication and welding	2	No. of starts	21	20	**
		% retention	62	70	**
		% pass rate	62	36	**
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	83	69	48
		% retention	53	71	63
		% pass rate	75	94	93
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	31	36	32
		% retention	65	69	72
		% pass rate	75	64	91
City and Guilds 4351-01 computer aided design	3	No. of starts	22	35	32
		% retention	95	71	78
		% pass rate	67	100	100

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

\* course did not run

\*\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

**Quality of education and training**

49. The proportion of good or better teaching observed was higher than the national profile for the engineering sector, with significantly fewer unsatisfactory lessons. Good technical expertise is demonstrated in teaching. Most lessons are well prepared, with clear learning objectives. Tutors make effective use of computers to present learning materials or to involve students in individual research or presentation activities. In one motor vehicle class, for example, the tutor successfully combined CD-ROM learning materials with practical demonstrations and individual activities for students to provide a well-paced and vocationally relevant session. Key skills and ILT are integrated into most courses. In the less productive lessons, there is insufficient checking of students' learning through, for example, question and answer techniques, and an over-reliance on teacher-led activity. Some lesson plans lack a clear structure and contain insufficient reference to teaching methods.

50. Specialist resources for most areas of engineering provision are of high quality. The CoVE award has enabled the acquisition of specialist resources in computer-aided design, industrial-process control, welding, and the refurbishment of workshops to industrial standards. The facilities are widely utilised by a range of full-time and part-time learners and by local employers. Classrooms are comfortable and clean. Some have interactive whiteboards and Internet access. Good online

learning materials for engineering are available in the learning resources centre, but their use is underdeveloped. There are some shortcomings in the resourcing of motor vehicle engineering. The motor vehicle workshops have good diagnostic equipment and facilities for spray painting, but they lack space for the numbers of students using them. There are no new, or nearly new, vehicles to provide students with experience of the latest technology. Staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience, much recently updated. Most hold qualified teacher status.

51. Assessment of students' work is thorough. Work is carefully marked and the comments from tutors provide guidance on both the standards achieved and how improvements might be made. There is good tracking of students' achievements, with colour-coded charts that allow easy identification of each individual's progress. Work-based reviews are detailed and held frequently. Assessors visit learners on a monthly basis to review progress and realistic, but challenging, targets are set. Reviews for college-based students are carried out six times a year, as part of the tutorial process. The targets resulting from these reviews are less specific and insufficiently challenging.

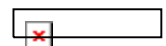
52. Links with local schools are good. Motor vehicle and practical engineering courses are offered, as well as the vocational GCSE in engineering. These attract large numbers of pupils aged 14 to 16 and provide them with a progression route on to other college courses. In one motor vehicle class, pupils worked enthusiastically on the removal, cleaning and reassembly of track rods before learning how to adjust the car's steering geometry. This well-designed practical activity also provided a good opportunity for pupils to improve their research, numeracy and communication skills.

53. Individual support for students is effective; good working relationships exist between students and their tutors. Work-based learners, full-time students and those on substantial part-time courses receive initial assessment of their basic skills. Additional support, where appropriate, is offered with the take up better than 80%. During the inspection, examples of very effective individual support, by vocationally qualified staff, were observed. Students appreciated the help provided and gained in confidence as a result.

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

54. The management of the engineering provision is good, although both students and the inspection team experienced problems over the accuracy of course timetables. Organisational roles are clearly defined, documented and understood; courses are well managed. Work-based learning is managed effectively and jointly between the college's own 'Newstart' business development unit and engineering staff. Employer links are effective. Teachers working in the CoVE liaise closely with employers to plan and deliver programmes which meet the current and future needs of local industry. Advisory group meetings with employers are well attended. Quality assurance systems are well structured. Targets are set for course enrolment, retention and pass rates. Annual course reviews are used to critically evaluate performance against targets and national averages. Internal verification, particularly on work-based learning, is well documented and administered by appropriately qualified staff. Scheduled meetings between assessors and verifiers are used to share good practice. Staff development records evidence a good take up of activities including industrial updating, additional qualifications and attendance at conference and curriculum events.

### **Business (including teacher education)**



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

The contributory grade for teacher education is **good (grade 2)**

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on most part-time courses
- high-quality learning activities in teacher education classes
- broad range of provision for adult students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates on AS-level courses
- some unsatisfactory classroom management in business lessons
- underdeveloped use of ILT in business classes.

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

55. Full-time business courses comprise AS-level, AVCE and GNVQ intermediate. In business administration, certificate and diploma programmes for legal secretaries are provided. There is a wide range of part-time courses for adults with flexible modes of study and attendance possible in order to meet the diverse needs of these students. Professional courses include NVQ accounting qualifications from levels 2 to 4 and NVQ 2 and 3 payroll awards, which typically attract more than 100 students in an academic year. Workshop provision, which facilitates flexible attendance patterns, is used to accommodate mainly adults working towards text and word processing qualifications. A broad range of part-time teacher education programmes is provided, including post-graduate study and qualifications for teaching assistants. Over 150 students are enrolled on these programmes this academic year.

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

56. Pass rates on City and Guilds teacher education awards are consistently good and often better than 90%; those on NVQ accounting courses are above national averages at all levels. Pass rates on the legal secretary's certificate and GNVQ intermediate are very good; by contrast, those on AS-level accounting and business are poor and significantly below national averages. Retention rates on NVQ accounting courses are also below national figures.

