



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Milton Keynes College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

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

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

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

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Business, administration, management and professional studies](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

[Hospitality and catering](#)

[Sport, leisure and travel](#)

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

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

[Visual arts and media](#)

[Humanities](#)

[English and communication](#)

[English for speakers of other languages](#)

[Literacy and numeracy](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

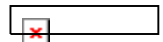
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

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

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

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

Basic information about the college



Name of college:	Milton Keynes College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Mr Rob Badcock
Address of college:	Milton Keynes College Chaffron Way Campus Leadenhall Milton Keynes MK6 5LP
Telephone number:	01908 684444
Fax number:	01908 684399
Chair of governors:	Mr Andrew Peck
Unique reference number:	130609

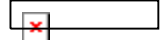
Name of reporting inspector:

Bob Avery HMI

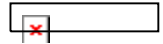
Dates of inspection:

1-11 March 2004

Part A: Summary



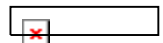
Information about the college



Milton Keynes College is the only general further education (FE) college within the borough of Milton Keynes. It was created in 1982 by the merger of Bletchley College and Wolverton College. A new campus was opened at Chaffron Way in 1984 and a further wing added in 1993. A new centre at Bletchley was opened in 2002. The college recruits locally and regionally and enrolments to courses expanded by over 60% between 2000 and 2002. At the time of the inspection, some 2,200 full-time and 11,500 part-time students were studying at the college. The college is responsible for managing the training programmes of over 500 work-based learners. Approximately 75% of students are from the Milton Keynes area and 85% are aged 19 or over. Almost 65% of students are female. The population of Milton Keynes is approximately 210,000 and is one of the fastest growing in the country. Despite low unemployment, many wards suffer severe deprivation. In 2003 the proportion of year 11 pupils gaining five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at A* to C was below the national average and below the average for the area covered by the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council.

The college's curriculum covers the 14 areas of learning and the college operates a sixth form centre at the Chaffron Way campus in collaboration with a nearby school. As part of its strategies for widening participation and workforce development, the college has expanded community outreach work and specialist education and training for some local employers. Provision is offered at three community-based information technology (IT) centres, two outreach centres at community venues and at a training facility located in the main shopping centre. Additionally, the college has strong links with local schools and coordinates the 'Increased Flexibility' provision for over 100 pupils from nine schools. It has an established centre for vocational excellence (CoVE) in information and communications technology (ICT); provides education and training in three prisons; has recently established a large distribution learning centre for a major supermarket chain; and is responsible for the Prince's Trust national project in the south-east region and part of the eastern region. The college's mission is to create opportunities for people to achieve their personal, educational and employment goals.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the provision to be good in one curriculum area, satisfactory in nine curriculum areas, and unsatisfactory in three others. The quality of work-based learning was considered to be satisfactory in three areas and unsatisfactory in one curriculum area. The college's main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- above national average pass and retention rates on many courses in hospitality and catering, sport, public services, media and graphic design
- increased enrolments
- good links with organisations in the wider community
- good accommodation and specialist resources
- effective support for students
- sound financial management.

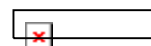
What should be improved

- pass and retention rates on many advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, IT courses for adults and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses
- completion rates of apprenticeship frameworks
- attendance of students at lessons
- teaching and learning in some curriculum areas, particularly for 16 to 18 year olds
- development of key skills
- rigour of course review and self-assessment

- o management of sixth form centre 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

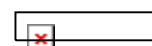


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Unsatisfactory. Students' achievements are unsatisfactory. Whilst there is some good teaching, students are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers provide effective support for students and resources are adequate. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Pass rates on some courses are high, but on some others have been consistently poor. Teaching on motor vehicle courses is good, but theory teaching on other courses is uninspiring. Work based learners achieve high standards of work, although framework completions for foundation modern apprenticeships are low.
Business, administration, management and professional studies	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Retention and pass rates overall are satisfactory with some good pass rates, particularly in accounting. Students display good numerical skills and there is good progression from level 1 to level 4. Work-based learning is co-ordinated effectively and learners receive good support from the college but there has been low achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Pass rates on the first diploma in IT are improving and above the national average. Retention rates on ICT courses for adults at the IT centres, although now improving, has been very poor. Teaching on courses for adults at the three IT centres is good, but teaching on courses for 16 to 18 year olds is weak. Self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous.
Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on college-based courses but low on work based learning programmes. Learning and assessment materials for national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses are of high quality. Students and trainees receive very good support. There are effective strategies for improving work based learning but quality assurance is insufficiently robust.
Sport, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. Provision for sport is good. Retention and pass rates are high on sports courses but are low on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced leisure and tourism course.

	Students make good progress in lessons but use IT insufficiently. Managers and teachers provide effective support for students and monitoring procedures have resulted in significant improvements in student attendance and punctuality.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Pass rates on some courses are high. Completion of apprenticeship frameworks is very poor. Much teaching is good or better. Planning of assessment is poor. Development of key skills is slow.
Health, social care and public services	Satisfactory. Pass rates on public service courses and NVQ 2 care are high. Retention rates on level 3 childcare and NVQ 2 care courses is above the national averages. Pass rates on childcare courses and retention rates on the foundation award in caring for children course are low. Teachers make effective links between theory and work practice in lessons, but in some lessons teaching does not challenge and motivate all students. Academic and pastoral support are effective.
Visual arts and media	Good. Pass rates on the majority of courses are high. Retention rates on some other full-time courses are low. Much teaching is good or better. Personal and academic support is effective. Development of key skills is weak. Specialist resources in media are of high quality.
Humanities	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses overall are below the national averages. Teaching is unsatisfactory for a significant proportion of students. Leadership and management of courses provide insufficient direction and quality assurance procedures are poorly implemented.
English and communication	Satisfactory. Pass rates on GCE A-level English language and literature are high, but poor on the GCSE and English as foreign language courses. Most teaching on AS-level and GCE A-level courses is good. The assessment of students' work and progress, and the support for provided for students, are good. Leadership and management of advanced English language and literature are unsatisfactory.
English for speakers of other languages	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are low on some courses, although retention rates are improving. Teaching methods do not meet the learning needs of individuals. Initial assessment is inadequate and leads to poor planning of learning. Links with community organisations are proving to be productive in meeting the needs of community groups.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on discrete courses are low. Teaching meets the needs of individual learners on discrete courses and in study support sessions, but the teaching methods used in some other lessons are ineffective. Basic skills provision is insufficient to meet the needs of all learners.

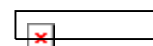
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has established a clear strategic direction and strategic planning has appropriate targets focused on teaching and learning, staff and student support and data. Governance is good. Governors demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge

The college has successfully widened participation from underrepresented groups through community and employer-based provision, and over the period 1999/2000 to 2001/02 achieved a 60% growth in the number of enrolments. The leadership and management of nine of the curriculum areas inspected are satisfactory, and are good in visual arts and media. The leadership and management of the collaborative sixth form provision in science and mathematics, humanities and English language and literature are unsatisfactory. Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory and some are good, although achievements on some qualifications in the ESOL and ICT curriculum areas, and at the sixth form centre, are well below the national averages. The achievement of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks remains poor. In most curriculum areas, teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. In a minority of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory. The college has recently identified some underperforming curriculum areas and effective action has been taken to redress shortcomings in the curriculum and weaknesses in teaching and learning. The management of work-based learning has been improved through the establishment of a work-based team directly managing all work-based provision. In some curriculum areas, quality assurance is poorly implemented and has been ineffective in bringing about improvements. Course teams are not held sufficiently accountable for the quality of their courses. In these areas, course review is inadequate and fails to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual courses. Many curriculum self-assessment reports are insufficiently rigorous and do not clearly identify weaknesses or actions to address weaknesses. Overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

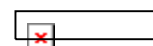
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college is effectively widening participation by working in partnership with other organisations and extending learning into community settings. Work with schools has grown. At the time of the inspection there were 140 14 to 16 year old school pupils studying at the college. There were also 38 pupils following an alternative curriculum programme targeted at disaffected and disengaged young people. New vocational routes have been developed at level 1 to encourage young people to progress to level 2 vocational courses. Courses in IT offered in community settings have grown significantly and many attract adults who have not attended formal education courses for many years. However, achievement on level 1 courses is low and teaching on entry-level courses is weak. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to a good range of additional support, which is tailored to their needs. Provision for speakers of other languages is unsatisfactory. Widening participation data, as defined by local postcodes, shows that enrolments from deprived communities have risen in the last year. Black and minority ethnic students make up 15.5% of the college's enrolments compared to 9.3% of the population of Milton Keynes. An equal access forum has been established recently for staff and students to raise the awareness of disability issues within the college.

The college is fulfilling its requirements under Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). Some 64% of staff have undergone appropriate training in the past 18 months and each area of the college has produced an action plan to implement the requirements of the Act. The college has an updated race equality policy and a development plan that meets the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act. However, the college has only recently been able to produce useable data and does not yet systematically promote and monitor race equality.

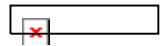
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The college provides good guidance and support for students. Students receive impartial guidance

effective for the many students enrolling on the community-based IT courses. Induction arrangements are generally satisfactory, but do not always cater for late starters. Personal support for students is good, particularly the one-to-one support which students receive. Students in some subjects receive good academic support from tutors who are often subject specialists. Work-based learners are also well supported in their place of work. Additional learning support is good. All students receive an initial assessment and if necessary a more detailed diagnostic test. Where additional learning needs are diagnosed, appropriate learning support is quickly offered. Students have access to a good range of flexible additional support. The college offers an adequate range of other support services. The welfare team offer good advice and support on a range of welfare issues including parenting, employment, housing and finances. Careers advice and guidance provided by the college are satisfactory.

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

- staff are friendly, likeable and approachable

- level of support is high

- adult mature atmosphere

- training facilities at the college.

What they feel could be improved

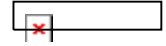
- student facilities, such as common rooms and storage space

- computer use in lessons

- key skills teaching

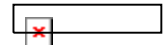
- both quality and price of canteen food.

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



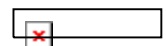
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16 to 18	54	37	9
19+ and WBL*	69	24	6
Learning 16 to 18	50	42	8
19+ and WBL*	71	23	6

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. Overall, the achievements of 16 to 18 year-old and adult learners are satisfactory. On some qualifications, particularly in hospitality and catering, sport, public services, media and graphic design, retention and pass rates are above the national averages. However, the pass rates are poor on the GCSE English course, on many GCE AS levels in humanities and on qualifications in ESOL. Retention rates on the AS-level science courses and the IT courses held at the IT community

in retention and pass rates for the college as a whole. Where improvement is evident in some areas, for example on AS-level and GCE A-level qualifications, the trends are often at a lower rate than the national trends. Data supplied by the college for the year of inspection, which compares retention rates with the same period for the previous year, shows some overall improvement and indicates that actions taken by managers to target low retention rates in some areas are having a positive effect.

16 to 18 year olds

2. On level 3 vocational courses, for example, national diploma and national certificate courses, overall retention rates have improved, and in 2002/03 exceeded the national average for the previous year by 10%. In the same year, the overall pass rate on these courses was just above the national averages. The overall pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses have improved, but at a slower rate than the national trend, and in 2002/03 were 9% below the national average. Universities and colleges admissions service (UCAS) points scores achieved by AS-level and GCE A-level students are low, and the college has only just introduced a value-added system to compare achievement at AS level and GCE A level against prior attainment at GCSE. Overall retention rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses have improved, but at a slower rate than the national trend and in 2002/03 it was 10% below the national rate. On level 2 courses, pass rates on most qualifications have improved and, overall, were above the national averages on GNVQ level 2 courses. However, overall retention rates, although close to the national averages, have declined over the three-year period 1999/2000 to 2002/03. In 2002/03, the overall pass rate for 16 to 18 year olds on level 1 qualifications was 15% below the national average for the previous year. Overall pass rates on GNVQ foundation courses and NVQ level 1 courses are declining and were below the national averages in 2002/03. The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds successfully completing qualifications on short courses remains well below the national average. Pass rates on key skills courses have been poor. Data supplied by the college shows that the proportion of students entered for and successfully completing key skills tests during 2003/04 has increased significantly compared to the previous year.

Adult learners

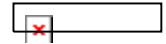
3. Overall pass rates on level 3 courses have improved over the period 1999/2000 to 2002/03, and in 2002/03 were slightly above the national average for the previous year. In particular, adults achieved well on NVQ level 3 courses and other vocational courses. Overall retention rates on level 3 courses have remained unchanged over the same period, and have been broadly in line with the national averages. On level 2 qualifications, overall pass rates have improved and in 2002/03 were above the national averages on many vocational qualifications. However, overall retention rates, although close to the national averages in 2002/03, have declined. On level 1 qualifications, overall pass rates are broadly in line with the national averages. Retention rates on many level 1 vocational courses, particularly on the ICT courses held at the IT community centres, have been consistently below national averages and until recently were declining. In 2002/03, the overall retention rate for adults on level 1 courses was 19% below the national average for the previous year. Data supplied by the college during the inspection shows that the retention rates on level 1 IT courses, to which there were over 2,700 enrolments, are improving. The proportion of adults successfully completing qualifications on short courses is improving, but remains below the national average. The retention rate of work-based learners has improved in some areas, but the completion of foundation apprenticeship frameworks overall remains poor.

