



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Uxbridge College

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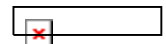
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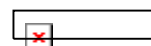
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Basic information about the college

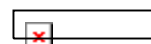


Name of college:	Uxbridge College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Rachel Davies
Address of college:	Park Road Uxbridge Middlesex UB8 1NQ
Telephone number:	01895 853333
Fax number:	01895 853377
Chair of governors:	Dr Maud Tyler
Unique reference number:	130446
Name of reporting inspector:	Angela Cross-Durrant HMI
Dates of inspection:	23-27 February and 12 March 2004

Part A: Summary



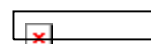
Information about the college



Uxbridge College is a general further education (FE) college, situated in Hillingdon, the outer area of West London. The college has two campuses: one in the heart of Uxbridge and the other in Hayes. The Uxbridge site includes a large sixth form centre, known as the Uxbridge College Academy, which provides courses mainly for students aged 16 to 18. The college's campus at Hayes, the Hayes Community Campus, offers a range of programmes for young people and adults, and includes facilities and courses enabling students to experience industry-standard training. The location of the campus and the courses run there form a key part of the college's widening participation strategy. It is an integral part of other community services on the same site. A new leisure complex on the site, 'Lifestyles', which contains fitness suites and a restaurant, is run in partnership with a private leisure company. Courses are offered at other venues, which are often in areas of high deprivation, and include provision, for example, in a local shopping centre, a church and in community centres. Approximately 21% of the population of Hillingdon come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The borough contains wards where some 50% of residents have no more than a level 1 or lower qualification. The unemployment rate is low, at 2.9%. A high proportion, 78%, of school leavers in the borough continue in education or training. Courses at the college as a whole are offered from entry level to level 4. Education and training takes place in all but one of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas of learning. The college also runs courses for school pupils aged 14 to 16 in mainly vocational areas.

The college's mission is 'to contribute to the increased competitiveness of the local and regional economy and through education and training improve prosperity and enhance the life chances of each individual'. Its purpose is 'to educate and train an increasingly diverse number of people so that they can achieve their individual learning goals'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors assessed 11 areas of learning at the college. They judged provision to be good in science and mathematics, visual and performing arts and media, humanities and English for speakers of other languages. Provision in engineering, information and communications technology (ICT) and literacy and numeracy was judged to be satisfactory. It was judged unsatisfactory in business; hairdressing and beauty therapy; health and social care (excluding childcare and public services); and in English, languages and communication. Work-based learning provision in engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy was judged unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- good practical lessons

- the safe environment for students and staff

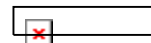
- good specialist help for students with physical impairment
- productive partnership with the local community at Hayes
- high pass rates on level 1 courses
- good academic support for students in tutorials
- effective student union.

What should be improved

- the quality of curriculum management in some areas
- the quality of teaching generally
- the thoroughness of lesson observations conducted by the college
- the assessment of students' work
- the proportion of trained teachers
- students' punctuality and attendance
- work-based learning provision.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

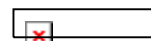


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. Much teaching is good and there are high retention and pass rates in most subjects. The science laboratories are modern and well equipped. Practical science lessons are good. Teachers make little use of information and learning technology (ILT) for teaching. In mathematics, learning resources and modern teaching aids, such as computers, interactive whiteboards, or algebraic games, are not available to stimulate learning or aid teaching.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory . There is effective individual support for students. Pass rates on the national certificate in engineering are high. Resources are of particularly high quality. On-the-job training for work-based learners is good. Some teaching is unsatisfactory. Students' lack of punctuality and low attendance rates have an adverse effect on learning in many lessons. The management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory.
Business	Unsatisfactory. The college offers a broad range of courses. Work produced by office skills students is of a high standard. Pass rates on some key business courses are low, and substantially below the national average. Much of the teaching is unsatisfactory and teachers fail to develop students' understanding of modern business contexts. Students' lack of punctuality disrupts many lessons.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Management of computing is good and there is a broad range of courses to meet local needs. There are high pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 3. However, the pass rates on the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course are low. Some lessons are poorly planned and managed and students' interest is not maintained.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Unsatisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory . Students produce some good written work. Workplace training is effective. Pass rates are low and declining on most courses, and there is very poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework. Some teaching is dull and teachers' expectations of students are too low. The low number of clients fails to create a realistic working environment for students. Learning targets for students are not clear.
Health and social care and childcare and public services	Unsatisfactory. Childcare and public services is satisfactory . Although pass rates have been high on the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) health and social care course, the first-year unit test results in January 2004 are very poor. Arrangements for briefing temporary and new teachers are inadequate and students are not yet performing at the standard required for the course. The

	management of health and social care provision is unsatisfactory. Internal verification arrangements are unsatisfactory, retention rates on many courses are below the national average and pass rates on level 3 childcare and public services courses are below the national average. There is effective work experience for childcare students and there is good support for students with additional learning needs.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Teaching is mainly good. Pass rates are high on many courses. The quality of most students' work is high. There are good links with the media industry. Too many students fail to complete their courses. High staff turnover often affects adversely the quality of lesson planning, teaching and learning.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high on general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses and most advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses. Much of the teaching and learning is well organised and stimulating. There is good individual support for students. Retention rates on some AS-level courses are low and some pass rates are below the national average. There is insufficient use of ICT for teaching.
English, languages and communication	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) modern foreign language courses are high and students develop good comprehension skills. Too much teaching in English and modern foreign language programmes is unsatisfactory and does not meet students' needs. Most of the written feedback from teachers on students' work fails to enable students to improve their performance. Students' lack of punctuality and their poor attendance have an adverse effect on lessons. Much curriculum management is poor.
English for speakers of other languages	Good. Teaching and learning overall are good. Students gain confidence and they progress successfully from one level of study to the next. Resources are of high quality. Course reviews are effective. Retention rates are low on some courses. Students are not given adequate opportunities to gain accreditation.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in practical lessons. Learning support staff work well with teachers and students in lessons. Students develop good speaking and listening skills, but their reading and writing skills are insufficiently developed. Teachers do not modify their teaching methods or materials to meet the needs of students of different abilities. Students' individual learning plans are often only partially completed or not completed, and contain insufficient detail to help students to progress at an appropriate rate.

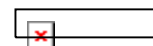
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors effectively oversee the financial health of the college and monitor its progress against strategic priorities and targets. They are appropriately involved in strategic planning. Governors and senior managers provide strong direction for the college. The college has productive links with its community partners, particularly in Hayes where the college's second site is located. There are good links with local schools through which courses for around 350 pupils aged 14 to 16 are offered. The college has an established quality assurance system, but its implementation is insufficiently thorough. Grades awarded for teaching and learning

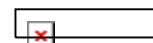
colleges. Many new and agency-supplied teachers do not have teaching qualifications. The quality of curriculum leadership and management varies across the college. The college meets its obligations under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Governors have agreed a disability statement to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Disability and Act 2001 (SENDA). The college has appointed a child protection officer, but does not yet have an adequate child protection policy. The college provides value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



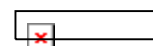
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. The college has a race relations policy, which is implemented satisfactorily. A total of 54% of students and 22% of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 21% of residents in the local community. Equality of opportunity is promoted through the student union and through college committees. The college has recently increased the number of courses for both students aged 16 to 18 and adult full-time and part-time students, and the college offers courses from level 1 to level 3 in most subject areas. Courses, mainly in information technology (IT) and in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), are offered in venues out in the community, to attract students from under-represented groups. The quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Saturday morning and holiday clubs in numeracy, IT and communication skills are run for children. Local and regional community groups speak highly of the colleges' responsiveness to needs. A recent audit, carried out to gauge the college's compliance with the requirements of the SENDA, demonstrated that most buildings are accessible to students with restricted mobility. An action plan to improve access has been drawn up and work has started on making suitable modifications.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for full-time and part-time students are good. Induction for students is generally well planned, and is appropriate for students aged 16 to 18 and adults. Students undertake a test at the start of their courses to determine their level of basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills, and specialised help is offered where needs are identified. Additional learning support from 'learning advocates' and other specialist staff is effective, both during lessons and through extra-curricular sessions. Individual learning plans for students are not always used effectively. Very good specialist support is offered to students with visual or hearing impairment. The college's tutorial system offers effective academic support and works well for the majority of students. While much informal pastoral support takes place, procedures for ensuring that all students receive comprehensive guidance on personal and social development are not well established. The student union is the main vehicle for informing students about topics such as drugs awareness and sexual health, but the information does reach students in all parts of the college. Advice on these topics is not offered through the college's tutorial system. There are appropriate systems in the student support centre for referring students to external support agencies, such as for counselling. Students benefit from effective careers guidance.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- friendly and supportive staff

- the safe and well-maintained college environment

- the mature atmosphere

- good computing facilities

- the range of courses

- careers education and guidance

- effective discipline.

What they feel could be improved

- staff shortages and changes

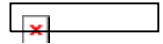
- students arriving late at lessons

- long gaps between lessons and some first lessons starting in the afternoon

- lack of work experience

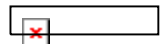
- o distracting noise from surrounding rooms in some lessons
- o the range and prices of canteen food
- o parking facilities, especially at the Hayes site.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



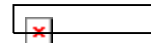
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	56	31	13
19+ and WBL*	56	34	10
Learning 16-18	52	35	13
19+ and WBL*	58	31	11

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. Uxbridge College offers a wide range of courses that can be studied full time and part time. There are courses in 13 of the 14 LSC areas of learning. Inspectors used data on students' achievements, drawn from the individualised student record returns, and individualised learner returns to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the LSC for the academic years 2001 and 2002. They also used college data, produced using kite-marked software, on pass and retention rates for 2003. Inspectors accepted college data in making judgements.

2. In 2003, according to the college's data, pass rates on level 1 courses had risen to well above the national average, and on courses at levels 2 and 3 they are just above the national average. However, retention rates on level 1 courses have fallen by around 12% to about the national average. Retention rates on other levels of courses are generally at, or near, the national average.

16 to 18 year olds

3. In the three years 2001 to 2003, pass rates on long level 1 courses have been well above the latest published national averages for 2002 for general FE and tertiary colleges. However, over the same three-year period, overall retention rates on these courses have declined from almost 20% above the national average to around the national average. Retention and pass rates on some national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1 and equivalent courses show a downward trend.

4. In the three years 2001 to 2003, pass rates at level 2 have been about 10% above the national average. Retention and pass rates on long level 2 courses have been slightly above the national average. In 2003, 57% of students achieved GCSE grades A* to C. Pass rates are generally good on the intermediate general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses, except in business studies.

5. Overall pass and retention rates on level 3 courses have been around the national average for the three years to 2003. There have been some consistently good pass rates, for example, on the national diploma in design and the national diploma in computing. However, pass rates for AS-level courses are falling, and they have declined on some level 3 NVQ or equivalent courses to around the national average. Pass rates on NVQ level 3 in beauty therapy have been between 13% and 40% below the national average for the three years 2001 to 2003. Although the average NVQ pass rate on NVQ level 3 courses has improved, it remains 26% below the national average. Pass rates for AVCE in business are low. Retention rates on these courses improved from below the national average in 2001 and 2002 to above it in 2003, except in accounting, where the retention rate in 2003 was 38%, according to college data.

6. College figures demonstrate that in 2003 the proportion of students gaining high grades in their qualifications varies from 40% in GCE A2 to 18% in GNVQ programmes. In some GCE A-level subjects, particularly in chemistry, physics, and some modern foreign languages including French and Italian, many students achieve high grades. In some other programmes, for example, business, ICT, leisure and tourism, health and social care, visual and performing arts and media, some humanities subjects and English, the proportion of students achieving high grades is below the national average. In some subject areas, and especially in humanities, few students progress from AS-level studies to GCE A level. Some 57% of GCSE students achieved grades A* to C.

7. The college has made use of three systems to measure students' achievements on level 3 courses against their GCSE point scores. In 2002, a system used in the Borough of Hillingdon and based on the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) statistics was used to compare college students' performance with that of local school pupils. In 2003, the college implemented its own performance reporting system that requires the setting of minimum acceptable grades for students for each subject or course studied. In the same year, the college subscribed to an external independent analysis for evaluation of students' performance in GCE A-level, AS-level and a few

AVCE subjects. In 14 of the 16 GCE A-level subjects analysed, most students achieved higher grades in three subjects than would have been predicted from their GCSE point scores. GCSE entry qualifications attained by students studying GCE A-level subjects have been consistently high over the last three years. Students achieve average point scores which range between 5.0 and 6.2. In AS-level subjects, in 12 of the 20 subjects analysed, students achieved higher grades than would have been predicted from their GCSE point scores. Of the five vocational programmes where data were analysed, students achieved less well in three than would have been predicted by their GCSE results, particularly in business studies.

8. Pass rates in communication and application of number key skills have generally been close to the national average. Pass rates in level 2 IT have fluctuated. Retention rates in key skills programmes at levels 1 and 2 have been over 80% for the three years 2001 to 2003.

