



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Oldham Sixth Form College

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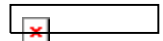
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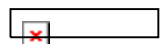
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Basic information about the college

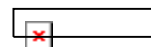


Name of college:	Oldham Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Nick Brown
Address of college:	Union Street Oldham OL8 1XU
Telephone number:	0161 287 8000
Fax number:	0161 633 7577
Chair of governors:	Gloria Oates OBE, DL
Unique reference number:	130506
Name of reporting inspector:	Ruth James HMI
Dates of inspection:	15-19 March 2004

Part A: Summary

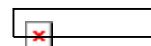


Information about the college



Oldham Sixth Form College is located on a single, purpose-built campus in the centre of Oldham in Greater Manchester. It opened in 1992 following a major re-organisation of post-16 education in the borough. Oldham has a population of 217,273. The area has significant levels of deprivation. Oldham is the 38th most deprived local authority out of 354 nationally. Some 37% of students are drawn from areas designated as deprived and 47% of students are in receipt of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs). Some 55% of those enrolled are from the 11 partner schools within the borough, with the others from other schools in Oldham, Manchester, Rochdale, and Tameside. Unemployment in the Borough is around 3.7%, compared with 3.3% nationally, but in the more deprived wards it is higher. The proportion of young people gaining 5 or more A*-C grades at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) in 2003 was 45%, lower than the national average. The college is part of a local learning partnership seeking to both widen participation and raise achievement levels in post-16 education and training. Within this partnership, the college is recognised as the major provider of academic and vocational general certificate of education advanced levels (GCE A levels).

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of education and training to be outstanding in four of the curriculum areas inspected, and good in five.

Key strengths

- outstanding leadership

- wide range of productive local partnerships

- very good management

- high pass rates for most courses

- very good teaching and learning

- effective widening participation strategies

- outstanding support for students

- wide range of enrichment opportunities

- excellent progress monitoring

- very good accommodation and resources

- effective governance.

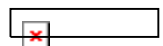
What should be improved

- underdeveloped use of information and learning technology (ILT) in some areas

- a minority of teaching rooms too small for the numbers of students in classes.

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

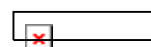


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Good. Contributory grade for electronics: outstanding. There are high pass rates for most courses. Value added is very good in electronics. Achievement for advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) human biology is poor. Teaching is good and there is good use of practical work and

	ILT in lessons. Support for students is effective. Some rooms are too small for the number of students.
Mathematics	Good. Pass rates for GCE A level and most GCSE courses are high. The teaching to non-mathematics specialists is very good. Subject specific support is good. Management is effective. The use of ILT is underdeveloped. In some lessons there is insufficient challenge for more able students.
Business	Good. There are high pass rates for GCE A-level and vocational courses. Much teaching is good and students are highly motivated. Accommodation and resources are good. There is insufficient differentiation in some lessons. Managers do not undertake sufficient analysis of student performance by ethnicity and gender.
Information and communications technology	Good. There are high retention and pass rates for most courses. Students have very good access to specialist information technology (IT) resources. There is effective use of assessment feedback. There is underdeveloped focus on the applications of IT in industry. In a minority of lessons students receive insufficient direction and guidance.
Sports, leisure and travel	Good. Pass rates for most vocational course are high. Most retention rates are high. Most teaching is good. Individual progress monitoring is effective. A*-C pass rates for GCSE travel and tourism were low in 2003. There are insufficient additional industry-relevant qualifications to enhance travel and tourism courses.
Visual and performing arts and media	Outstanding. Pass rates for most courses are high. Practical work is of a high standard. Teaching is very good and ILT is used effectively. Specialist resources are very good. Curriculum management is effective. GCE A-level 3D product design had low value added in 2003. Written feedback is underdeveloped in art and design.
Humanities	Outstanding. Pass rates for GCE A-level courses are outstanding. Teaching is very good. Learning activity is appropriate to the ability range of students but use of ILT is limited. Students' progress is meticulously recorded. Subject support is highly effective. Leadership and management are outstanding. In general studies achievement is below expectations.
Social sciences	Outstanding. Achievement for GCE A-level and GCSE course are excellent. There are high pass rates for AS-level citizenship and psychology. Teamwork is effective and promotes very good teaching. Students' responses to learning opportunities are good. There are good resources to support learning. Support for students is very good.
English and modern foreign languages	Outstanding. Pass rates for most courses are high. Teaching and learning are very good and assessment feedback is outstanding. Learning resources are high quality. A good range of vocational language courses is offered. Leadership and sharing of good practice are effective. Value added was low for GCE A-level French in 2003.

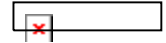
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers have created a very positive and supportive staff culture with student achievement the main priority. Most pass rates

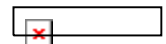
the curriculum areas is good, with very good teamwork and sharing of good practice. A self-critical culture, shared by all staff, is a significant factor in the continuous improvement achieved by the college. Quality assurance processes are thorough and analytical. Governors are committed to the mission of the college and make a valuable contribution to its development. The college is in a strong financial position and provides very good value for money. Equal opportunities are embedded across the college. Support for newly appointed staff is outstanding.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



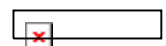
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college provides a harmonious multi-cultural environment, enabling students to study in a friendly and orderly atmosphere with a strong focus on achievement. The proportion of students of minority ethnic origin is higher than that of the local population. The college has deployed resources to widen participation. It has set up innovative initiatives with schools to support pupils who otherwise might not progress to college. The college's response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 is good. Most areas of the college are accessible to students with mobility difficulties and there are plans to extend this to all areas. The college fulfils its statutory obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001. The tutorial programme effectively develops students' awareness of equal opportunities issues. There is a shared set of values across the college, based on respect for individuals and zero tolerance of prejudice which teachers communicate very clearly to students.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are outstanding. Links with partner schools are very strong and the college provides a range of taster days and other events to provide advice and guidance to year 10 and 11 pupils. Impartial pre-enrolment guidance ensures that students are on the right courses. Induction enables students to quickly settle into college. A team of specialist personal tutors closely monitors the individual progress of each student. Students value the subject support that is made available to them. A comprehensive group tutorial programme covers a range of relevant topics that effectively develop students' personal and social skills. The college provides very good support for students with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Guidance on progression to HE or employment is exemplary. Student destination data are systematically monitored and evaluated to inform curriculum planning. Appropriate provision is made to ensure compliance with child protection legislation and support for vulnerable students.

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

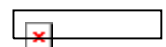
- relaxed and friendly atmosphere

- culture of diversity and respect
- access to IT equipment and learning resources
- helpful advice and guidance for careers and HE
- support offered by subject teachers
- wide range of course and enrichment activities.

What they feel could be improved

- high food prices
- lack of social space in the college at peak times
- compulsory general studies examinations
- timing of coursework which creates a heavy workload for some students
- parking facilities for students.

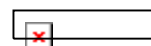
Other information



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

The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



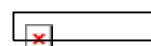
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16 to 18*	82	16	2
Learning 16 to 18*	79	20	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).

**Note: the above figures include the very small number of lessons where adult students were in the majority.*

Achievement and standards



16 to 18 year olds

1. For long courses overall retention and pass rates are consistently above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Pass rates for most GCE A-level courses are high and, in 2003, 22 subjects had pass rates of 100% and a further ten subjects had pass rates of over 95%. Some twenty AS-level subjects had pass rates of at least 90%. Overall retention and pass rates for vocational courses are particularly high and are consistently well above national averages at both level 2 and level 3. The proportions of students on vocational courses gaining high grades are also high. In 2003 over half the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate students achieved high grades, and over two-thirds of the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) students.

2. The college accepts students onto GCE A-level courses with average GCSE scores below those typically found in sixth form colleges. Value-added data which compares students' prior attainment with their performance in advanced level examinations shows that, for many subjects, students attain higher grades than would be expected. AS-level and GCE A-level subjects which have consistently high value-added include psychology, sociology, law, history, English literature, religious studies, electronics, and drama and theatre arts. AVCE courses with good value added include single award ICT, and travel and tourism, and double award health and social care, and science. For most other courses, students' attainments are in line with expectations. There are many examples of

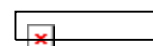
students from disadvantaged backgrounds with modest GCSE attainments successfully achieving level 3 qualifications and progressing to HE. Progression from level 2 to level 3, and from level 3 to HE is good. Attendance is very good and, at almost 90%, it is better than that typically found in sixth form colleges.

3. Science students carry out practical and experimental work confidently and competently. In computing, students' projects show independent project planning, analysis, design, and systems implementation. AVCE information and communications technology (ICT) students develop imaginative multimedia projects using specialist software, integrating sound, animation, video, and text. In sport, leisure and tourism, students make good use of IT to enhance the presentation of their work. Students in business subjects are able to use business vocabulary fluently and apply their understanding of key concepts to case study scenarios. Art and design students produce practical artwork of a high standard. In media, radio work is developed through community radio broadcasts and very good short films are produced. Music and performing arts students' music compositions, individual dance pieces and acting performances are confident and imaginative. In the social sciences, students use technical terms with fluency and apply social science concepts to real life events. Students make good progress in their communications skills and in their ability to support discussion points with evidence. Humanities students develop their analysis and evaluation skills. English students explore texts, developing their vocabulary. Students of modern foreign languages develop high levels of linguistic skill and are able to communicate in the target language with confidence.