4. Grades awarded by inspectors for the standards achieved by 16 to 18 year olds and adult learners, in lessons and in their written and practical work, were broadly in line with the attainment grades awarded to general FE colleges inspected over the last two years. Overall, attainment is better on level 1 and level 2 courses, but notably weaker on entry level and some level 3 courses. Students achieve a high standard of practical work in motor vehicle and electronic engineering. In business, good numerical skills are demonstrated by full-time students and in visual arts and media, students show high levels of practical skills and critical judgement. In literacy and numeracy, good standards of work are achieved by those learners studying at the main college.

5. Overall, students' attendance was 77% and is close to the national average for general FE

colleges. However, there are too many lessons where attendance is low. The overall attendance of students at lessons was low in 5 of the 13 curriculum areas inspected.

Quality of education and training



6. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. During the inspection, 217 lessons were observed. Of these, inspectors judged teaching to be good or better in approximately 59% of lessons, satisfactory in 33%, and less than satisfactory in just over 8% of lessons. The proportion of good or better teaching in lessons predominantly attended by adults is significantly higher than in lessons predominantly attended by 16 to 18 year olds, where there is a higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Overall, most teaching is satisfactory or better in lessons on level 1 and level 2 courses. The largest proportion of less than satisfactory teaching is in entry level and level 3 lessons, and the overall proportion of good or better teaching in lessons on level 3 courses is low, at 9% below average for general FE colleges inspected over the last two years. Most teaching on work-based learning provision is good or better.

7. Teaching is notably better in practical lessons. The largest proportion of less than satisfactory teaching occurs in theory lessons, or where theory and practical teaching is mixed. Teaching in lessons leading to City and Guilds qualifications is good. Overall, the proportion of good or better teaching on GCE A2 courses is low, and there is a notably high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching on AS-level and open college network (OCN) courses.

8. The best teaching takes place in hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual arts, media and sports lessons. Teachers plan their lessons well, use a range of effective teaching and learning methods, and ensure that the needs of all learners are met. In these lessons, teaching is lively and students are involved in a range of learning activities that hold their interest and improve motivation. Activities and tasks are arranged to challenge learners of different abilities. Teachers involve all students in lessons by skilful use of questioning to check that students are making the progress expected of them. In the better lessons in health, care and public services, teachers link theory to practice effectively.

9. The largest proportions of weaker teaching are in the science and mathematics, humanities and ESOL curriculum areas. In these lessons, teachers often fail to meet the needs of all learners, and too much teaching is uninspiring. In some lessons, teachers spend too much time in talking to students, writing notes on the whiteboard or dictating notes, and do not plan their lessons imaginatively. In many curriculum areas, teachers do not use information and learning technology (ILT) to enliven their lessons. In the few weaker lessons in catering, teachers' supervision of students in the kitchens is inadequate and some students develop poor practical skills. The college has introduced recently a much-revised scheme for the teaching of key skills. Nevertheless, the teaching of application of number, ICT and communication key skills remains unsatisfactory in some areas.

10. Most teachers are well qualified and some hold higher degrees in relevant subjects. Some teachers in the ESOL and literacy and numeracy curriculum areas are not fully qualified to teach ESOL or basic skills. Approximately 76% of all teachers hold a recognised teaching qualification and the remainder are currently studying on courses leading to a teaching qualification. There are regular in-house training opportunities and good support for staff to improve their specialist knowledge. However, the methods used to determine staff development needs are not fully effective.

11. The college offers courses at two main campuses, three community IT centres and two neighbourhood learning centres that offer support for voluntary and community groups. The sixth form centre is situated in a wing of the Chaffron Way campus. Since the last inspection, the college has closed one campus at Wolverton, sold off part of the Bletchley site, vacated three leased premises and rebuilt the Bletchley campus. The new campus was opened in August 2002 and

provides a good learning environment. The building project was well planned and was completed on time and within budget. The college's accommodation strategy is clear and the estate's development plan is comprehensive. The college is close to meeting its targets for room utilisation. There is good access for learners with mobility disabilities at most sites. However, the Buckingham IT community centre has very restricted access. The specialist resources for media, graphics, hairdressing and beauty therapy are particularly good. Teaching resources are satisfactory. The ratio of computers to learners is satisfactory, although in some curriculum areas students have insufficient access to computers during lessons. In most curriculum areas, teachers are able to access ILT, but many make insufficient use of the facilities. Teachers at the outreach IT centres have restricted access to ILT and work space is cramped.

12. The learning resource centres are satisfactory. The centres provide sufficient study spaces and separate areas for quiet private study and group work. The range of books and multi-media resources are insufficient for a few curriculum areas and there are an insufficient number of computers in the learning resource centre at Chaffron Way for the number of students wishing to use them. The college's intranet for staff is well established, and the range of learning materials available on the college's students' intranet is being further developed.

13. The majority of teaching rooms are fit for purpose. The rooms are clean, well decorated and appropriately furnished. However, some rooms are either too small for the group size or restrict teaching methods. There are crèche facilities for the children of students and staff and access to rooms for prayer on both campuses. Social areas for students are currently less than satisfactory. This has been recognised by the college. The refectory at Chaffron Way is due for refurbishment and has been redesigned to meet students' needs. A student common room and sports facilities are being built at the Bletchley campus and these are planned to be available from September 2004.

14. Assessment practice and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory overall. The college has improved assessment practice recently to ensure greater consistency and rigour in the monitoring of students' progress, assessment planning and internal verification procedures. In most curriculum areas, initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is carried out effectively. The outcomes of initial assessment are provided to course teams to help them develop appropriate teaching strategies. Course assignments are checked for appropriateness. Students are made aware of the college's appeals procedure in course handbooks. Most teachers provide constructive feedback on students' written and practical work to help them improve their work. Internal verification procedures are robust. There is an effective cross-college system for monitoring external moderator and verifier reports. Issues raised in the reports are noted and actions required are identified and recorded. Progress is carefully monitored. External reports indicate that for most courses the requirements of the awarding bodies are being met.

15. The college has developed a set of tutorial procedures to help personal tutors monitor the progress of their students. During termly progress review meetings, students identify targets for improvement with their tutors and review their progress. There are established links between personal tutors and teachers and during course team meetings the progress of individual students is discussed. However, the procedures are not applied consistently across all curriculum areas. In the English, hospitality, literacy and numeracy curriculum areas, progress targets clearly identify how students can make improvements. In the science and mathematics, business and ESOL curriculum areas, target setting is weak. Parents of 16 to 18 year olds are informed of progress through written reports and at parents' evenings.

16. The college provides a broad range of courses from entry level to level 3 in most areas of learning. The college has successfully widened participation through its community and outreach provision. In the ESOL curriculum area there is a wide range of college and outreach provision with programmes that have effective links with community organisations. Courses are held at locations and at times convenient for students. There are productive links with partner organisations in developing further literacy and numeracy provision. However, there is limited discrete provision in literacy and numeracy offered at the main college campuses. A Foyer project offers basic skills courses, which provide flexible attendance patterns, and 36 students study basic skills through the Prince's Trust. The college provides education in three prisons in the region through its contract with the Home Office. Substantial IT training for adults is offered at three centres through partnership with

an external training provider. Approximately 25 subjects at AS level and GCE A level are taught at the sixth form centre, operated in collaboration with a local school. Access to Higher Education courses are offered on a full-time or part-time attendance basis, and 51 students have timetables that are designed to suit their work-life needs.

17. The college is the lead partner in the Increased Flexibility Project with approximately 140 young people studying for vocational qualifications and applied GCSEs. There are approximately 38 students on alternative provision for disaffected and disengaged young people.

18. Effective employer and industry links have resulted in the development of training courses for a major supermarket company where training is provided on-site for approximately 160 learners. Courses are designed to meet the needs of individuals working shift patterns. The college is a partner in a skills centre in central Milton Keynes which provides training for a range of organisations and individuals in the retail industry. The college carries out extensive market research and community analysis. Areas of particular need are targeted and provision is planned to meet identified needs. There is no overall employer forum or group, although individual curriculum areas operate employer liaison groups. Programmes for curriculum enrichment are satisfactory and the participation rate is high at 80%.

19. The college has very recently developed a revised policy for the teaching of key skills which aims to integrate, wherever possible, the teaching and learning of key skills within students' main courses of study. Key skills teachers have now been assigned to curriculum teams, although some posts are yet to be filled. At the time of the inspection, the revised policy had not been fully implemented, but in lessons where the teaching of key skills was integrated with the main course of study, teaching was judged to be satisfactory. In other key skills lessons, teaching was less effective and students made insufficient progress.

20. Guidance and support for students are good overall. Pre-entry guidance and information processes are well managed. Students receive impartial guidance at enrolment. There is an efficient centralised interviewing process. Surveys of students' views show that students are very satisfied with the advice and guidance service. However, initial advice and guidance are less effective for the many adult learners enrolling on IT courses at the community IT centres, where diagnosis of individual learning styles and prior learning and skills is inadequate. Induction arrangements are mostly satisfactory, but do not always cater for students who start their course late.

21. Personal support for students is good. All full-time students have a weekly entitlement of two hours tutorial per week, which allows for group and individual needs to be addressed. There is particularly effective one-to-one support provided for those students seeking advice and guidance on personal issues. Students in some areas receive good academic support from tutors who are often subject specialists. Work-based learners are also well supported in their place of work with frequent visits from trainers. The overall co-ordination of personal tutorials is good. Most personal tutors have attended recent training on the implementation of the revised tutorial system. The personal tutorial co-ordinators meet regularly with other staff members of student services to share information. Tutorials are generally well planned and cover a range of relevant topics, which are outlined in the comprehensive and detailed personal tutor's handbook. The college has satisfactory arrangements for monitoring students' attendance. The work undertaken by an attendance advisor is contributing to improvements in students' attendance in some areas.

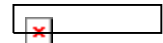
22. Additional learning support is good. All students undertake an initial literacy and numeracy assessment. Where a need for learning support is identified, the learning support team administers a more detailed diagnostic test. Learning support is promptly offered to those students who need it. Additional learning support is made available at one-to-one sessions, in small groups, in classes and workshops, at twilight sessions and at weekends. The learning support team gives good advice to teachers on supporting their students with additional support needs. Over recent years, there has been an 8% growth per year in the numbers of students receiving additional learning support. Overall, 75% of students who are assessed and recommended for support are receiving it.

23. The college offers an adequate range of other support services. For example, childcare places are offered on both sites, through child minding networks and subsidised council nurseries. The

welfare team offer good advice and support on a range of welfare issues including parenting, employment, housing and finances. There is also a well-promoted counselling service, which in 2002/03 conducted over 1,000 sessions. There is a well-used transport service from the city centre to college sites, which is subsidised by the college.

24. Satisfactory advice and careers guidance are provided by the college. Advice is available in-house from a careers officer or through the service provided by Connexions personal advisers, although the take-up of the service has declined over the last year. The college has a satisfactory child protection policy and draft procedures that meet the statutory requirements.

Leadership and management



25. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has established a clear strategic direction and strategic planning has appropriate targets focused on teaching and learning, staff and student support, and data. The college has widened participation from under-represented groups through community and employer based provision. Over the period 1999/2000 to 2001/02 the college achieved approximately 60% growth in enrolments to courses. The leadership and management of nine of the curriculum areas inspected are satisfactory, and are good in visual arts and media. The leadership and management of the collaborative sixth form provision in science and mathematics, humanities and English language and literature are unsatisfactory. Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory and some are good, although achievements on some qualifications in the ESOL and ICT curriculum areas and at the sixth form centre are well below the national averages. In most curriculum areas, teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. In a minority of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory. Overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

26. The college has made satisfactory progress in some areas since the last inspection. Management information has improved and now supplies robust and useful information on students' achievement, retention and attendance rates. The judgement of the Provider Financial Assurance Review in March 2004 is that financial management is sound. A substantial new college campus has been built on time and within budget. The college has widened participation from under-represented groups through community and employer based provision. The college has established a clear strategic direction and strategic planning has appropriate targets focused on teaching and learning, staff and student support and data. The new development plan covers the period 2003 to 2006 and it is too early at this stage to judge its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning and students' achievements. Communication from the senior managers and within curriculum areas is good. The new principal is providing clear and supportive leadership and there are recent initiatives to improve the quality of provision. The restructuring of the management team has provided improved links between the strategic and operational management of the college.