9. The standard of students' work was satisfactory in 55% of the level 1 lessons observed. In the better lessons, students develop good personal and vocational skills. In humanities, most students demonstrate confidence in lessons and make valuable contributions in debates. In practical lessons in science, biology and chemistry, students demonstrate effective investigative skills. In performing arts, students are confident performing in front of their fellow students. However, in many full-time business lessons, students do not develop research and analysis skills, or skills that enable them to study on their own or to work in groups. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, students are often unable to make sufficient progress in their lessons and do not develop the competences to work at the speed required in the industry.

10. The average student attendance rate in lessons observed was 76%, at the national average. The highest attendance rates, around 85%, were in humanities and literacy and numeracy. The lowest were in English, languages and communication, ESOL, engineering and health, social care, childcare and public services, where they ranged from only 63% to 73%. In some lessons during the inspection, students' attendance and punctuality were frequently unsatisfactory. Scrutiny of registers by inspectors showed that the pattern of students' attendance seen during the inspection was typical, though in a few areas, attendance was a little lower in some lessons during the inspection than at other times of the year. Registers showed that students' attendance in many tutorials is poor. Students lack punctuality in many lessons. In a few instances, students arrived up to 30 minutes late. For example, in a mid-morning tutorial, only 1 student was present at the beginning of the tutorial; 3 more students arrived after 20 minutes and by half-way through the session, just 7 out of the 16 students on the register were present. Inspectors recorded students arriving significantly late in 69 of the 227 lessons observed (30%) and in some curriculum areas, in almost all lessons. Students' lack of punctuality often significantly disrupted lessons by causing a loss of momentum or breaking the logical flow of the lesson, and because time was lost bringing latecomers up to speed. Explanations had to be repeated and some teachers have to go over ground already covered.

11. Completion rates on modern apprenticeship framework programmes are low. Since 2000, of the 42 students on the advanced modern apprentice programme in engineering, only 2 have achieved the full framework award. In hairdressing, of the seven enrolled on the advanced modern apprenticeship, just three have achieved the full framework award. In the same period, of the 54 foundation modern apprentices enrolled in engineering, only 1 achieved the full framework and only 3 their NVQ. In hairdressing, of the 125 foundation modern apprentices enrolled during the same four-year period, only 8 students have achieved the full framework. The number of students starting on work-based learning programmes is declining. In 2002, the college enrolled only 22 advanced modern apprentices and this figure declined to 11 in 2003. In 2002, 125 students started their foundation modern apprentice programmes. However, at the time of the inspection, less than half that figure had been enrolled.

12. The college has a contract with the Employment Service to offer Job Centre Plus training in mainly ICT and foundation programmes, including training in literacy and numeracy and training for students on ESOL courses. Retention and completion rates are high. Of the 28 clients who started ICT training in 2002, 82% were retained and completed their training satisfactorily. Similarly, of the 128 clients on foundation courses, 78 have been retained and all completed their training successfully. In 2001, the college had 88 clients; in 2002 there were 618 clients. At the time of the inspection, the college had trained a total of 198 clients. In ICT training, clients benefit from well-

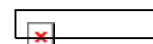
designed and clear workbooks and work well in a workshop environment. Clients organise their files well. Dates for reviewing their progress are planned well in advance. All clients had received an effective assessment of their level of basic skills. However, the employment rate is poor. Of the 28 clients in ICT, only 1 found employment, and of the 128 clients on foundation courses, only 16 have found a job. The overall employment rate for this contract, covering the period 2001 to 2003, is extremely low, at only 7%.

Adult learners

13. In the three years 2001 to 2003, overall pass rates on level 1 courses have been above the national average, rising to almost 20% above the national average. However, retention rates on level 1 courses have declined, though they remain just above the national average. In the same period, pass rates on level 2 courses have been consistently at the national average and retention rates have been consistently above the national average. In the three years 2001 to 2003, both retention and pass rates on level 3 courses have been consistently above the national average. Pass rates in GCSE French, Italian and Spanish are high and the proportion of students who achieve a high grade is significantly above the national average. However, there are areas where the retention and/or pass rates are low. For example, the pass and retention rates on accounting foundation and intermediate courses are consistently below the national average. At the time of the inspection, 20% had low attendance rates or had withdrawn from their courses. Pass rates on IT qualifications are low on some courses being run in community venues and on some beauty therapy courses.

14. Overall, inspectors judged that the standard of adult students' work during lessons was good or better in half of the lessons observed. However, students' attainment specifically in level 3 lessons was judged unsatisfactory in almost a fifth of lessons observed. Adults develop their ICT skills well. They develop good comprehension skills in modern languages and good listening and oral skills in ESOL and literacy and numeracy lessons, though this is often at the expense of developing their reading and writing skills.

Quality of education and training



15. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 227 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 55% of lessons, 33% were satisfactory and 12% were unsatisfactory. This is lower than the average for general FE and tertiary colleges inspected in 2002/03. The grading of learning follows a similar pattern, with 54% good or better, 34% satisfactory and 12% unsatisfactory. At the time of the college's last inspection, undertaken by the FEFC, in 1999, of the 90 lessons observed in that inspection, 58% were good or better, 32% were satisfactory, and 10% were unsatisfactory.

16. The standard of teaching is uneven across the curriculum areas. Teaching is most effective on courses in science and mathematics, humanities and visual and performing arts. The teaching in practical lessons in science and visual and performing arts is particularly good. Some practical lessons in engineering and literacy and numeracy are also good. Teaching is least effective in business, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and English, languages and communication, and 20% of work-based sessions are unsatisfactory. The development of students' key skills is mainly integrated with normal lessons and occurs during group tutorials. The quality of teaching of key skills, and basic skills, is mainly satisfactory. Much teaching of basic skills in ESOL is good.

17. In entry level, level 1 and 2 lessons, where adult students predominate, teaching is significantly better than in lessons where students aged 16 to 18 predominate. It is most marked in level 2 lessons where 68% of lessons for adults were graded good or better, compared with only 47% in lessons for students aged 16 to 18. In level 3 lessons, teaching is significantly better in lessons with students aged 16 to 18 than in those for adults. Only 20% of work-based learning sessions were graded good or better.

18. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan well and share the objectives of the lessons with students. Practical activities for students are well prepared. Teachers give clear introductions to new topics. They develop students' key skills by making them a central part of lessons. Some teachers devise good handouts and other learning resources for students. They enable students to work well in groups and to share confidently the results of their group work. Some teachers are adept at encouraging lively debates in lessons. They ask questions of individual students to check they have understood what was intended, and they give good support to individual students. The pace at which some lessons develop keep students on task and fully occupied.

19. In less successful lessons, there is no clear indication of what students should achieve. There are unstructured starts to lessons and poor questioning from teachers to ascertain what students can recall from earlier lessons. Sometimes, teachers give laboured explanations of concepts or ideas, spend too long introducing topics or spend too much time speaking and giving students little opportunity to engage in discussions. Many classes contain students of varying ability, but teachers do not devise appropriately different methods or materials to meet their different learning needs. Often, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of their students and the pace at which lessons develop is slow, the teaching is dull and students become bored. Teachers fail to check adequately that all students in a lesson have understood what was intended. In some lessons, students spend too long copying notes and more ground could be covered. There is some poor lesson management. Students engage in their own conversations or otherwise fail to participate properly in lessons, and these failings are not always noticed by teachers. Insufficient learning resources also hamper students' learning and progress. Many students are not punctual for lessons, and teachers often do not do enough to challenge students about being late.

20. A total of 70% of permanent teaching staff and around only 40% of agency-supplied teachers have a teaching qualification. Part-time agency teachers teach approximately 15% of the total teaching time at the college. New full-time teachers are scheduled to undertake a one-year or two-year training course, respectively, after they have been appointed as permanent members of staff, normally after six months. Some work-based teachers in engineering do not hold appropriate qualifications. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, some necessarily additional assessors have only recently been appointed. As a result, the assessment of trainees' work and skills has been delayed. In some subject areas, the college has a policy of recruiting people from industry. However, these recruits are not teacher-trained and often will not complete their training for at least two years. Some 8 communication support staff have qualifications in sign language and work effectively with 23 deaf students. Five mandatory training days for all staff are designed to address college priorities. While recent events have focused on, for example, managing student behaviour, retention and pass rates, management development and IT, insufficient emphasis has been placed on improving teaching and learning.

21. Since the last inspection in 1999, the college has made significant improvements to its premises. College buildings on both the Uxbridge and Hayes site are well maintained, attractive and clean. A new four-storey 'Academy' building on the Uxbridge site, built specifically to offer provision for students aged 16 to 18, has a welcoming reception area, and contains the student services area and teaching rooms. There are recreational facilities, sports halls and playing pitches, lounges, restaurants and cafes. There has been significant development at the college's campus at Hayes. The college has become an integral part of the local community services. The college shares the site with a health centre, social services day centre, nursery, fitness and leisure centre, and a youth centre, all of which are surrounded by a new housing estate.

22. An audit was carried out recently to establish the degree to which the college complied with the requirements of the SENDA. The audit demonstrated that most of the college's buildings are accessible to students with impaired mobility or other physical impairments. However, further work has yet to be done. Some teaching rooms, especially in dance, music, photography, hair and beauty and business, are too small for the size of student groups using them. Classrooms, laboratories, workshops and studios are equipped to a high standard. Little student work is displayed in classrooms. As a result, some rooms are dull, and fail to reflect students' interests or the subjects taught. Learning resource centres are welcoming and adequately equipped with books, videos and periodicals. The proportion of high-quality computers available for students' use is satisfactory. Computers are available on open access for students and they can be booked in advance. However,

at lunchtimes, access to the computer facilities is poor because too many students require them at the same time. There is a well-equipped IT training room for teachers. Although the college's intranet and computerised 'virtual learning environments' provide basic information for staff and students, this service is still not yet well developed.

23. Teachers generally use the results of students' initial assessment of their literacy, communication, application of number and IT skills for planning lessons, especially those in which students' key skills are being developed. A few students are unclear about the results of their basic skills tests undertaken when they started at the college, and are unaware of how the results have been used. Students' experiences prior to coming to the college are considered when they enrol, but formal accreditation of their prior learning is not available. Some work-based students gain relevant experience, and work competently, in the workplace. However, teachers on work-based programmes do not include students' workplace achievements in the evidence used for formal assessment and fail to help students be assessed more quickly and so achieve their qualifications earlier.

24. Information about students' achievements and prior learning experiences are entered in their individual learning plans at the start of their courses, and used to set minimum target grades for students to achieve. The procedure for calculating minimum grades is generally understood by students. However, the system is not implemented well by teachers and often the grades identified for students on GCE A2 courses are exactly the same for all students in a group, even though they have achieved different GCSE grades. In some areas, such as humanities, business, and some parts of the ICT area, individual learning plans are completed appropriately, and have both short-term and long term targets for students to achieve. Students' progress is monitored and reviewed each term and, where targets and objectives are clear and measurable, the individual learning plans are generally effective. However, in some areas, such as foundation studies, engineering work-based learning, health and social care, and literacy and numeracy, the plans are ineffective. They have not been completed adequately or on time, or targets in them are vague.

25. The work set for students is appropriate to the level of their courses. Teachers usually mark and return work promptly. There is good assessment of students' work in ICT, humanities and visual and performing arts. However, in work-based learning, in both engineering and hairdressing, there is too little assessment of students in the workplace. Across all areas of learning, teachers' comments on students' written work are often poor, too brief, and fail to give enough guidance to students to help them improve their performance. Some teachers use too much indiscriminate 'ticking' and provide inadequate comment and annotation on written work. Teachers often fail to correct errors in students' spelling, grammar and punctuation. These shortcomings have not been identified through the college's internal verification system, which is designed to enable teachers to compare and check the work they are setting, and their marking. A revised, but too general, internal verification policy is in place. There is too little guidance for teachers about the appropriate stages of verifying marking, and insufficient guidelines for ensuring sufficient examples of students' work are used. Whilst some curriculum areas, such as visual and performing arts, have developed rigorous marking systems, which include effective forms for recording marks, across the college there is much inconsistency in the quality of checking and comparing marking. Some of the forms used for assessors' feedback are unclear and do not promote effective assessment practice. There is little analysis of, and comparison between, the performance of different groups of students.

26. The college offers a wide range of courses. It recently increased the number of full-time and part-time courses. There are courses at level 1 in some curriculum areas, but the majority of provision is at levels 2 and 3. In 2003, 57% of full-time students returned to the college to progress from one level of study to the next. In the same year, 14% of the total student body progressed to higher education (HE). The college has productive links with local communities who speak highly of the college's responsiveness to the community, particularly at Hayes. A few courses, mainly ICT and in vocational areas for speakers of other languages, are offered in venues out in the community. Saturday morning and holiday clubs are run for children, which offer a small number of courses, mainly in numeracy, IT and communication skills. The college works effectively with local schools, special schools and the local education authority, on a number of projects for pupils aged 14 to 16. Some 350 school pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the college to gain vocational education and sometimes experience in the workplace. Retention and pass rates are high on the courses for pupils

aged 14 to 16. Despite the high number of students aged 14 to 18, the college does not yet have an adequate child protection policy.

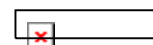
27. Guidance and support for full-time and part-time students are good. In addition to providing informative materials, the college offers advice for potential students in drop-in advice centres on both campuses. The college also offers a programme of information and guidance at community centres and in schools. Induction is well planned, especially for adult students. The college has two 'disability officers' to support students with disabilities.