57. The standard of students' work on legal secretarial and office skills courses is high. A wide variety of skills is demanded of students in carrying out assignments. Students' work, particularly in teacher training, is often well researched and presented and shows good use of IT skills in a variety of contexts. Standards of written English can sometimes be unsatisfactory. The average attendance in lessons was 75%, below the national average for this area of learning. It was particularly low on some of the full-time programmes.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in business (including teacher education), 2001 to 2003***



Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Text processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	117	99	81
		% retention	96	92	81
		% pass rate	83	85	71
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	43	30	32
		% retention	77	67	66
		% pass rate	82	70	76
Legal secretaries' certificate	2	No. of starts	21	28	21
		% retention	90	71	95
		% pass rate	95	100	100
AVCE business (double award) and precursor	3	No. of starts	40	19	*
		% retention	60	42	*
		% pass rate	75	50	*
City and Guilds 7307 teachers' certificate	4	No. of starts	70	120	87
		% retention	94	87	87
		% pass rate	89	98	92
NVQ 4 accounting	4	No. of starts	20	21	27
		% retention	80	81	81
		% pass rate	75	41	59

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

58. In teacher education lessons, many of the learning activities were of high quality. One lesson successfully introduced students to the construction of educational crossword puzzles with the aid of a simple computer design programme. Another identified how students might structure and deliver an introductory lesson for a new course. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives which ensure the full ability range of students are engaged. Teachers employ a wide range of activities in class such as group discussion, presentation, case studies and creative thinking. They frequently check students' understanding and give constructive feedback on their progress. Students are consistently encouraged to develop, share and record ideas. Good use is made of the students' work roles and experience to apply educational theory to practice. The level of professional debate is high. The learning environment is excellent with spacious rooms, modern comfortable furniture and a good variety of modern teaching aids.

59. In other business lessons, teaching is mainly satisfactory. In the better classes, learning activities are well structured with a range of theoretical and vocational skills being developed. Progress is checked and teachers successfully structure activities for mixed-ability groups of students. For example, within the different tasks set, more complex extension activities are provided and students are encouraged to apply new knowledge in different contexts. In one class, students were engaged in planning and running a company meeting. This involved them applying business theory to practice, developing skills of corporate decision making, sharing ideas and ensuring that goals were met. In a GNVQ intermediate class, students were discussing the concept of stakeholders. They were able to list and distinguish the various types of stakeholder and apply the concept to different types of organisation. In the weaker lessons, insufficient progress is made by students because there is no consolidation of key learning points or testing of understanding. In these lessons, there are often missed opportunities to use ILT to support and enrich learning. Unsatisfactory classroom

management can result in students losing concentration or becoming disruptive. In one class, the more confident students were allowed to dominate the lesson and effectively prevented others from making an active contribution.

60. Key skills are developed and assessed through the medium of a synoptic project that encompasses the different skills within one portfolio of work. Progress in key skills is regularly monitored through one-to-one tutorials. Some portfolios are well advanced and have a good range of well-presented and appropriately researched material, but key skills are not a priority for many students and attendance at key skills lessons can be low.

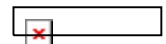
61. Students' assignments and portfolios are often well presented and lucidly written. Legal secretarial students methodically proof read their work before submitting it for marking. Consistent standards in the grading of work are achieved through a process of internal moderation or secondary marking. Occasionally, comments by teachers lack sufficient detail including how improvements might be achieved. College timetables permit full-time students to combine advanced academic and vocational study and many full-time students in business have taken advantage of this opportunity. On legal secretarial courses, students can achieve a wide range of additional secretarial and IT single-subject qualifications at all levels. They also receive valuable work experience in local solicitors' offices. Subject enrichment in the business area is provided through visits to companies and visiting speakers from local organisations. Students on the Institute of Leadership and Management courses undertake an overseas residential course that enables them to compare and contrast local and overseas management practices. Good progression routes exist for students to move on to higher level courses in the college.

62. Students' targets are set through individual learning plans. The college value added system allows the progress made to be compared with the minimum target grades set. The tutorial programme for full-time students is well organised, but attendance is sometimes unsatisfactory. There is no formal tutorial system for adult students beyond teacher education courses, although teachers are sensitive to the needs of adults and make arrangements when appropriate.

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

63. Teamwork in the teacher training area is effective. There is a clear sense of purpose. Teachers meet regularly to plan and develop courses, produce learning materials and monitor students' progress. In the broader business area, teamwork is less evident although the key skills project is effectively operated by personal tutors acting together; they discuss measures for improving attendance and providing support for students. Course files are well maintained. Quality assurance procedures are well understood by staff, and many programme reviews are analytical and supported by clear action plans. Targets set for improvements in attendance and retention rates have yet to be met in most cases. The inspection findings did not support the grades awarded through the internal lesson observation scheme.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on GNVQ foundation programme
  
- good individual teaching and coaching for adults

- productive use of learning support assistants in lessons
  
- effective use of resources.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates on AS-level and national diploma courses
  
- unsatisfactory retention rates on ECDL and first diploma IT
  
- weaknesses in NVQ assessment and internal verification
  
- ineffective target setting on adult courses.

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

64. There are 206 full-time students and 990 part-time students, of whom the majority are aged 19 or over. A broad range of courses in ICT and computing is offered from foundation to HE levels. In addition, the college offers part-time courses in 25 community centres where students have access to different City and Guilds e-learning qualifications, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and Open College Network (OCN) introductory IT courses.

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

65. Pass rates on the GNVQ foundation programme have been consistently high and well above the national average. The retention rate on this programme has improved significantly to over 90% in 2003. Although the pass rate on ECDL is much higher than the national figure, retention rates have been declining and in 2003 became unsatisfactory. Similarly, on the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma the retention rate has now declined to an unsatisfactory level. Pass rates on the AS-level IT and national diploma courses have worsened over the three-year period 2001 to 2003, to a point where they are now poor. Although overall attendance is satisfactory, in a third of the lessons observed it fell below 50%.

66. The standard of work in students' files is generally satisfactory. There are examples of well-organised and well-presented portfolios by students undertaking OCN courses in community venues. Full-time students on practitioner courses clearly evidence the development of programming skills. In one information systems lesson, for example, students worked on a project involving the programming of a light sensitive robot which was designed to travel through a dark tunnel.

