



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Mid-Cheshire College

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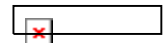
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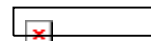
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Basic information about the college

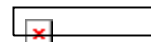


Name of college:	Mid-Cheshire College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	John Reilly
Address of college:	Hartford Campus Chester Road Northwich Cheshire CW 1LJ
Telephone number:	01606 74444
Fax number:	01606 720700
Chair of governors:	Bob Floyd
Unique reference number:	130620
Name of reporting inspector:	Nigel Flood
Dates of inspection:	19-23 April and 27-29April 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



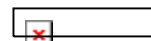
Mid-Cheshire College is a medium-sized general further education (FE) college located in Vale Royal, a rural and urban district of Cheshire. The college has three sites. The main site, where most provision is located, is on the outskirts of Northwich at the Hartford campus. A significant part of the visual and performing arts and media provision is provided at the London Road site near the centre of Northwich. A third site, the Verdin Centre at Winsford, is used mostly for health and social care provision. The college offers provision at local centres including Frodsham, Rudheath, Helsby and Tarporley, and on employers' premises.

The college provides programmes in all areas of learning identified by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The areas of learning with the largest numbers of students are visual and performing arts and media, information and communications technology (ICT), and English, languages and communications. In other areas such as retailing, customer service, transportation and land-based provision, the number of students is low. Courses range from entry level 1 to the higher level. The college provides learning in the community and a small number of work-based learning programmes. In 2001/02, there were 1,901 enrolments aged 16 to 18, of whom, 59% were full time and 14,544 adult enrolments, of whom, 86% were part time. Some 60% of students were female and 2% were of minority ethnic origin.

The population of Vale Royal in 2001 was 122,089, of which, 1.2 % were from minority ethnic groups. Unemployment in March 2004 was 1.7 % against a national average of 2.5%. The service sector makes up around two-thirds of Vale Royal's economic activity. The remainder is mostly manufacturing and construction; around 3% is agriculture. The proportion of manufacturing and construction is 10% above the national average for this area of economic activity. The percentage of pupils in Cheshire achieving grades A* to C, at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) level in 2003, was 59%, against a national average of 53%

The college's mission statement is: 'Where learning comes first'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged provision to be outstanding in two of the curriculum areas, good in four and satisfactory in four. The college's main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- increasing and high pass and retention rates for adult students

- outstanding provision in visual arts and design, and modern foreign languages

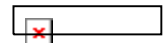
- good college-based ICT resources
- effective strategies to widen participation
- good guidance and support for students
- clear leadership to raise standards.

What should be improved

- retention rates for students aged 16 to 18
- pass and retention rates of work-based learners
- pass rates for key skills
- access for those with restricted mobility at the London Road site.

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

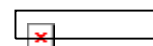


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Construction	Good. Pass rates on college-based courses are high. Teaching and

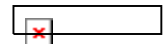
	learning in electrical installation are particularly good. Support for students is very good. The retention and pass rates for work-based learning are low.
General engineering	Satisfactory. Pass rates at level 3 are high. Most teaching is satisfactory. There is an effective range of learning activities and support for students is good. The pass rates at levels 1 and 2 in performing engineering operations are low. The progress of advanced modern apprentices is slow.
Business, administration, management and professional	Satisfactory. Pass rates on advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) and some professional courses are high. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory and there is good support for students' learning. The pass rates for general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate business are low and for work-based learning are very low.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates for adults are high. The support for students is good. Most teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are low pass rates for students aged 16 to 18.
Sports, leisure and tourism	Good. Pass rates are high on sports courses. The standard of students' work is good and there is very good teaching and learning. Retention rates are satisfactory on most courses, but low on the AVCE in travel and tourism course. The pass rate is low on the GNVQ intermediate travel and tourism course.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high and there is good teaching and learning of practical subjects. Additional learning support for students is good. The retention rate for the national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 beauty therapy course is low. There are not enough resources in the beauty therapy salons.
Health and social care	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses. Most teaching is good or better and there is effective development of key skills. There is good support for students and management is effective.
Visual and performing arts and media	Outstanding. Contributory grade for music and media: good. Pass rates are high in visual art and design. The quality of students' work is outstanding on new media centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) provision and visual arts and design courses. Teaching and learning are very good and there are excellent specialist resources. Students' progression to higher education (HE) and employment is good and there is very good support for students.
Languages	Outstanding. Pass rates are high on all courses and teaching is outstanding. Students demonstrate very high standards of written and oral work, and there is rigorous and effective assessment. Support for students is good and management is excellent.
Literacy and numeracy	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on adult courses. Teaching and support for students are good. There is effective individual support to promote learning and good management.