28. Students' additional learning needs are identified at the start of their courses, and there are effective arrangements for providing additional learning support where it is needed. The college provides effective additional learning support for students both in lessons and in extra-curricular sessions in the learning support centre. There are 18 'learning advocates', allocated across the 9 schools of study, who support sensitively the learning of identified students either individually or in small groups. IT co-ordinators provide an effective support service for students in the learning resource centre. Students with hearing impairments are supported well. A substantial fund for support for students helps over 450 students to attend college, and there are attendance targets to be met by the students.

29. The college's tutorial system is designed mainly to support students' academic progress. While students receive much informal pastoral support, procedures for ensuring that all students receive guidance on health and social welfare are not well established. There is an effective students union, which is represented on the college governing body and on college committees. The union provides information for students about issues such as drugs awareness, sexual health and the promotion of equal opportunities. Advice and guidance on these issues are not offered through the college's tutorial system. The service provided by the students union does not reach students in all parts of the college. Written records of students' personal and learning needs are not in place across all courses. Liaison officers arrange a programme of relevant activities, which includes trips for students and talks by outside speakers. For example, a workshop was arranged on young peoples' rights related to 'Stop and Search' legislation. Tutorial support for part-time and work-based learning students generally meets their needs. The college has good relations with the Connexions service, whose staff have a permanent base in the student support centre. Students receive effective careers guidance, especially related to HE, and the college has established good links with local HE institutions. Tutors inform parents and sponsors appropriately about the progress students are making.

30. The college employs tutorial co-ordinators, one of whose main duties, with teachers, is to identify and deal with students' poor attendance at college. However, in some curriculum areas, such as English, modern languages and communication, and in business, and tutorials in science and mathematics, some registers were not completed correctly. Some students have substantial periods of non-attendance and no action has been taken. Students arrive late to many lessons. While procedures are in place to address this failing, teachers do not apply them thoroughly enough.

Leadership and management



31. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors carry out their statutory duties through well-attended board meetings and an appropriate range of committees, including a student affairs committee. They are appropriately involved in strategic planning. Governors and senior managers provide strong direction for the college. The college's strategic objectives and priorities are clear and disseminated to staff, who generally understand and support them. Managers monitor closely the progress made towards achieving strategic objectives and targets. Senior managers meet groups of students regularly, and curriculum teams are encouraged to have student representatives at their meetings and to speak to focus groups to gain students' views of their experiences at college.

32. The college's organisational structure is clear and understood. Roles are well defined and, with the exception of some newly appointed staff, managers are clear about their responsibilities and accountability. Permanent staff, including the principal, are appraised annually. The process identifies their development and support needs. Hourly paid teachers are not appraised, though their teaching is observed as part of the college's internal observation scheme. Communication in the college is effective. The principal holds regular briefing meetings with staff, and senior managers visit school of study meetings. There are also information sites on the college intranet for staff. Managers try to keep in close contact with their staff and to listen to their views.

33. The college has effective and productive links with its community partners, particularly in Hayes, where the college's second campus is an integral part of a newly built community centre that is highly valued by local community groups. There are good links with schools through which the college provides mainly vocational programmes for students aged 14 to 16. However, there is little collaboration with others regarding students aged 16 to 18 and over. Links with employers are not consistently effective, though they are improving.

34. Managers monitor the college's performance through a range of quality assurance activities. These include course reviews that consider progress against course targets in, for example, students' attendance, retention and pass rates; the outcomes of quality audits, such as lesson observations, internal and external verification of work set for students and marked; and surveys of students' views. However, the quality audits are not consistently effective. For example, as a result of the college's lesson observation system, grades awarded by the college for teaching were higher than those awarded by inspectors. Observers do not always give sufficient attention to students' learning and attainment during observations. The thoroughness of internal verification procedures varies across the college and on some courses internal verification is poor. In health and social care, for example, there is no adequate internal verification and no teacher is qualified as an internal verifier. The college has a well-established quality assessment system. However, the strengths identified in some schools of study self-assessment reports are overstated, and weaknesses, particularly in teaching, learning and attainment, are underestimated. The resultant strategies for improvement are not always adequate. In some schools of study, actions for improvement are not always followed up. The proportion of good or better grades for teaching achieved by the college during the inspection is lower than the national average and slightly lower than in its previous inspection in 1999. The proportion of lessons judged less than satisfactory is higher than the national average and slightly higher than in the previous inspection.

35. The college has a clear training and development plan which is based on the outcomes of lesson observations and staff appraisal. The evaluation of training and development is largely descriptive and does not identify the impact of training on the quality of teaching and learning. The college has a strategy for recruiting teachers who are vocationally well qualified but who may not be teacher-trained. At the time of the inspection, there were 40 such untrained teachers who are permanent staff. Most of the 178 agency-supplied teachers are also untrained. New untrained teachers normally are not placed on teacher training courses until their appointment as full-time teachers has been confirmed, usually after six months, and they are reliant on training events organised in the college. In practice, a number of factors restrict the effectiveness of the events. A large number of agency-supplied teachers do not benefit from them because they cannot attend them. In some schools, staff turnover is high and new teachers have not yet participated in the training. The intention is that untrained teachers are provided with support from mentors and advanced practitioners, who observe their teaching and identify development needs. Training needs are also identified by the teachers themselves or by their line managers as a result of appraisal. However, not all untrained teachers can take advantage of this support. Many have teaching commitments which prevent them attending, and often advanced practitioners are not available when the teachers are.

36. There is good team working, for example, in visual and performing arts, and good overall curriculum management in ICT, humanities and ESOL. Course team and school of study meetings are frequent and generally well attended, though, in some cases agency-supplied teachers cannot attend. Teachers are involved in setting targets for their courses and monitoring progress against them. However, differences in the quality of teaching and learning between schools of study, and in different sections in the same school, indicate insufficient sharing of good practice. In some schools, many managers and teachers are new in post and often this has had an adverse impact on the

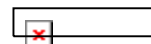
quality of course leadership and co-ordination. The quality of overall curriculum leadership and management varies widely across the college. Overall curriculum management is unsatisfactory in work-based learning provision in engineering, in both college and work-based learning provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy, in English languages and communication, in literacy and numeracy, and in health and social care. Some aspects of course or curriculum management are unsatisfactory in visual and performing arts and business. Inspectors identified staff changes or vacancies at management level that were having an adverse impact on course organisation and management, and ultimately on teaching. In health and social care, the late appointment of course team leaders, high staff turnover and high student enrolment numbers led to the level 3 groups starting fully some five weeks late. In addition, since then there have been inadequate arrangements for temporary covering of lessons. Students who started on the level 3 course in 2003 are not yet performing at the standard required by the course. In business, some students were without a teacher for much of the first term of the academic year 2003/04. There was also, for example, a lack of support for new or untrained staff in literacy and numeracy.

37. College policies and procedures are generally clear and well disseminated. However, new teachers are not always aware of college procedures. Some of the guidance, such as that for the internal verification policy and the assessment procedure, are insufficiently clear and their implementation varies in thoroughness across the schools of study. Teachers do not always comply with registration procedures at the start of lessons. They do not always sign the register after marking it and, for example, in English it is not clear whether long-term absentees have withdrawn from the course.

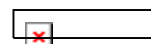
38. The college last updated its equal opportunities policy in 2002, but has since developed policies that meet the requirements of recent equality and diversity legislation. It has a race relations policy that takes account of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and is implementing it effectively. College statistics show that those from black and ethnic minorities are well represented in the student cohort compared with the local population. They are well represented among the staff. Events for students to promote racial harmony are held regularly, though attendance is often low. Governors agreed a disability statement on 31 July 2003 that sets out the college's response to the SENDA. Training days for staff regarding the Act were held in July 2003. An audit was carried out in 2003 to determine the standard of access to buildings for students with physical impairment. An action plan was drawn up to improve the access for such students in order to meet the requirements of the Act. Work has begun, but there is more to do. The college already has provision for more than 300 students aged 14 to 16. Despite its strategic focus on increasing the numbers of students aged 14 to 19, at the time of the inspection, the college had not yet drawn up an adequate child protection policy. A child protection officer has recently been appointed, but at the time of inspection did not have a job description. No staff training on child protection had yet been arranged.

39. The college has clear financial procedures and controls, with which budget-holders generally comply. Governors and senior managers receive monthly reports, which enable them to monitor financial and other key performance. The college has consistently met its funding unit target and other financial targets agreed with the LSC. The college provides value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- consistently high pass and retention rates on most courses, particularly at level 3
- good practical science lessons
- modern, well-equipped laboratories.

Weaknesses

- inadequate learning resources in mathematics
- teachers' insufficient use of IT for teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

40. There is a good range of courses for students aged 16 to 18 from level 1 to level 3. There are over 275 mathematics and science enrolments. The college offers 'pre-GCSE' science and mathematics courses and GCSE mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics courses, as well as AS-level and GCE A2 courses in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. In addition, a small AS-level further mathematics course was introduced in September 2003. Although there is a choice of GCE A-level mathematics modules for students, there are no alternative courses in science, such as human biology or environmental science. The college offers only one evening class in GCSE mathematics, and no vocational science or access course. There is well-planned provision for students who are learning to speak English, to enable them to study science or mathematics as they develop their language skills.

Achievement and standards

41. In 2003, pass rates were well above the national average in AS-level and GCE A2 mathematics, chemistry and physics. In AS-level biology, the pass rate was a little below the national average. Retention rates are mainly high. Students achieve better results than their GCSE points scores might indicate. Pass and retention rates in GCSE mathematics, chemistry, science and physics have been above the national average for the three years 2001 to 2003. However, at the time of the inspection, the in-year retention rates on some GCSE science courses had fallen. In 2003, the pass rate in GCSE biology rose to above the national average. Students' attendance rates in GCE A-level lessons are high, but on the GCSE mathematics evening course, and some other courses, they are low. Students arrive late for many lessons, disrupting the progress being made by those who arrived on time.

42. Many students progress successfully from level 1 science or mathematics courses through to level 3 courses. In biology and chemistry, students' practical skills are good. For example, students handle organic chemicals confidently and use diagnostic tests to identify the functional groups present. They wear appropriate protective clothing and observe correct safety procedures. When students watch demonstrations in physics, they can deduce the results of the experiments. The more able students give good explanations of their observations. Mathematics students' files are

particularly well kept: students provide solutions to problems clearly and well, showing the stages of each calculation. They are also confident in giving explanations of their results to the rest of their class.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE biology	2	No. of starts	58	66	69
		% retention	86	76	86
		% pass rate	38	44	54
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	309	313	199
		% retention	72	75	73
		% pass rate	42	42	56
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	34	45	45
		% retention	74	89	87
		% pass rate	72	90	64
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	36	38	46
		% retention	81	87	89
		% pass rate	83	97	83
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	86	56	67
		% retention	74	77	84
		% pass rate	66	79	73
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	33	27	29
		% retention	76	81	97
		% pass rate	84	86	93

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

Quality of education and training

43. All teaching is at least satisfactory and many lessons, particularly in science, were judged to be good or better. Teachers on chemistry and biology courses devise good practical lessons. For example, biology students studying the physiology of heart function measured blood pressure for individuals of different height and mass, and used the results to evaluate the significance of the range of readings obtained. Software to support learning in biology is becoming increasingly available to students, but IT is rarely used for chemistry and physics teaching. Mathematics teachers generally make good use of traditional methods: they explain solutions carefully then give numerical examples, covering a range of difficulties, to consolidate students' learning. Teachers of GCE A-level mechanics use demonstrations to good effect, for example, on friction or the coefficient of restitution. They encourage students to work in pairs to stimulate their learning. Some teachers are adept at asking students questions that make them think for themselves. For example, in a GCSE mathematics revision lesson, through careful questioning, students were able to explain clearly the difference between a mean and a moving average. There is relevant software for GCSE students to use in the learning resource centre and students can use computerised spreadsheets for coursework on numerical solutions of equations. However, teachers are restricted in the range of methods they can use because they do not have specific IT facilities and software for use in mathematics lessons.

44. In the less successful lessons, teachers do not plan their teaching sufficiently well to meet the

range of students' abilities, and they are not always aware of suitable strategies to help students for whom English is not their first language. The development of students' key skills in lessons is poor. Students are, nonetheless, enthusiastic and committed to their studies, even in some cases where teaching is not inspiring.

45. Teachers and technicians are well qualified and experienced. All teaching rooms in the college's 'Academy' are newly built and attractive, but there is no display on classroom walls related to mathematics and very little to science. Laboratories are well equipped, for example, with a digital microscope, modern balances and a few computers available for use during practical lessons. In contrast, there are no computers or interactive whiteboards in the mathematics teaching rooms. The department does not have the graph drawing software that was designed for the GCE A-level course, and in the absence of computers in the classroom, students can make only limited use of the GCSE software package installed on the college's network when they are in the learning resource centre. Apart from basic equipment for level 1 mathematics, there are few other resources, such as the games designed for teaching algebra.

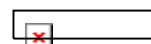
46. Teachers provide parents with comprehensive reports on students' progress each term. Tests are set regularly for students, and teachers compare the results across the groups. Homework is marked promptly. However, teachers give students few written comments to help them improve their performance. Not all teachers keep comprehensive records of homework marks, and in some groups there is insufficient marked work. There are appropriate internal verification procedures for teachers to compare their marking. In a few cases, external assessors from awarding bodies have judged that teachers' marks are generous and needed some adjustment to meet awarding body requirements. The performance of different groups of students is not analysed or compared in order to guide course development or students' choices of modules.