67. Many adult students on business-related courses are first-time users of ICT. Despite this,

students work well to gain modest, but significant, new skills. They are able to design interesting presentations, construct spreadsheets to calculate household budgets and produce eye-catching, desk-top published posters and greetings cards. Many adult students are confident about what they are doing and are proud of their achievements.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation ICT	1	No. of starts	17	15	*
		% retention	65	73	*
		% pass rate	82	100	*
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	529	548	469
		% retention	91	84	90
		% pass rate	67	74	71
AS-level ICT	2	No. of starts	31	55	48
		% retention	74	80	83
		% pass rate	61	59	33
BTEC first diploma for IT practitioners	2	No. of starts	27	41	47
		% retention	74	88	68
		% pass rate	90	72	72
ECDL	2	No. of starts	75	116	77
		% retention	61	77	56
		% pass rate	85	84	93
BTEC national diploma in computing	3	No. of starts	31	55	48
		% retention	74	80	83
		% pass rate	61	59	33

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

68. Teaching and learning on full-time courses are mostly good. However, for part-time students, the proportion of good lessons is much lower than the national profile. In the best classes, teachers conduct the lesson at a good pace and effectively enable students to work at a level that matches their ability. In workshop classes, teachers provide effective coaching for individual students, build their confidence and respond quickly to any queries raised. These lessons, which comprise mainly adult students, are conducted with an appropriate amount of informality which allows students to work at their own pace. Some lessons are not sufficiently productive. In these lessons, the use of students' time is not effectively managed and there is too much exposition on the part of teachers without sufficient checks on students' learning. The integration and use of learning support staff in lessons are good. Students are given appropriate support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their confidence. Learning support assistants work in a sensitive and enabling way to encourage students to become more independent.

69. Resources for ICT are good and used effectively. The ratio of students to workstations is good and access to computer equipment is good. Students make good use of clearly structured learning materials and workbooks for supported self-study. There are extensive resources on the college

intranet, which are regularly accessed and used by students. Open-access and drop-in workshop facilities are available to students undertaking courses where study modes are flexible. Most teaching rooms are well laid out and teachers make good use of interactive presentations, data projectors and interactive whiteboards. Access to those with restricted physical mobility is unsatisfactory in two community centres, and in one outreach centre the chairs were unsuitable for computer use.

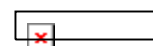
70. Target setting on courses for adults is unsatisfactory; those within individual learning plans are not sufficiently specific or challenging. Students' progress in workshop provision is not effectively checked or recorded; students are not routinely informed about their progress. Action is now being taken by the college to address this recognised weakness. Assessment mechanisms for full-time students are effective. Teachers share a spreadsheet of students' performance to monitor their progress. Assessment materials are appropriate and include clear instructions for the completing of assignment work. Feedback to students is satisfactory, although more information could be provided to support improvement. Internal verification and assessment on NVQ courses are not sufficiently frequent or rigorous.

71. The college has been successful in recruiting students from a wide range of age groups and offers a broad portfolio of courses to meet the needs of adult students. The community centres are well appointed and convenient for students who wish to study close to their locality. Full-time students are initially screened and additional support is provided for those with identified literacy, numeracy and language needs. A structured programme of tutorials is provided for full-time students. There are appropriate referral facilities at the main college site to address any identified support needs for students in the community, but this facility involves considerable travel and is not well used.

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

72. The management of courses is satisfactory. Staff and managers work well together and communication and sharing of good practice are effective. There is a regular schedule of team meetings, course reviews, lesson observations and planning. This schedule is communicated to all staff before the start of the autumn term. All full-time staff and a significant proportion of substantial part-time staff are involved in school strategic planning and contribute to the development of the self assessment report. There is an appropriate programme of staff development to support all teachers. Quality assurance is satisfactory, but course reviews do not sufficiently focus on actions to raise standards. Overall, the self-assessment report was detailed, but not sufficiently self-critical. On full-time courses, the proportion of female students is low. Initiatives to improve the gender balance have not, so far, been successful in addressing this weakness.

### **Hospitality, sport and leisure**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on travel and tourism programmes
  
- good teaching and learning in travel and tourism

- o excellent specialist resources for sports studies.

**Weaknesses**

- o low retention rates in a significant minority of courses
- o unsatisfactory teaching and learning in catering
- o poorly managed resources for food preparation.

**Scope of provision**

73. Full-time programmes are provided in catering at NVQ levels 1 and 2. Travel and tourism qualifications at levels 2 and 3 include GNVQ intermediate, travel industry awards and AVCE. Sports courses are offered at levels 2 and 3 and comprise the BTEC first diploma, national certificate and AS-level and GCE A-level awards. Approximately 60% of students are enrolled on travel and tourism courses; about 18% study on catering programmes. There are part-time courses in NVQ hospitality and catering including a small modern apprentice programme. Year 10 and 11 school pupils attend an OCN accredited programme in catering.

**Achievement and standards**

74. There are generally high pass rates on travel and tourism courses, for example, the AVCE and GNVQ intermediate programmes, but there are some unsatisfactory outcomes in catering and AS-level sport. Retention rates are good on the cabin crew and travel programme and satisfactory on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and NVQ 2 food preparation and cooking courses. They are poor on the NVQ 1 catering, AVCE travel and tourism and AS-level sports, games and recreation courses. Over a third of the students enrolling on the first diploma in sport in September 2003 had withdrawn by January 2004.

75. The quality of written work in travel and tourism and sport is generally good. Assignments are well presented and organised. Level 3 students produce well-constructed extended writing; theory is appropriately applied to practical situations. Level 2 students demonstrate appropriate knowledge of travel geography, although their pronunciation of unfamiliar place names is often imprecise. In sports studies, students are able to effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their practical performance. Many level 1 catering students have not yet developed a satisfactory standard of vocational skills in practical work. A minority have particularly poor numeracy skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	26	19	*
		% retention	38	47	*
		% pass rate	100	33	*

GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	23	38	19
		% retention	74	71	79
		% pass rate	71	67	93
ABTAC travel agents' certificate - primary	2	No. of starts	*	24	32
		% retention	*	92	91
		% pass rate	*	91	86
AVCE in travel and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	**	23	17
		% retention	**	48	47
		% pass rate	**	100	100
Diploma in health and fitness studies	3	No. of starts	27	*	20
		% retention	85	*	95
		% pass rate	78	*	84

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

\*\* course did not run

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

76. The quality of teaching and learning in travel and tourism and sport, which form the majority of provision, is good but it is unsatisfactory in catering. Lessons in travel and tourism are planned with clear, explicit learning objectives which are shared with students at the start of the class and used to successfully recap and check learning at the end. A good range of activities, together with the knowledgeable and energetic approach of teachers, successfully engages students throughout the sessions. Second-year AVCE students are encouraged to use more complex technical descriptions linked to tourism development as well as analyse and apply key theories to different case studies.