Adult learners

4. Both retention and pass rates for the small numbers of adult students improved to above national averages in 2003.

Quality of education and training



5. Inspectors observed and graded teaching, learning and attainment in 175 lessons. The overall quality of the teaching was similar to that of the learning. Teaching was good or better in 82.3% of the lessons, satisfactory in 16% and unsatisfactory in 1.7%. This profile is well above the 2002/3 national average for sixth form colleges. The highest proportions of teaching that were good, very good or excellent were in social sciences, humanities, science, visual and performing arts and media, and English and modern foreign languages.

6. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and the best are inspirational, skilfully imparting their passion to students. In the more effective lessons teachers plan thoroughly and set clear objectives for students. Good use is made of student profiles to target teaching at specific needs, and to include the wide ability and aptitude range that exists in many classes. There is good continuity from lesson to lesson, and students can see the overall pattern of their learning. Teaching and learning are closely allied to examination specifications and assessment criteria, so that students are very well prepared for examination. Teachers inculcate very good study habits in their students, emphasising the importance of personal planning to meet assignment deadlines and the benefits of redrafting work. There are very good working relationships between teachers and students, and an enthusiastic learning culture pervades. Students are given confidence in their growing autonomy as learners. They aspire to achieve beyond their previous expectations or predictions, and have both the curiosity to ask questions and the maturity to admit difficulties. Independent research skills are nurtured and students are guided to make full use of the college's good physical and technological resources for learning. There are very good study support workshops, closely allied to teaching, which students appreciate. These are used both to support those who are struggling with some of their work and to extend those who are eager and ready for further challenge. Information and learning technology is used in imaginative ways in some areas to extend ways of teaching. However, in other areas the use of ILT is underdeveloped. Practical

lessons are well managed and closely supervised by teachers. Teachers relate theory to practice effectively. Close attention is paid to safe working practices.

7. In a few of the less effective lessons, not all of the more able students are fully challenged to reach their potential. Some whole-class, single-task teaching is dominated by general questioning to the whole group, in which the needs of both less and more able students are not fully met. In some lessons the strong emphasis on working to fulfil assessment criteria results in a loss of focus on the development of skills.

8. The college buildings are well maintained and provide a safe and welcoming environment. Access for students with mobility problems is good. Further alterations are planned to ensure the college complies fully with the Special Educational Needs amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 2000. Risk assessments have been carried out in all areas and there is an effective health and safety policy. Specialist equipment and accommodation are good in most areas, particularly in visual and performing arts and media. All students have good access to modern computer facilities. There is a high ratio of approximately one computer to every three students. The computers are located in the learning resource centre and in study areas. The study areas are well used by the students and provide an opportunity for students to work unsupervised and to use the Internet. In addition, the business department has computers in the base rooms for the use of business studies students. Classrooms are pleasant and well equipped. Some have electronic whiteboards, although these are not always used to maximum effect. A few lessons are held in rooms that are too small for the number of students.

9. Teachers are well qualified and almost all have a teaching qualification. Teachers and students are effectively supported by technical support staff, learning resource centre staff and other staff. There are excellent induction arrangements for newly qualified and experienced teachers when they are appointed. All are allocated a mentor and are given a formal programme of structured support and induction. A weekly informal support group is also timetabled. Trainee teachers on work placements at the college also join this group.

10. Students are given regular and detailed information about their progress through the close monitoring of individual targets and action plans in individual tutorial reviews. The efficient formal systems are implemented rigorously by both teachers and personal tutors. Students' profiles summarising prior attainment, expected grades, learning styles and needs, and specific development goals are kept in the foreground throughout their courses. Regular progress reviews are conducted and discussed in full with students before being formally reported to parents or guardians. These comment in detail on effort, attendance and attainment, and help students focus on areas for development. In many areas assessment schedules are designed to spread students' workload evenly, but on some vocational courses there is insufficient planning to ensure that assignments are spread appropriately.

11. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their major assessments but considerable help is provided through the use of key check-points on research, preparation and submission deadlines. In many areas students are guided to redraft work, and this results in improvements. Oral and written feedback on students' work is timely, detailed and effective. Feedback is closely related to course assessment criteria, and provides good preparation for formal examinations, but it is not always effective in helping students to develop particular skills. There is a culture of constructive criticism in the college. Students seek rigorous scrutiny of their work and they have confidence that this helps them to improve. It is in this spirit that they often share peer-assessment and self-assessment, sharpening their own critical faculties and evaluative vocabulary as well as developing a capacity to see their own work from another's perspective. Many subjects embrace these processes fully. For example, in performing arts, art and design and media, students continually comment on the practical work of their peers. Grading is carefully standardised within course teams, and in some subjects staff deliberately mark work set and taught by colleagues to ensure objectivity and consistency. Written work is not always corrected for errors of spelling and grammar.

12. Initial assessment of students' literacy and numeracy needs is carried out before students commence their courses and is based on predicted GCSE results together with an interview. Occasionally, this process fails to identify some student needs. Value-added data is used well in

establishing individual minimum expected grades, which are powerful motivators for all students. Progress towards these grades is monitored carefully.

13. There are wide-ranging and effective local partnerships. A well-established agreement with the local further education college ensures that the two colleges focus on meeting the needs of different sections of the community. The Oldham local learning partnership identifies the sixth form college as the main provider of full-time academic and vocational courses at level 3 for those aged 16 to 18. Some 90% of college students follow a level 3 programme of study. The college offers a very good range of AS levels and GCE A levels, as well as several AVCE courses. Curriculum 2000 has been implemented effectively and students can take different combinations of advanced level courses according to their aptitudes, abilities and aspirations. A minority of students who lack the formal entry qualifications for a level 3 course are encouraged to take a three-year programme, studying level 2 qualifications such as GNVQ intermediate and GCSEs during their first year. Liaison with partner high schools is particularly effective and the college has responded to the needs of students leaving school with qualifications such as the full GNVQ at intermediate level.

14. A wide range of enrichment activities is available, many of which are externally or internally accredited. These include citizenship, first aid and Chinese. There is also an innovative 'Salaam' society, which provides a forum for discussion and debate. Participation in enrichment activities is actively encouraged and is good. There is a small provision for young people aged 14 to 16 in performing arts and media, which is largely aimed at gifted and talented pupils.

15. The key skills of communications and application of number are developed largely through subjects. Most students who have not already attained a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics or English are offered an opportunity to resit. A few students are inappropriately enrolled on an evening GCSE resit mathematics course that does not meet their needs. All students study the key skill of IT as a discrete subject at either level 2 or level 3. Pass rates for IT key skills qualifications are low.

16. Support and guidance for students are outstanding. The college has excellent links with local schools. College staff provide taster days and open evenings, and participate regularly in schools' careers events. A designated team of admission tutors works successfully to ensure potential students make informed decisions about what to study at the college. A well-presented prospectus gives detailed information on the application process and courses available. The college has invested in two innovative projects to ensure students make a smooth transition from school to college. A website, containing learning resources devised by college staff, provides useful activities to help local schools prepare pupils for the demands of advanced level study. In addition, a member of staff provides targeted mentoring support for 120 pupils from three local schools, who are at risk of not progressing to further education. All students are interviewed for a second time during the first week of the autumn term when subject choices are finalised. Induction procedures allow students to settle quickly into college life. A formal change of course procedure is rigorously adhered to. The number of students who decide to leave college early is very low.

17. The college has experienced considerable growth in the number of students requiring additional learning support. At the time of inspection there were approximately 329 students receiving additional learning support. This represents a 23% increase in demand, compared to the previous year. Students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, receive effective assessment and support. Their needs are carefully and sensitively assessed and the students are actively involved in agreeing and setting their own targets and learning aims. Managers evaluate the impact of learning support by monitoring students' achievements and the progress they make in relation to their prior attainment. In 2003, the pass rate at GCE A level for students with specific learning difficulties was 94%.

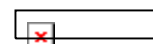
18. The literacy, numeracy and basic skills programme is new to the college this year. At the time of inspection there were 146 students receiving discrete literacy and/or numeracy support. There are some areas of good basic skills practice in literacy that are not sufficiently shared across the provision. Challenging learning goals are set for students, based on their diagnostic assessment. However, for students receiving basic skills support, there are no clear procedures for monitoring the quality and consistency of target setting on individual learning plans. At present, there is only one member of staff with a formal basic skills qualification.