47. Students on science courses benefit from visits to relevant venues, such as to local nature reserves, sand dunes and ponds, and occasional lectures. There are no similar additional activities for students on mathematics courses. Students are given good guidance when enrolling at the college. Their additional learning support needs are identified, but students do not all take up the extra support available. 'Learning advocates' help students well in lessons to develop the reading and writing skills that are necessary for the study of science. Students receive good careers advice and guidance. Regular review of students' attendance and punctuality is improving attendance on most courses, but attendance at tutorials remains poor.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Provision in biology and mathematics is well managed, but as yet, effective leadership has not been extended to chemistry and physics. Lesson observations are undertaken and provide teachers with some useful feedback, but the system lacks clear criteria for assessing the quality of students' learning during lessons. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers are sensitive to equal opportunities issues. However, they have not received professional development to enable them to devise teaching methods to meet the needs of students who are speakers of other languages. The need for monitoring and comparing the progress and achievement of different groups of students has not been adequately addressed.

Engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on some courses
- very good on-the-job training for students
- effective individual support for students from teachers and tutors
- particularly good resources.

Weaknesses

- poor framework achievement on modern apprenticeship programmes
- failure of teachers to pay sufficient attention to students' varying abilities
- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- inconsistently rigorous approach to health and safety practice
- unsatisfactory management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

49. The college offers a wide range of engineering courses, which includes full-time, part-time, evening and work-based learning provision. Courses range from foundation level to level 4. There are motor vehicle, mechanical engineering, electrical installation, electronics, security systems and computer maintenance courses. At the time of the inspection, 855 students were enrolled on engineering programmes, of which 367 were aged 16 to 18 and 488 aged 19 or over. There were 273 students aged 16 to 18, and 84 students aged 19 or older, on full-time courses. A total of 93 part-time students were aged 16 to 18 and 404 aged 19 or more. The college also offers programmes for pupils aged 14 to 16 attending the college, and a foundation programme in engineering for speakers of other languages. Modern apprenticeship programmes are provided at foundation and advanced levels. There are 35 learners at foundation level and 22 are on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. There is a wide range of engineering courses.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates are high on the national certificate course in engineering. The pass rate for this qualification was 91% in 2001 and 92% in 2003. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory overall across the provision, and rates on most courses are at, or above, the national average. The retention rate on the City and Guilds course has been 100% for the three years 2001 to 2003. In 2003, the retention rates on the electrical installation competencies (part 1) and GNVQ engineering courses were below the national average.

51. Students' achievement of the complete framework qualification on the modern apprenticeship courses is poor. Of the 30 students on the foundation course in 2000, only 8 were retained and just 1 achieved the qualification. Of the 23 students on the advanced course who started their studies in the academic year 2000/01, only 2 have completed the framework and 5 still remain in training.

52. Students are not punctual to lessons and the student attendance rate is low across the engineering courses. In five of the lessons observed, the attendance was below 60%, and in one lesson only 4 out of 12 students were present at the start of the lesson, the number rising only to 6. The average attendance in all lessons observed was 72%, which is below the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 2360-01 electrical installation competences (part 1)	1	No. of starts	21	55	68
		% retention	71	62	47
		% pass rate	80	88	66
City and Guilds 6956 progression award in motor vehicle studies	1	No. of starts	35	34	*
		% retention	74	91	*
		% pass rate	50	48	*
GNVQ intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	32	30	36
		% retention	53	12	72
		% pass rate	808	83	75
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	34	23	40
		% retention	82	61	63
		% pass rate	82	64	76
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	23	**	17
		% retention	48	**	76
		% pass rate	91	**	92

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

* inconclusive figures

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

53. Most teaching is satisfactory and some is better. Teachers plan and structure most lessons appropriately. Teaching is good in practical lessons where teachers provide effective individual support for students. Teachers help students effectively to work out solutions to problems. For example, in motor vehicle lessons, students regularly diagnose problems, find solutions with the help of the teacher's support, and then carry out the appropriate repairs. Students enjoy tackling issues

themselves and are also keen to ask further questions.

54. In the less effective lessons, teachers employ a narrow range of methods, and sometimes dominate the lessons by talking for too long so that students remain uninvolved. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to, or devise materials and methods for, the sometimes wide range of abilities of students in their lessons. Often, teachers do not assess sufficiently how much students have learned during theory lessons. Students' behaviour is generally good. However, latecomers often cause disruption. Students' lack of punctuality interrupts teaching; teachers have to ensure that the latecomers catch up with the rest of the class and the learning of other students is disrupted.

55. Much of the accommodation and general resources are good. Classrooms in the new technology centre are light, spacious and well furnished; many are equipped with appropriate teaching technology. There is also a computer-aided learning suite containing custom-built systems to help students' learning in motor vehicle and engineering technology courses. However, there is little use of ILT in many lessons. Some teaching is conducted in huts. The accommodation is poor and provides an unsuitable learning environment. Some of the rooms are too small for the large size of classes using them, classroom management is made difficult, and the overcrowding impedes the extent to which teachers can check the learning of all the students in the room. There are deficiencies in implementing health and safety requirements. For example, in one lesson, two groups of students were in the same workshop; while one group wore full protective clothing, the other group wore overalls, but no safety footwear.

56. Most teachers are well qualified and six have higher degrees. Most teachers possess recognised teaching qualifications. However, few teachers have assessor qualifications and only two have achieved internal verifier awards. This is insufficient for the range of provision, the number of courses and the students on them. The college has difficulty in recruiting permanent, well-qualified and experienced staff. Only one third of the teachers are full-time staff. The college relies heavily on part-time, contracted and agency staff. There have been frequent changes of teacher on the national certificate course, and students have noted a loss of continuity in teaching.

57. Teachers monitor and record students' marks satisfactorily. Their written feedback on students' completed assignments, however, is limited to single comments and does not provide adequate guidance for students to improve their performance. Teachers pay insufficient attention to errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation in students' work.

58. On-the-job training for students is good. Several companies understand well the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. Students are given every opportunity to be assessed, and the planning of the assessments is monitored well by company assessors and mentors. This work is well supported by a college internal verifier. However, there is often inadequate planning of off-the-job training. For example, some employers provide an extensive range of work experience, which enables students to gather a broad range of evidence of having successfully developed or used wide range of competences. None of this is recorded by college staff during students' reviews and the competences are not recognised for assessment purposes.

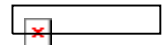
59. Students receive good individual support from teachers and tutors. Learning advocates provide good support both in and out of the classroom. Initial advice and guidance for students are satisfactory. Most students are placed on appropriate courses.

60. Teachers do not make effective use of students' individual learning plans. Many plans do not have targets which include specific time limits for the completion of actions or tasks. Tutors often cite action to be taken that is often only a description of ongoing activities, without setting targets relating to specific performance that needs improving. Students do not understand the purpose of individual learning plans. Individual learning plans for work-based students are unsatisfactory and the monitoring of progress is inadequate. Employers and in-company assessors are not always involved with the setting of short-term targets for these students.

Leadership and management

61. There have been some significant developments in the leadership and management of the curriculum area as a whole, but it is too soon to evaluate their effectiveness. Lesson plans and schemes of work are satisfactory overall. Equal opportunities are well promoted. Teaching materials contain no discriminatory content and the proportion of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds reflects the composition of the college's student population. The self-assessment report is comprehensive. However, there is little evidence that course teams have a significant input to its content. Some of the strengths contained in the report are overstated and some weaknesses are either overlooked or underemphasised. The approach to health and safety practice is not consistently rigorous. Internal verification procedures for teachers to compare their marking of students' work are inadequate. On one course, there has been no internal verification of marking. The management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory.

Business



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

Strengths

- good development of IT skills by students on administration courses
- broad range of provision and good progression rates on some courses.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in business and AS-level business studies
- much poor teaching
- full-time students' insufficient awareness of business practices
- students' lack of punctuality.

Scope of provision

62. Full-time business courses are offered at AS level and GCE A level, AVCE and GNVQ intermediate. These courses are based in the 'Academy' and almost 200 students are enrolled on courses in this provision. In the school of business, office skills courses are provided at levels 1 and

2 and students can select a number of additional IT modules at various levels. There is a legal secretaries' certificate and an NVQ in administration, including a small provision for work-based learners. There is a wide range of part-time provision for adult students, and courses are held at times which suit students' work and personal circumstances. NVQ accounting courses at levels 2, 3 and 4 are also offered at various times, full time or part time, and there is a full-time course at the college's site in Hayes. More than 200 students are working towards these qualifications. In accounting, the needs of students from minority ethnic groups are met by providing a full-time Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) course that includes specific provision for speakers of other languages. There are part-time management courses in management studies, personnel management and marketing. The college offers an access to business course for adults, and a part-time AS-level business studies evening course. Overall, a total of 647 students are enrolled in the business, administration and accounting area of provision.

Achievement and standards

63. Pass rates on AS-level business studies, AVCE business and GNVQ intermediate business courses are low, and significantly below national average. Retention rates are high on the IT single subject modules. Retention rates of work-based learners in administration and accounting are poor.

64. On a few courses, students' attainment is good. The standard of students' work in administration, legal secretarial and office skills courses is high. Students demonstrate good use of a number of software packages and produce accurate and well-displayed work. AS-level business students are able to extract and analyse information and data to determine the styles of leadership. Students on the certificate in personnel practice confidently prepare and carry out recruitment interviews. Assignments for students on vocational business courses require students to exercise a variety of skills. However, students do not always carry out their research thoroughly or execute their tasks appropriately, and some of their completed assignments are marred by low standards of written English. Students fail to prepare their work adequately for lessons.

65. Many students are late for lessons. Teachers have to go over ground already covered and the lessons are disrupted. The attainment of students in vocational business lessons is often poor.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Audio transcription	1	No. of starts	40	51	59
		% retention	93	84	90
		% pass rate	75	58	77
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	73	51	58
		% retention	67	73	66
		% pass rate	43	22	45
AAT foundation accounting	2	No. of starts	71	71	124
		% retention	61	80	71
		% pass rate	70	79	65
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	69	68	87
		% retention	90	93	91
		% pass rate	84	90	61
AVCE double award (formerly GNVQ advanced in 2001)	3	No. of starts	149	77	54
		% retention	68	49	78
		% pass rate	72	55	45

Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	32	37	34
		% retention	97	92	88
		% pass rate	97	97	97

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

Quality of education and training

66. Teaching is good in a few lessons. The pace at which topics are introduced and developed is brisk. Teachers set demanding learning goals for students and students endeavour to meet these expectations. Learning is developed in a logical sequence and encouragement is given to students to analyse and apply knowledge, and evaluate their conclusions. Teachers are skilful in encouraging students to respond to questions. In the better lessons, students are confident in testing ideas and applying earlier knowledge to new situations. In one lesson, for example, students were grappling with the concept of empowerment in industrial relations. They were able to move from a definition of the concept to presenting examples of empowerment which enabled organisations to bring about improvements. In the weaker lessons, lecturers place little emphasis on the process of learning. Few demands are made on students. They are given a great deal of information, but are not expected or enabled to use it appropriately or think about it. Few opportunities are given to students to test their understanding and put new learning into practice. Their rate of learning is often slow and provides no opportunity for more able students to demonstrate that they can take their learning further. Teachers have not devised methods or materials to meet the needs of students of varying ability. More able students are left to talk among themselves while others, who take longer, complete the work. Teaching methods fail to stimulate students and they soon become bored. Questions are put to students which often require just one-word answers and do not encourage students to think for themselves. Material is often presented in a way that makes it uninteresting for students and they struggle to understand it or its relevance. In many lessons, students' understanding is not checked by teachers. Students in a vocational business lesson produced inaccurate results when working on a task. The incorrect results were overlooked by the teacher and continued to be used in later tasks, perpetuating the error throughout the assignment. Teachers do not provide full-time students with examples of commercial realism or enable them to understand modern working practices of business, and many students are unable adequately to convert theoretical concepts into examples of actual business practice.

67. Teaching accommodation used by business students provides a pleasant working environment, although some rooms are too small for the size of groups using them. Access to computers is good for students on administration courses, though the noisy environment sometimes distracts students during lessons. Rooms used by vocational business students do not have interactive whiteboards or direct access to the college's intranet or the Internet. This restricts the range of activities that students can undertake in some lessons. The college does not have a realistic business working office for students on NVQ administration or secretarial courses. There is a shortage of suitably qualified staff in some areas. As a result, some of the class sizes are large and the amount of support that teachers can give to individuals during lessons is often insufficient.

68. Internal verification procedures in the accounting and administration areas are rigorous. Marking of assignments is thorough. Feedback from staff is often helpful to students and indicates how they are performing, though some teachers' comments are brief and do not always include points to enable students to improve their work. Students' errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always identified for them. On administration courses, the emphasis in assignments is on meeting the needs of examination and external assessment requirements and less attention is paid to other methods of assessment that help students to develop their potential. Outcomes of assessments are used to plan individual students' next targets.