77. In catering, teachers fail to consolidate and reinforce learning to ensure students can confidently use and apply new knowledge and skills. As a result, many students lack confidence in their understanding of food-related topics and concepts. Their key skills, particularly numeracy, are also insufficiently developed. The standards of behaviour and professional practice in cookery, set by teachers, are also insufficiently demanding. Sports teachers provide an appropriate theoretical context to practical sessions and students successfully develop their skills in practising and analysing performance. Lessons are well paced and teachers provide good examples of how to plan, lead and evaluate sports training. In a minority of lessons, students are insufficiently involved in contributing their ideas.

78. Students have good access to computer and library resources including a range of learning materials on the intranet which are used constructively in travel and tourism. The outdoor and indoor facilities at the Shobnall leisure centre provide outstanding resources for many sports. Satisfactory alternative arrangements are made for swimming. The kitchen used for practical cookery is poorly managed and presents students with a poor-quality learning environment. It is untidy and cluttered and does not have adequate levels of labelling to promote good practice in food hygiene and cleaning.

79. The planning, execution and verification of assessment are well managed. The outcomes of assessment are used constructively in individual tutorials and to keep students and parents informed about progress. Full-time students have individual tutorials at frequent intervals with a clear agenda of monitoring and discussing progress and identifying prospective targets. Students talk positively about the approachability and helpfulness of tutors, they value their tutorials and cite examples where teachers have successfully and patiently worked with them to improve previously unsatisfactory responses to assignment deadlines.

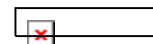
80. There is a broad range of courses in travel and tourism, adequate provision in catering, but an insufficient range of full-time courses in sport. For example, there is currently no level 1 course in sport. This results in students from a wide ability range enrolling on the BTEC first diploma, but with a significant minority leaving early because they cannot cope with the standards demanded by the course. Catering students have a work placement one day a week that successfully broadens their experience beyond the more narrow range of activities they experience in college. The well-conceived OCN cookery programme for Year 10 and 11 school pupils successfully motivates some behaviourally challenged students and encourages them to consider progression opportunities in this area. The range of part-time courses on offer is limited.

81. The information students receive before and during their course is good. Additional learning support for individual students is provided, but insufficient attention is given to improving their numeracy skills. On some courses, for example GNVQ intermediate travel and tourism, the additional support required by a significant number of the students makes it difficult for the teacher to properly respond to all of those requiring help. Informal support is readily given by teachers outside of lessons.

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

82. Course reviews in catering are insufficiently rigorous. The views of students are always considered to support improvements. Actions taken to address some poor achievements have not so far been successful. In the curriculum areas of travel and tourism and sport, leadership and management are effective. New teachers have been well supported by an advanced practitioner; all staff undergo an annual appraisal with the head of school which leads to a professional development action plan. Staff development opportunities appropriately support personal and college priorities.

### **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

#### ***Strengths***

- excellent pass rates on level 3 courses
  
- much good teaching including work-based learning
  
- high-quality specialist resources
  
- good portfolios and assignments
  
- effective employer liaison.



### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rates on beauty therapy courses
- inadequate target setting in work-based learning.

### **Scope of provision**

83. There are 432 full-time and part-time students on a wide range of hairdressing, beauty therapy, holistic and sport therapy courses at levels 1 to 3. Approximately two thirds of students are adults. Part-time courses include qualifications in aromatherapy, reflexology, manicure, electrical epilation and Indian head massage. Courses in health and fitness and sports massage are provided at level 3. The majority of full-time and work-based learning students work towards key skills qualifications. A variety of additional qualifications is offered to students including ear piercing, nail art and new hairdressing techniques. All full-time students in hairdressing have work experience placements, helping to develop their practical skills. By contrast, work placements are not provided for level 2 beauty therapy students. The college provides hairdressing training for 60 work-based learners most of whom are on foundation modern apprentice programmes.

### **Achievement and standards**

84. Pass rates on the majority of courses are good and sometimes outstanding. In 2003, for example, 100% pass rates were achieved in NVQ hairdressing at level 1 and NVQ beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3. Similar results were recorded on body massage and aromatherapy qualifications. Retention rates, by contrast, for beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3 were below national averages in 2003, for both full-time and part-time courses. Actions to address this weakness are now in place and there has been an improvement in retention rates on these courses during this academic year. Successful framework completion on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes has improved significantly during the past three years from 24% in 2001, to 73% in 2003.

85. The standard of students' portfolio work and assignments is high. Evidence is obtained from a wide variety of sources including the Internet, photographs and survey outcomes. Practical and organisational skills are also well developed. For example, students in a level 2 hairdressing class were observed performing a variety of advanced colour and cutting techniques while demonstrating excellent client care skills. Attendance during the inspection was good, averaging 82%.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	16	28	43
		% retention	63	64	79
		% pass rate	80	83	100
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	30	40	42
		% retention	37	68	52
		% pass rate	91	70	95
Diploma in sport	3	No. of starts	24	*	17

therapy		% retention	92	*	100
		% pass rate	100	*	88
Diploma in body massage	3	No. of starts	23	24	24
		% retention	70	79	71
		% pass rate	65	79	100
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	25	27	21
		% retention	76	89	95
		% pass rate	100	100	90

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

86. There is much good teaching. Lessons are well planned, objectives are shared with students. Teaching methods are varied and include lively group work and whole class review sessions. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, one level 3 hairdressing class took place in the local shopping centre to promote the work of students at the college. The students organised the whole event which included different demonstrations of modern hairdressing techniques. The students evaluated the success of the event as part of their coursework. Students' individual learning needs are identified and used to inform teaching methods. They are encouraged to debate and discuss vocationally relevant topics. Team teaching is used effectively, with additional 'facilitators' deployed to support learning in large practical groups. Key skills are not sufficiently integrated into full-time programmes of study and students do not always appreciate their vocational relevance.