19. Workshop sessions are available in all subjects and are highly effective in providing additional individual academic support. A team of 27 specialist personal tutors, including senior managers, is responsible for monitoring and supporting the progress of their students. Detailed monitoring of individual progress and attendance is effective in improving students' performance and motivation. Students are able to access and monitor their individual attendance and punctuality record on the college intranet. A comprehensive group tutorial programme covers a wide range of relevant topics that effectively develop students' personal and social skills. Tutorials are well attended and deal with issues such as study skills, citizenship, careers guidance, equal opportunity and health issues. Tutorial co-ordinators have developed an extensive range of well thought-out activities to support teaching and learning in group tutorials. The tutorial programme also incorporates AS-level and GCE A-level general studies. There is an annual cycle of observation of tutorial practice. The results of these observations are rigorously evaluated and used to bring about improvements. Parents are kept well informed about student progress through written reports, parents' evenings and other events, such as an evening on progression to HE.

20. Arrangements to guide students applying to HE or employment are outstanding. The college is working with local and regional universities to encourage wider participation. All students have access to high-quality careers guidance. The college has a full-time member of staff with responsibility for careers education and a team of careers teachers who deliver a well-planned careers programme to all students. Links with the local Connexions service are highly effective. Personal advisors are available to offer careers interviews as well as help students access the local job market. Students who decide not to apply to university are targeted by careers staff for specific support in job-seeking skills. Data on student progression and destinations are carefully monitored and used by college staff and managers to inform their planning and decision-making.

21. Appropriate provision is made in terms of child protection. A designated member of staff liaises with the local specialist support services and other external agencies to ensure vulnerable students are effectively supported. There is a college counsellor available three hours a week to provide support for personal issues. The college also has links with other counselling agencies that provide support for students. Financial help for students is provided appropriately through the college learner support fund, and many students receive educational maintenance allowances.

Leadership and management



22. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers have created a dynamic and positive ethos where student achievement is paramount. There is a shared set of values across the college, based on support and respect for individuals. The college provides a harmonious multicultural experience for students because of the standards and expectations that are embedded in the culture. The presence of the principal and the senior management team around the college at key points during the college day is beneficial to maintaining the friendly and orderly atmosphere which characterises the college. The principal has a high profile in the community and is chair of the local learning partnership. He is able to bring to the senior management team a clear view of the local context to inform discussions of college policies to improve transition from school to college and curriculum planning. Senior managers have clear role descriptions and line management structures are effective. Senior managers are mutually supportive and work closely as a team.

23. Managers, governors and staff have a shared understanding of and a commitment to the mission and the strategic priorities of the college. They are clearly focused on widening participation, raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The strategic plan arises out of a rigorous process involving all staff. Drafts of the plan are subject to consultation with staff and governors. Once agreed, the strategic plan informs all elements of the quality process, including target-setting and the staff development plan.

24. Retention and pass rates are good. On most courses students achieve grades in line with or better than expectations based on their prior attainment. The quality of teaching and learning is better than the average found in sixth form colleges inspected during 2002/3. Curriculum management is good. In most areas there is a team culture with a strong commitment to improving standards. The sharing of good practice in relation to teaching and learning is a feature of many areas. The use of ILT is uneven across the curriculum. There is now a management plan in place to integrate ILT more explicitly into curriculum planning and schemes of work.

25. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive and effective in securing improvement. All staff are involved in self-assessment and the process is thorough and rigorous. An in-house software package enables managers easily to access a wide range of up-to-date data. Support services produce detailed self-assessment reports and action plans but this process is not supported by surveys of staff satisfaction, which would provide evidence as to whether service quality standards are being met. Curriculum self-assessment reports have a strong focus on the analysis of retention and achievement. There is some inconsistency across areas in relation to data analysis. For example, not all areas make full use of value-added data or do a detailed analysis of the relative success of different groups of students. Target-setting is rigorous. Following discussions with the principal and vice-principal, managers produce a series of targets with a detailed breakdown of the actions that will be taken to achieve them. Where the discussions reveal significant underachievement, improvement strategies are established and monitored. Lesson observations for all teachers take place in an annual cycle. Observers mainly teach within the area observed and the use of peer observation is common and contributes to the sharing of good practice. The internal lesson observation profile awarded more generous grades than those awarded by inspectors during the inspection.

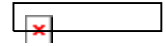
26. Equal opportunities and race equality are embedded across the college. They are a standard element of staff interviews, staff induction and schemes of work. Students are introduced to the policies through the student diary and tutorial activities. Equality and diversity, race equality and disability policies are available for staff on the college intranet and are summarised in the staff handbook and monitored by the equality and diversity committee. The proportion of staff from under-represented groups is currently 5% and only one governor is from the minority ethnic community. The college is exploring a range of strategies to increase community representation. Analysis of achievement and destination data across the college has revealed some differences in the achievement and progression rates for particular groups of students. There are strategies to change classroom practice and to offer support and appropriate guidance to these students.

27. Communications are excellent. There is a weekly staff briefing, which is followed by area or course meetings. There is also a weekly staff briefing on the intranet. The appraisal system involves staff reviews, including development interviews with line managers. While the process is fundamentally supportive, discussion of training needs is informed by lesson observation records, area targets and the strategic plan. There has been no formal appraisal of the principal in recent years. Opportunities for staff development and training are good and include a wide range of in-house opportunities as well as external training. The induction programme for new teachers is excellent. Subject-specific mentors act as induction tutors and newly qualified teachers have additional observations and reviews and a reduced timetable.

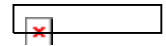
28. Governors make a valuable contribution to the development of the college. Their knowledge of the key issues facing the college is thorough. They have a good awareness of the performance of different areas and monitor progress effectively against targets. Governors are clear about their strategic role and have used their expertise well to give good support to the college in areas such as finance and estates management.

29. Financial management is strong. The deployment of staff and rooms is efficiently managed. A formal process, which always includes an assessment of set-up and on-going costs, takes place before the introduction of any new course or the recruitment of additional staffing. The resource committee controls capital bids and ensures that spending is linked to the college's strategic plan and the area's current action plan. The college gives very good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

The contributory grade for electronics is outstanding (grade 1)

Strengths

- high and improving pass rates on most advanced courses
- very good provision and high value added in electronics
- good teaching which motivates students
- very good use of practical work and ILT to support learning in lessons
- effective academic support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement for AS-level human biology
- some teaching rooms too small for the numbers of students in classes.

Scope of provision

30. A good range of courses is offered to full-time 16 to 18 year olds at level 3. This includes AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, geology and electronics. Other courses are the AVCE science (double award) and AS-level science for public understanding. At level 2 GCSE courses are available in human biology and applied science. There

were 903 students enrolled on science courses at the time of the inspection.

Achievement and standards

31. Pass rates for most advanced courses are high and improving. In 2003 the pass rates for GCE A-level chemistry and physics rose to 98%. For most AS-level subjects, pass rates also rose to figures well above national averages in 2003. In AS-level human biology, however, the pass rate fell to 59%. Data that compares students' performance on advanced level courses with their prior attainment shows that most students achieve grades that are in line with expectations. Electronics students do particularly well and attain higher grades than would be expected. Retention rates for most AS-level and GCE A-level courses are in line with national averages. The AVCE science course has high retention rates and pass rates are also well above national averages. Progression to HE is good. Attendance at classes observed was very good at 94%.

32. Students are well motivated. They demonstrate competence in practical work and can carry out different experimental techniques. GCSE applied science students use scientific apparatus more skilfully than would be expected at this level. Physics students use data loggers and ILT to process results where appropriate. In discussion, human biology students are not confident in their use of scientific language. Geology students develop good information retrieval skills using a variety of sources, including the internet and college intranet.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE (A* to C) human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	35	53	57
		% retention	80	89	75
		% pass rate	68	49	70
GNVQ advanced science/AVCE science (double award)	3	No. of starts	11	19	17
		% retention	91	74	88
		% pass rate	80	93	100
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	139	141	128
		% retention	92	91	90
		% pass rate	86	84	88
AS-level electronics	3	No. of starts	44	49	42
		% retention	84	88	90
		% pass rate	95	91	100
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	64	112	113
		% retention	91	88	86
		% pass rate	93	77	59
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	86	79	98
		% retention	79	92	92
		% pass rate	93	92	98
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	61	56	50
		% retention	79	95	96
		% pass rate	98	96	98

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

Note: retention rates for GCE A-level courses measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003

Quality of education and training

33. There is much good teaching. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a good range of teaching and learning activities, including exposition, group and pair activities, practical work and research exercises. In a geology lesson, the teacher displayed large aerial photographs on an overhead projector to stimulate students' discussion on coastal erosions and the environmental impact of volcanoes. In an electronics lesson, the tutor involved students with a demonstration of charging and discharging a capacitor. All students were quickly engaged in the task and enthusiastic about the analysis of results, and in the following exercise. In practical lessons, teachers relate theory to practice clearly and effectively. In a biology lesson on enzymes, students carried out a practical exercise using immobilised enzymes, which helped to develop their understanding of the biotechnology industry. In a practical AVCE lesson, the students learned how to identify different hydrocarbons by working through a simulated forensic investigation. This was an effective way of helping them to understand a topic they found challenging. In all practical lessons, attention to health and safety is very good. Teachers use ILT to good effect. In a physics lesson, the teacher used an interactive whiteboard to display an animated diagram explaining atomic structure. In a chemistry lesson, the board was used to show different molecules so that students could compare their structure. In practical lessons, students frequently make use of data-logging equipment in experiments. A number of enhancement activities are closely linked to courses. For example, biology students do field work on sand dunes, and on a river to study water quality. AVCE students take part in forensic science taster days.