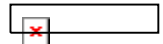
69. Academic support for students in lessons and through the monitoring of individual learning plans is satisfactory. Students needing help with English because they are speakers of other languages value the help they receive during lessons. Students do not take the tutorial system seriously and attendance is low. Systems for monitoring students' punctuality and attendance are not rigorously or

consistently applied by lecturers.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management in the business area overall are satisfactory. A number of changes are planned by new managers; they are at an early stage of implementation and it is too soon to gauge their effectiveness. Course reviews and subsequent setting of targets for improvement are managed competently by course teams. The ethos of team working is being strengthened by the new managers and recently appointed staff. Some aspects of management are not satisfactory. Although course reviews are mainly thorough, the grades awarded for teaching as a result of the college's internal observation scheme appear to be generous. Staff development needs identified through the quality processes are met by the college. Joint planning does not take place and resources are not shared. Staff turnover has disrupted students' learning. An evening group did not have a teacher for several weeks and is not on target to complete the syllabus in time for the examination.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 3

- good retention on City and Guilds and GCE A-level ICT courses

- wide range of courses

- good assessment of students' work.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on the ECDL course

- insufficiently clear lesson objectives

- insufficient opportunity for students to gain knowledge of commercial computing

- students' lack of punctuality.

Scope of provision

71. ICT courses are managed by four departments in the college. The college offers a range of courses for full-time students, which include GCSE in IT, AS level and GCE A level in computing, AS level and GCE A level in ICT, GNVQ intermediate in ICT, three versions of the national diploma for IT practitioners, access to computing, access to e-commerce and a range of City and Guilds e-qualifications. There are also level 4 courses available. Part-time courses are offered at entry level and at levels 1 to 3, both in the college and at venues out in the local community. Evening courses include web-page design and programming in 'C++' and in Java. The college also offers day-time and evening courses in computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and City and Guilds 'e-qualifications'. There are 406 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 285 students aged 19 or over enrolled on courses in this area. In addition, there are 162 part-time students, mostly aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

72. Pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults are high. For example, pass rates on the GCE A-level ICT and GCE A-level computing courses are high, and in 2003 a high proportion of the students achieved high grades, grades A and B. Pass rates on the national diploma in computing course have been consistently high over the three years 2001 to 2003. In 2003, however, pass rates for adults on all versions of ECDL were low. Pass rates on the AS-level ICT course are declining. The proportion of high grades on both of the AS-level courses is declining and is below the national average. Retention rates are high on the City and Guilds and GCE A level in ICT courses. In 2003, they were below the national average on the GNVQ intermediate course in IT and the national certificate in computer studies courses, and around the national average on the GCSE IT course. The college offers 'return to study' courses at entry level, which include mathematics, English and IT at level 2. All full-time students on courses below level 3 study mathematics in addition to their main course and all programmes include the development of key skills.

73. Students' attainment is satisfactory. Students develop skills quickly in the use of computers and industry-standard software. For example, students develop valuable skills by assembling computers, connecting them together in a network and installing the correct software to enable users to access the system.

74. Students are not punctual to a substantial number of lessons. Lessons are disrupted and teachers often have to go over ground already covered, frustrating the learning of those who arrive on time. The proportion of full-time students who progress to HE is declining. In 2003, 20% of full-time students progressed to HE, compared with 25% in 2001.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
CLAIT stage 1 (short)	1	No. of starts	214	406	321
		% retention	100	97	90
		% pass rate	70	72	*
ECDL (1 year)	2	No. of starts	28	36	115

		% retention	100	56	83
		% pass rate	36	70	53
GNVQ intermediate in IT	2	No. of starts	122	123	132
		% retention	80	76	76
		% pass rate	80	72	69
AS-level ICT (1 year)	3	No. of starts	91	66	73
		% retention	76	82	75
		% pass rate	88	78	71
GCE A-level ICT (1 year)	3	No. of starts	**	25	21
		% retention	**	96	100
		% pass rate	**	96	100
National diploma in computing (2 year)	3	No. of starts	116	124	181
		% retention	65	73	76
		% pass rate	91	98	96

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

*inconclusive data

**course did not run

Quality of education and training

75. Teaching overall is mainly satisfactory or good, though some teaching is unsatisfactory. In the effective lessons, teachers have detailed and well-produced schemes of work and plan lessons well. They make clear references to how students' key skills will be developed and how the teaching methods and materials will meet students' ways of learning. Teachers include activities for students of different abilities and they give good support to individual students during practical lessons. Many of the theory lessons are good. Teachers plan these lessons well and use an appropriate variety of activities which enable all students to reach their potential. They make good use of projection equipment to illustrate the finer points of programming techniques, or the features of website design, and then encourage students to practise and demonstrate their learning. Students explain to the class the results of their exercises and practical work with confidence. In one lesson, the teacher used group work, role-play and simulation well to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of batch processing compared to real-time processing in a payroll system. The teacher made students give clear explanations of their workings and group decisions and asked pertinent questions of them in order to help them develop coherent arguments.

76. The objectives of some lessons are unclear and lesson plans do not set out what students should have learned by the end of the lesson. In the less effective lessons, teachers fail to match their lesson objectives, methods or materials to students' abilities. There are too few lessons in which students are inspired, or challenged to extend the boundaries of their knowledge. Often, teachers do not manage lessons well and fail to enable students to make the best use of their time. Teachers do not manage group work well, and allow unproductive discussion among students to continue unchallenged. Some teachers lack suitable experience or teaching technique to encourage effective learning.

77. Teaching rooms are good and contain modern computers and up-to-date software. However, in some classrooms, not all the computers are functional. Often, there are insufficient computers for the number of students in the classroom. Resources are, however, adequate for small computer courses at venues in the community, though some of the computers at these venues have old versions of software. Tutors have constantly to adapt their teaching materials for students using these

computers. Access to computers is good for students with restricted mobility and each learning centre has equipment to assist those with visual or hearing impairments. The learning resource centre has a good range of computing books and periodicals. Although there are some good learning resources, students on vocational programmes have insufficient opportunity to gain knowledge of computing as it is used in business and industry. Visits to business or industry are not arranged, and visiting professionals from the IT industry are not brought to the college to speak to students. Students have insufficient opportunity to learn about aspects of commercial computing.

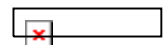
78. Teachers plan the assessment of students' work well, and students know the dates by which they should complete their assignments. Teachers design relevant assignments which reflect commercial computing practice. The major assignments set out clearly the criteria used for grading. However, there is sometimes less clarity in the grading criteria for shorter exercises. Internal verification procedures for teachers to compare their marking are satisfactory and actions arising from external verifiers' visits are dealt with promptly. Students undertake a thorough test to identify their literacy, numeracy and IT skills. The results are used to organise any additional learning support that might be necessary. Tutors monitor students' progress closely. They use a computer-based system to record each student's effort in class, course, homework and assignment grades. Additionally, tutors review and revise regularly the target grades that have been set for students.

79. Overall guidance and support for students are appropriate. Tutors provide good personal support. Students demonstrate good awareness of the support services offered by the college. Group tutorials are not always effective. Students who are at risk of leaving college before the end of their course, or who are making poor progress, are contacted promptly by a tutorial co-ordinator. Students have individual learning plans, which are intended to be used by tutors to monitor students' progress. However, learning and other targets on these plans are sometimes vague and are not measurable and are of restricted value to students. Although tutors monitor students' attendance, significant improvements have yet to be made.

Leadership and management

80. The management of the area is good. As a result of a recent reorganisation, some key areas of the work have been combined into one school of study. Course team leaders undertake annual course reviews and devise appropriate action plans. The college operates a system of observing teaching and learning. Most teachers in this area have been observed and, where weaknesses are identified, teachers receive support. There is a staff development programme, but it contains few opportunities for teachers to update their commercial or industrial experience. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are well represented in all subjects. However, there are few women students on most full-time courses.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



Overall provision in this area is **Unsatisfactory**. Work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

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

Strengths

- effective training in the workplace for work-based learners

- good standard of students' written work

- high pass rates in NVQ hairdressing at levels 1 and 2

- effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates on many courses

- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework

- much unsatisfactory teaching

- insufficiently realistic working environment for students

- too few opportunities to assess students' practical skills

- unsatisfactory management.

Scope of provision

81. There are 143 students aged 16 to 18 and 111 students aged 19 or over on full-time courses. The full-time courses include beauty therapy courses NVQ at levels 2 and 3, hairdressing NVQ courses at levels 1 and 2 and the diploma in hairdressing, which is a level 3 course. Students on NVQ level 2 courses may also pursue the customer service certificate. On part-time courses, there are 44 students aged 16 to 18 and 224 students aged 19 or over. The college offers a range of related courses, such as in anatomy and physiology, reflexology, sports massage, body massage, cosmetic make-up, aromatherapy, facials, manicure and pedicure, nail technology, waxing, Indian head massage and holistic massage. There is also a level 2 course in hairdressing and the specialist award in advanced barbering. Short courses, such as threading and Indian bridal long hair styling, make-up, bindi, and henna are also available. The number of students enrolled on most courses in this area is declining. Pupils aged 14 to 16 from 8 local schools participate in programmes, including English for speakers of other languages, leading to NVQ level 1 in hairdressing.

82. There are 51 foundation modern apprentices, employed in 27 salons, who attend the college on at various times on various days. One employer is qualified to assess employees' work and there are five college staff who visit the salons to carry out reviews and assessment of employees' work. The

range of evening and weekend courses offered meets the diverse needs of the local community.

Achievement and standards

83. Retention rates are consistently high on hairdressing NVQ level 1 and level 2 courses. Retention rates in body massage were above the national average in 2002 and 2003. Pass rates on manicure and pedicure courses were at, or above, the national average in 2002 and 2003. There are low and declining pass rates on hairdressing courses at levels 1 and 2, and on the beauty therapy NVQ level 2 and body massage courses.

84. Pass rates on the modern apprentice framework are poor. Between 1999 and 2003, there have been 155 students on foundation modern apprenticeship courses, of whom only 8 have achieved the full framework. Only 3 out of the 10 advanced modern apprentices have achieved the framework. However, work-based learners make good progress in salons. Their practical skills are well developed and some have their own clients. The student attendance rate and punctuality in lessons are satisfactory.

85. Most students demonstrate some good practical skills. In a level 2 NVQ lesson, students demonstrated good knowledge of colouring techniques and client care. The work of students' aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory. The quality of students' written work is generally good. Most students make good use of IT.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	1	No. of starts	74	97	73
		% retention	89	81	79
		% pass rate	73	91	86
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	2	No. of starts	30	117	78
		% retention	60	79	77
		% pass rate	50	88	60
NVQ beauty therapy (1 year)	2	No. of starts	52	36	34
		% retention	63	78	71
		% pass rate	45	82	79
NVQ hairdressing (two years)	2	No. of starts	71	28	20
		% retention	51	64	65
		% pass rate	89	72	69
Manicure and pedicure certificate	2	No. of starts	*	57	50
		% retention	*	89	88
		% pass rate	*	80	95
Body massage certificate (1 year)	3	No. of starts	28	34	29
		% retention	79	88	83
		% pass rate	68	80	63

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

86. There is good training in the workplace for modern apprentices, who enjoy working in the salons. Some additional training, such as training in products by manufacturers, is provided in salons, and students can observe good standards of practical work. Most students develop effective practical skills. Employers develop their staff well. In the college, in the better lessons, teachers plan lessons effectively, they teach enthusiastically and succeed in motivating students to learn. Students in a lesson on anatomy and physiology gave clear presentations on the different types of bone in the skeletal system, which promoted good class discussion. In an NVQ level 2 hairdressing lesson, students performed advanced colouring techniques, drawing effectively on knowledge gained in earlier lessons. Teachers make the development of students' key skills a central part of lessons and students understand their relevance.

87. In the poorer lessons, some teaching is dull, and there is insufficient variety of activity during practical lessons to hold students' attention and interest. Teachers have insufficiently high expectations of students and do not provide tasks that challenge students to extend their abilities. There is often insufficient realistic practical work for students to do and students chat among themselves for most of the time. Some lessons are poorly planned and students spend too much time sorting their portfolios and not enough time building their practical skills. Often, students are left to choose either to practise skills on their fellow students or work on portfolios because there is not enough for them to do. Teachers and students depend on clients to enable students to practise appropriate skills, under supervision. Teachers do not prepare contingency lesson plans to deal with instances when too few clients arrive for hairdressing or beauty therapy services. This failing leads to a narrow range of activities for students to engage in, they do not develop appropriate learning skills sufficiently, and some students become bored.

88. Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate, current, industrial experience. The college has recently built new specialist accommodation to provide students with modern salons. However, many aspects of the accommodation and other resources are unsatisfactory. In hairdressing, the open plan salon is divided into three small areas. One is small and overcrowded because of the size of classes. Personal belongings are left on the floor, cluttering the area and impeding safe thoroughfare. In some lessons, students have to sit around a corner, out of direct sight from the teacher, because the number of students is too large for the area. Clients arriving at the salon exacerbate the cramped conditions. Staff and students have to walk through the salon to the dispensary in order to fetch products. Lessons taking place are significantly disrupted as staff and students walk through. When all three open-plan areas of the salon are in use, there is a high level of noise and teachers have to raise their voices during demonstrations in order to be heard. Some ESOL students have difficulty hearing and understanding what is being said. Hairdressing and beauty therapy students complain of the lack of resources to carry out treatments. During evening classes, there is no member of staff to oversee the dispensary and control the stock.