87. Specialist resources in hairdressing and beauty therapy are of high quality. The accommodation provided is of a modern commercial standard. The reception area is well sited and has good access for clients and students with restricted physical mobility. In some cases, rooms are not well matched to the size of classes. In one lesson, for example, 23 students were trying to complete practical tasks, including working with hazardous chemicals, in a room with only 19 working positions. This compromised health and safety and the range of assessed activities students were able to undertake. Teachers have good commercial knowledge and through visits to work placements, liaise closely with local employers.

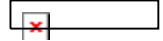
88. Assessment and internal verification are well organised and planned. There are sufficient qualified verifiers; practical work is assessed thoroughly. External verifier reports confirm high standards of moderation in all vocational areas. Assessment sessions observed in college and in the workplace are valid, appropriate and fair. Work-based assessments and progress reviews appropriately take place every four weeks. Target setting for work-based learners is inadequate: most are unclear about long-term actions and priorities. In addition, all learners start at the beginning of the programme irrespective of their prior vocational experience. All students are provided with an induction programme at the start of their course. This includes initial assessment for basic skills. The tutorial system is effective and classes are well attended by students. Students value the formal support they receive in tutorial sessions and the informal support readily given by teachers outside of lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

89. Courses are well organised and managed across the hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic programme area. Course teams work hard to refine and improve teaching and learning strategies. The quality assurance system is applied rigorously to course reviews; resulting action plans demonstrate clear targets for raising retention and pass rates and improving levels of attendance. There has been continual improvement in the management of work-based learning over the last

three years. This has resulted in much higher levels of success on modern apprenticeship programmes.

## **Health and social care and public services**



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

### ***Strengths***

- excellent pass rates on full-time courses at levels 1 and 2
  
- good use of teachers' professional knowledge in lessons
  
- effective links between work placements and college activities
  
- effective support for individual students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on level 3 full-time courses
  
- insufficient variety in teaching methods
  
- underdeveloped community-based provision
  
- adverse impact of staff absence on students' progress.

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

90. There are 226 full-time and 293 part-time students enrolled on courses in the curriculum area. In addition, 44 students follow work-based courses in pharmacy at a local hospital. Full-time courses at level 3 are available in care, early years, public services and health studies. Level 2 programmes are offered in care and public services; level 1 provision comprises an OCN 'working with people' award.

Counselling training and NVQs in care and early years at levels 2 and 3 are available as part-time programmes in the day and evening, predominantly for adult students. Few courses are offered off-site at community venues. A school links programme provides opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 studying for GCSE health and social care. Enrichment opportunities include sign language, driving theory, first aid, food hygiene, and GCSE re-sits. Placements are available in the local community in a wide variety of settings including local schools, private day nurseries, residential care homes and hospitals.

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

91. Pass rates on full-time courses at levels 1 and 2 have been excellent, reaching 100% for the past two years. At level 2, with rapidly growing numbers, retention rates have also improved to over 81%. Level 3 full-time courses have had generally poor and declining achievements for the past two years; pass rates in health and social care and in early years are significantly below national averages. On work-based learning, NVQ pass rates in care and early years care have been good, although framework pass rates have been consistently low. Retention rates on these programmes are predominantly at or above national averages. Progression rates to higher levels of study are good. In 2003, 86% of those achieving a level 2 qualification progressed on to level 3 courses at the college. Currently, 75% of the level 3 full-time cohort have offers of places in HE or training.

92. Students' work is at an appropriate standard for the level of their course. Portfolios show a good grasp of theory, and the relationship with practice is explained clearly. On some courses, staff absences have adversely impacted on students' progress with cancelled classes and insufficient specialist cover provided. Work experience is recognised as a valuable resource, and a placement co-ordinator maintains close contact with students, providers and the course team. This ensures college work and placement activities are both complementary and effective. There are conscious attempts to link key skills activities to the vocational interests of the students. Attendance rates are high, averaging 85% during the period of inspection.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
OCN working with people	1	No. of starts	21	19	22
		% retention	86	68	64
		% pass rate	89	100	100
BTEC first diploma in care (and precursors)	2	No. of starts	15	23	54
		% retention	73	74	81
		% pass rate	45	100	100
Introduction to counselling	2	No. of starts	19	50	32
		% retention	79	82	88
		% pass rate	87	90	79
BTEC national diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	*	30	26
		% retention	*	47	73
		% pass rate	*	86	74
AVCE health and social care double award (and precursors)	3	No. of starts	*	36	39
		% retention	*	67	64
		% pass rate	*	88	60

\* data unreliable

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

93. Just over 60% of teaching was judged good or very good; none was outstanding or unsatisfactory. The best lessons are well planned, with clear objectives and high-quality learning materials. There is some recognition of preferred learning styles in planning lessons. The vocational experience of teachers is used well, and their standing with students is high. In one lesson, childcare students were encouraged to read poems and sing nursery rhymes they had collected in an anthology. The teacher referred to her own collection and the considerable benefit she had gained as a practitioner in building up such a resource. Much teaching follows a similar pattern of teacher-led exposition followed by small group work and recap. Consequently, there is a lack of variety in methods. The approach to key skills varies according to the needs of the group. In one successful lesson developing numeracy skills, students were tasked to construct a three-dimensional pyramid illustrating Maslow's hierarchy of needs. To do this, they had to understand the importance of angles and accurate measurements.

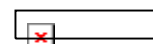
94. Accommodation in the Riverside block is lively and attractive, and there are numerous displays of students' work and stimulus materials in classrooms and public areas. Large group sizes have led to some overcrowding. Many rooms have interactive whiteboards available. The learning resource centre contains a good range of up-to-date curriculum materials and these are well used. The relatively new staff team are well qualified in their vocational specialisms and make good use of continuous professional development opportunities. Assessment is fair and accurate and subject to regular internal verification. Students generally receive detailed feedback on their work which usually indicates how they might improve and gain higher grades. Attainment is mostly satisfactory or better. In one class, students could clearly describe health and safety issues in an early years setting, and articulate the process of conducting a risk assessment.