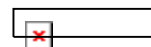
34. Science accommodation is up-to-date, with displays of students' work and exhibits relevant to courses. There are large open-plan laboratories for physics, electronics and biology, giving ample space for practical work. Chemistry laboratories are satisfactory. Some other rooms are too small for the numbers of students in classes. The laboratories are well equipped with a wide range of apparatus for use in lessons. Teachers and technical staff are well qualified and knowledgeable. Good stocks of relevant texts and a wide range of scientific journals are available. Science subjects, particularly electronics, have good materials for independent study on the college intranet. Students have access to computers for independent study both in subject resource bases and in the learning resources centre. Good use is made of paper-based self-study materials in electronics.

35. Assessment processes are rigorous and closely linked to the demands of specifications. Students' progress is carefully monitored by subject tutors. Timetabled support is provided for students who are making unsatisfactory progress. Work is marked and returned promptly. Some good use is made of students' learning styles in planning learning. Support for students is good. Induction is effective and includes interpersonal and study skills. Students receive good careers advice and guidance and effective support for applications to HE. Both personal tutors and subject teachers make good use of individual target grades in monitoring progress, and there is good communication between them.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are good. Subjects are managed separately and there is good liaison between the individual managers. Managers set clear directions for their teams and there is a clear recognition of the need to maintain high standards and improve weaknesses where they occur. All subjects follow standard practices for schemes of work, and organisation of practical classes. There is a productive exchange of ideas among the heads of subjects and the internal observation process is used well. There is a commitment to spreading good practice, and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Communications are good. Subject team meetings are held regularly and focus on the monitoring of student performance and teaching and learning. Technical support is well managed and technicians and teachers work well together. Self-assessment reports are suitably critical and evaluative and acknowledge key weaknesses. There are action plans that address most of these, including staff development to address teaching and learning issues.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for most GCSE mathematics courses
- high pass rates for GCE A-level mathematics
- very good teaching to non-mathematics specialists
- very effective subject support
- effective management.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of ILT in the classroom
- insufficient challenges for more able students in some lessons
- inadequate evening provision.

Scope of provision

37. The college offers an appropriate range of mathematics courses at GCSE, AS level and GCE A level. This includes AS-level 'use of mathematics', for students who do not have the higher GCSE grades in mathematics. A small number of students take further mathematics. A free standing mathematics qualification in using and applying graphical techniques is also offered, primarily to support physics students who are not taking AS-level mathematics. There are 173 students on AS-level courses and 82 studying at GCE A level. Some 200 students aged 16 to 18 take the year-long GCSE mathematics course and a further 83 took a short course for a November resit. A pre-GCSE

course is also offered to students on two-year programmes of study who will sit GCSE mathematics in year two. There is one evening class in GCSE mathematics.

Achievement and standards

38. A*-C pass rates for most GCSE courses are high. For example, in 2003 for the one-year course the proportion of students attaining higher grades was 15% above the national average. Short November resit courses have had consistently high pass and retention rates, with the exception of the most recent cohort. Pass rates for AS level have improved and are in line with the national averages. GCE A-level pass rates are high, at 100% and 98% in 2002 and 2003 respectively. Retention rates for AS level are just above national average and for GCE A level are high. Progression of GCE A-level mathematics students to HE is good, with many taking mathematics or mathematically related degree course. Attendance is good.

39. Students are very well motivated. They are interested and attentive in class and have a responsible attitude to study. Many choose to attend the well-resourced mathematics workshop for additional help or consolidation. A few students on the GCSE evening mathematics course have difficulty in understanding the topics presented.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE (A* to C) mathematics (1 year)	2	No. of starts	246	190	199
		% retention	81	91	85
		% pass rate	42	43	54
GCSE (A* to C) mathematics (short)	2	No. of starts	34	32	64
		% retention	100	94	100
		% pass rate	68	80	80
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	221	206	176
		% retention	86	89	89
		% pass rate	64	66	70
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	126	99	96
		% retention	75	97	97
		% pass rate	82	100	98

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

Note: retention rates for GCE A-level courses measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003

Quality of education and training

40. Teaching and learning are good and most students make good progress. At its best, teaching is innovative. For example, in an AS-level use of mathematics class the teacher returned practice exam scripts to students with no marks on them. Students worked in groups to agree answers, learning from each other. They used a marking scheme to mark their own papers, seeing clearly where they had lost marks. Only then were they told their actual marks. Some lessons are well adapted to the particular requirements of the class. For example, in a lesson for physics students studying a freestanding mathematics unit, the topic of trigonometric graphs was approached using situations to which students could relate. These prompted a discussion involving ideas from physics which went beyond the mathematical requirements of the class but which added real interest for the

students. Later the teacher discussed difficulties with students and gave them options but left them with decisions. Eventual success was indicated by students' model equations giving results on their graphical calculators that matched their data. In some lessons, however, teachers give insufficient attention to ensuring sufficient challenge for more able students who spend time doing additional examples of a routine nature. Extension materials are provided in homework and in the mathematics workshop.

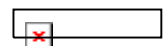
41. Mathematics lessons are taught in a suite of specialist rooms with bright and lively displays. Adjacent corridors also have lively mathematical displays. One room has a computer and electronic whiteboard. Students have access to computers with mathematical software in the study area but there is insufficient use of graphical software and graphical calculators to enhance learning in lessons on most mathematics courses. Courses for non-mathematical specialists use rooms with good computing facilities and in these lessons teachers make good use of computers, enhancing the learning experiences of their students. Paper-based learning materials are good. The mathematics intranet site has a wide range of topic summary sheets and revision sheets. Students can obtain copies of past papers free of charge in the workshop and download answers from the intranet. The GCSE evening class takes place in a different building, without easy access to the shared resources in the mathematics base.

42. Strong subject support is provided to help students. Where students' work indicates a need they are given programmes of study in the mathematics workshop. Good paper-based resources and guides are used to bridge gaps in knowledge and understanding. Attendance and progress of these students are carefully monitored. For other workshop users there are programmes for consolidation and for extension. Teachers operate an open-door policy and students appreciate the support received in this way. A small number of students are inappropriately enrolled on the evening GCSE course and do not receive sufficient subject support.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. The section is well organised and the head of mathematics gives a clear sense of direction and purpose. She is supported by course leaders with clearly defined responsibilities. There are robust systems for monitoring students' attendance and progress. A strong emphasis is placed on supporting students and improving provision. Self-assessments are evaluative and take place at course and curriculum area level. Analysis of data is thorough. Action plans are monitored through the weekly mathematics team meetings. These meetings have a standard agenda item for staff to share ideas and there are many examples of the sharing of good practice. These include useful revision guidelines, issued to all students as they approach exams and regular aural tests for GCSE students. The resources co-ordinator ensures that these are circulated to all relevant staff. Peer lesson observation is valued by staff, who regard this as a way both of learning from and supporting each other. There is an annual review process which identifies training needs and which is also valued by staff.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for GCE A-level and vocational courses

- much good teaching

- good accommodation and resources
- highly motivated students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient differentiation in some lessons
- insufficient analysis of student performance by ethnicity and gender.

Scope of provision

44. There is a good range of provision for full-time 16 to 18 year old students. GCE A-level and AS-level courses are offered in business studies, economics and accounting, and GCSE courses in business and accounting. Vocational courses comprise GNVQ intermediate, and AVCE single and double awards in business. At the time of the inspection there were 512 students enrolled on business courses.

Achievement and standards

45. Pass rates for all GCE A-level courses are high. Retention rates for GCE A-level accounting and economics are also high. Retention rates for GCE A-level business studies are below national averages. Pass and retention rates for AS-level business studies are broadly in line with national averages. AS-level economics had pass rates in line with national averages in 2001 and 2003, but the pass rate was low in 2002. The pass rates for AS-level accounting were high in 2001 and 2002 but fell by 15% in 2003, although remaining above national average. Pass rates were high for GNVQ intermediate and AVCE business in 2003. The AVCE course has had consistently high retention rates. In 2003 over half the students on GNVQ intermediate achieved merit or distinction grades. Progression from the GNVQ intermediate course to the AVCE course is good, and progression from level 3 courses to HE is also good. Student attendance is excellent.