89. Although the salon is bright and modern, there are insufficient clients wanting to avail themselves of the hairdressing or beauty therapy services, and students do not have enough experience of a realistic working environment at college. Students are not able to develop skills of working at industrial speeds or the interpersonal skills required by the industry. There are not always enough learning resources for students. For example, in a practical hairdressing lesson, the teacher had planned that students would work on demonstration block heads with long hair in order to practise plaiting techniques, but there were insufficient blocks for each student to carry out the activity. Students had to stand and wait, or watch others working. There are eight beds in the beauty salons, but often twice as many students. Students do not gain enough practise in working on clients because they have to keep taking turns.

90. The documentation for recording students' work, and the internal verification system to check teachers' marking, are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient assessment of modern apprentices' efforts in the workplace, which has adversely affected their progress towards completing units of their NVQ course. There is also insufficient assessment of students' practical work in college because there are insufficient clients for students to work on. In addition, all students pursuing a level 3 NVQ have to spend a year on the level 3 'diploma progression course'. Some who are on the progression course already work in hairdressing salons during the week and have their own clients. However, these students have to be assessed in the college, where there are insufficient resources and a shortage of appropriate clients. The deficiencies in the college prevent

such students from having their work assessed in a real working situation. There is no provision for students to have their work assessed on their employers' premises, even where their employers have qualified assessors based in their salons, and this restriction prevents students from achieving the qualification in less than two years.

91. There is satisfactory documentation for monitoring students' progress. However, targets set for students depend on the number of clients available and targets often are not met. Learning targets for work-based students are inadequate. Students are given short-term targets that are not sufficiently detailed. For example, students are set targets for achieving whole units of the NVQ, but there is no account of particular tasks to be completed in order to achieve the whole unit. Most students are unclear about their targets and the dates for their achievement. Students in college and in the workplace are not sufficiently involved in the planning of their learning. There are no long-term targets on work-based students' individual learning plans, and neither employers nor students are able to determine students' progress.

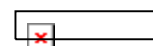
92. All full-time students have a period of industrial experience and part-time students are encouraged to gain work experience, but they are not assessed at the workplace. Some students' relevant prior knowledge and experience are not taken into account when they enrol. For example, students with extensive experience of working in salons and who are capable of embarking on a level 3 NVQ course in hairdressing, are enrolled instead on the level 3 `diploma progression course' and they have to take an extra year to achieve the NVQ.

93. Students undertake an initial screening test of, among other things, their literacy and numeracy skills, and where additional learning support is needed, it is provided. Students receive good support to help them develop literacy and numeracy skills. There is also good support for students with specific learning or physical needs, such as those with dyslexia or hearing impairment. Students are aware of the range of pastoral support available and appreciate the informal help offered by staff.

Leadership and management

94. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Teachers are working hard to try to improve student attendance and retention rates. However, the management of resources is ineffective. There is insufficient action to improve the opportunities for students to have practical competences assessed in college salons. The setting of targets for students is unsatisfactory. Self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous. The grades for teaching awarded as a result of inspection are well below the national average. New teachers are allocated to a mentor. However, the system for mentoring new teachers places insufficient attention on their teaching methods and classroom management. There is not enough assessment of modern apprentices' work in the workplace. The number of workplace assessors has been increased, but it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this development. There have been recent staff and management changes in the section and, at the time of the inspection, the head of the area had been in post for only a few weeks.

Health and social care and childcare and public services



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

Contributory grade in childcare and public services is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- effective work experience for students on childcare courses

- good pass rates on the AVCE health and social care courses
- good student progression to related employment or HE
- effective learning support for students with additional learning needs.

Weaknesses

- retention rates below national average on many courses
- low pass rates on level 3 childcare and public services courses in 2003
- poor internal verification arrangements in health and social care
- students' poor progress in AVCE health and social care
- unsatisfactory management of health and social care
- insufficiently clear learning objectives
- overall inadequate marking of students' work.

Scope of provision

95. The college offers a broad range of full-time courses in health and social care, childcare and public services studies, some from entry level to level 4. A total 244 full-time students are enrolled on health and social care courses. The full-time provision includes foundation and intermediate level GNVQ courses, an AVCE course in health and social care, a level 4 foundation degree course in care management, and access to nursing and health studies programmes for adults. The college also offers an entry level course for students who are speakers of other languages and for school pupils aged 14 to 16. There are 27 students aged 14 to 16 enrolled on the GCSE double award course in health and social care. There are 126 full-time and 43 part-time students pursuing

qualifications in childcare. The college offers childcare and early years courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. The diploma in childcare and education is also available as a part-time evening course. Related short courses in first aid, sign language and food hygiene are also available. The college offers a first diploma and national diploma course in public services and a total of 62 students are enrolled on these courses. There is little part-time provision.

Achievement and standards

96. While pass rates on the certificate and the level 3 course in health and social care have been high, the pass rates on the two AVCE unit tests taken by first-year students in January 2004 were some 10% below the national average in one unit and only 1 student out of 49 passed the other unit. Students' performance in one of the second-year unit tests was also poor. The pass rate on the foundation GNVQ course in health and social care fell from 94% in 2002 to 85%, but remains at the national average. The pass rates on the diploma course in childcare and education have fluctuated widely in the three years 2001 to 2003, and in 2003 the pass rate fell 39% to just 47%, some 40 % below the national average. In 2003, six students completed the national diploma in public services course and just three achieved the qualification. There is a high retention rate on the single award AVCE in health and social care, but retention rates have declined on most other courses. For example, in 2003, the retention rate on the foundation GNVQ course in health and social care fell by nine percentage points, and on the intermediate GNVQ course, although having risen, in the three years 2001 to 2003 remained below the national average. On the certificate and the diploma in childcare and education, retention rates fell to below the national average. Retention rates on the first diploma in public services have fallen consistently over the three years 2001 to 2003; in 2002 the retention rate fell to below the national average and in 2003 it fell further below it.

97. Students in the majority of lessons work effectively in groups or in pairs, and are able to discuss topical issues and present their views to their classmates. In some childcare lessons, students are able to gather relevant information effectively from books, articles and the Internet. Some are beginning to learn sign language.

98. Of the students who complete their courses, many progress successfully to related employment or higher level studies. However, at the time of the inspection, only 63% of students on the one-year single award AVCE in health and social care had been retained in the second year of study. The student attendance rate in lessons observed is below the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation in health and social care	1	No. of starts	16	19	36
		% retention	69	84	75
		% pass rate	82	94	85
Intermediate GNVQ in health and social care	2	No. of starts	22	46	43
		% retention	68	76	74
		% pass rate	73	91	84
First diploma in public services	2	No. of starts	**	17	30
		% retention	**	71	63
		% pass rate	**	100	89
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	16	26	34
		% retention	69	88	71
		% pass rate	82	91	96

AVCE in health and social care (first year and second year single units)	3	No. of starts	17	36	27
		% retention	88	81	89
		% pass rate	67	93	92
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	*	21	25
		% retention	*	100	60
		% pass rate	*	86	47

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

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

99. Lesson plans are appropriate for most courses, more so in childcare and early years. 'Group profiles', which indicate the learning needs of students in each group, are made available to all teachers and generally are used to influence the teaching and learning activities in lessons. In the successful lessons, teachers draw effectively on their professional experience to ensure that students can relate their learning to realistic practice. In a childcare lesson on the importance of rest and sleep for young children, the teacher led a useful discussion on ways of ensuring adequate rest for children in a busy day nursery. Students contributed well to the discussion. There are productive relationships between the teachers on childcare courses and staff in the college's nursery, which enable students to have useful experience in a realistic setting.

100. Not all lessons are well planned or managed. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not identify what students should achieve by the end of the lessons, and neither teachers nor students are able to judge how far they have met their learning objectives. A few teachers spend too much time dictating notes for students, or dominating discussions. In some lessons, teachers fail to check carefully whether students have understood what was intended. Some teachers do not ask sufficiently searching questions of students to ensure they are thinking for themselves. Some do not question specific students; they put questions to the whole class, the same students answer and the remainder of the class is not involved.

101. On childcare courses, work placements for students are well organised and students on work experience are monitored carefully. There are comprehensive and well-presented placement handbooks for employers, which are discussed fully with them. Students on the access to nursing course are required to go out to work experience placements, but these placements are not organised by the college and students are not routinely visited by college staff while they on the work placements to check the adequacy or scope of the students' experiences. Although the prospectus states that work experience for AVCE students is mandatory, no work placement has been organised for students in the academic year 2003/04. Students have been given time to visit care services providers to complete a short project. There was insufficient briefing for students prior to embarking on the task. The task is intended to enable students to use their findings for formal assessment. However, it is insufficiently thorough and does not meet the requirements of the course unit being studied.

102. Classrooms are spacious and clean, but there are few displays in them to provide examples of, or establish, an appropriate vocational setting for students. There is a craft room at the college's Hayes site, which provides resources for childcare students, but few other learning resources are available for health and social care or childcare students to help them to develop practical skills. Teachers' written feedback to students on their work is often inadequate to help students to improve their performance. Teachers do not routinely correct students' errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Some students have handed in written work and have not had it returned. Some have done work and subsequently were told it was unnecessary. At the time of the inspection, only three students in an AVCE group had yet completed the portfolio unit for the first semester, the teachers responsible for the unit had left the college, the work had not been marked, and no formative feedback had been given to students. The AVCE single award course did not begin properly until

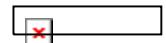
some five weeks after the start of the autumn term. There have been many changes of teachers on the AVCE course. Many of the teachers brought in to cover for teachers who leave are poorly briefed about the stage of learning that students have reached, and, as a result, in some cases the same topic has been covered several times. Students have not done all the work required for the stage of the year reached. The college has had difficulty recruiting staff.

103. There is effective support for most students. All students in this area of learning complete a basic skills screening test, and additional learning support is provided as required. Some students do not know the results of all their tests. Learning support staff work well and sensitively in lessons with students on courses at levels 1 and 2. There is particularly good specialist support for students who have visual impairment.

Leadership and management

104. The management of the health and social care provision is unsatisfactory. The AVCE one-year course started some five weeks late. There have been many timetable changes, and students have not always had a teacher for lessons. The multiple changes of teachers have disrupted students' learning significantly. Some teachers were not appropriately qualified or did not have appropriate experience. The management and briefing of agency-supplied and other temporary teachers are inadequate. Students are not performing at the level required for the course and have covered insufficient ground. Quality assurance arrangements and internal verification are inadequate. The organisation and management of workplace experiences for students are poor. AVCE students have complained about the deficiencies of their course. Group reviews of courses are carried out, but actions intended to remedy identified deficiencies are often inadequate. Curriculum planning and development are poor. The management of childcare and early years courses is satisfactory. There are productive links with community providers of care and early years services. Formal team meetings are held, but there is much variation in the quality of recorded minutes of meetings and not all actions resulting from meetings are followed-up. There have been recent developments in public services. While it is too soon to gauge their effectiveness fully, students are beginning to benefit from them.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- high standard of students' work

- very good teaching

- good industrial links in media.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- ineffective management of some aspects of the curriculum.

Scope of provision

105. The college offers a broad range of courses in art, design, media, dance, drama and music, from level 1 to level 3. Art, design and media courses are offered at the Uxbridge site and performing arts students attend the Hayes site. There are vocational courses such as those leading to GNVQs, and first and national diplomas and a diploma in foundation studies. The college also offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art, media, film, dance and drama through its 'Academy'. Most of the students are on full-time courses and many also pursue key skills qualifications. Nearly all students are aged 16 to 18. In total, there are 492 students in this area. Among them, there are 167 art and design students and 158 media students. There are also 44 students enrolled on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

106. Pass rates are high on many courses. For example, pass rates have been consistently high on the first diploma course in design, the national diploma courses in media, design and music and the diploma in foundation studies. Pass rates on the GCE A-level art course were 100% in 2002 and 2003. However, there are poor retention rates on some courses. For example, the retention rates on the national diploma in music have been below the national average for the three years 2001 to 2003. The college has implemented a range of strategies to increase retention rates. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these measures, though at the time of the inspection fewer students than at the same time in the previous year had left prematurely.

107. Students' work is of a high standard. Students demonstrate good technical skills in photography when lighting and 'shooting' studio portraits. Additionally, a series of London landmark photographs, produced by students, illustrate good awareness of composition and effectively capture the mood of each location.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
First diploma in design (changed from GNVQ intermediate in 2003)	2	No. of starts	24	37	16
		% retention	83	86	75
		% pass rate	95	97	83
GNVQ intermediate in media	2	No. of starts	*	16	27
		% retention	*	75	74
		% pass rate	*	92	95
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	32	42	34
		% retention	84	81	82
		% pass rate	96	100	93
National diploma in	3	No. of starts	39	18	*

music		% retention	64	28	*
		% pass rate	96	90	*
Diploma in foundation studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	23	*	23
		% retention	96	*	78
		% pass rate	100	*	94

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

108. Most of the teaching is very good. In the successful lessons, teachers plan and structure their lessons well and check that students have learned what was intended by asking thought-provoking questions of individual students. Teachers create a good learning atmosphere and students work well together. Teachers often refer appropriately to their professional industrial knowledge and subject experience when teaching. For example, in media lessons, teachers use well their experiences of writing scripts to entertain and engage students. In these lessons, there is much lively exchange of ideas and students devise some creative and exciting storylines. Most students attend well and few are late for their lessons.