95. Tutorial support is extensive and effective. Six-weekly formal tutorial reviews are used to set clear targets. Support for individual students is effective. Dedicated learning assistants provide in-class support for individuals including evening class students, and laptops are used by students who have difficulty taking notes. There is very good screening for dyslexia and support made available. Use of central learning support services is good with attendance and progress closely monitored.

### **Leadership and management**

96. There is effective leadership. Although staff absences have caused difficulties, strategies are now in place to rectify the situation. At present, it is too early to assess their effectiveness. There are good formal and informal communications between staff, although meetings are not always systematically recorded. The course review system is detailed and mapped against the common inspection framework. Reviews are audited, and development plans closely monitored. The self-assessment report overemphasised some of the strengths.

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



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

The contributory grade for media is **outstanding (grade 1)**

#### **Strengths**

- high pass and retention rates on level 3 courses

- broad range of innovative teaching styles
  
- high standard of students' work and oral skills
  
- effective support for students
  
- outstanding level of student engagement in media lessons.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on level 2 courses
  
- insufficient provision for part-time adult students.

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

97. The main provision is for full-time students aged 16 to 18 studying at levels 2 and 3. The college offers full-time level 3 vocational courses in performing arts, media, art and design, design studies, photography and the diploma in foundation studies. There are also full-time level 2 courses in performing arts, art and design and sound technology. There is a growing uptake of media-related courses; enrolments on full-time courses have risen significantly over the last three years. There are no courses at entry level or level 1 and despite the excellent resources within the area, there is no significant part-time provision for adults.

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

98. Pass and retention rates on most level 3 courses are excellent, with all courses maintaining achievement levels at or significantly better than national averages. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level media courses are outstanding. Students also consistently achieve significantly better grades than predicted by their GCSE results. Achievements on the intermediate certificate in sound recording and studio administration are consistently above national averages. Other level 2 courses, however, demonstrate low completion rates. The retention rate on the current second year of the national diploma in performing arts are also unsatisfactory.

99. Students produce high-quality work across all courses. Media students display sophisticated presentation and research skills. Dance students have excellent improvisational skills and work creatively in devising original sequences of physical theatre. Attendance, averaging 87%, was very good during the inspection reflecting clear school policies on reducing absence and students' enjoyment of their courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	18	17	21
		% retention	83	59	71
		% pass rate	93	100	80
Certificate in sound recording and studio administration	2	No. of starts	22	28	30
		% retention	86	96	87
		% pass rate	63	85	77
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	33	57	90
		% retention	91	89	81
		% pass rate	77	88	99
AVCE and BTEC national diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	26	32	34
		% retention	69	56	76
		% pass rate	94	100	96
AVCE (double award) art and design	3	No. of starts	*	27	29
		% retention	*	52	62
		% pass rate	*	86	89
Diploma in foundation studies art and design	3	No. of starts	**	25	22
		% retention	**	96	100
		% pass rate	**	83	95

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

\* course not running

\*\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

100. Teachers provide students with innovative and challenging learning activities which generate a positive response. For example, in an introductory lesson using specialist design software, the theme of 'Aliens land in Burton' allowed students in a humorous way to experiment creatively with some of the features of the programme and develop an understanding of its potential applications. On most courses, students are highly self-motivated. Students use both their teachers and peers effectively as a learning resource. Teaching in three of the media lessons observed was graded as outstanding. In sound technology, students participated fully in classes and were quickly able to appreciate and understand different recording and production techniques. In other media classes, students gave high-quality presentations as part of assignment work, confidently using data projectors and electronic whiteboards. Across the range of courses, a positive feature of class discussion was the quality and diversity of students' contributions. Students demonstrate a broad range of practical skills: in the visual arts, these include objective drawing, basic design, colour theory, photography, the use of relevant software and the effective use of sketchbooks to develop research skills. In dance, simple but challenging tasks encourage students to be creative in their interpretation. In performing arts, students occasionally do not find practical work sufficiently challenging. A minority of lesson plans and schemes of work do not explicitly detail learning activities; this leads to a lack of structure in some lessons.

101. There is new, high-quality, purpose-built accommodation for performing arts, media, art and design. The new arts block includes specialist accommodation such as a 100-seat studio theatre and well-equipped sound recording and photography suites. The nearby Brewhouse arts centre provides performing arts students with a professional environment in which to work. There is a strong subject identity in many of the art studios with work creatively displayed throughout the area.

In a few lessons, the classrooms are too small for the activities and number of students. Sound recording studios are inappropriate for the teaching of theory to large classes and there are insufficient specialist computers available to support curriculum delivery. Many teachers have recent commercial experience, which enriches the quality of their subject delivery.

102. Students' progress is effectively monitored; each student has a progress file. Personal tutors hold frequent individual reviews with students where they check progress on an informal basis. Every six weeks, lessons are suspended and formal progress reviews and target setting take place. Students value this process and find it helps them organise their studies and set action plans. The marking of students' work is detailed and constructive. In media, students are given comprehensive written feedback. Clear and detailed whole school systems for internal verification are supported by appropriate paperwork. All assignments are internally verified before being given to students.

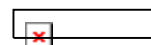
103. There is excellent internal progression with nearly all level 2 completers progressing to level 3 courses. Most level 3 students progress to HE. The delivery of key skills is well organised and effective with course leaders integrating key skills opportunities into their courses. Good additional study opportunities are available, for example, many national diploma students take AS-level and GCE A-level subjects alongside their main programmes. The school offers a range of external visits including residentials and work experience both in this country and abroad.

104. Support for students is comprehensive and is highly valued by students. Additional in-class learning support is effective and provided by staff qualified in the curriculum area. Course teachers make themselves available to students outside lessons and students appreciate their approachability and flexibility. Personal tutors effectively provide guidance and advice in relation to HE courses and other career options.