46. Students are able to use business vocabulary fluently and apply their understanding of key concepts to case studies. They develop effective study skills and a mature attitude to learning. In one lesson students confidently recalled the features of different market structures, discussed previously learned aspects of the price mechanism and, then applied these concepts to analyse the package holiday market.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	31	19	20
		% retention	94	84	85
		% pass rate	93	69	94

GNVQ advanced / AVCE business (double award)	3	No. of starts	50	54	41
		% retention	88	67	76
		% pass rate	84	69	100
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	46	61	87
		% retention	93	87	89
		% pass rate	98	89	74
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	161	189	196
		% retention	94	89	87
		% pass rate	84	87	83
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	29	41	22
		% retention	86	88	95
		% pass rate	92	69	86
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	141	97	103
		% retention	72	93	92
		% pass rate	81	98	99

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

Note: retention rates for GCE A-level courses measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003

Quality of education and training

47. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. They motivate their students and maintain their interest. Brisk, prompt starts to every lesson establish a working environment in which students are punctual, settle quickly and purposefully, and are very clear about what is to be learned. Students are highly motivated to work hard. Students' interest is sustained by an appropriate range of activities and students are kept on task. Current business examples are used and students' own experiences are drawn in. In one very good lesson a dynamic question and answer session targeted individual students and focused their attention on the lesson topic. Students' confidence was boosted by positive reinforcement of their answers. There is a very strong focus on achieving success in examinations, with plenty of opportunities to practise examination questions. In less successful lessons the structured delivery keeps all students working at the pace set by the teacher without the opportunity for more able students to undertake more challenging tasks. Some lessons ran out of time and activities could not be completed.

48. Teachers are well qualified. The variety of industrial experience from their prior employment benefits students. Learning takes place in very good accommodation, generously resourced with computers, software, text books, and carefully prepared hand-outs. The library has a range of current titles and is well used. Students have good access to a helpful range of business software, both in and out of lessons. Students are regularly directed to appropriate websites that enhance the business relevance of their work. A customised intranet website has been designed for business studies, from which students can research current news items, carry out extension reading and print out learning materials in advance of their lessons.

49. Students are assessed regularly and their work is marked and returned promptly. Some feedback on marked work does not explain what students need to do to improve their grade.

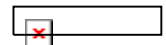
50. Students value the pre-enrolment advice and guidance they receive. Transfer arrangements within the first few weeks effectively enable students to confirm their choices. Students are well

supported by their personal tutors and subject teachers. Attendance and progress are carefully monitored in lessons and underperformance against predicted target is acted on swiftly. Communications on student progress are excellent, and an effective referral system alerts personal tutors to students at risk of falling behind. Students like the additional subject workshops, which help them to catch up or keep up to date with their work.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are good. Communications are good and teamwork is effective. There are regular team meetings, which are minuted. There is an appropriate focus on students' achievement. Teachers share ideas and work collaboratively. Good use is made of central management information. Staff training needs are identified through the performance review process and opportunities for staff development are good. Teachers use the expertise gained through training to benefit students. One example is the development of the intranet website. A high proportion of students are of minority ethnic origin, and teachers and students work harmoniously and respectfully together. Quality assurance processes lead to actions that bring about improvements. For example, following the low pass rate for the GNVQ intermediate course in 2002 the course was re-structured and the pass rate improved significantly in 2003. Internal lesson observation grades were higher than those awarded by inspectors. Course targets are set by curriculum teams. There is insufficient formal analysis of student performance data by gender or ethnicity to inform curriculum planning.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for AS-level and GCE A-level courses

- good student achievement on AVCE ICT

- very good access to specialist IT resources

- effective use of assessment feedback.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped focus on applications of IT and computing in industry

- insufficient direction and guidance for students in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

52. The college offers an appropriate range of courses to about 500 16 to 18 year old students, including AS-level and GCE A-level computing and ICT, GNVQ intermediate IT and AVCE single and double awards in IT. Key skills IT level 2 is available for all full-time students. There are 40 adults studying on introductory IT courses. Enrichment opportunities include a networking course, which 16 ICT and computing students took up in 2003.

Achievement and standards

53. Most pass and retention rates for AS-level and GCE A-level computing and ICT courses are above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Retention rates for AS-level computing are particularly good. At 98% in 2003, and 95% in 2004, these exceeded the national averages by at least 5%. GCE A-level computing also had a very high retention rate of 100% in 2003. The AVCE double award in ICT has very high retention and pass rates, and all consistently exceed national averages by at least 10%. Value-added data shows that students on this course achieve better results than would be expected on the basis of their GCSE attainments. Pass rates for key skills are low. Progression from level 3 courses to HE is good, and progression from the GNVQ intermediate ICT to the AVCE is also good. Attendance is good.

54. Students are well motivated and conscientious. They achieve good standards of work at appropriate levels on all courses. Complex and challenging IT and computing projects are completed by GCE A-level students. Projects show independent planning, analysis, design, and systems implementation. In many level 3 projects students take an active and mature role in planning and scheduling their activities to meet the assessment requirements. In AVCE ICT students in lessons on multimedia develop imaginative creative multimedia projects using specialist software, integrating sound, animation, video, and text. Key skills portfolios show that students from all areas of the college produce coursework which shows good applications of IT.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	17	21	16
		% retention	88	100	88
		% pass rate	93	100	79
GNVQ advanced/ AVCE ICT (double award)	3	No. of starts	59	47	49
		% retention	88	83	78
		% pass rate	92	100	95
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	198	282	262
		% retention	90	91	90
		% pass rate	85	88	80
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	45	51	52
		% retention	89	98	94
		% pass rate	95	88	82
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	151	115	165
		% retention	75	97	93
		% pass rate	90	91	95

GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	19	28	30
		% retention	84	89	100
		% pass rate	56	92	86

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

Note: retention rates for GCE A-level courses measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2001 and 2003

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching and learning are good. There is some enthusiastic teaching. The better lessons are well managed and effective. Many lessons feature a variety of activities to maintain students' interest and enthusiasm. In GCE A-level computing lessons, there is effective use of group research activities to help develop understanding of theory. In most lessons the aims, content and purpose of the lesson are made clear. Management of the students is effective and lessons have a clear conclusion with teachers giving the students guidance on supporting activities. In the minority of less effective lessons, opportunities to state clearly the lesson objectives at the start, or to summarise and guide students towards follow up activities at the end, are lost. In a minority of cases teachers fail to give students sufficient direction, so that some are not engaged all the time.

56. Teaching rooms are well equipped and effectively laid out to allow teacher exposition, individual work at computers, and group work. Students have access to modern IT resources outside timetabled lessons. Good specialist software resources are available on all networked computers. Teachers show good understanding of the assessment requirements on all qualifications, but many have little up-to-date industrial experience. Homework is regularly set and marked on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Students' progress on all courses is carefully monitored and systems for tracking students' progress are effective. Feedback on project work for AS-level and GCE A-level courses is frequent and constructive and helps students improve their performance. Assignments on the AVCE courses are not evenly spread and at times students have a heavy workload.

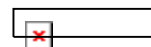
57. There are insufficient opportunities for many students to learn about current applications of IT in industry. There are few visits to industry or visiting speakers. Students on the AVCE double award course benefit from a short period of work experience, which supports their work in an assignment on organisations.

58. Initial advice and guidance are effective in helping students to choose appropriate courses. Teachers are diligent in monitoring punctuality and attendance. There is good individual support for students in lessons. Students' individual learning styles are analysed and reported to teachers, although this information is not always used in planning teaching and learning. Students are well prepared for progression to HE, and are supported through the application process. Individual support for students at risk of failing is prompt. Additional subject workshop sessions are provided to help students catch up. Students value the tutorial system, which is effective in supporting them with personal concerns as well as with their academic progress.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are good. There is much effective informal communication between teachers. Learning resources and good practice are shared productively between teachers on different courses. Managers prioritise resources for teaching appropriately. Courses are well managed and close attention is paid to the achievement of students on each component of their courses. Self-assessment at course level is thorough, although actions to address identified weaknesses are not always clear. Appropriate targets are set. There are effective arrangements for the quality control of assessment on full-time courses, including a formalised system of cross moderation on the AS-level courses, and standardisation of the marking of different teachers on parallel modules on the AVCE.

Sports, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for most vocational courses

- much good teaching

- effective monitoring of students' progress

- high retention rates for many courses.

Weaknesses

- low A*-C pass rate for GCSE travel and tourism in 2003

- insufficient industry-specific additional qualifications to enhance travel and tourism courses.

Scope of provision

60. The college offers a range of full-time courses at levels 2 and 3. These include AS-level and GCE A-level physical education, GCSE travel and tourism, GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, and AVCE single and double awards in travel and tourism, and leisure and recreation. Almost all of the 484 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. The college also offers the community sports leaders award and assistant fitness instructors' award as part of the enrichment programme, which is available to all students. There are no industry-specific additional qualifications in travel and tourism.

Achievement and standards

61. Pass rates are high for most vocational courses. For example, the AVCE (double award) travel and tourism had pass rates of 100% in 2002 and 2003, and retention rates were well above national averages. Pass rates for GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism were also 100% in 2002 and 2003, and the proportions of students achieving higher grades were also well above national averages. Retention rates for this course are in line with national averages. The pass rate for AVCE (double award) leisure and recreation was low in 2002, but it improved to 100% in 2003. In 2003 students on

the AVCE (double awards) in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism achieved higher grades than would have been expected on the basis of their GCSE attainment. Pass rates for GCE A-level physical education are high, but the retention rate fell in 2003 to below national average. Retention rates for AS-level physical education are in line with national averages. Pass rates for this course are not consistent and fell by 14% in 2003, but remained in line with national average. The A*-C pass rate for GCSE travel and tourism declined to well below national averages in 2003.