109. Staff are well qualified and most have relevant professional subject experience, which they use to good effect in lessons. Teachers have some good links, particularly with the media industry and use them effectively to enrich students' learning. For example, in a lesson on professional practice and presentational skills, a visiting professional used a show reel as an example of good practice in the industry, from which students were able to construct their own. The visiting professional's experience of television journalism, presenting news stories and interviewing leading business and political decision makers, inspired and motivated the students. Studios and classrooms at the Uxbridge site and some performance areas at the Hayes site are of a high standard. However, access for students with restricted mobility is poor. The dance studio and music rooms are too small for the large classes using them. Although many design courses require substantive photographic equipment, there is no dedicated photography studio. Accommodation and facilities for media students are good. IT facilities are adequate to enable students to gather information and conduct research, though students have to wait to use machines during peak periods. There are insufficient computers for creative work. A specialist suite containing computers used in design has been established. However, it has some versions of key software which are not fully compatible with the current operating system. There is little display of students' or exemplar work in the studios. Many classrooms, though clean and well decorated, have bare and uninspiring walls.

110. Assessment of students' work is clear and fair. There is an extensive internal verification procedure for teachers to compare their marking. The briefing to students on assignments is good and identifies clearly how students can compile evidence of development of their key skills. Teachers' feedback on students' written work helps students to improve their performance. Although teachers encourage students to analyse their own work critically, there is insufficient encouragement for students to evaluate each other's work and ideas.

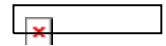
111. Support for students is generally good and there are appropriate procedures for ensuring that students are enrolled on a suitable course. Prospective performance students have to audition for a place on a course. Tutorial support is effective. Learning support for students is good and is particularly effective for students with hearing impairments. For example, in a lesson on the prediction of fashion trends, a specialist facilitator used signing to enable a deaf student to contribute fully to a debate that involved complex specialist terminology.

Leadership and management

112. Management of the curriculum overall is satisfactory. Communication is clear and there are regular and appropriately recorded staff meetings. There has been a careful review of courses. For

example, level 1 courses in art and design and in performing arts have been introduced in order to meet students' needs more effectively. However, some aspects of management are unsatisfactory. Frequent changes and occasional shortages in staff disrupt students' learning, and have resulted in delayed marking or return of some students' coursework. Additionally, replacement teachers do not always complete action points identified in students' individual learning plans. Although there are arrangements for covering lessons when there are teacher shortages, these are insufficient to ensure adequate continuity of learning for students on the longer courses. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but considered that the effectiveness of teaching in this area has been overestimated.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all GCE A2 and AS-level courses

- much good teaching

- very good contributions of students in lessons

- strong support for individual students

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level government and politics and poor achievements in GCSE history in 2003

- low retention rates on some AS-level courses

- teachers' insufficient use of IT for teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

113. The college offers GCSE history, and AS-level and GCE A2 courses in government and politics, history, law, psychology and sociology, mainly for students aged 16 to 18. Law and psychology evening classes up to AS level are available. There is also an introductory 'pre-humanities' course for students who are acquiring the English language skills needed to progress to level 2 courses. A total of 512 students are enrolled on these courses.

Achievements and standards

114. There is much good achievement. In 2003, the pass rates in GCE A-level psychology, sociology and history courses were 100%, though only a small number were on the history course, and they were above national average in law and government and politics. In 2003, pass rates on AS-level courses were above the national average in all subjects except government and politics, which had a very low pass rate of just 40%. Achievement of grades A* to C on GCSE courses in history and psychology course were more than 20% below the national average. Students generally achieve higher grades in AS-level and GCE A-level courses than might be predicted from their GCSE point scores. An exception is AS-level government and politics. Retention rates vary. They are good in GCSE history and psychology, but have fallen to below the national average in 2003 in AS-level history, law and psychology, and in GCE A-level law. In psychology and law, the number of full-time students who continue from AS-level to GCE A-level study is comparatively low.

115. Attendance has improved significantly and at the time of the inspection attendance at observed lessons was 84%, which is above the national average. In most lessons, students contribute confidently and knowledgeably. Their commitment is reflected in the quality of much of their written work. Some GCE A-level students' project work is of a high standard and students are able to demonstrate some very good skills in the use of desktop publishing software. Other students are unable to express well in writing the ideas they express orally.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	21	34	21
		% retention	62	59	76
		% pass rate	54	50	38
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	23	19	29
		% retention	83	79	76
		% pass rate	37	100	95
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	61	58	103
		% retention	82	81	73
		% pass rate	80	74	71
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	133	113	106
		% retention	81	81	73
		% pass rate	73	84	73
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	41	26	22
		% retention	59	85	100
		% pass rate	96	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

116. Most teaching is good. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and well organised. They give students good opportunities to learn in different ways and to contribute significantly to the lessons. Students in a AS-level history lesson gave presentations on different aspects of Nazi doctrine, such as the role of the fuhrer, and the impact of national socialism on the lives of women. The presentations were carried out confidently and some students' strong opinions were well supported with evidence from research. The teacher prompted further thought in some areas and highlighted key points well. GCE A-level sociology students were encouraged to think widely on the subject of society's attitudes to young people. Teachers provided a variety of stimulating materials, including the results of a recent survey of students' attitudes to morality, and cartoons vividly depicting changing attitudes to young people by older generations. Students were encouraged to draw extensively on previous topics studied, including religion and education and contributed an impressive range of ideas. In a GCE A-level law lesson, students were able to illustrate points on a new topic by recalling much relevant detail from case studies considered earlier in the course. In the less successful lessons, lesson planning and classroom management are weak. Teachers spend too long talking and give students insufficient opportunities to contribute. Some activities that teachers planned as introductory aspects to lessons, or supporting features of new topics, take over substantial parts of the lessons. Teachers rush through important issues in an attempt to complete the lessons' objectives and students do not understand them sufficiently.

117. Students are well supported in their studies. Teachers have a good awareness of the needs of individual students in their groups and offer effective help both in lessons and in time given outside lessons. Learning support teachers enable a profoundly deaf student to participate fully in lessons, making some valuable contributions to discussion. Many students on the pre-humanities course have English as a second language. Teachers check their understanding of key words and phrases carefully before beginning exposition of each topic. There are regular and effective reviews of individual students' progress. The reviews do not always result in useful targets for improvement being set for students.

118. Most students' work is marked thoroughly and fairly. There is effective internal moderation of marking. Usually, teachers provide good written feedback to students, explaining how they can improve the quality of their work. Sometimes, the important messages for students are not stated clearly enough. Some teachers' annotations are insufficiently detailed.

119. Classrooms used for humanities lessons are well furnished, but there is little display to reflect the quality of teaching and learning or of students' work. Students use IT in computing suites for researching topics and production of their work. IT or interactive whiteboards are not available in the classrooms and there is little use of IT for teaching.

Leadership and management

120. The management of humanities provision is good. Meetings are regular, purposeful and well recorded. Quality assurance processes have been implemented effectively and some measures have led to improvement. Students' poor attendance in some areas has been identified as a priority. Teachers check attendance thoroughly and follow it up, and this has led to much better attendance, especially on AS-level courses. There has also been some successful restructuring of the way courses are taught in order to make learning more coherent and interesting. New teachers are supported well and value the help they receive from line managers and more experienced colleagues.

English, languages and communication



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCSE modern foreign language courses

- good development of students' comprehension skills in modern foreign language courses.

Weaknesses

- too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning

- inadequate feedback by teachers on students' written work

- students' lack of punctuality and low attendance rate

- unsatisfactory curriculum management.

Scope of provision

121. The college offers GCSE English and English literature for full-time students and GCSE English for evening students. There are full-time GCE A-level and GCE A-level English language and literature, and English literature courses and AS-level English literature is offered in the evening. At the time of the inspection, there were 111 students enrolled on AS-level courses, 32 on GCE A-level courses, and 215 on GCSE courses.

122. Modern language courses include French, Italian, Spanish and German from beginner level to AS level and to GCE A level in French. Japanese is also offered at beginner level. All courses are taught at the Uxbridge site. These language courses are offered in the evenings with the exception of AS-level and GCE A-level French which is also available to daytime students. At the time of the inspection, there were 361 students in modern languages. Of these, 264 were at beginner level, 39 on GCSE courses and 58 on GCE A-level programmes.

123. The college has reduced the number of full-time language courses because student demand for language courses is low. AS-level French is now the only language course available to full-time students. There is also a narrow range of language programmes offered in the evening for adults. Courses in English as a foreign language are offered from pre-intermediate level to advanced level during the day, in the evenings and at weekends. All of these courses are taught at the Uxbridge site. At the time of the inspection, there were 84 students on English as a foreign language programmes.

124. The college also offers courses in sign language, from level 1 to certificate level, for those with hearing impairment or living with someone who has a hearing impairment. These courses are offered in the evenings at both the Uxbridge and Hayes sites, and 'intensive courses' are available at weekends. At the time of the inspection, 218 students were enrolled on these courses. The range of English programmes available for full-time students is satisfactory, but the GCE A-level class is small.

Achievement and standards

125. Pass rates are high on GCSE modern languages courses. For example, in 2002 and 2003, all students who completed the GCSE Spanish course achieved the qualification. In both GCSE French and GCSE Italian, pass rates are significantly above the national average. Achievement on the GCSE English literature course is significantly below the national average. The proportion of high level grades achieved by students on AS-level and GCE A-level English language and literature has fallen since 2002, but has remained satisfactory on AS-level and GCE A-level modern foreign languages courses. Pass rates in most of the remaining modern foreign languages and English programmes are satisfactory and close to national averages. In 2003, retention rates in GCSE French and Spanish were well below the national average, and on the AS-level English literature course the retention rate had fallen to just below the national average.

126. Students on modern foreign languages courses develop their comprehension skills well. Most students can understand clearly directions, numbers and simple instructions, and they can complete written work effectively and play 'language games'. Many of these students are new to learning the foreign language. Students in AS-level French language lessons use tape and video materials effectively to make notes and presentations. Students are confident and contribute fully in lessons.

127. Students are not punctual to lessons. Many students arrive late, learning is interrupted and often the teacher has to repeat what the rest of the class has covered. In some lessons, students arrived up to 50 minutes late. Students' attendance in lessons observed during the inspection was poor. The average attendance in lessons observed was 14.5% below the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE French language	2	No. of starts	*	17	16
		% retention	*	71	44
		% pass rate	*	83	100
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	209	206	194
		% retention	92	73	82
		% pass rate	41	50	45
AS-level French language	3	No. of starts	*	31	15
		% retention	*	61	87
		% pass rate	*	58	85
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	33	36	28
		% retention	85	89	64
		% pass rate	93	94	89
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	37	34	31
		% retention	76	85	77
		% pass rate	71	97	88

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

128. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching. Much teaching is unexciting and barely satisfactory, too much is poor, and little is good or better. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching grades for this area of learning is significantly above the national average. Most lesson plans do not include clearly defined and specific learning outcomes for students. Many teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the learning needs of students. In many lessons, students have a wide range of abilities, skills and experience, but teachers fail to devise methods and materials to meet the differing needs of students. For example, half of the students in GCSE English lessons are repeating the course in order to improve their GCSE grade, and many students speak English as a second or third language. Students, whatever their level of ability, receive the same work in the same way, with the same amount of support. In the poorer lessons, teachers dominate the proceedings, talk for too long, and give students few opportunities to share knowledge and experience. Teachers do not use ICT to assist teaching and learning in lessons, and do not encourage students to use IT, for example, the Internet, to carry out research for their work. They rely too much on boards and overhead transparencies. Much of their board work is poor, overhead transparencies are often difficult to read, and many handouts lack relevance for students and do not hold their interest. Some groups are large, the seating arrangements are ill-considered, and students find it difficult to see and hear video recordings of plays. In most lessons, teachers do not use questions to students effectively in order to assess whether students have learned what was intended.

129. Most teachers have appropriate subject qualifications, but not all, including the current section managers, have teaching qualifications. None of the full-time teachers, and only two thirds of the 13 part-time teachers, hold a teaching qualification. Many teachers have recently attended relevant training events, but the staffing files are not up to date and do not contain details of attendance. Overall, rooms are furnished appropriately, but there is no students' work or stimulating materials related to students' courses displayed on classroom walls. There are no computers in teaching rooms.

130. Teachers often discuss students' completed work with them. However, their written comments on students' marked work are inadequate and do not enable students to improve their performance. Sometimes an identical comment, for example 'good', is used to describe work that has been awarded different grades for different aspects. Teachers do not always correct students' errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. There is no evidence that teachers use assessment specifications or marking criteria.

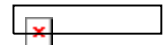
131. Students value the informal support and help provided by teachers and tutors. A student with a hearing impairment is supported well by a note taker. Students receive useful information and guidance at induction and receive an appropriate introduction both to the college and their course. However, course handbooks do not contain sufficient information, for example, about the content of courses, criteria used for marking students' work, or key dates for students to submit work.