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

105. The area is well managed and there are regular, productive staff meetings. Roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined; physical and human resources are well managed. Student representatives reflect the views and opinions of their peers to course teams. Detailed, self-critical course reviews contribute to the school self-assessment report. The latest report identified most weaknesses, although there was insufficient evaluation of pass rate data. Assignments are monitored to comply with the equal opportunities policy and, in art and design, a number of projects promote multicultural or gender issues. The school is also involved in a project to raise male underachievement.

## **Humanities, English and modern foreign languages**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high and improving pass rates on many courses
  
- enthusiastic and effective teaching across the provision
  
- attractive and well-resourced learning environment



- o strong curriculum leadership and teamwork.

**Weaknesses**

- o low retention on the modular access programme
- o poor pass rate in AS-level geography.

**Scope of provision**

106. There is a broad curriculum for school leavers and adult students, with good opportunities for progression. Provision includes foundation and GCSE courses, which are also organised for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools. Modern foreign languages programmes run at levels 1 and 2. At level 3, the college provides AS-level and GCE A-level English, psychology, sociology, history, law, French, German and Spanish subjects and an access to HE programme. Numbers are, however, small on modern foreign languages. Most GCE A-level students study full time and are aged 16 to 18. There is good flexibility built into courses to meet individual students' needs including a pre-access route, and accelerated 'fast-track' AS-level and GCE A2 courses. At the time of the inspection, there were over 840 enrolments in the curriculum area, of which 180 were part time.

**Achievement and standards**

107. There are high and improving pass rates on many courses. At level 2, GCSE A\* to C pass rates in English and psychology are well above the national average. At level 3, pass rates in GCE A-level English language and literature, French and German significantly exceed national figures. In AS-level psychology and GCE A-level law, the grades achieved in 2003, were much higher than those predicted by students' GCSE results. The pass rate for AS-level geography in 2003 was poor at 36%, and well below the national average. Retention rates are at, or near, the sector average and have been improving over a three-year period. However, on the modular access programme, retention has declined substantially and a third of students did not complete the course in 2003. Those who remain, perform well with a high proportion progressing to relevant HE destinations.

108. The standard of students' work is generally good and shows evidence of developing maturity in subject knowledge, wider academic skills and critical faculties. Study skills are well integrated into learning in order to support students in meeting the challenge of their work. Students are given good encouragement and feedback, although targets for improving work are not always sufficiently challenging. Students of differing abilities all make measurable gains in their confidence enabling them to clearly articulate their ideas. Modern languages students display increasing competence and fluency in applying their oral skills to a range of different contexts.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English (A* to C grades)	2	No. of starts	189	209	158
		% retention	76	60	66

		% pass rate	61	58	79
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	78	96	141
		% retention	73	75	76
		% pass rate	67	90	90
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	33	32	44
		% retention	76	81	80
		% pass rate	64	62	89
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	39	38	42
		% retention	64	68	74
		% pass rate	76	81	84
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	59	38	42
		% retention	51	100	86
		% pass rate	90	92	100
Access modular foundation programme	3	No. of starts	84	110	92
		% retention	75	86	63
		% pass rate	82	78	83

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

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

109. There is much good teaching across the range of subject disciplines. Teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly and demonstrate sound subject knowledge in their delivery. There is skilful management of learning in large and small group situations and the needs of individual students are carefully considered. Imaginative use is made of context and stimulus to reinforce students' understanding in the various subject disciplines. In English, students acquire a good understanding of the significance of a range of contextual influences on writers. For example, a presentation on nineteenth century paintings was used effectively to explore attitudes and values relevant to literature of the period. Good use is made of a wide range of relevant subject material, data, local history sources and websites. In social sciences and history, students undertake detailed individual research activities and present their findings to the whole group for evaluation and critical review. In a psychology lesson on the treatment of mental disorders, the teachers used imaginative approaches to explore comparative theories and methodologies and used students' feedback and peer evaluation to consolidate learning. Teachers question students effectively and require them to justify their judgements and clarify their thinking. In a minority of lessons, there is insufficient challenge, a lack of pace and lost opportunities for students to demonstrate the depth of their understanding. No lessons were judged less than satisfactory. Although some very good teaching was observed, none was judged outstanding.

110. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Part-time teachers are integral members of course teams and make an important contribution to the pool of subject expertise. The newly refurbished accommodation and dedicated sixth form centre provides a high quality, well-resourced learning environment which meets the needs of students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Library, learning resources and computing facilities are well matched to need and well used. The use of ICT within subject teaching has improved since the last inspection. Equipment to support modern foreign languages teaching is becoming dated.

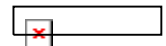
111. Students are very well supported on their course and speak highly of the accessibility and helpfulness of teachers and the purposeful nature of tutorials. Many teachers maintain e-mail contact with their students. These arrangements assist irregular attendees to catch up on work missed. Individual progress is carefully monitored by personal tutors. Work is set regularly and marking is

thorough and feedback generally detailed. There are isolated instances where there are delays in the return of marked work to students. There is good use of front sheets on assessed work to provide more consistent and structured comment and to signpost areas for improvement. Oral feedback is sensitive and encouraging. There is good use of peer evaluation and marking to reinforce students' awareness of assessment criteria.

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

112. The curriculum is well managed with a clear structure of responsibilities. Strong teamwork and collaboration across and within the subject disciplines have enabled shared learning resources, joint schemes of work and common teaching approaches to develop effectively. These approaches have driven forward improvement strategies and supported the raising of standards. Good communication is aided by effective management, the links with part-time staff and the consolidation of provision in the new sixth form centre. There are regular and well-minuted meetings at school, team leader and team level. Subject reviews are generally thorough and explore relevant course issues and show clear action points. Internal lesson observation is well established, but the grades allocated are overgenerous and did not closely match those of inspectors. There is good use of data on key performance measures and on students' pass rates to inform management planning and actions.

### **Literacy and numeracy**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- much high-quality teaching
  
- broad range of programmes responding to local needs
  
- good support for basic skills students
  
- effective curriculum management.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning
  
- unsatisfactory resources in community venues.