27. Governance is good. The committee examining standards and performance is supplied with appropriate information on students' achievements. The full corporation receives the required information from the quality committee and scrutinises curriculum and cross college self-assessment reports. Governors demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge about students' achievements and key areas of strength and weakness in the college. The search committee advertises through the college web site for new governors and has received applications and expressions of interest through this route. Governors display a range of suitable skills and new governors undergo an audit of skills to contribute to the overall profile and analysis of governors' skills. All governors have undergone training in the SENDA and Race Relations Amendment Act (2000). There are regular presentations to governors' meetings from curriculum managers on specific areas of the college's work.

28. The college has recently identified curriculum areas causing concern and in engineering, key skills and health and social care, action has been taken to improve the curriculum offer and teaching and learning. The management of work-based learning has been improved through the

establishment of a work-based learning team directly managing all work-based provision. However, in some curriculum areas, quality assurance is poorly implemented and has been ineffective in bringing about improvements. Course teams are not held sufficiently accountable for the quality of their courses. In these areas, course review is inadequate and fails to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual courses. Many curriculum self-assessment reports are insufficiently rigorous and do not clearly identify weaknesses or actions to address weaknesses. The achievement of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks remains poor. The college has failed to identify other areas of concern such as science and mathematics, ESOL and humanities, and self-assessment in those areas is unsatisfactory. The collaborative arrangements with the partner school to provide sixth form courses are underdeveloped. There are practical and communication difficulties that affect the quality of teaching and learning. In English, there is inadequate collaboration and staff teach different specifications for the same subject. In humanities, science and mathematics, course team meetings are held irregularly and do not provide evidence or action points for improvements. The college has very recently introduced new management arrangements designed to address some of these weaknesses, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these.

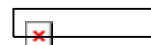
29. The college operates several types of lesson observation including external, management and peer observations. External and internal observation has been targeted on areas of the curriculum requiring improvement and the college has responded to its findings with staff development and training designed to address identified weaknesses. There have also been cross-college training events designed to address generic weaknesses identified through observation. However, the impact of staff training on teaching and learning has been insufficiently monitored. The outcomes of lesson observations undertaken by managers are insufficiently linked to staff development systems and there is an over-reliance on informal communication of training needs. Appraisal is insufficiently linked to external and management lesson observation. The college has recently recognised this as a weakness and has introduced interim arrangements and documentation. However, statements on the interim documentation are frequently neither detailed enough nor sufficiently focused to provide clear information to improve performance or to identify staff development needs. The number of staff undergoing appraisal has been unsatisfactory. In 2002, 30% of staff were appraised, and 60% were appraised in 2003. Managers have been slow to return appraisal documentation and consequently there has been insufficient information for senior managers to monitor and analyse staff performance and training needs. College information suggests that in 2004 the percentage of staff appraised will improve to the college target of 92% but at the time of the inspection it was too early to determine if the target was to be achieved.

30. The quality of management information on pass and retention rates is good. Since the last inspection, systems have been improved and now provide timely and accurate information. Most managers have been trained to use the system and can access pass and retention rates information for their courses. However, managers make insufficient use of this information for planning and evaluation of courses. Many staff are unaware of the range of reports that are available for their use. All courses have targets set using a three-year history of achievement but targets are unsystematically set and some are insufficiently challenging or aspirational. Managers do not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the use of targets in improving provision.

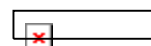
31. The college has established closer relations with local schools through its growing Increased Flexibility provision, collaborative sixth form provision and alternative education. However, collaboration is at an early stage and the college is not routinely represented at school events such as parents' evenings. The college has successfully widened participation through its community and outreach provision. There are good working relationships with partners to deliver basic skills and there are productive links with industry and employers.

32. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. There is a clear equal opportunities policy and the college has fulfilled its statutory duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and the SENDA. Many staff have undergone appropriate training and new staff receive training as part of their induction. There is a clearly identified race equality policy and development plan. The college has very recently begun to analyse students' achievements by ethnicity but has yet to take any action on underperforming groups. There is an appropriate policy on child protection, and training in child protection issues has taken place. A physical audit of the buildings has been carried out and access for students of restricted mobility is mostly good.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good teaching on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics
- effective subject support for students.

Weaknesses

- declining and low retention rates on AS-level science courses
- low retention and pass rates in AS-level physics
- lack of challenge for more able students
- insufficiently rigorous self assessment.

Scope of provision

33. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, environmental science, mathematics and physics at a sixth form centre in collaboration with a local school. The number of students enrolling on AS-level courses increased from 89 in 2000/01 to 149 in 2002/03. Many students study biology and the number of students studying physics has increased from 11 to 35 over the last three years. Whilst the number of students progressing from AS-level to GCE A2 courses is increasing, in 2002/03 the only subject with more than 15 enrolments was biology. GCSE courses are offered during the day and evening. Subjects include human physiology and health, mathematics and science. Over 150 students started GCSE mathematics courses in 2002/03, of

which 16 students enrolled on distance learning courses.

Achievement and standards

34. Retention rates on most AS-level science courses are declining and are low. In 2002/03, retention on AS-level courses in biology, chemistry, environmental science and physics was well below the national averages. Retention on the environmental science course has fallen by 30% over the last 3 years and in 2002/03 was 16% below the national average. The retention rates on GCE A2 courses varies considerably. In 2001/02 and 2002/03, retention rates were 100% on the GCE A2 chemistry course. However, retention rates on the GCE A2 biology course over the same period were below the national average. Whilst the retention rates on the GCSE science course are declining, in 2002/03 it was 10% above the national average. In 2002/03 the pass rates on all AS-level science courses declined significantly. On the AS-level chemistry course, the pass rate fell from 9% above the national average to 11% below. The pass rate on the AS-level physics course is low and has remained below the national average for several years. Whilst the proportion of students achieving higher grades in GCSE mathematics has been consistently above the national average, in 2002/03 only one student of the 17 entered achieved a higher grade in GCSE human physiology and health.

35. Students make satisfactory progress in most lessons. Most students are attentive in lessons. Attendance is often low. Most students' work is of a satisfactory standard, although files are frequently poorly organised and presented. On the AS-level mathematics course, students make effective use of graphics calculators and students work safely and enthusiastically during experiments in science.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	136	137	115
		% retention	62	74	64
		% pass rate	43	52	45
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	21	44	53
		% retention	95	89	79
		% pass rate	40	44	36
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	23	32	41
		% retention	91	78	68
		% pass rate	67	88	50
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	14	17	29
		% retention	64	76	72
		% pass rate	67	77	57
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	25	13	31
		% retention	72	54	87
		% pass rate	28	57	56
GCE A-level (A2) sciences (biology, chemistry, environmental science, physics)	3	No. of starts	*	34	43
		% retention	*	88	91
		% pass rate	*	87	87

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

** course not running*

Quality of education and training

36. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in the majority of AS-level and GCE A2 lessons in biology, chemistry and physics. However, in many mathematics lessons and some science lessons teachers fail to set sufficiently challenging work for the more able students. In the best lessons teachers provided clear explanations and use a range of techniques and resources including textbooks to help students make progress. Students work productively in small groups. In one biology lesson students researched aspects of gene technology and presented their findings well. In a well planned physics lesson, students chose insulating materials to soundproof ice cream containers and their products were tested, using electronic measurement of the sound intensity, to find the best design. In the weaker lessons teachers place too much reliance on whole-class teaching and the pace of learning is too slow for some students. In one mathematics lesson the teacher spent a third of the lesson guiding some students through their homework. Other students who had completed the homework before the lesson were not given alternative work to do and their time was wasted. One science lesson was very poorly planned and students made poor progress. Teachers make insufficient use of IT during lessons to enliven teaching and learning.

37. Most staff have appropriate qualifications and experience, but the lack of continuity in staffing in some subjects disrupts learning. The laboratory facilities are adequate to support the range of science courses. There is a good level of technical support for science teaching and procedures for risk assessment are robust. Specialist equipment is sufficient to support practical work, but access to computers in the two laboratories is limited and this is restricting the use of IT to support teaching and learning. Some equipment for electronic measurement is not being used due to incompatibility with computer software. During lessons students are able to access an appropriate range of textbooks.

38. Overall, assessment is adequate. However, some teachers make insufficient use of assessment in planning and monitoring students' progress. Homework is set regularly and students' work is accurately marked and corrected, but some written feedback provided to students fails to provide sufficient guidance on how to improve. Whilst students are regularly given tests or examination questions, there is no formal system to track students' progress against appropriate target grades based on prior attainment.

39. The range of GCSE and AS-level and GCE A-level subjects offers substantial choice to students. Although there are no vocational science courses offered, students are able to prepare appropriately for progression to FE and higher education (HE). Some arrangements for enrichment studies are good. For example, biology students have attended a residential field centre and students in mathematics and chemistry have attended workshops at universities.

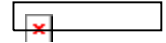
40. There is effective subject support for students. Students are given extra help with mathematics in workshops and additional lessons are provided to prepare students for module examinations. A bridging course has been introduced in mathematics, which has improved progression from GCSE to AS-level courses. During tutorials, students discuss their progress with tutors and value the individual support they receive.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The launch of the sixth form centre in collaboration with a local school led to a significant increase in the number of students on AS-level courses in 2002/03. In the same year there was a marked decline in students' achievements on AS-level courses. There is insufficient direction provided by managers to ensure consistent approaches to planning of subject provision and to enable sharing of good practice between teachers. Self-assessment at subject level lacks rigour. Although teachers analyse examination results against national averages, inadequate attention is given to the quality of teaching and learning in subject reviews. Weaknesses are often not identified. Action planning is poor and the allocation of responsibility to address weaknesses is unclear. There are few subject team meetings and the

monitoring of actions to improve the quality of provision is inadequate. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory, but there is insufficient monitoring of performance by gender and ethnicity.

Engineering



Overall provision in this area, including work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rate on mechanical production engineering

- high retention rates on performing engineering operations and vocational GCE A-level engineering courses

- high standard of practical work in motor vehicle and electronics

- high standards achieved by work-based learners

- good teaching on motor vehicle courses

- good support in mathematics.

Weaknesses

- low framework completions for foundation modern apprentices

- poor pass rates on NVQ level 1 motor vehicle maintenance and service replacement

- uninspiring theory teaching

- ineffective initial assessment for motor vehicle work-based learners

- inadequate self-assessment of engineering programmes.

Scope of provision

42. Engineering courses range from level 1 to higher level. Full-time courses include the level 1 progression award in engineering principles, motor vehicle studies, first and national diplomas in engineering, a progression award at level 2 in motor vehicle maintenance and the NVQ level 2 in performing engineering operations. Part-time courses include national certificates in mechanical engineering and electrical and electronic engineering, and vocational courses to support apprenticeships. Additionally, courses in engineering operations, manufacturing, engineering production, maintenance, design, technical services, computer-aided design and electrical installation are offered.

43. At the time of the inspection, there were 120 students on full-time engineering courses and 416 students attending part-time courses. Approximately 190 learners were either undertaking a modern apprenticeship or a work-based NVQ in a range of engineering disciplines including electrical installation, motor vehicle and production engineering. Approximately 70 pupils were attending the schools link programme that offers the vocational GCSE in engineering and the level 1 motor vehicle progression awards.

Achievement and standards

44. In 2002/03, the pass rate on the mechanical engineering course was high at 44% above the national average. Retention rates on the performing engineering operations programme have been consistently high, and in 2002/03 were 100%. Retention rates on the AVCE in engineering have also been consistently high and in 2002/03 were 18% above the national average, although pass rates have declined. However, over the period 2000/01 to 2002/03 the pass rates on the NVQ 1 in motor vehicle maintenance and service replacement have been well below the national averages. In 2001/02 no students achieved the qualification. There were insufficient opportunities for students to collect competence-based evidence from work placements. Completion of foundation modern apprenticeships in engineering is poor. Over recent years, achievement of frameworks has been no better than 20%. Achievement of key skills is poor. Achievement on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes is satisfactory with improving retention rates.

45. The standards achieved by students during electronics lessons are high. Students produce electronic circuits to exacting standards. In the motor vehicle workshops students work skilfully in dismantling, servicing and re-fitting brake assemblies. Work-based learners also achieve high standards. They develop effective skills in manual and computer-aided engineering, fibre-optic communication systems, computer networks and in the use of diagnostic systems to repair motor vehicles. One company encourages its apprentices to work with pupils from local schools, helping pupils to gain an interest in engineering and assisting them in their school project work.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ vehicle maintenance/fitting	1	No. of starts	31	18	23
		% retention	55	78	74
		% pass rate	47	0	24

NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	*	31	19
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	84	53
GNVQ intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	14	19	15
		% retention	86	89	80
		% pass rate	25	41	50
City and Guilds computer aided design	2	No. of starts	34	29	25
		% retention	71	90	96
		% pass rate	92	54	92
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	59	38	38
		% retention	85	82	61
		% pass rate	48	41	65
AVCE (double award) engineering	3	No. of starts	*	14	14
		% retention	*	71	71
		% pass rate	*	80	30

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

46. Teaching on motor vehicle courses is good or better. Teachers in motor vehicle engineering make effective use of visual aids and well-illustrated handouts to help maintain the interest of students. During one lesson the teacher used ILT effectively to show video clips on power steering systems. Students responded well and made good progress. Training for work-based students is good. However, teaching in the theory lessons on some other courses is uninspiring. Some theory teaching is not related to a vocational context and students fail to see the relevance of the topic. During these lessons teachers make insufficient use of worked examples to help learners develop analytical skills. Some theory is poorly explained and teachers too often direct students to textbooks. Teachers provide good support for students in mathematics. Additional support includes extra lessons and a drop-in mathematics workshop.