62. Standards of work are good. Students' work is well presented and IT is used effectively to enhance presentation. Students' attainment is good, particularly in vocational level 2 provision. Students use vocational terms confidently and display a very positive attitude to learning. Files of students' work are generally well organised. The learning and attainment of students for whom English is a second language is good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	19	12	16
		% retention	74	83	81
		% pass rate	93	100	100
GCSE (A* to C) travel and tourism	2	No. of starts	11	8	20
		% retention	82	100	90
		% pass rate	100	88	39
Community sports leaders award	2	No. of starts	70	55	46
		% retention	90	96	98
		% pass rate	70	38	64
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism /AVCE travel and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	52	27	20
		% retention	71	74	80
		% pass rate	89	100	100
AS-level sports, games and recreation	3	No. of starts	101	124	122
		% retention	86	85	88
		% pass rate	80	97	85
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	110	53	81
		% retention	72	94	90
		% pass rate	87	100	96

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

Note: retention rates for GCE A-level courses measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003

Quality of education and training

63. There is much good teaching. Teaching is well planned and materials are well prepared. Lessons have clear objectives that are shared with students and used well by teachers at the end of a session to consolidate learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and make good use of available resources, including information and learning technologies. Knowledge and skills are built up progressively, preparing students well for assessment. In a minority of lessons not all teaching challenged the more able students.

64. All teachers hold appropriate academic and teaching qualifications. Teachers of travel and tourism lack recent industrial experience. Classrooms display examples of students' work and celebrate students' achievements. Resources include brochures, textbooks, maps and computers with internet access. There is a well-equipped sports hall, a fitness room and two squash courts.

65. Students' work is marked regularly and returned promptly. Teachers make detailed comments and students understand what they need to do to improve. Assessment policies are clear and understood by staff and students. However, not all spelling and grammatical errors are corrected. Teachers make very good use of individual learning plans and students are clear about their progress. Progress reviews are used to discuss individual performance and students are required to reflect on their performance. Students value the process and are aware of their progress. Standards for attendance, punctuality and completion of homework are set and maintained. Students have a positive attitude to their learning and make effective use of time and college resources outside timetabled hours.

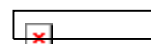
66. The college offers an extensive programme of sports to allow students to compete at local, regional and national events. Travel and tourism students have the opportunity to study languages and first aid as additional qualifications, but no specific industry recognised qualifications are available which would enhance their studies. On advanced vocational courses in travel and tourism, and leisure and recreation, work experience and visits to external organisations are used to develop students' understanding.

67. Communication between subject teachers and personal tutors is good. Tutors effectively support students who have poor attendance or who do not submit work. Subject support workshops are available and are compulsory for students who are not meeting targets. Students find these useful. Course teams manage these flexibly to meet the particular needs of their students.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are good. Management of courses is well co-ordinated and effective. Teaching teams are very clearly focussed on teaching and learning and bringing about improvements to courses. Teachers discuss teaching and learning and share good practice. Course teams gather student feedback and make good use of this to improve the quality of their courses. Self-assessment is thorough and many judgements made in the self-assessment report are accurate. However, insufficient attention is given to some weaknesses, and actions to address these are not clearly identified or specific enough. Regular appraisal leads to staff development with a focus on awarding-body updates and teaching and learning. Teaching teams analyse the performance of students by gender and ethnicity and make use of this analysis in course reviews and the self-assessment process.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- high standard of practical work

- very good teaching

- excellent use of ILT to improve learning

- very good specialist resources

- very effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low value added for GCE A-level 3D product design in 2003

- underdeveloped written feedback in art and design.

Scope of provision

69. The college offers an appropriate range of courses in visual and performing arts and media to 802 full-time 16 to 18 year old students and 16 full-time adult students. These comprise AS-level art studies, dance, drama, film and video production, media, music history/theory, and performance studies, and GNVQ advanced art and design. GCE A levels are offered in art and design, dance, drama and theatre studies, film, media, music, and performance studies. At level 2, media GCSE and Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) grade 5 music theory and practice are available. Students aged 14 to 16 are offered a course in dance and a GCSE in communications/media.

Achievement and standards

70. Retention and pass rates are high on the majority of courses. Pass rates on most AS-level and GCE A-level courses meet or exceed national averages. AS-level drama and GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts have achieved 100% pass rates for the past three years. The proportion of students achieving high grades on GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts is also high. However, the grades obtained by students on GCE A-level 3D product design in 2003 were lower than those predicted on the basis of their prior attainment.

71. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of students' personal and learning skills. Group work and communication are developed well in the majority of lessons. There is a high standard of practical artwork celebrated and displayed throughout the college, and radio work is developed through community radio broadcasts. Very good short films are produced in media. Students' music compositions, individual dance pieces and acting performances are confident and imaginative. Progression from level 3 courses to HE and specialist training is good. For example, students regularly win places on the prestigious British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) mentoring project.

Attendance and punctuality are good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE (A* to C) communication/ media	2	No. of starts	17	14	23
		% retention	94	93	78
		% pass rate	100	85	78
AS-level art studies /fine arts	3	No. of starts	140	235	240
		% retention	91	88	93
		% pass rate	95	99	100
AS-level drama	3	No. of starts	35	33	32
		% retention	80	88	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level art studies/fine arts	3	No. of starts	92	85	145
		% retention	72	96	91
		% pass rate	91	90	98
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	108	65	70
		% retention	68	91	96
		% pass rate	99	100	100
GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts	3	No. of starts	24	21	26
		% retention	67	90	96
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

72. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are enthusiastic and highly motivated. Well-organized lesson plans are produced. Very good schemes of work are devised collectively by teaching teams. There is excellent use of ILT to enhance learning. In AS-level graphics lessons students learn about image sizing with photographic editing software through the teachers' effective use of an interactive projection unit. Excellent use is made of the college intranet and film sources in media lessons, on interactive whiteboards, to enable students to study a rich range of images. There is very good teaching of practical skills. In AS-level 3D product design, students' sketchbooks show the development of carefully observed natural forms that have been skilfully manipulated into 3D sculptural designs. They work with conviction and enthusiasm to transfer their studies into card and wire maquettes that show originality and creative thinking. There is an over-reliance on the internet for contextual research in art and design, and insufficient use is made of the college library. Performing arts students have the mature discipline and etiquette needed to reach high performance standards, and they readily give and receive critical comments on their work.

73. Resources and accommodation are very good. There is a fully equipped dance studio and a large theatre with professional grade lighting. Music has good IT facilities for composition and media uses digital film editing facilities and professional radio equipment. The open-access computer area is staffed by two full-time technicians who provide good additional support for students outside lessons. Two part-time technicians in 3D design and graphics provide high levels of support for practical work. Classrooms and studios are well maintained, displaying high-quality student work. Specialist resources in art and design are very good. Studios are very well equipped, but space is

cramped in some studios and the art studio is sometimes used as a thoroughfare during lessons, interrupting learning.

74. Assessment practices are rigorous. Formative assessment is very supportive, with regular and thorough written and verbal feedback preparing students well for examinations. For example, music students are given very clear guidance on how to improve timing and mood in their compositions. Students are informed of course assessment criteria through detailed documentation for each unit. Assignment briefs are written in clear language and carefully mapped against the examination boards' assessment criteria. However, written feedback to art and design students focuses too much on what has been produced, rather than what has been learned.

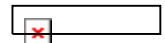
75. Students have good access to optional work placements. All AVCE art students secure placements with local art-based companies. Art and design students have opportunities to exhibit their work in local galleries and community venues. Media students participate in a major employer's mentoring scheme, that encourages access to employment for students from minority ethnic groups. A scheme to enrol gifted and talented school pupils onto courses through artistic merit is innovative but currently underdeveloped. A wide variety of enrichment activities are offered, with drama productions open to all students. Dance, music and drama students attend performances at local and regional theatres, and art and design students visit local and national galleries.

76. There is very good support for students. Specialist personal tutors monitor students' progress very thoroughly, and subject teachers offer extra guidance on practical work outside lesson times. There is good provision for students with additional learning needs. Good communication exists between subject teachers, personal tutors and Connexions advisors to support students. All students attend dedicated IT key skills lessons.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are very good and provide strong strategic direction for each subject. Significant investment and commitment is given to improving resources. Teaching teams meet regularly. Self-assessment reports are evaluative and effective action plans lead to positive changes. Very rigorous health and safety procedures exist, and regular risk assessments are undertaken in all course areas. There is good support for newly qualified teachers. Equal opportunities are promoted effectively, particularly in media and film studies where a wide range of cultures are explored. Staff value their annual performance reviews, which focus on improving teaching, learning and subject-specific skills. Peer lesson observations and the regular sharing of good practice are given significant weight in the department. Action plans from staff meetings do not contain deadlines to monitor progress. There is good communication and a cohesive team ethos amongst staff.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates at GCE A-level

- very good teaching

- learning activity appropriate to the broad ability range of students
- meticulous tracking and recording of students' progress
- wide range of courses and curriculum enrichment activity
- highly effective subject support
- outstanding leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- low value-added for general studies
- some students' learning restricted by limited use of ILT.