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

113. Provision is broad ranging and comprises discrete literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses, in-class literacy and numeracy support for students on vocational programmes within the college, and additional individual or small group support. Family learning in basic skills has been successfully introduced and developed. The embedding of basic skills in vocational courses is planned to be fully completed by the end of this year, and is already firmly established and effective in many schools. Learning takes place both on the main site and in a range of community venues, including community health centres, local schools, and in the workplace. There are nearly 600 students enrolled on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Over 200 students receive additional literacy and numeracy support as part of their main course of study. The majority of enrolments are adult students. At time of the inspection, about a third of the students were attending on a full-time basis.

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

114. Most pass rates on literacy and numeracy programmes and ESOL qualifications are above national average. Some pass rates on external national tests, albeit with smaller numbers of students, are unsatisfactory and below national averages. Students achieve competency in literacy and numeracy at levels appropriate to their programmes of study. For example, entry level literacy students were able to produce a short text with accurate punctuation; level 1 numeracy students could produce a frequency table using complex data. Students, through their work, grow in confidence and demonstrate improved self-esteem. On vocational courses receiving literacy and numeracy support, students develop improved study skills. Most students' work on ESOL programmes shows evidence of literacy attainment at the standard required by the qualification aim.

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

115. Most teaching is good or very good and some is outstanding. Teachers are experienced and have good subject knowledge and expertise. They are adept at praising and encouraging students, checking understanding, and inviting responses to confirm and consolidate learning. Visual aids are used productively. For example, when a powerpoint presentation or an interactive whiteboard was being used to stimulate interest, students became better motivated to discuss and explore topics; they completed subsequent reading and writing tasks with enthusiasm. Teachers provide constant feedback on students' progress and offer constructive guidance when needed. Most manage groups of mixed levels and needs well, ensuring that all are properly focused on tasks and progressing to the next level of learning when appropriate.

116. The 'skills for life' curriculum team consists of nearly 90 members of staff, over 70 of whom work part time. Members of the teaching team are suitably qualified and undertake courses, as needed, to upgrade their skills and teaching qualifications. There has been satisfactory attendance at the 'national skills for life' training, and there are plans to train staff to teach level 3 and 4 literacy, numeracy and ESOL teaching courses. The quality of resources is variable and dependent on the venue for study. Some of the community accommodation is unsatisfactory where classrooms are insufficiently equipped with basic teaching aids. Access to ICT resources is also sometimes difficult, preventing the full integration of this medium into programmes of study. The college has acknowledged this weakness, and is planning to obtain more IT equipment, train staff and enhance the use of laptops in community venues to support learning.

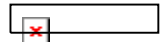
117. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Teachers provide constructive comments on marked work, and make good use of support staff in monitoring in-class learning. All students have regular reviews of progress with their personal tutors. They are encouraged to reflect on their preferred learning styles, personal achievements and progress, and negotiate learning goals. Teachers give and get constant feedback in lessons, and encourage students to reflect on acquired knowledge, and analyse critically. There is good support for basic skills students both in the college and the community through personal and additional learning support tutors. The assessment of students' individual needs for literacy and numeracy and additional support is satisfactory. Target setting is sensitive to the individual needs of students and

goals are consistently reviewed in formative assessments. Initial assessment is thorough and well developed; the college intends to fully integrate diagnostic assessment from September 2004.

**Leadership and management**

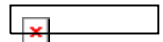
118. The management of this area of work is very good. Managers have been active in introducing the new 'skills for life' strategies. Robust strategic planning has successfully enabled the rapid expansion of programmes both in college and in the community. Effective partnership arrangements, for example, have been developed with eleven local primary schools. Communication within the programme area is effective. All teachers meet regularly to share good practice and update skills. There are appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff, including those employed part time; new staff take part in a mentoring scheme. The self-assessment report is detailed, realistic and identifies relevant strengths and weaknesses. There is, for example, recognition of the need to fully integrate the use of ILT within guided learning hours. Close attention is paid to equal opportunities in literacy and numeracy.

**Part D: College data**



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

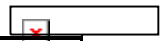
Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	27	53
2	26	19
3	41	14
4/5	0	1
Other	6	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



Source: provided by the college in 2004

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

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	396	201	4
Land-based provision	0	38	0
Construction	190	207	3
Engineering, technology and manufacture	179	221	3



Business administration, management and professional	216	887	8
Information and communication technology	272	2,335	18
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	38	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	233	399	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	130	280	3
Health, social care and public services	494	1,135	11
Visual and performing arts and media	574	303	6
Humanities	364	286	5
English, languages and communication	205	441	5
Foundation programmes	184	469	5
Other	1,056	2,511	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,493</b>	<b>9,751</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2004

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,031	904	711	1,418	1,553	1,959
	Retention rate	83	86	72	83	84	82
	National average	76	75	76	73	69	70
	Pass rate	76	76	82	64	67	71
	National average	65	69	71	66	68	71
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,536	1,487	1,364	1,800	1,506	1,732
	Retention rate	74	75	71	75	77	77
	National average	72	71	72	70	68	68
	Pass rate	68	79	75	63	76	85
	National average	67	69	71	64	68	72
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,299	1,611	1,511	1,444	1,107	1,405

	Retention rate	65	67	75	75	66	70
	National average	67	71	77	69	68	70
	Pass rate	73	83	80	70	74	70
	National average	75	77	79	66	69	72
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	125	93	96
	Retention rate	*	*	*	65	70	46
	National average	66	73	71	67	67	67
	Pass rate	*	*	*	62	77	50
	National average	65	54	53	58	55	56

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

*Sources of information:*

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

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

*\* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

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

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Teaching judged to be:</b>			<b>No of sessions observed</b>
	<b>Good or better %</b>	<b>Satisfactory %</b>	<b>Less than satisfactory %</b>	
Level 3 (advanced)	67	29	3	94
Level 2 (intermediate)	75	22	1	62
Level 1 (foundation)	47	42	10	19
Other sessions	80	18	2	25
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>200</b>