47. Teachers are suitably qualified. Most hold a teaching qualification or are working towards one, and the number of teachers holding assessor and verifier awards is sufficient. Engineering accommodation is satisfactory, although some workshops and laboratories are untidy and have insufficient storage facilities. The motor vehicle workshop has a good range of equipment and tooling but lacks modern vehicles. There is a well-resourced computer-aided design suite, but insufficient workspace between the workstations. The learning resource centre has a good selection of engineering texts, although students are unable to access specialist engineering software. In the workplace there are some excellent resources for training. For example, one employer uses computer numerical control and advanced materials for the production of engines for racing cars.

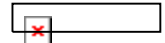
48. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers provide helpful and constructive feedback to students about their assignment work. Students' progress is monitored and recorded effectively. Assessment in the workplace is also satisfactory. Work-based students receive regular and effective review visits from their training advisor. Each learner's progress is reviewed and new targets are set. Arrangements for the internal verification of both college courses and work-based programmes are adequate. Schedules are clear and detailed but sampling of some work-based portfolios is insufficient. Good practice is shared at monthly meetings between assessors and internal verifiers.

49. Overall, support for students is satisfactory. There is a well-documented system for initial assessment. However, on some motor vehicle programmes, initial assessment fails to identify all students who would benefit from additional literacy and numeracy support. This weakness was identified in the motor vehicle development plan and a review of the initial assessment process is being undertaken. Tutorials are well planned. Learners' progress, attitude, aptitude and attendance are routinely reviewed during these sessions. Constructive guidance is given to individuals by their tutors. Students are set short-term targets and these are recorded in the individual's learning plan. Pastoral support is good. Tutorials include topics such as assertiveness, health issues, equal opportunities, personal finance and health and safety. Work-based learners receive good support in the workplace. They have frequent contact with assessors who respond well to learners' requests for additional assessment visits.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication between staff and managers is good. There are regular formal team meetings. The appraisal process identifies staff training needs and sets specific performance targets. Recent staff development activities have included improving teaching techniques and the legal requirements of working with young school pupils. Arrangements for the support and mentoring of newly appointed teachers are effective. Self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous. There is no formal process to review and evaluate the quality of individual courses. Teachers contribute to the self-assessment report for the area, but the report fails to identify some key weaknesses in the provision at the college. Self-assessment of work-based learning is undertaken more thoroughly. The college carries out careful health and safety checks at each employer's premises. Monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace is insufficient.

Business, administration, management and professional studies



Overall provision in this area including work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- above national average pass rates on book-keeping and accounts level 1 and level 2, NVQ level 2 accounting and advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses

- effective range of teaching styles in most lessons

- good workplace learning support for modern apprentices

- effective co-ordination of work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- inadequate attention to the individual learning needs of students in some lessons
- insufficient use of visual aids to support teaching
- inadequate business links for full-time students.

Scope of provision

51. There is a good range of AS-level and GCE A-level and vocational courses for full-time students. AS-level and GCE A-level courses include accounting, economics, business studies and combined economics and business studies. Vocational courses include the AVCE and GNVQ intermediate courses in business and a business and computing foundation course. There are clear progression pathways for students from level 1 to level 4. A broad range of professional and management courses is offered to part-time adult learners. Courses include marketing, accounting, purchasing, training and development, management and teacher training. At the time of inspection, 442 students were enrolled on these courses. Of these, around half were 16 to 18 year olds enrolled on full-time courses. The college manages 79 foundation and advanced modern apprentices in administration and accounting and provides work-based learning at level 4 in accounting. All work-based learning trainees are employed and there are good links with employers. Work-based learning is also available to adults in employment who wish to gain NVQs in accounting or administration.

Achievement and standards

52. Pass rates on book-keeping and accounts at level 1 and level 2, the NVQ 2 accounting and AVCE courses are high. However, the pass rates on the business and computing foundation course and on NVQ level 1 and 2 administration courses are low. In 2002/03, the pass rate on the supervisory management course was 95%. Between 2001 and 2003, achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks was poor with only 13% of learners achieving the full framework in 2001. Achievement improved to 29% in 2002 and the progress and achievement of learners continues to improve.

53. Overall, standards achieved by students are satisfactory. Some students achieve high standards of work. Most students demonstrate at least a satisfactory level of understanding of terminology and concepts and are able to apply what they have learned to real business situations. Students frequently make good use of their full-time or part-time jobs to enhance discussions in lessons. Full-time students display good numerical skills. Students' written work shows a thorough understanding of theory and there is good evidence of secondary research where students make effective use of the internet. Analytical and evaluative skills are less well developed within the AVCE course but there are some good examples of cogent argument and analysis within the GCE A-level work.

54. Modern apprentices produce work of a good standard and demonstrate well-developed employment skills. They are well motivated and keen to achieve. Modern apprentices are able to discuss their job roles with confidence and are able to identify opportunities to provide evidence for assessment. During the inspection, work-based learners were making good progress towards achievement of frameworks within their planned timescale.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, management and professional studies, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Book-keeping and accounts	1	No. of starts	101	54	74
		% retention	76	74	82
		% pass rate	95	93	89
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	42	39	41
		% retention	74	69	76
		% pass rate	87	48	68
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	83	77	71
		% retention	80	79	82
		% pass rate	68	90	84
Book-keeping and accounts	2	No. of starts	94	25	42
		% retention	63	64	88
		% pass rate	92	94	89
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	21	29	16
		% retention	76	79	94
		% pass rate	94	91	87
AVCE double award	3	No. of starts	*	65	56
		% retention	*	66	63
		% pass rate	*	63	80

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

* course not offered

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching is satisfactory and some is good or very good. During lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and many use an effective, wide range of teaching styles. Whilst students are tackling set tasks, teachers circulate well and provide good individual and group support. Teachers ask frequent questions to test the level of understanding but there is less use of questioning to extend students' thinking and to encourage debate. In some lessons the work fails to meet the needs of individual students and lacks challenge. Some teachers make insufficient use of visual aids to help students to learn. Most students make satisfactory progress. Students work well in groups, in pairs and individually. Off-the-job training for modern apprentices is generally well organised. The purpose of workplace visits is clear and understood by learners. Targets for learning and assessment activities are set and monitored during each visit. The development of key skills is integrated effectively into the NVQ programme and good quality learning materials are provided to support learning for technical certificates.

56. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and most hold teaching qualifications. However, some teachers have little recent experience of business and commerce. Work-based learning trainers are appropriately qualified and hold training and assessor qualifications. Resources are satisfactory. There is an appropriate range of texts, videos and specialist journals. There are insufficient interactive whiteboards or video projectors in classrooms and vocational students have insufficient access to computers in lessons. Learning resources to support work-based learning for modern apprentices and adults studying NVQs in the workplace are good.

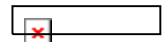
57. Assessment is satisfactory. Work is frequently and accurately marked but does not always suggest how students can improve. There is little evidence of target-setting to support students' progress. Key skills assessment is improving. However, there is insufficient detail in both schemes of work and assignment briefs to support students in collecting key skills evidence. Overall, the internal moderation system is robust. The monitoring and planning of assessment for work-based learners has improved and is now good. Learners are clear about the process and what is required as evidence for NVQ assessment. Training advisors regularly visit learners in the workplace to monitor progress and plan assessment. Moderation of work and internal verification procedures in work-based learning are good.

58. Support for all students is good. Students receive good one-to-one support and guidance on personal issues from their tutors. Students' progress is regularly monitored. However, target setting is not based on prior attainment and individual action plans are not sufficiently subject-specific. Work-based learners are visited frequently by trainers in the workplace and have excellent contact with trainers via e-mail. Links with business are under-developed. Full-time students have too few visits to industry. Arrangements for appropriate work placement have not been established.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management, including work-based learning, are satisfactory. Communication is good and there is a regular cycle of effective team meetings. The curriculum is well co-ordinated and teams work well together. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between GCE A-level and AVCE course teams or between college and work-based learning accounting staff. Schemes of work for college courses are generally satisfactory but rarely make reference to links with business. There are no formal course reviews and there is little action planning at course level. However, some actions for improvement are being implemented. For example, revision workshops for students, interviews for students identified as being at risk and peer lesson observation are now being undertaken. Specific actions to improve the provision for work-based learners have also been taken by the work-based learning team. These are contributing to improved retention and pass rates. Management information is not always used effectively. The self-assessment of the college provision failed to identify some key weaknesses.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- good and improving pass rates on the first diploma in IT

- good or better teaching and learning for adults

- very effective tutor support for adults in IT centres.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on the certificate in IT users course in 2002/03
- ineffective teaching in some lessons for 16 to 18 year olds
- inappropriate initial guidance for some adult learners at the IT centres
- inadequate self-assessment.

Scope of provision

60. The college offers a good range of courses in computing and IT to meet the needs of full-time and part-time learners. The full-time courses include GCSE ICT, AS-level and GCE A2 courses in ICT, and the first and national diplomas in IT practitioners. Short and part-time courses include the European computer driving licence (ECDL), computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and City and Guilds E-qualifications courses. At the time of inspection, 230 students, predominately aged 16 to 18, were enrolled on full-time courses and approximately 2,600 adult learners were enrolled on part-time courses. The majority of the enrolments to part-time courses are at the three ICT centres based at community venues. These courses are offered by the college in partnership with a private organisation. The college also provides HE courses in ICT and has an approved centre of vocational excellence (CoVE), based at its main campus. The CoVE specialises in IT applications and provides a range of level 3 programmes for students as well as specialist short courses for employers.

Achievement and standards

61. The pass rate on the first diploma course is high, and in 2002/03 was 21% above the national average. The pass rates on the AS-level and GCE A-level ICT courses are broadly in line with the national averages. However, the pass rate on the CLAIT course declined significantly in 2002/03 and was 16% below the national average. The pass rate on the GCSE IT course has been significantly below the national average for two of the last three years. In 2002/03, retention rates on the certificate in IT users course were significantly below the national average, although data provided by the college during the inspection indicated that retention rates for the period September 2003 to February 2004 had improved, when compared with the same period for the previous year. Students' attendance at many lessons is high.

62. The standard of 16 to 18 year old students' practical work is satisfactory and demonstrates appropriate competence in the use of IT applications. However, the standard of oral and written work of some 16 to 18 year olds is low. Adult learners on part-time courses are well motivated and their work is of a high standard. Most adult learners demonstrate high levels of skills and knowledge and these are applied with confidence to the solution of problems.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
OCR CLAIT (stage 1)	1	No. of starts	321	211	69
		% retention	78	80	80

		% pass rate	62	72	47
Certificate in computer applications	1	No. of starts	874	1407	428
		% retention	82	56	63
		% pass rate	60	70	69
Certificate in IT users	1	No. of starts	*	*	1279
		% retention	*	*	37
		% pass rate	*	*	87
First Diploma in IT	2	No. of starts	87	79	51
		% retention	82	73	71
		% pass rate	66	76	92
GCSE ICT	2	No. of starts	17	19	32
		% retention	76	58	72
		% pass rate	0	36	13
National diploma in computer studies	3	No. of starts	83	82	92
		% retention	64	52	73
		% pass rate	91	98	82
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	13	16	40
		% retention	62	94	68
		% pass rate	38	73	67
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	*	**	19
		% retention	*	**	89
		% pass rate	*	**	82

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

* course not running

** low number of enrolments

Quality of education and training

63. Teaching is mainly good or better in lessons for adult learners. These lessons are well planned and teachers provide a variety of effective learning activities to support the different learning styles of students. In many lessons, teachers work with individuals or with small groups to ensure learners make good progress. During lessons, adult learners are provided with well-designed learning materials. Learners are kept on-task by their teachers who deal with queries quickly and provide clear, unambiguous explanations. In the best lessons teachers explain technical concepts clearly and use real-life examples to set the topic in context. For example, in one lesson, the importance of thorough validation for data entry was effectively illustrated by the problem of a customer list where several thousand names had been entered inconsistently. All lessons for adults were businesslike and purposeful.