Scope of provision

78. The college offers a very good range of AS-level and GCE A-level daytime courses in ancient history, archaeology, geography, history, law, philosophy, government and politics, and religious studies. At the time of inspection 711 full-time 16 to 18 year old students were enrolled on these courses. General studies at AS level and GCE A level is offered to all students through the tutorial programme.

Achievement and standards

79. Pass rates at GCE A level are outstanding. In 2003 eight subjects had 100% pass rates. In geography, government and politics, history, law, philosophy and religious studies pass rates of 99% and 100% were also achieved in 2002. Over the same two years the pass rate in general studies was just below the national average. In some subjects the average GCSE points score on entry is significantly below the national average. In most subjects the majority of students attain a grade at or above their potential target grade. Subjects with the largest proportions of students achieving higher grades than would be expected include law, history and religious studies. Most pass rates for AS-level courses in 2002 and 2003 were in line with, or above, national averages. For AS-level religious studies and law pass rates significantly above national averages have been sustained over the three years 2001 to 2003. Students achieve higher grades in AS-level law and religious studies than would be expected on the basis of their prior attainment at GCSE. Retention rates for AS-level archaeology, government and politics, history, law, and religious studies are consistently above

national averages. For most other AS-level subjects they are similar to national averages.

80. Students produce very high standards of work. A strong emphasis is placed on learning that promotes social and personal development. There is commendable class discipline, mutual respect and tolerance. Students work well together, bringing an appetite for debate and research to their learning. Irrespective of ability, gender or ethnicity they enjoy equal opportunities in learning activities. They acquire and use new knowledge intelligently and develop the essential study skills of analysis, evaluation and judgement making. In some lessons oral skills are underdeveloped.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	71	78	70
		% retention	93	94	90
		% pass rate	89	79	92
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	137	99	98
		% retention	93	95	93
		% pass rate	90	96	90
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	123	116	133
		% retention	89	92	91
		% pass rate	92	96	90
GCE A-level general studies	3	No. of starts	570	400	422
		% retention	97	90	98
		% pass rate	85	81	81
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	108	77	74
		% retention	78	96	93
		% pass rate	98	100	99
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	87	76	80
		% retention	68	96	93
		% pass rate	83	100	100
GCE A-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	38	20	29
		% retention	89	100	97
		% pass rate	82	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

81. Teaching is very good and students make excellent progress. Topics are covered comprehensively and expertly by staff. Lessons plans are well-structured to take account of different learning needs and styles. Students are quickly involved in learning activities that logically progress in levels of difficulty. Good examples occurred in an AS-level religious studies lesson on Irenaeus' theodicy, an AS-level archaeology lesson on post excavation analysis and a GCE A-level law lesson on the criminal offence of burglary. In each case a simple starter task established learning confidence and this was followed by more challenging intellectual exercises. Much learning takes place in small group situations. In a history lesson on Nazi social policies the teacher grouped students and set investigative tasks on source materials appropriate to group abilities. Students work

diligently and maintain high levels of interest. A stimulating lesson on Greek history contributed well to a lively discussion on the Sicilian Campaign. Students develop the skills of analytical reading, close listening and challenging discourse. Law students make excellent use of computers to do investigative research on case studies.

82. There are excellent resources to support learning. Lessons take place in well-equipped, dedicated rooms with stimulating displays that create specific subject identity. Some rooms have interactive whiteboards but these are not used to maximum effect. Students use good quality texts and there are adequate reference books in the college library.

83. There is meticulous tracking and recording of students' progress. Initial assessments of students' skills and prior qualifications are used to set individual target grades, which are frequently reviewed. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Regular assignments are set and marked within agreed timescales. Marking is sensitive and constructive and the recent introduction in history of cover sheets for marked work has been adopted by other subjects, encouraging very full and helpful feedback.

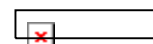
84. Excellent enrichment activities, closely related to the curriculum, broaden students' learning and contribute to their social and personal development. The 'Salaam Society' is an exciting initiative that complements the study of religious studies and explores Islamic and multi-cultural issues.

85. Students benefit from excellent learning support. Timetabled subject workshops help to reinforce learning, although more are needed for law. Additional extra-timetable support sessions provide further help with coursework, revision and parts of courses identified as responsible for weaker examination performance. Students with learning needs are identified early and given considerable extra support. Students place great value on the ready availability of their teachers to guide and support them.

Leadership and management

86. Leadership and management are outstanding. Excellent communications exist between staff, and the delegation of responsibilities is clear. Regular formal and informal meetings are held to discuss performance data and students' progress against targets. There are periodic reviews of the curriculum to match students' interests and abilities. Social inclusion is integral to the content and process of lessons. Lesson plans are well developed to give clear direction for learning. Staff are encouraged to pursue professional development opportunities and training needs are well managed. New staff receive excellent support. Self-assessments analyse retention and achievement data thoroughly and produce excellent action plans, although in other aspects of the reports there is less rigorous use of evidence to support judgements. Much good practice is shared within and across subjects.

Social sciences



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

Strengths

- excellent achievement for GCSE and GCE A-level courses

- high pass rates for AS levels in citizenship and psychology

- effective teamwork which promotes very good teaching

- good response by students to learning opportunities

- good resources to support learning

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- no key weaknesses.

Scope of provision

87. The college offers an appropriate range of courses to full-time students aged 16 to 18. This includes GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level courses in psychology and sociology, and GCSE and AS-level citizenship. There is also one adult evening GCSE psychology course. At the time of inspection there were 974 students.

Achievement and standards

88. Examination performance in psychology is outstanding. For AS level and GCE A level high pass rates are combined with outstanding proportions of higher grades. For GCSE the proportion of A*-C grades is also well above national averages. For sociology, examination performance at GCE A level is outstanding with a 99% pass rate in 2003 combined with a high proportion of high grades. The proportion of A*-C grades at GCSE is well above the national average. For AS-level sociology, pass rates are in line with national averages. In 2003 the pass rate for AS-level citizenship was good. In both psychology and sociology students gain better GCE A-level grades than would be predicted by their GCSE profile when entering the course. Retention rates are broadly in line with national averages.

89. Written and oral work is generally of a good standard. Students in many classes are able to use technical terms such as 'reductionism' or 'relative deprivation' with fluency and accuracy to apply social science concepts to real life events. Students make good progress in their study and communications skills and their ability to support discussion points with evidence.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE (A* to C) psychology	2	No. of starts	21	18	20
		% retention	81	83	70

		% pass rate	29	87	86
GCSE (A* to C) sociology	2	No. of starts	20	21	19
		% retention	85	90	74
		% pass rate	71	79	86
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	250	296	309
		% retention	93	89	88
		% pass rate	95	97	94
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	134	154	198
		% retention	91	89	91
		% pass rate	96	87	89
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	195	175	211
		% retention	77	97	96
		% pass rate	95	99	98
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	91	88	92
		% retention	75	98	95
		% pass rate	84	99	99

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

Quality of education and training

90. Teaching and learning are very good. All lessons observed were good or better and over half were very good. Teachers have clear expectations of student success and these are communicated very effectively. Lessons are lively and stimulating. Planning is very effective. There are common schemes and shared resources but there is sufficient flexibility to allow for individual staff strengths in teaching. All students are involved from the first moments of each lesson. Lessons often begin with individual or small group activity, followed by full group summary to recap on earlier learning and link it to the current lesson. Maximum opportunity is taken to ensure students provide as much input as possible, even when quite complex theories are being introduced. For example, one class was introduced to Freudian theory through a homework reading task, but were advised that they should concentrate on the main issues rather than attempt to digest all the information provided. At the beginning of the next lesson students were paired and asked to tell each other what they remembered in everyday language. Following this, the teacher very effectively built up a clear picture of the theory using much more input from students than would normally be expected during an introduction to psychodynamic theory. The setting of productive homework tasks as reinforcement to classroom learning is a regular feature of teaching. Teachers make effective use of questions to involve the whole group, track understanding, reinforce learning, stimulate deeper analysis and support the development of their exposition. Teachers cater well for the range of abilities in their classes. Questions are often tailored for particular students. Extension activities are available for those who complete tasks more quickly. Students needing to develop their essay writing skills receive skeleton essays to flesh out as homework activity. This is supported by very effective subject workshops to which students are referred for help with particular topics or skills that need development. Additional revision workshops are presented during the run up to examinations.

91. Staff are well qualified and the experience of some as examiners is used effectively. Subject base rooms provide a pleasant learning environment with stimulus material including student work. These are sometimes referred to in lessons and provide the opportunity for quick visual reminders of topics covered. One room used for citizenship GCSE is too small for the size of group. Learning is supported by a good variety of well-constructed handouts. Students have good access to IT but the intranet is in the early stages of development and is an underused resource.