Leadership and management

132. Curriculum leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Many teachers are part time and are not employed directly by the college. Some students have been taught by several different teachers during the autumn and spring terms, and one class was without a teacher for several weeks. Staff turnover is high. The different teachers manage lessons differently, there has been a loss of continuity in students' learning, and some students are making slow progress in their studies. A temporary section leader has been appointed, and a team leader for the modern languages provision. Meetings are held regularly, but not all are properly recorded and, often, action points are not noted, implemented or checked. Not all staff attend them. Meetings deal with the day-to-day, mainly administrative, business of the section and there is no discussion or sharing of good practice. Trained observers observe full-time lessons. However, most teachers are not observed by subject

specialists and some grading of the quality of teaching appears generous. Part-time teachers are observed informally, if at all. In some cases, part-time teachers do not stay with the college long enough to be observed. Students' views are not formally or systematically collected, though some tutors gain students' views in tutorials. Course reviews are insufficiently thorough. Many aspects of practice that are satisfactory or standard practice have been identified as strengths. Teachers do not always deal appropriately with latecomers, some of whom are persistent latecomers. Students' learning is disrupted by those who arrive late, topics have to be repeated, and the concentration of the rest of the class is disturbed.

English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- good rate of student progression to other courses
- good teaching and learning
- high-quality effective teaching and learning resources
- effective course reviews.

Weaknesses

- restricted accreditation of students' achievements
- low retention rates on some courses
- very low student attendance in some lessons.

Scope of provision

133. The colleges offers a good range of provision, including full-time courses, part-time courses in the evenings and on Saturdays, a summer programme and ESOL courses for students with literacy needs. There are also courses which develop both English language and vocational skills. Most

courses are based at the college's Hayes Community site, but some are offered at the main site in Uxbridge. There is an expanding 'outreach' section that provides courses at venues in the local community. Courses are offered at five levels. There are 327 students aged 16 to 18, of whom 203 attend full-time courses, and 1,158 aged 19 and over, of whom 789 attend part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

134. In 2003, the college began entering students for assessment for the Open College Network (OCN) ESOL award. The pass rates recorded by the college are misleading. The definition of achievement used by the college, for each course level, is the successful completion of only a single unit of the award, rather than completion of the required number to gain the full pass. Although students make good progress in acquiring appropriate language skills, the college enters students for assessment for insufficient OCN units, and students do not achieve accreditation for all of their efforts. A minority of students achieve a nationally accredited ESOL qualification as an additional award. Retention rates are low on some courses. In the three years 2001 to 2003, retention rates on full-time courses fluctuated, sometimes widely. The poorest retention rates are on some discrete ESOL courses. During the inspection, many students were not punctual and the student attendance rate in lessons observed was low at 67%, though it is just above the national average. However, there are wide variations in attendance and it is sometimes very low. In 13 of the lessons observed, around 40% or more of the students were absent.

135. The range of provision is good and the college encourages students to move from one level of study to another. In 2003, 64% of students progress to higher level courses. Half of the students on ESOL vocational courses moved to full vocational courses, and a further 15% gained employment.

136. Students make satisfactory progress in reading and writing. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to practise and consolidate the acquisition of oral skills and students make particularly good progress in speaking and listening. Students gain confidence from developing their fluency through working in pairs and can make presentations confidently to their classmates.

Quality of education and training

137. Most of the teaching is good. In the good lessons, teachers meet the varying needs and aspirations of all students. Teachers generally plan their lessons well, and share clear objectives with students. They summarise what has been covered at the end of lessons and plan thoughtfully for the next lesson. Teachers write simplified objectives on the whiteboard, which they explain to students at the beginning of the lesson and use again at the end to review the main learning points. They use topical subjects and issues to good effect. For example, in one lesson, students discussed productively their use of text messaging on mobile phones and how this differed from standard written English. In weaker lessons, teachers fail to provide materials that meet the different learning needs of students. Some lessons contain students of varying abilities, but the work set for students is the same for all of them: the most able students are insufficiently challenged by the level of work and they do not reach their full potential, and for some students the work set is too difficult.

138. Some marking of students' work is good and contains constructive feedback that helps students to improve their performance. Sometimes, however, comments from teachers are inadequate. Students' progress is monitored and reported on regularly. Students' confidence and self-esteem are developed through, for example, visits to museums and places of interest, which then form the basis of discussion. Former ESOL students volunteer to talk to potential students during the enrolment period about their experiences at the college. In recognition for this support, the students receive a college certificate at the college's award ceremonies.

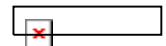
139. There are high-quality teaching and learning resources. Students are given either a textbook or nationally devised learning materials, which are supplemented by a range of high-quality handouts produced by teachers. The best handout materials are devised specifically to meet individual students' needs. There are two ICT co-ordinators to help staff and students, some of whom have little or no experience of using computers, to use ICT effectively. Students develop their language skills through using computer-assisted language learning software and other facilities, such as the

Internet.

Leadership and management

140. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Teachers are dedicated to their work and they share ideas to improve the quality of provision. They set clear targets in course reviews and monitor progress against them in team and management meetings. The targets for recruitment and achievement generally have been met, but student attendance and retention rate targets have not. Steps have been taken to try to address key weakness regarding students' attendance and punctuality. These include awarding certificates of achievement to students for good attendance, and ensuring tutorial co-ordinators monitor and follow-up absentees. This is starting to reduce the levels of absence and has significantly improved students' punctuality. There is an extensive staff development programme based on issues identified in course reviews and in lesson observations. Teachers who are not already suitably qualified are enabled to gain appropriate qualifications. Part-time and agency teachers are paid to attend staff development events and team meetings. There is good use of e-mail to communicate with those who are unable to attend meetings. All teachers are involved in the self-assessment process. Course teams identify strengths and weaknesses through regular meetings and course reviews, outcomes of which are included in the self-assessment report.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning in practical lessons

- students' well-developed speaking and listening skills

- effective support staff.

Weaknesses

- insufficient specifically designed materials to meet individual students' needs

- students' underdeveloped reading and writing skills

- inconsistently effective use of individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

141. Students' literacy, numeracy, and key skills at entry level to level 2, are developed mainly during their main subject lessons across the curriculum. There are also some separate literacy and numeracy lessons. The college offers a good range of entry level courses, and level 1 courses. They are designed for students who have few or no formal qualifications, young people who have been disaffected from their earlier education, and students with moderate or severe learning disabilities. Literacy and numeracy provision includes part-time and full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 and adults who have disabilities or learning difficulties. There is an innovative programme of short and 'link' courses for young people aged 14 to 16 and students aged 16 to 18. There are also vocational courses for young people aged 14 to 16 in, for example, motor vehicle, hairdressing, childcare, catering, and sport, which include learning support for students to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and their personal effectiveness. In addition, the college provides extensive support for students with sensory impairment, specific learning difficulties and those with additional learning needs.

Achievement and standards

142. Retention and pass rates for key skills at level 1, and the City and Guilds profile of achievement, are significantly above the national average. Some foundation studies students, however, fail to achieve qualifications.

143. Students are confident oral communicators and are able to use their skills effectively. Their reading and writing skills are less well developed and attainment in lessons is often poor. Students' numeracy skills are insufficiently developed.

144. Students generally progress well within the college, from one level of study to the next. However, some progression rates are poor. In 2003, in foundation studies, at the end of the courses, the destinations of 17% of full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 15% of part-time students aged 19 and over are unknown.

Quality of education and training

145. Lesson plans vary in quality and effectiveness. The best are well written and include reference to assessment of individual students' learning and attainment. The plans include the means of integrating the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills with the lesson. In the best lessons, plans and/or objectives are shared with learning support staff and students. However, many lesson plans lack clear objectives and the means for recording whether objectives have been met are vague. The tasks for students included in the plans are often routine and unimaginative. Teachers tend to acknowledge the need for differing methods and materials to meet the needs of their students, but do not provide appropriately designed materials or alter their teaching methods for the lessons.

146. Some teaching is good. Students develop good speaking and listening skills. In the best lessons, teachers use topics and projects that involve students in relevant, practical activities. Teachers plan the lessons carefully and identify individual objectives for students. They use resources well to ensure that students meet some challenging learning goals. Learning support staff are fully briefed by teachers and work well in the lessons to support students whose basic skills are weak. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed effectively and the standard of students' written work is generally good. For example, in one lesson, students were running an imaginative and exciting business enterprise venture as a profit-making undertaking. Students' number and language skills were being developed incrementally, and the range of concepts involved during the activities ensured that students' understanding and abilities were extended. Students clearly rose to the occasion.

147. In the less effective lessons, teaching is dull and students lose interest. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to individual students' needs when planning lessons. The same materials or

activities are used for all students, regardless of their differing levels of ability. For example, in a literacy lesson, the teacher arranged students into groups, but they all did the same work, at the same pace, and in the same way. The piece of writing chosen for the task was about a topic that was of little relevance to students and not enough was learned. Some teachers dominate significant portions of lessons by talking for too long and fail to involve the students. Others do not take into account the learning styles of their students, they rely too much on texts or other written materials, and do not engage students in useful practical activities. Learning support assistants are available to help individual students during lessons, but teachers do not always make effective use of them.

148. The assessment of students' learning needs at the start of the courses is effective. Individual learning plans are not always effective. Some contain relevant detail of progress to date and individual targets with dates by which they should be met. The plans are updated regularly, and teachers make effective use of them to plan suitably differentiated materials, activities, and teaching methods for lessons which take account of the different needs and abilities of students. At the time of the inspection, some plans had been completed by the stipulated deadlines, but others were overdue and some were not completed at all. The level of detail and clarity of recording is also variable. Many targets set for students are vague, some refer consistently to appropriate initial and subsequent assessment of students' skills and learning, while others make no reference to it. Some are very poor and do not help students to improve incrementally in order to meet their targets. Assessment of students' work is of variable quality and effectiveness. In successful lessons, teachers and learning support staff monitor students' learning carefully and accurately and assess students against shared and realistic learning targets. They ensure that students aspire to high standards. However, in too many lessons, there is little feedback from teachers to students. Often, teachers fail to give effective feedback on students' written work. Students do not always have access to their completed and marked work. Teachers' oral feedback is generally good and used well to guide and support students during lessons. A few teachers are not yet able to explain clearly to students how to complete tasks. This is particularly evident when teaching numeracy, especially in cases where the teacher does not have expertise in teaching it.

149. Resources are satisfactory. Students have access to digital cameras to record relevant learning activities and used to improve students' ICT skills. There is a well-equipped independent living skills area on the Hayes site that is used effectively by staff to promote learning among students with severe learning disabilities. However, some classrooms are dull and shabby and not all contain ICT equipment. A dedicated ICT room being used for teaching did not allow space for students to work in groups.

150. Support for students is good. The college has invested heavily in specialist support staff for hearing impaired students, those with specific learning difficulties, and those with additional learning support needs. 'Learning advocates' are effective in helping students with their studies and there is a team of able learning support assistants.

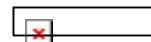
Leadership and management

151. The foundation studies area is managed effectively. However, literacy and numeracy provision across the college is less effectively managed. Some inexperienced staff have to wait too long to begin teacher training. Quality assurance procedures are ineffective for literacy and numeracy across all the provision, and the variable quality of individual learning plans is an example of the lack of effective monitoring. Agency-supplied teachers are significantly under qualified and this often has an adverse effect on students' learning. The training and support for agency staff are insufficient. Teachers who are not members of the foundation studies area do not always have appropriate qualifications or skills in teaching literacy and numeracy, and many are not effective teachers of these skills. The collection and use of relevant student data are inconsistent across the courses, and the college does not have the means of measuring any impact that improvements in students' literacy and numeracy skills have in raising standards.

Part D: College data



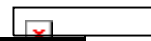
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	30	42
2	27	15
3	28	12
4/5	0	3
Other	15	28
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	756	281	5
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	63	207	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	209	230	2
Business administration, management and professional	745	1,652	12
Information and communication technology	886	3,803	25
Retailing, customer service and transportation	126	761	5
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	441	590	5
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	450	560	5
Health, social care and public services	506	403	5
Visual and performing arts and media	406	91	3
Humanities	469	115	3
English, languages and communication	455	547	5
Foundation programmes	1,567	2,806	23

Total	7,079	12,046	100
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Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	927	754	987	832	852	1,472
	Retention rate %	93	89	77	84	82	75
	National average %	75	76	*	69	70	*
	Pass rate %	83	84	86	75	77	90
	National average %	69	71	*	68	71	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,241	1,397	1,472	935	833	969
	Retention rate %	78	75	76	78	76	77
	National average %	70	72	*	68	68	*
	Pass rate %	78	77	79	69	75	71
	National average %	69	71	*	68	72	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,117	1,612	1,598	1,243	1,043	877
	Retention rate %	73	80	81	72	73	77
	National average %	71	77	*	68	70	*
	Pass rate %	76	85	81	73	75	79
	National average %	77	79	*	69	72	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	**	**	**	65	71	73
	Retention rate %	**	**	**	72	72	84
	National average %	73	71	*	67	67	*
	Pass rate %	**	**	**	43	43	54
	National average %	54	53	*	55	56	*

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000/01 to 2001/02: College CPR

3. College rates for 2002/03: provided by the college.

* data unavailable

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	58	30	12	96
Level 2 (intermediate)	53	30	17	71
Level 1 (foundation)	56	38	6	32
Other sessions	50	43	7	28
Totals	55	33	12	227