64. Teaching within the CoVE is good. Lessons are well planned and learning materials are of a high quality. Teachers make effective use of video projectors for demonstrations and provide very effective individual support to learners whilst working on practical tasks. They apply questioning skilfully to check and promote learning. Learners are well motivated, make good progress and use their developing skills with confidence.

65. In lessons for 16 to 18 year olds, teaching is less effective. Teaching in a minority of lessons is unsatisfactory. These lessons are poorly planned and classroom management is poor. Some students are not always kept on-task or are distracted by listening to music CDs and some students are using the Internet inappropriately. In these lessons, some students demonstrate poor understanding of the topic being covered and are poorly motivated. In the better lessons, teachers set interesting and relevant tasks, the lessons are brisk and effective and students demonstrate a better grasp of the topic. In many lessons for full-time students, teachers make insufficient use of ILT to enliven teaching and learning and for effective demonstration.

66. Teachers are appropriately qualified. All full-time teachers hold a teaching qualification or are working towards one. Some have relevant industrial experience but little of this is recent. A number of part-time teachers have current and relevant experience that is used well within lessons. All teachers are able to participate in staff development activities and many have updated their skills in IT. Classrooms are well equipped with sufficient, high specification computers. The layout of some IT rooms results a restricted view of whiteboards and some students have difficulty in following tutors board-work. Few classrooms have data projectors or projection screens. Most learning materials are of a high standard and are particularly good on courses for adults. Teaching accommodation is well maintained. In the IT centres some rooms are too small for the large number of students who attend, and the cramped conditions make it difficult for teachers to circulate amongst learners easily. The workshop at the Milton Keynes central IT centre has insufficient visual aids for effective teaching.

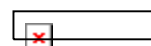
67. Assignments are well written and grading criteria are clearly specified. Adult learners are clear about the timing of assessments and what is expected of them. However, the scheduling of assignments on full-time courses for 16 to 18 year olds is not well planned and often results in heavy workloads. Most completed work is well marked and provides clear guidance on how students may improve their work. A minority of marking comprises no more than a series of ticks and provides no indication of why marks have been deducted.

68. Advice and guidance provided to 16 to 18 year old students prior to admission to full-time courses is accurate and impartial. However, work experience is not arranged during their courses. Some adult learners in the IT centres are enrolled on courses that do not meet their needs. Arrangements to assess the prior IT skills of adults are lacking. Learners who may have relevant but uncertificated experience are required to achieve a module at level 1 before studying the topic at level 2. Some students perceive that little is to be gained from completing the lower level course.

Leadership and management

69. Overall, leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Leadership and management of the CoVE are good. The manager responsible for the CoVE sets and closely monitors targets and the quality of the provision. The range of courses offered is well informed by a thorough needs analysis. Management of the provision for adult learners at the IT centres is satisfactory. However, managers pay insufficient attention to improving the teaching and learning on full-time courses for 16 to 18 year olds. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between teaching teams. Course reviews lack rigour. The self-assessment report identifies weaknesses with retention and pass rates on some courses, but remedial actions are often inadequate to secure improvement and progress is insufficiently monitored. Communication between managers and staff is satisfactory. Links between appraisal and the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently robust.

Hospitality and catering



Overall provision in this area including work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates for most college-based qualifications
- high retention rates on full-time NVQ courses
- good off-the-job practical training for work-based learners
- good quality learning and assessment materials for NVQ courses
- very good support for students and trainees
- effective strategies for improving work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low achievement of work-based learner outcomes
- low retention rates of work-based learners
- poor development of key skills for full-time students
- inadequate supervision of students' practical skills in food preparation lessons
- insufficiently robust quality assurance systems.

Scope of provision

70. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses from level 1 to level 4. At the time of inspection, 166 learners were enrolled on courses, including 32 apprentices on work-based learning programmes. Courses for full-time students include NVQ levels 1 and 2 in food preparation and cooking, food and drink service, level 3 in kitchen and larder, advanced pastry certificate and an AVCE single award in hospitality and catering. Part-time provision includes a range of courses from

NVQ levels 1 to 3, such as food hygiene certificates and cake decorating, at introductory and intermediate levels. Overall, few students progress from NVQ level 2 to level 3.

Achievement and standards

71. Pass rates are high for most qualifications. Retention rates are also good, particularly on full-time courses, where rates have exceeded the national average for the last three years. However, the development of key skills is poor and pass rates are very low. The achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is poor in work-based learning and few trainees have gained NVQs or key skills over a three-year period. The retention rates of work-based trainees is also low. The standards of practical skills achieved by most full-time students are satisfactory or better. However, the practical skills of some students are insufficiently developed. For example, in some lessons students used incorrect knives for a task. Other incorrect techniques were observed, such as whisking instead of stirring a custard sauce, and washing hands in a pot sink.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	34	31	24
		% retention	94	77	96
		% pass rate	91	100	91
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	30	24	23
		% retention	80	92	91
		% pass rate	83	77	95
NVQ serving food and drink	2	No. of starts	35	41	40
		% retention	71	61	60
		% pass rate	84	72	92
Basic food hygiene	2	No. of starts	246	536	591
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	99	98	92
Pastry cooks and Patisseries - basic	2	No. of starts	35	34	15
		% retention	94	79	80
		% pass rate	94	100	83
NVQ food preparation and cooking	3	No. of starts	10	9	8
		% retention	90	100	88
		% pass rate	89	89	100
Pastry cooks and Patisseries - advanced	3	No. of starts	15	15	15
		% retention	100	87	80
		% pass rate	80	80	83

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

Quality of education and training

72. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. However, teaching is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic, the pace is brisk and businesslike and good links are made between theory and practice. Questioning is used

skilfully to engage all learners. During lessons on food preparation, most of the students' practical skills are developed in producing food for the college's restaurant. Students undertake a broad variety of tasks in these lessons, most teachers manage the lessons well and students make good progress. However, in a minority of lessons the supervision of students by teachers is inadequate. Teachers often fail to correct poor techniques applied by students during their work. In work-based learning the teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. The practical skills workshops are effective. Learners utilise skills gained from work and gain new skills to help them complete the requirements of the qualification. Teachers are aware of learners' individual needs and abilities, but there is some lack of challenge and pace to convey greater industrial awareness.

73. Most teachers are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Teachers also update their knowledge and skills in industry and these are reflected in the contemporary range of menus used in the training restaurant. Resources are generally satisfactory. Teachers have devised high-quality learning resources for NVQ students, which include study packs, menu and recipe files and interactive materials on the college intranet. These materials help learners to test their knowledge and understanding. There is an adequate stock of books with multiple copies of course texts, which are well used by students. The college has specialist catering facilities, including a training restaurant and three kitchens, including a specialist pastry section. There is a good range of commercial equipment that prepares students well for working in industry. However, most practical areas have restricted working space for students. Classrooms are also sometimes too small for the numbers of students in the class, which adversely affects teaching and learning. Changing rooms for students are inadequate, with restricted washing or showering facilities.

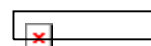
74. Assessment is consistently rigorous, especially for NVQ courses. Assessment procedures ensure that sufficient and reliable evidence can be produced by students and trainees. Assessors are meticulous in ensuring appropriate levels of competence have been achieved and assessment evidence is very clearly presented. Assessment materials are helpful in enabling students and trainees to organise portfolios. Students find the assessment materials made available on the college's intranet helpful. There is rigorous control over the quality of assessment through internal verification.

75. Students and trainees receive very good levels of guidance and support. The section adheres to college procedures for initial and diagnostic assessment to ensure students and trainees join appropriate courses. Arrangements for additional learning support are provided quickly and students and trainees speak highly of the additional learning support they receive. Specific targets for individual students are agreed and progress is monitored closely. For example, attendance is monitored rigorously and tutors promptly follow-up absences. The induction programme is comprehensive. A student with Asperger's syndrome was given very good support by his tutor and peer group to enable him to shout instructions to the kitchen brigade in his role as head chef.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective strategies have been established to improve work-based learning attainment and retention rates. These include comprehensive initial advice and guidance, better preparation for key skills and closer links with employers. Improved communications, including regular team meetings and action planning, have been implemented. There is effective monitoring of attendance and retention rates. Trends are analysed and acted upon. Other aspects of quality assurance are insufficiently robust. Lesson observations are not evaluative or consistent and few weaknesses are followed up. The self-assessment report failed to identify weaknesses, especially in teaching and learning.

Sport, leisure and travel



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

Contributory grade for sports provision is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on sports courses

- good teaching on sports courses

- thorough assessment practice

- effective support for students

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on GNVQ advanced course in leisure and tourism

- insufficient use of IT in lessons

- lack of work experience programme for full-time students

Scope of provision

77. Full-time courses include the first and national diplomas in sport, foundation and intermediate GNVQs in leisure and tourism and the AVCE in travel and tourism. Approximately 260 learners are enrolled on programmes and the majority of students are 16 to 18 years old, although most groups include some adult learners. The college is planning to extend the range of part-time courses from September 2004 when the new sports centre at the Bletchley campus is due to be opened. A range of additional qualifications is available to full-time students. These include the airfares and ticketing level 1 certificate, the community sports leaders award (CSLA), and the Galileo certificate.

Achievement and standards

78. Pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism and the first and national diplomas in sport and exercise science are above the national averages. For example, the pass rate on the first diploma in sport and exercise science has improved from 91% in 2000/01 to 100% in 2002/03. Retention rates on a number of courses are above the national average. In 2002/03, the retention rates on the intermediate GNVQ course in leisure and tourism was 81% and on the national diploma in sport and exercise science retention rates were 23% above the national average. However, pass rates on the advanced GNVQ course in leisure and tourism are declining. Over the last three years the pass rates have declined from 100% in 2000/01 to 62% in 2002/03: 10% below

the national average. Retention rates are also declining. In 2000/01, the retention rates were 83% but had declined to 54% in 2002/03. Pass rates on most additional qualifications are mostly good, with the exception of the Galileo certificate, where the pass rates have been poor for the past two years. Pass rates on modern apprenticeships have been very poor but are beginning to improve.

79. Students develop high standards of practical skills. Most written work is satisfactory or better. Some students use IT to good effect in developing their assignments. In 2003, a student studying sport gained a prestigious Helena Kennedy bursary award.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	22	40	21
		% retention	59	83	81
		% pass rate	62	79	82
First diploma in sport and exercise science	2	No. of starts	39	18	24
		% retention	59	72	88
		% pass rate	91	85	100
National diploma in science (sports science)	3	No. of starts	38	45	38
		% retention	61	53	79
		% pass rate	100	92	100
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	12	25	24
		% retention	83	64	54
		% pass rate	100	100	62
AS-level sports, games and recreation	3	No. of starts	*	*	14
		% retention	*	*	79
		% pass rate	*	*	91

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

* low number of starts

Quality of education and training

80. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. On sports courses much teaching is good or better. Many lessons are well planned. In the best lessons, teachers use comprehensive schemes of work and lesson plans that contain detailed references to the syllabus and key skills. Whilst planning sports lessons, teachers use thorough information about each student to enable individual learning needs to be taken into account. During practical lessons in sport, teachers incorporate theory effectively. In these lessons, students' practical and team-building skills are developed to a high standard. The best theory lessons include highly effective group work and practical activities that help all students to make good progress. In the weaker lessons, teachers fail to take account of the needs of all students and some students become inattentive. Although computers are available in many teaching rooms the majority of teachers make insufficient use of the facilities to enhance teaching and learning.

81. Teachers are well qualified and well experienced. Most teachers hold at least a first degree in their specialist subjects. There are a number of newly appointed teachers, particularly in sport, who have yet to gain teaching qualifications. Teachers are well supported by managers and have good access to a wide range of development opportunities. There is lack of practical sport facilities on the

Bletchley campus, which restricts the range of practical teaching and students' participation in team sports. The college currently uses the facilities at a local sports centre, although a new college sports centre is being constructed and is due to be completed in September 2004. The centre will contain indoor facilities for a variety of sports, a gym, a massage suite and social facilities for students. Many of the teaching rooms and the learning resource centres provide good resources to support teaching and learning. However, a few of the teaching rooms are too small for the numbers of students in the class and are not appropriate for group work.

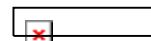
82. Arrangements for assessment are thorough, with internal verification procedures undertaken systematically. Teachers provide comprehensive feedback on students' assignments and provide effective guidance on how students may improve their work. The monitoring of students' progress is undertaken effectively during regular tutorials, although target setting has yet to be further developed. Attendance is rigorously monitored and there have been significant improvements in attendance and punctuality over the past year, particularly on level 2 courses. Students speak highly of the formal and informal support they receive from their teachers. All students undergo an initial basic skills assessment when they commence their courses, but a few students identified as needing additional support do not attend the support workshops.