How well is the college led and managed?



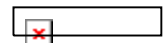
areas is good or better and none is unsatisfactory. The majority of teaching and learning is good or better and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, since the last inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1999, has declined significantly. Between 2001 and 2003, most pass rates increased. In 2003, nearly all were above the national average. Most retention rates increased for adult students between 2001 and 2003 and were above the national average, but, for students aged 16 to 18, most declined and were below the national average in 2003. Pass rates for key skills and work-based learning were low. Student guidance and support are good. Quality assurance and staff development are mostly successful in improving performance. The self-assessment report is generally accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and there are clear action plans to remedy issues. Communications between managers and staff are good. Managers have developed successful strategies to widen participation. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Staff make effective use of management information. Financial management is satisfactory.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



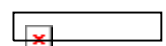
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college has widened participation for groups under-represented in FE successfully, through clear policies, changes made to provision and the good support provided to students. The college offers courses at a significant number of community venues and makes provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at locations and times convenient to students. There is effective numeracy, literacy and language support for students. Over 200 young people, aged 14 to 16, attend the college. The college's equality forum monitors the implementation of the comprehensive equality policy and the dissemination of good practice effectively. The college's response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) is satisfactory. Student and staff data are analysed by age, gender, ethnicity, disability and postcode. Staff receive training on their statutory obligations. The college has adapted buildings and provided specialist equipment to support students with disabilities, but there is poor access for students with restricted mobility at the London Road site.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. The college provides students with comprehensive and impartial advice and guidance before they start their courses. Initial assessment is prompt and identifies effectively those students in need of additional support. There is a high take-up of the support offered and additional learning support is effective in improving students' progress and achievement. Communication between personal tutors, key skills teachers and learning support tutors is good and there is rigorous monitoring of students' progress. Students receive good careers advice and support in applying for HE. The college does not have sufficiently accurate and prompt data on students' attendance, but tutors follow up absence quickly and attendance rates are satisfactory. Tutorial provision is satisfactory and students value the support they receive from personal tutors. The college supports students with multiple and complex difficulties to help them successfully complete their studies and progress to HE and employment.

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

- supportive staff with time and patience

- treated as adults

- friendly atmosphere

- supported to do the best they can

- growth in confidence

- drop-in learning support centre

- enjoying coming to college.

What they feel could be improved

- lack of car parking

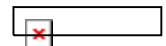
- overcrowded canteen

- key skills

- cover arrangements for absent teachers

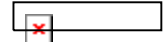
- o insufficient computers in classrooms
- o restrictions in the library at the London Road site.

Other information



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once the report is published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the 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 LSC. The LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

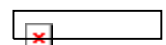


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	63	29	8
19+ and WBL*	67	31	2
Learning 16-18	59	35	6
19+ and WBL*	67	35	2

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. Most retention and pass rates increased between 2001 and 2003, and in 2003, were above the national average for similar colleges. Between 2001 and 2003, approximately 75% of pass rates increased. Most pass rates in 2003 were at, or above, the national average. Some 70% of retention rates increased between 2001 and 2003, and were at, or above, the national average. Overall, students make satisfactory or better progress when their results are compared with prior levels of attainment and learning, and most are improving their personal and learning skills. The college has been unsuccessful in raising key skills pass rates and they remain very low.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Pass rates for most students aged 16 to 18 declined during 2001 to 2002. Between 2002 and 2003, this trend was reversed and the pass rates increased. In 2003, 80% of success rates were at, or above, the national average. Most pass rates increased between 2001 and 2003. Nearly all pass rates in 2003 were above the national average. Between 2001 and 2003, 75% of retention rates declined and in 2003, most were at, or below, the national average. However, data from the college shows that between September 2003 and March 2004, retention rates for this age group were high.