92. Assessment and monitoring of student progress are very effective. Progress is monitored continually within lessons and feedback on homework is detailed and provided quickly. Students have a clear understanding of how they are progressing and actions that they should take to keep on track or improve. Spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are of a reasonable standard but teachers rarely correct mistakes. All students are aware of their predicted grades and the review system is effective in monitoring their progress though some of the planned actions lack precision and deadlines.

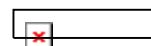
93. There is a wide variety of enrichment activities and take up is good. The provision of citizenship programmes is particularly appropriate to the cultural needs of the locality. Social sciences contribute effectively to opportunities for students to mix academic and vocational studies and to combine different levels of course within individual learning programmes.

94. Students value the guidance and support they receive. There are good induction procedures, which include setting subject specific tasks before students join their first lesson. For example, sociology students are given a scenario which gets them to think about the problems of a group of people stranded on a desert island. They arrive at the first class ready to contribute to group icebreaking exercises that build on the task to develop some core sociological themes. Guidance for students progressing to HE is effective and others are given specific careers advice.

Leadership and management

95. Leadership and management are very good. In citizenship they are effective at both AS level and at GCSE level but the subject has not yet been placed in one managed area and this reduces the level of interaction between the two levels. There is a good team ethos and communication is very effective with much sharing of good practice ensuring continuity of students' experience across a large number of teaching groups. There is an effective annual review system that identifies staff development needs and opportunities. Students' views are effectively captured through focus groups. Appropriate targets are set for retention, pass rates and value added, and these are regularly monitored. The team make effective use of course reviews to plan and deliver changes in the approach to teaching and learning but the self-assessment report (SAR) sometimes fails to focus sufficiently on variations in performance. Race equality and equal opportunities issues are effectively promoted within the curriculum area by open discussion in units such as the family, education, mental health and cultural differences. Qualifications in citizenship have been introduced to promote discussion of these topics within level 2 tutorials and in level 3 enrichment. The make-up of small groups in classroom activities often involves mixing students for learning purposes in a way that results, by accident or design, in ethnically mixed working groups which work well together.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for many courses

- excellent progress by English students

- very creative and well-structured teaching
- high quality resources enhancing learning
- outstanding assessment feedback to students
- good range of vocational language courses
- very good links with local schools in modern foreign languages
- strong team culture with effective leadership and shared practice.

Weaknesses

- low value-added for GCE A-level French in 2003.

Scope of provision

96. The college offers a good range of English and foreign language courses to full-time 16 to 18 year olds, and a small number of foreign language courses to adults. Courses include GCSE English, AS-level and GCE A-level English language, English literature, English language and literature, French, German, Spanish and Urdu. In addition, foreign language courses leading to qualifications such as NVQ units and foreign languages at work are available in Italian, Spanish, French and German. There are 650 students currently enrolled on English courses and 267 on foreign languages, including 41 adults.

Achievement and standards

97. Students' achievement in English is outstanding and most students achieve or exceed their predicted target grades. In GCE A-level English language and literature and GCE A-level English literature, there were pass rates of 100% in both 2002 and 2003. Pass rates for AS-level English courses are high, and consistently exceed national averages. Pass rates for GCE A-level modern foreign language courses are also high. For example the pass rates for German and Spanish were 100% in 2002 to 2003. In 2003 GCE A-level French had a retention rate of 100% and a pass rate of 95% but data comparing attainment with students' prior GCSE grades showed grades were lower than expected. Most retention rates for GCE A-level English courses are above national averages. Pass and retention rates for most AS-level language courses in 2003 were in line with or above national averages. Retention and pass rates have been at or above national averages for the three years 2001 to 2003 for the vocational language courses such as NVQ units. Progression to HE is good.

98. Students are highly motivated and their enthusiastic application results in very good class work. In a GCSE English lesson, students confirmed their understanding of an anthology through a multiple-choice quiz. In an English literature GCE A-level lesson, students confidently explored war texts, developing a sophisticated critical glossary to apply to other texts. Language students develop high levels of linguistic skill, and are able to communicate in the target language with confidence. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ unit in Spanish	1	No. of starts	77	70	40
		% retention	95	91	98
		% pass rate	89	97	95
Foreign languages at work (FLAW) in French	2	No. of starts	21	45	26
		% retention	90	78	100
		% pass rate	100	97	100
GCSE (A* to C) English language	2	No. of starts	229	183	215
		% retention	77	88	87
		% pass rate	72	60	55
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	118	83	109
		% retention	94	94	92
		% pass rate	77	99	100
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	105	68	84
		% retention	71	96	93
		% pass rate	95	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	114	75	67
		% retention	85	95	97
		% pass rate	99	100	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	33	16	21
		% retention	73	88	100
		% pass rate	88	100	95

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

Quality of education and training

99. Teaching and learning are very good. In over half the lessons observed, teaching and learning were judged to be very good or outstanding. Teaching is carefully planned to include imaginative and stimulating activities, and students' preferred learning styles are skilfully accommodated. Students across a wide ability spectrum are offered diverse tasks that extend them at appropriate levels. There is some inspirational teaching and strong classroom management. Listening, experiencing and reading are integrated into some exciting activities, which stimulate response and develop skills. Foreign language teaching at level 3 is conducted through the medium of the target language, which develops students' speaking and listening skills and clearly enhances their learning. Respect for the opinions of students and the creation of space for reflection are evident. In the best lessons, teachers communicate a passion for the subject, eliciting active participation from students. Spanish vocabulary revision was made more interesting through simple games. In many lessons

excellent use is made of the interactive whiteboard. In a GCE A-level English language class, students demonstrated their knowledge of significant linguistic events by dragging them electronically to their respective time bands on the whiteboard.

100. Teaching staff are well qualified and many are examiners. Four foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to the development of students' oral language skills. Physical resources are excellent and enhance learning. The digital language laboratory is well used and the college intranet offers a wealth of information and interactive activities. Classes benefit from being taught in stimulating base rooms that create strong subject identity. The learning resource centre contains a range of useful resources to support and extend study. Non-subject specific literature, however, does not fully reflect the diversity of the college community. Strong links exist with similar institutions in Europe, and exchange visits are open to students across the college.

101. Assessment of students' work is very thorough and is valued by students for its helpful written comments. Teachers focus sharply on specific assessment criteria, clearly identifying areas for improvement. Oral feedback on progress is given regularly and routinely within lessons. Minimum expected grades are initially set for individual students using data drawn from GCSE attainment; these are regularly redefined as aspirational personal target grades in the light of students' performance.

102. A wide range of enrichment activities is offered, including theatre trips and study conferences. A touring professional theatre company performed scenes from *Macbeth* to GCSE students, many of whom had not seen live theatre before. Students can choose to follow one or more languages: this year, Chinese was offered in partnership with a local secondary school. The college plays an important role in the development of foreign languages in the wider community, offering study days to all local schools and promoting a transition project for potential linguists.

103. Students receive excellent academic and personal support outside lessons. Each has a personal tutor who monitors their progress very thoroughly and individual support is available from specialist staff. Students value the advice they received before coming to college, and appreciate strongly the individual care and professional guidance they are given whilst at college. Teachers and students operate in an environment of mutual respect and this culture of value promotes self-esteem and confidence amongst students.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership and management are very good and enhance the learning experience for students. Both disciplines have strong team cultures and high aspirations, and good practice is enthusiastically shared. Curriculum management roles are well defined and clearly understood. Staff review courses regularly, using a range of data to set challenging targets. Self-assessment reports for individual areas are realistic and include dynamic action plans. Heads of department observe and appraise all teaching staff on an annual basis, and the results inform a strong programme of professional development and training. There is an imaginative response to issues of equal opportunities and diversity; assessment modules are selected to enable students to investigate gender and race, and vibrant class displays record their findings.

Part D: College data

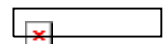
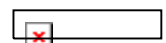


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	2	62
2	16	9
3	58	11
4/5	0	0
Other	24	18
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,427	37	11
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	72	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	588	119	5
Information and communication technology	2,145	0	17
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	1	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	424	0	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	247	34	2
Visual and performing arts and media	867	0	7
Humanities	2,892	17	22
English, languages and communication	999	70	8
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Unknown AOL	3,005	8	23
Total	12,666	286	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
2	Starters excluding transfers	671	604	657	93	38	26
	Retention rate %	82	90	84	55	61	73
	National average %	80	81	*	72	71	*
	Pass rate %	96	95	100	82	22	95
	National average %	85	84	*	68	71	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	6,069	5,830	6,374	61	31	26
	Retention rate %	85	92	91	72	65	96
	National average %	80	89	*	64	69	*
	Pass rate %	88	89	89	59	70	96
	National average %	86	88	*	67	75	*

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

Sources of information:

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

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

**data unavailable*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	85	14	1	146
Level 2 (intermediate)	69	24	7	29

Totals	82	16	2	175
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