83. There is a broad enrichment programme for students. Courses include the pool lifeguard qualification and the community sports leaders' award, and visits and residential courses. However, there is no planned work experience programme for students and links with industry are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication between staff and managers is good and course teams review course performance with their managers. However, self assessment and action planning are insufficiently robust and have not yet impacted sufficiently on some aspects of provision, such as the teaching and learning in work-based learning and the sharing of best practice. Management information is used well to monitor the performance of courses and students. Data on early leavers are analysed and action plans are produced and implemented effectively. There is an effective mentoring scheme to support new staff. Analyses of the performances of different groups of students have not been undertaken, but equality of opportunity issues are dealt with effectively and sensitively.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on cosmetic make-up and NVQ level 2 hairdressing course

- effective teaching in most lessons

- good tutorial and specialist support

- good support in the workplace for work-based learners
- effective teamwork leading to improvement in teaching and learning.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) beauty therapy and NVQ level 1 hairdressing courses
- very poor achievements on work-based learning programmes
- slow development of key skills
- slow progress toward NVQ qualifications in work based learning
- poor assessment planning.

Scope of provision

85. Courses range from level 1 and 2 in hairdressing to level 2 and 3 in beauty therapy and holistic studies. Part-time courses include body massage, cosmetic make-up and waxing. At the time of inspection there were 462 students enrolled on full and part-time courses. Approximately 52% of these were adults. Additionally, on work-based learning provision, there were 72 foundation modern apprentices and six advanced modern apprentices. Most work-based learners attend the college every two weeks, although 22 learners are exclusively salon-based and do not attend college.

Achievement and standards

86. Pass rates on most courses are high and above the national average. For example, in 2002/03, the pass rates on the NVQ 2 hairdressing and cosmetic make-up courses were 96% and 90% respectively. Retention rates are poor on the NVQ 1 hairdressing course and BTEC beauty therapy course. Achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is very poor. Over the last three years, only two of the 88 learners have achieved the full framework. Retention rates have improved recently. The standard of work achieved by most students is satisfactory. Some students' work is of a high standard. Adult learners undertaking hairdressing at NVQ 2 achieve very good practical skills in the first year of their course. However, the overall attainment of students on the electrical epilation course is poor. Students' portfolio work and assignments are of at least a satisfactory standard. Most are well presented and supported by robust evidence. Many learners make slow progress in

developing key skills, although the college has started to address this weakness recently by employing specialist key skills teachers to work with vocational teachers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ beauty therapy, one year course	2	No. of starts	64	58	49
		% retention	77	74	73
		% pass rate	90	91	81
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	68	57	57
		% retention	50	33	55
		% pass rate	50	47	96
NVQ cosmetic make-up	2	No. of starts	32	30	46
		% retention	88	97	91
		% pass rate	93	90	90
Indian head massage diploma	2	No. of starts	*	63	56
		% retention	*	100	75
		% pass rate	*	60	67
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	*	13	24
		% retention	*	77	100
		% pass rate	*	50	67
Diploma in sport therapy (short course)	3	No. of starts	28	64	62
		% retention	93	92	92
		% pass rate	62	100	88

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

* course not offered

Quality of education and training

87. Much teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Lessons are planned well with clear aims and objectives, and these are often shared with students. The NVQ level 3 programme is well planned to motivate and interest learners. In the most effective lessons, teachers make excellent use of innovative learning and teaching aids. In a lesson on anatomy, students made good progress in learning the muscles of the head and neck with the help of games created by the teacher. Teachers are aware of the learning needs of individuals. During a hairdressing tutorial, students worked through activity sheets to identify their own learning needs. They then related the results well to the requirements of the course. In the weaker lessons, students are not challenged sufficiently and poor class management by teachers restricts the progress made by many students. Work-based learning trainees make slow progress toward achievement of NVQ qualifications. The 'off the job' training provided at the college is mostly good but in some lessons teachers rely too heavily on using learning packages. Training for apprentices based at commercial salons is inadequate.

88. Teachers are well qualified. Many hold teaching, assessor and verifier qualifications. Part-time teachers are well supported through a mentoring system. Specialist resources include new hair and beauty salons, a reception area and a wet area in beauty therapy. These are of high quality. The salons are well equipped but are not suitable for theory classes. Well-produced and well-designed learning packages help students to study independently and at their own pace. Classrooms are

adequate. Access to some rooms can only be made by passing through other classrooms and these arrangements then disrupt the learning of others. Work-based learners are employed at good quality salons.

89. Arrangements for assessment are unsatisfactory. Assessment planning is poor and some learners are unable to fulfil the assessment requirements of their courses. In the college salons there are insufficient clients to enable students to fully develop the skills required of them. Planning of work experience is ineffective in identifying assessment opportunities. Assessment of students' portfolios is satisfactory. Feedback provided by teachers on students' work is encouraging but not always sufficiently critical. There is a robust internal verification system for all full- and part-time programmes.

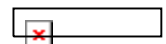
90. There is a good range of curriculum enrichment activities. The area organises an 'Industry week' where all students participate in a range of activities, some of which are facilitated by external organisations. Students take part in college and national competitions.

91. Support for students at the college and in the workplace is good. Students receive good initial advice to ensure that they are enrolled on courses that are appropriate for them. Specialist support is effective. Students identified as dyslexic are given regular support either on a one-to-one basis or by a learning support tutor during theory lessons. Individual learning plans include reference to an individual's preferred learning styles but teachers do not always use the information effectively when planning lessons. Progress reviews are not always effective. Tutors make insufficient use of individual learning plans during the reviews. There are regular visits by assessors to the work place for work-based learners. Assessment arrangements for work-based learners are satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are good. Teamwork is effective in both identifying and addressing areas for improvement. Teaching and learning are being improved through effective peer and management lesson observations. For work-based provision, the senior training advisor and tutors meet frequently to discuss the individual progress of learners. However, there is no rigorous tracking system yet developed to monitor learners and ensure they are making sufficient progress. Links with employers are generally good but there is poor planning of training for learners who are salon-based.

Health, social care and public services



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on public services and NVQ courses

- high retention rates on level 3 childcare courses and the NVQ 2 care course

- good links between theory and work practice in lessons

- o effective academic and pastoral support.

Weaknesses

- o low pass rates on childcare courses in 2002/03
- o poor retention rates on the foundation award in caring for children
- o some inappropriate classroom accommodation
- o teaching in some lessons which does not challenge and motivate all students.

Scope of provision

93. There is a broad range of courses for full-time students in childcare, early years, public services and health and social care. At the time of inspection, there were 163 students aged 16 to 18, and 19 adult learners enrolled on full-time courses. Provision for part-time students includes counselling skills, childminding practice, dental nursing and NVQ 2 in care and early years care and education and NVQ 3 in early years care and education, promoting independence, care and caring for children and young people. There are approximately 700 adult learners enrolled on these courses.

Achievement and standards

94. Pass rates are high and above the national averages on some programmes. Pass rates on the first and national diplomas in public services and the NVQ 2 care course are well above the national averages. Retention rates are well above the national averages on the first diploma in public services, the national diploma in early years, the NVQ 2 course in care and the diploma in childcare and education. However, in 2002/03, the pass rates were significantly below the national averages on childcare courses and retention rates were poor on the foundation award in caring for children. Students' achievements on public services and childcare courses are celebrated at awards evenings. Attendance for most lessons is high.

95. The standard of work produced by students during lessons varies considerably. In childcare and health and public services, students link theory to workplace practices effectively in their written work. For example, students on the NVQ care course relate effectively the topic of healthy eating to the diets for the elderly in the care homes in which they worked. Progression to higher study and employment are good. In 2002/03, a significant majority of students completing the national diploma in early years gained employment or progressed to nurse and teacher training. Approximately 90% of students completing the diploma in public services gained vocationally-related employment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
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CACHE foundation award in caring for children	1	No. of starts	35	24	23
		% retention	71	75	30
		% pass rate	88	89	71
First diploma public services	2	No. of starts	20	23	33
		% retention	95	83	85
		% pass rate	79	84	96
NVQ care 1 and 2 year	2	No. of starts	11	92	79
		% retention	91	93	84
		% pass rate	90	100	91
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	22	16	37
		% retention	45	81	62
		% pass rate	100	85	96
National diploma early years	3	No. of starts	30	26	30
		% retention	50	54	63
		% pass rate	87	100	89
CACHE diploma in childcare and education and precursor	3	No. of starts	31	33	20
		% retention	77	55	55
		% pass rate	88	89	64

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

Quality of education and training

96. Teaching is at least satisfactory and some is good or better. The better lessons are well planned and purposeful with clear aims and objectives that are shared with students. In these lessons, teachers use a variety of methods, including case studies, visits and visiting speakers. Teachers identify preferred learning styles and modify their teaching methods to suit the specific learning needs of students. In a lesson on childcare, a fire officer provided up-to-date specialist expertise on the importance of safety and used a range of resources to illustrate points. In the weaker lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to the individual needs of all learners, and fail to challenge and motivate some students. During some lessons on level 3 courses, teachers failed to provide students with sufficient work to enable them to develop appropriate research and analysis skills. Teachers do not make sufficient use of ILT to enhance learning.

97. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and all hold or are working towards a teaching qualification. Some teachers have recent, relevant work experience and use up-to-date examples to help students learn effectively. For example, in a first diploma public services lesson the teacher drew on his recent work experiences to illustrate the role of public services in dealing with road traffic accidents. Students on childcare courses either work or are placed in a range of different organisations and are able to share their experiences with each other during lessons. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. At the Chaffron Way Campus some classrooms are too small for the planned activities and the numbers of students in the class. Private facilities for students on counselling courses are inadequate. There is a good range of consumable items for practical work and the learning materials are mostly of a good standard. The learning centre has a comprehensive range of textbooks, journals and videocassettes.

98. Assessment of students' work is fair and accurate with supportive and constructive comments provided by teachers to help students improve their work. However, spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not always corrected. The assessment on NVQ courses is rigorous. Initial assessment results are discussed with students to determine their support needs. Some students

attend additional support classes but additional in-class support is not provided. Parents are informed of students' progress at parents' evenings and contact is made with parents as issues arise, which has contributed to an improvement in punctuality and attendance.

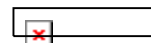
99. There is a good range of provision and progression opportunities in childcare, early years, counselling and public services. Full-time students undertake additional programmes to broaden their experience and improve their employment prospects. Links developed by staff with local organisations have led to an expanding range of courses for part-time students.

100. There are high levels of personal support for students. Weekly tutorials for all students address academic and personal needs. There is effective support provided outside of timetabled lessons and students are referred to specialist external agencies when appropriate. Students appreciate the support given to them. There is comprehensive advice and guidance linked to diagnostic testing and identification of additional support needs. The induction programme enables students to settle quickly into their courses and there are arrangements for those who start their courses late. Careers advice is good, with contributions from employers and representatives from local universities.

Leadership and management

101. Leadership and management are satisfactory and communication is strong. Teams meet regularly and progress with action plans are reviewed during meetings. The views of students are taken into account, contributing to improved retention rates this year. The college's lesson observation schemes highlighted weaknesses in teaching and appropriate staff development activities have been undertaken to rectify these. The self-assessment report is comprehensive, but overstates some strengths and fails to identify some weaknesses. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively during lessons and there are some displays on equal opportunities in classrooms and corridors.

Visual arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on the national diploma courses in media and graphic design

- high standards of practical skill and critical judgement achieved by students

- much good teaching

- high quality specialist equipment in media and graphic design.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates on the national diploma in applied arts and interior design and foundation studies in art and design

- weak development of key skills.

Scope of provision

102. The college offers a wide range of courses in visual arts and media and the majority of students are aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were 320 students enrolled on full-time courses. Of these, 256 students were enrolled on national diploma courses in applied arts, graphic design, interior design, media and textiles. A further 15 students were enrolled on the diploma in foundation studies in art and design. The remainder were enrolled on foundation and intermediate GNVQs in art and design and an intermediate GNVQ course in media. There were 210 students studying a variety of part-time courses during both the day and evening.

Achievement and standards

103. Pass rates on the national diploma courses in media and graphic design have exceeded the national averages for the past three years. Retention rates on these programmes have also been consistently above the national averages. The pass rate on the GNVQ foundation art and design course has been at 100% since 2001/02, and the pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate art and design course have also been above the national averages for the past three years. Although the pass rates on the national diploma courses in applied arts and interior design have been high, the retention rates have been poor. The retention and pass rates on the foundation diploma in art and design have been below the national averages for the last three years. Development of key skills is weak. A significant proportion of students do not have lessons that allow them to develop the key skills of number, communication or ICT. The minority of students who have timetabled key skills lessons neither value nor enjoy their key skills studies. Many students progress to higher-level courses. In 2002/03, all students who planned to progress to higher-level courses did so: 57% progressed to HE, 16% to FE and 17% entered employment. The destinations of the remaining 10% were unknown.

104. Students develop high standards of practical skill and critical judgement. They demonstrate knowledge and skill in a range of techniques and consistently provide evidence of exploratory work. However, some of the work produced by art and design students showed weak drawing and visualising skills. Students develop significant levels of skill in research, evaluation and critical analysis in both practical and theoretical situations.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ Foundation	1	No. of starts	*	15	8
		% retention	*	46	89
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GNVQ Intermediate	2	No. of starts	19	16	22
		% retention	84	100	77
		% pass rate	88	94	100
ND Applied Arts	3	No. of starts	10	17	14
		% retention	100	65	43

		% pass rate	70	88	100
ND Graphic Design	3	No. of starts	38	38	37
		% retention	87	68	76
		% pass rate	97	100	100
ND Interior Design	3	No. of starts	18	21	12
		% retention	67	62	42
		% pass rate	80	100	100
ND Media	3	No. of starts	38	39	48
		% retention	71	69	83
		% pass rate	96	100	100
ABC Foundation	3	No. of starts	24	14	17
		% retention	75	86	65
		% pass rate	94	83	91

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

105. Teachers are skilled and motivate students by their expectations and their expertise. They often relate theory to practice effectively. Students enjoy the demands placed upon them. Courses and lessons are generally well planned to challenge students, although in a few lessons the vocational focus was lost and students' motivation lessened. Most teachers are aware of the individual needs of their students and their potential. Students make good progress in lessons. For example, in a GNVQ-foundation drawing lesson, students initially struggled to cope with the demands of drawing in charcoal. They initially rejected the medium as too messy and uncontrolled. The teacher carefully and sensitively drew them through their difficulties to success. Teachers ensure that students develop a firm base of technical skills, from which students can interpret their own ideas and explore their own interests. This was particularly evident in a graphic design class on cardboard engineering, which resulted in complex articulated models of dragons and scale models of car prototypes.

106. In a few weaker lessons teachers underestimated the capabilities of students and failed to challenge them. In lessons dealing with the potential of particular mediums, the teachers failed to ensure that students fully explored the capability of the medium, which resulted in time being spent unproductively.

107. Teachers have relevant expertise in their subjects. They have extensive qualifications and professional experience. The majority have first degree qualifications. Most have teaching qualifications. The college supports teachers in gaining teaching and other postgraduate qualifications. The support provided by technicians is effective. Resources are good. The new building provides high quality accommodation. Accommodation is arranged to enable students to move easily between studio and computing facilities. Studios and workshops are well equipped. Digital media equipment is of a very high standard. These facilities enhanced an entertaining live production of 'Never Mind the Buzzcocks', which students scripted, acted, produced, directed and controlled. Students on graphic design courses produce a high standard of work through their access to industry-standard hardware and software.

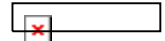
108. Assessment practice is satisfactory. However, on some courses assessment criteria are unclear and fail to indicate to students what they have to do to achieve. The internal verification process is thorough and effective. There is good personal and academic support. There are regular reviews of students' progress although the targets set for students are insufficiently defined.

109. There are many opportunities for students to enrich their studies. There are frequent visits arranged to galleries and exhibitions and visits abroad to studios and exhibitions. Live projects are integral to many courses and exhibitions of student work are a central feature of the curriculum area. There is a lack of display of student work within the college itself.

Leadership and management

110. Leadership and management are good. The area has a clear strategic direction and most course management is good. The national diploma course in interior design has insufficient specialist teaching included as part of the course timetable. Resources are well deployed. There are regular meetings of staff at all levels. The emphasis on gaining teaching qualifications and developing teaching skills has improved teaching. Inspectors agreed with many of the findings given in the self-assessment report for the curriculum area.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level sociology and psychology

- good progress made by students on access programme

- courses responsive to student needs and interests.

Weaknesses

- declining and poor pass rates on AS-level and GCSE courses

- poor attendance in many lessons

- unsatisfactory teaching for a significant proportion of students

- unsatisfactory leadership and management of GCSE and AS-level and GCE A-level provision.

Scope of provision

111. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in humanities, which includes evening provision. GCSE and AS-level and GCE A-level courses are managed in collaboration with a nearby school. The college also offers a range of distance learning humanities courses. At the time of the inspection, 408 students were enrolled on AS-level and GCE A-level courses and 60 students were studying part-time. Approximately 92 students were enrolled on GCSE courses and 88 students were enrolled on access to HE courses.

Achievement and standards

112. In 2002/03, the pass rates were high on the GCE A-level psychology and sociology courses at 86% and 100% respectively. On the GCE A-level sociology course the proportion of students achieving high grades improved to 36% and was 10% above the national average. With the exception of sociology and geography, the pass rates on AS-level courses were significantly below national averages. The pass rates at grade A* to C on GCSE psychology and sociology courses were also below national averages. Pass rates on the access courses are high and in 2003, 91% of students progressed to HE or employment. Retention rates are broadly in line with the national averages on GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level and access courses. However, in 2002/03, retention rates on the AS-level history course declined to well below the national average. The college has only introduced recently a scheme to compare students' performance with their prior attainment.

113. Standards of students' written work are satisfactory and students acquire a good knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and the ability to apply theoretical perspectives. Students are confident in exchanging views in small groups and making presentations to their peers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE psychology 1 year	2	No. of starts	39	36	44
		% retention	72	67	59
		% pass rate	54	46	42
GCSE sociology 1 year	2	No. of starts	19	19	25
		% retention	79	68	64
		% pass rate	67	62	44
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	18	19	24
		% retention	78	89	63
		% pass rate	93	71	47
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	59	56	65
		% retention	73	64	82
		% pass rate	53	56	43
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	33	33	44
		% retention	78	85	77
		% pass rate	58	82	76
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	28	17	15
		% retention	57	41	93
		% pass rate	38	71	86

GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	19	18	17
		% retention	79	44	82
		% pass rate	60	88	100
Access to social and community studies	3	No. of starts	*	44	61
		% retention	*	93	80
		% pass rate	*	98	88

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

* course not offered

Quality of education and training

114. In most lessons, teaching and learning is satisfactory and some is good. However, in too many lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. In the better lessons students work well together in small groups and develop their understanding and analytical skills through their discussions. In a lesson on ethical issues in research, students recalled a diverse range of studies and applied and discussed the issues with skill and insight. Students on a GCSE psychology class took a lively interest in Freudian theory of moral development. The teacher conveyed enthusiasm for the subject and used the good example of a lost wallet to raise their understanding of the concept of conscience and the superego. Independent research and presentation skills are developed in philosophy and sociology through a series of individual presentations. Unsatisfactory and poor lessons are characterised by: students spending too much time copying down notes; ineffective questioning; imprecise instructions given to students; lack of direction given on note taking resulting in some students failing to record useful learning points; lack of variety in teaching methods; and insufficient stimulating visual material to enliven learning.

115. Most teachers are well qualified and have relevant experience. Newly appointed teachers are well supported through a mentoring scheme. In two subjects, changes in teaching staff have disrupted students' learning. There is a lack of IT facilities in general classrooms and limited hardware and software available in the learning resources centre. Teachers do not plan for the use of IT to support and develop students' learning and do not refer students to relevant Internet websites.

116. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. Students on access courses are given a clear picture of their progress. Feedback on assignments is explicitly linked to assessment criteria and supplemented by constructive comments and an opportunity for students to comment. There is a thorough internal verification process to confirm the accuracy of marking. Much of the homework set for AS-level and GCE A-level students is based directly on exam requirements, often using past paper questions. Feedback is not always systematic and varies between constructive, helpful comments and stark judgements. There are no standards for marking students' work.

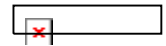
117. The programme of courses is responsive to the needs and interests of students. The access course offers a good range of pathways for students and offers an evening option to suit the needs of those in employment. The access course successfully recruits minority ethnic students who make up a third of the total. Courses are offered flexibly to suit the differing needs of students. 'Flexilearn' is a popular distance learning option, which attracts shift workers and those with family responsibilities. AS-level and GCE A2 courses offer a good range of options and complementary enrichment activities.

118. Students receive good support from subject teachers and tutors on personal and learning issues. The results of initial assessments of students' skills and prior attainment are shared with teachers. Teachers receive helpful advice from the learning support team on how to support individuals with additional support needs. Learning assistants provide support where appropriate.

Leadership and management

119. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory for GCSE and AS-level and GCE A-level provision. The collaborative arrangements with the nearby partner school are insufficiently robust to ensure improvement in standards. Partnership working is still developing and there are timetabling and communication difficulties that affect the quality of teaching and learning. Some aspects of the college's quality assurance systems do not apply to the teachers from the school. Strategies for reviewing and improving teaching and learning and students' performance are weak. Course teams are held insufficiently accountable for reviewing and improving their courses. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative and makes no reference to students' views. Course meetings are held infrequently and outcomes and actions are not recorded. Schemes of work are often no more than topic lists and do not specify activities or skills development. Management and coordination of the access courses and distance-learning scheme are good.

English and communication



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on the GCE A-level English language and literature course
- good teaching on AS-level and GCE A-level English courses
- thorough marking and assessment of students' work
- good in-class and tutorial support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on the certificate of advanced English and certificate of proficiency in English courses
- below average high grade pass rates on GCSE English
- insufficient extension work for the more able students in a minority of lessons

- o unsatisfactory management of courses.

Scope of provision

120. The college offers GCE A-level and AS-level courses in English language and literature, and communication studies. At the time of inspection, approximately 150 students were enrolled on these courses as part of a full-time programme. These courses are offered at the sixth form centre, operated in collaboration with a local school. Programmes offered during the day and evening to part-time learners include GCSE English and English as a foreign language (EFL). Approximately 120 students were enrolled on these programmes at the time of the inspection.

Achievement and standards

121. Pass rates on the GCE A-level course in English language and literature are outstanding and have been consistently at 100% for the last three years. In 2002/03, retention rates on this programme were above the national average. In 2002/03, the pass and retention rates on the AS-level communication course were above the national averages. However, retention rates on AS-level English language and literature and GCE A-level communication courses are low. The pass rate on the GCE A-level communication course was high in 2001 and 2002 but declined in 2003. Pass rates on the GCSE English course declined in 2002/03 and were below the national averages, although retention rates have improved. Pass rates for EFL students taking the Cambridge Advanced Certificate and Proficiency exams have been poor over the last three years.

122. The standard of many students' written work is high. Students are able to demonstrate good subject knowledge: they know set texts well, understand literary and linguistic concepts and use the appropriate terminology with confidence. Students on English courses hold lively discussions that support their learning and understanding. Learners on EFL courses are able to demonstrate their growing understanding of grammar. Some students' files are poorly organized and do not reflect rigorous study. In some lessons, students' attendance and punctuality are poor. Teachers do not always comment on lateness or suggest strategies for improving punctuality.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English (A* to C grades)	2	No. of starts	84	83	88
		% retention	62	66	74
		% pass rate	44	55	42
Certificate in advanced English	2	No. of starts	10	17	17
		% retention	60	71	59
		% pass rate	33	42	30
AS-level English language/literature	3	No. of starts	45	37	59
		% retention	84	68	69
		% pass rate	87	100	76
GCE A-level/A2 communication*	3	No. of starts	22	28	11
		% retention	50	91	55
		% pass rate	100	95	67
GCE A-level/A2 English	3	No. of starts	35	28	23

language/literature*		% retention	54	86	96
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level communication	3	No. of starts	39	24	20
		% retention	82	75	90
		% pass rate	100	67	94

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

* Two-year GCE A level completing in 2000/01

Quality of education and training

123. Teaching on the GCE A-level and AS-level English language and literature courses is good. Lessons are well planned and tasks are carefully divided into manageable sections so that students remain interested and alert. Teachers choose topics, texts and resources that will interest learners and relate to their experiences, including texts from different periods and cultures. Students on English language and literature courses write their own texts, changing from one genre to another. For example, in one English lesson, students re-wrote Martin Luther King's speech as a recipe for peace. This helped them to understand the differences between speech and writing and different registers. In many lessons, teachers ensure that students are able to develop vocabulary and grammar skills effectively. Specific terminology is covered thoroughly, so students are able to use literary and linguistic definitions with confidence. During GCE A2 English and communications lessons, students are appropriately challenged by complex theories. They learn how form shapes meaning in texts by applying theories to familiar texts, for example the *Mona Lisa* and *East Enders*.

124. In the weaker lessons, teachers fail to involve all students and often learning goes unchecked. Those students who are quiet or reluctant learners are not asked questions and make insufficient progress. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not set sufficient research and discovery tasks to extend the learning of the most able students. Work in lessons is not always followed up by independent study, revision or homework tasks.

125. Teachers are suitably qualified and have sufficient expertise for the courses they teach. At the collaborative sixth form centre, staff from the college and the school share the teaching of advanced level provision. Accommodation is spacious, although classrooms lack displays of students' work. Teaching and learning materials are rarely shared between teachers and few of these materials are made available on the college's intranet or in the classrooms. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning.

126. Marking and assessment of students' work is thorough. Teachers give detailed written and oral feedback on students' work to help them understand how they can improve. Students understand the assessment objectives and can assess their own and others' work using model essays. GCSE coursework is meticulously marked and teachers provide students with detailed ideas of how to improve their work.

127. There is an extensive programme of enrichment activities designed to broaden students' learning. Activities include study days, trips to conferences and lectures, and regular theatre visits, which support the study of drama and spoken texts. During lessons, students make effective use of what they have learned from these activities whilst undertaking class work.

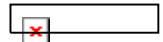
128. Support for students is good. Teachers offer students additional individual sessions to help them make better progress. Teachers are aware of the individual needs of their students and carefully monitor and report the progress of all students. Progress reviews are effective and tutors provide guidance for students to help them with their applications for places on HE courses. Students identified with specific needs receive regular support in literacy, which helps them improve the standard of their essay writing. Induction materials support students at the beginning of their

courses and clearly set out what is expected from them during their studies.

Leadership and management

129. The leadership and management of advanced level English language and literature provision in the sixth form centre are unsatisfactory. Although members of the English team work together informally, collaboration between the teachers employed by the school and the teachers employed by the college is inadequate. Teachers from the school and college teach to different syllabus specifications, resulting in few opportunities to share ideas and plan lessons together. The college's lesson observation scheme does not extend to the teachers employed by the school. On advanced level programmes and the GCSE course teachers insufficiently review their courses and students' achievements. Self-assessment lacks the rigour necessary to bring about improvements.

English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- productive links with community organisations to meet learners' needs

- strong student support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on most short courses and the preliminary English test course

- poor attendance

- insufficient range of teaching strategies to meet individual learning needs

- inadequate initial assessment and poor planning of learning.

Scope of provision

130. The college offers a broad range of courses in ESOL. Courses range from entry level 1 to entry level 3 and lead to externally accredited awards. At the time of inspection there were 46 full-time and 162 part-time students enrolled on courses at the two college campuses. Approximately 75 learners

are enrolled on part-time courses offered at two venues in the community. A significant majority of learners are adults. The provision at the college has expanded recently to include vocational courses in business, book-keeping and ICT. There is also a citizenship course. Additionally, 62 students on other college courses were receiving individual ESOL learning support.

Achievement and standards

131. Pass rates on most ESOL short courses are unsatisfactory and in 2002/03 were between 7% and 17% below the national averages. Between 2000/01 and 2002/03, the pass rates on the Pitman spoken ESOL basic course improved, and although the pass rate was above the national average in 2002/03, it remains low. Over the same period, retention rates on the Pitman ESOL courses have improved. Of the total number of learners enrolling on one-year ESOL courses, the proportion successfully completing the courses is low. Attendance to lessons is poor or erratic. In the lessons observed, overall attendance was poor at 63%. The standard achieved by learners during their lessons varies considerably. In some lessons learners fail to develop the language skills necessary to allow them to access employment. In the best lessons learners made good progress and demonstrated confidence in speaking and writing.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English for speakers of other language, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Pitman's ESOL Basic (short course)	E	No. of starts	37	77	143
		% retention	68	92	99
		% pass rate	0	38	39
Pitman's ESOL Elementary (short course)	E	No. of starts	23	4	60
		% retention	52	100	98
		% pass rate	0	100	31
Pitman's Basic Spoken (short course)	E	No. of starts	39	72	146
		% retention	69	93	100
		% pass rate	30	51	54
Pitman's Elementary Spoken (short course)	E	No. of starts	23	9	150
		% retention	52	100	99
		% pass rate	0	67	36
Cambridge Preliminary English test (1 year course)	E	No. of starts	43	60	36
		% retention	60	67	72
		% pass rate	31	30	31
Cambridge key English test (1 year course)	E	No. of starts	32	17	13
		% retention	69	71	46
		% pass rate	41	58	67

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

Quality of education and training

132. In many lessons, teaching and learning is satisfactory and some is good. However, in a minority of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. In the more successful lessons teachers use carefully graded questioning. In an effective entry-level business communication lesson the teacher helped learners to develop workplace telephone skills by relating the topic to their own experiences of work. In the weaker lessons teachers fail to use an adequate range of teaching strategies to address the learning

needs of individuals. In too many lessons all learners are expected to work through the same activities despite identified differences in learning style or needs. The more able learners complete the work early and lose interest. Materials to extend learning are not provided. Ineffective questioning by teachers often allows a few learners to dominate the lesson and hinders the learning of the less confident. Teaching and learning in ESOL learning support sessions are satisfactory.

133. Most teachers are well qualified and hold English language teaching qualifications. However, many teachers have not received training on the national ESOL core curriculum. Classrooms used by ESOL learners are not equipped with computers. The numbers of course books and dictionaries made available to learners during lessons are insufficient. Accommodation at the main college campuses is adequate. Access for learners with mobility difficulties is good at the main college campus and at most community venues. However, at one of the community venues classrooms are very small and are not easily accessible to wheelchair users.

134. Initial assessment is inadequate. It is insufficiently comprehensive and fails to provide a complete picture of learners' needs and abilities at the beginning of their courses. The targets set in most individual learning plans are often ineffective and teachers do not use them to develop schemes of work. Formative assessment is undertaken each term, but does not systematically assess all language skills.

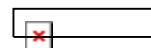
135. The college has established productive links with community organisations to widen participation and to meet the needs of learners who would not otherwise attend college. Courses are offered at two convenient community venues.

136. Learners receive good personal support from their tutors, both informally and formally. There are good links with the careers and guidance service. The tutorial system provides good pastoral support for full-time learners. Learning support for learners on mainstream courses is usually provided on a one-to-one basis and takes place in a specialised learning support centre.

Leadership and management

137. Strategic management of the area is effective. In September 2003 a new team was formed to support the Skills for Life agenda and to widen participation. The management of ESOL learning support is satisfactory. However, aspects of operational management are unsatisfactory. Communication with the large proportion of part-time teachers is often ineffective. Self-assessment, at course and section level, lacks rigour. Targets to raise learners' achievements are not sufficiently demanding. The self-assessment report fails to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning. Low attendance to some lessons is not being addressed effectively.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high standard of work in literacy and numeracy by some learners attending courses at the main college campus

- good teaching which meets the needs of individual learners on discrete courses and study support

- good assessment practice which supports teaching and learning
- effective support in literacy and numeracy.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on discrete courses in 2002/03
- ineffective teaching methods used in some lessons at the community venues
- insufficient basic skills provision
- ineffective action planning to raise standards.

Scope of provision

138. The literacy and numeracy provision includes courses at community venues; discrete literacy and numeracy courses at the main college campus, which are offered as part of a foundation programme for 16 to 18 year olds; and literacy and numeracy learning support. At the time of the inspection there were approximately 390 students enrolled on discrete courses, including 36 learners on the Prince's Trust programme. Students receive literacy and numeracy support in individual sessions or through team-teaching on some college courses. There were 294 students receiving literacy and/or numeracy support.

Achievement and standards

139. Most adult learners achieve their personal learning goals and are successful in gaining modules of Open College awards. Learners at the community venues gain credit for units of work, which increases their confidence as they proceed with the full programme. Where literacy and numeracy forms part of another programme, such as a vocational course, some learners fail to achieve the literacy or numeracy elements. Data provided by the college for 2002/03 shows that retention and pass rates were below the national averages on discrete literacy and numeracy courses. Students' attendance to some lessons is poor.

140. Standards of work achieved by many learners on discrete literacy and numeracy courses at the main college campus are high. In the study support sessions, students' portfolios are well structured and some work is of a high standard. Learning support is effective in raising standards and achievements. Overall, a large majority of learners identified as needing literacy and numeracy support attend the support sessions. Data supplied by the college shows that literacy and numeracy support is contributing to improvements in the retention and pass rates on some courses in visual arts, engineering and catering.

141. Learners acquire skills over and above their primary learning goals, which add value to their achievements. Some learners demonstrate good development of independent learning skills.

Quality of education and training

142. The majority of teaching is satisfactory or better. Teaching in a few lessons is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, planning is effective and teachers make use of appropriate resources. Learners are challenged and the work is well structured. Most teachers use a variety of effective teaching methods to meet the different needs of individuals. During a lesson for 16 to 18 year olds, the teacher addressed the needs of each learner by using skilful questioning. Effective teaching methods are used in team-taught lessons as part of the study support strategy for 16 to 18 year olds. In the most effective lessons at the community venues, the teaching fully engages all learners. During a lesson for adults, the teacher's skilled and enthusiastic approach in teaching measurement motivated all learners. Learning was continually checked for understanding through a series of practical tasks and learners developed a clear understanding of the numerical concepts involved. However, in a few lessons held at community venues, teaching is dull and uninspiring and teachers' subject knowledge is weak. In these lessons students make insufficient progress. In some lessons, teachers do not make sufficient use of ILT to enliven teaching and learning. Teachers often rely too heavily on paper-based materials. During learning support activities teachers are successful in ensuring that the longer term, underpinning skill needs of learners are met.

143. Most teachers hold a basic skills teaching qualification. Some teachers at the community venues are qualified to teach the full range of basic skills. Staff development programmes provide opportunities for teachers to update their skills through a rolling programme of staff development that takes account of the ongoing changes to curriculum and standards. Most specialist resources and general accommodation are good but there is insufficient practical equipment to support the teaching of numeracy.

144. All learners are initially assessed to identify their individual literacy and numeracy support needs. In some curriculum areas, the personal tutor, course tutor and support tutor work well together to set the level of work for learners, and individual learning plans are used to develop an appropriate scheme of work. The process is undertaken less effectively in some other curriculum areas. Assignment work is mapped to the national curriculum and achievements are recorded at the end of every session against the national standards. Frequent and regular assessment of progress is recorded. Learners are fully aware of the documentation and how it helps them make progress. Progress reviews are undertaken at regular intervals and are effective in supporting learners in managing their work.

145. The college is strengthening links with the local community. There are examples of innovative work in some of the most socially deprived areas of Milton Keynes. An example is 'Midsummer Skills', a partnership arrangement with a housing association. The 'Vocational Opportunities' and 'Signpost' programmes provide a comprehensive curriculum to learners who are not yet able to access mainstream provision. However, the range of basic skills courses offered at the main college campuses is too narrow. A foyer project is successful in offering flexible basic skills provision to young people living in foyers. The college is also servicing a Prince's Trust programme by responding to the basic skills needs of 36 students.

146. There is a high level of support provided for students at all centres. Learners at the community venues receive regular careers advice and guidance and there is good level of personal support for students at the college. Learners are given effective advice to help them tackle a wide range of problems.

Leadership and management

147. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is now a clear vision and strategic direction for basic skills provision. Senior managers and curriculum managers are starting to address the limitations in current provision and are developing additional local partnerships to broaden inclusion. The Skills for Life strategy has yet to be fully implemented following the completion of the

planning and development phases. Quality assurance procedures are carried out by teaching teams, but action planning to drive up standards is insufficiently robust.

Part D: College data

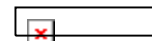
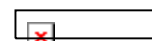


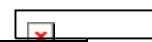
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16 to 18 %	19+ %
1	22	49
2	39	31
3	22	13
4/5	0	4
Other	17	3
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16 to 18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,722	593	7
Land-based provision	0	6	0
Construction	9	143	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	243	271	2
Business administration, management and professional	732	2,278	9
Information and communication technology	1,595	1,210	9
Retailing, customer service and transportation	50	156	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	571	1,221	6
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	248	362	2
Health, social care and public services	1,062	1,693	9

Visual and performing arts and media	612	361	3
Humanities	1,527	410	6
English, languages and communication	2,111	992	10
Foundation programmes	1,536	1,493	9
Other (unclassified curriculum areas)	2,168	6,660	27
Total	14,186	17,849	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16 to 18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	402	487	831	2,832	3,493	3,662
	Retention rate %	70	64	71	63	60	51
	National average %	75	76	-	69	70	-
	Pass rate %	72	57	56	61	64	71
	National average %	69	71	-	68	71	-
2	Starters excluding transfers	908	918	1,114	991	1,448	1,528
	Retention rate %	75	76	72	72	70	64
	National average %	70	72	-	68	68	-
	Pass rate %	73	74	67	64	70	80
	National average %	69	71	-	68	72	-
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,234	1,186	1,377	1,021	960	1,064
	Retention rate %	70	65	72	71	70	68
	National average %	71	77	-	68	70	-
	Pass rate %	74	82	75	69	82	77
	National average %	77	79	-	69	72	-
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	341	224	208
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	78	62	78
	National average %	*	*	*	67	67	-

	Pass rate %	*	*	*	54	68	41
	National average %	*	*	*	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 Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR.

** numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

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)	55	34	11	93
Level 2 (intermediate)	60	34	6	73
Level 1 (foundation)	65	35	0	20
Other sessions	68	19	13	31
Totals	59	32	8	217

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