3. The proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C in Cheshire schools is above the national average. Many students aged 16 to 18, recruited by the college, are those who do not achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C. Overall, these students are making adequate or better progress compared to prior levels of attainment and are developing effective learning skills. In most curriculum areas, students are developing good occupational skills. In construction and engineering, students have developed high levels of confidence when using equipment and hand tools. There is good use of algebra, trigonometry and physics by engineering students on national certificate and diploma courses. Sports students develop good coaching skills. In health and social care, GNVQ intermediate students make good use of the Internet to research work for their assignments. Visual arts and design students produce exciting and imaginative work across a wide range of specialisms. Some ICT students are not producing work of an appropriate standard and the punctuality of GNVQ intermediate ICT students in lessons is poor. Work-based learners develop occupational skills to the standards required by industry and the quality of their portfolios of evidence is satisfactory or better.

4. The number of work-based learners who complete all aspects of the framework successfully is low. Between 1999 and 2004, only 17% of learners completed their learning programme successfully. The overall pass rate for the main NVQ for work-based learning, between 1999 and 2004, was better than that for the completion of the framework, with 52% of learners achieving the award. The low achievement of the framework was due to lack of success of learners in achieving the key skills qualification.

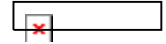
Adult learners

5. For adult students, overall success rates increased between 2001 and 2003, and all were above the national average. At levels 1 and 2, this was significant, with both levels being around 15% above the national average. Some 80% of pass rates increased between 2001 and 2003. At the higher level, the rate increased by 15%. In 2003, 60% of pass rates were above the national average and most of the remainder were at the national average. Between 2001 and 2003, nearly all retention rates increased and in 2003, most were at, or above, the national average.

6. In many instances, adult students come from groups who, traditionally, are under-represented in FE, for example, adults who have left school with few formal qualifications and who have not taken part in any further training to improve their learning skills. Adults make satisfactory or better progress in comparison with their previous levels of achievement. A higher proportion of adult students make good progress compared with students aged 16 to 18. Nearly all adults develop satisfactory or better learning skills during their time at college. Languages students develop very high standards of written and oral work. Adult ICT students understand new concepts quickly and build on previous knowledge well to comprehend new topics. Many business administration, management and professional students develop good levels of confidence in their work. Part-time visual arts and design students produce work of a very high standard. Most 'return to learn' literacy and numeracy

students progress to college courses or employment.

Quality of education and training



7. Inspectors graded teaching and learning in 178 lessons. Of these, teaching is good or better in 65% of lessons, satisfactory in 30% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 5% of lessons. Learning is good or better in 62% of lessons, satisfactory in 34% and unsatisfactory in 4%. This profile of teaching and learning grades is similar to the average for colleges of FE.

8. In modern foreign languages, visual arts and design, and sport, leisure and travel, the majority of teaching is good or better whilst in engineering and ICT, half is good or better. There are few unsatisfactory lessons in the college. The quality of teaching is similar between students aged 16 to 18 and adults. However, adults learn slightly better than students aged 16 to 18. Students' punctuality is satisfactory and during the inspection, attendance was 81%.

9. Most lessons are well planned with detailed schemes of work and lesson plans that take account of individual learning needs and styles. This is a particular strength in visual art and design, modern foreign languages, health and social care, and business administration, management and professional studies. However, there are examples of insufficiently detailed schemes of work and lesson plans in ICT. In a few lessons, students that are more able are challenged insufficiently to improve their performance and there are examples in health and social care, and engineering of the poor use of questioning by teachers.

10. Overall, students are well motivated and enthusiastic about their studies and staff and students have good working relationships. In the best lessons, teachers take account of students' individual needs with a range of teaching and learning approaches. Teachers particularly understand students' different learning styles in sport, leisure and travel, visual art and design, literacy and numeracy, health and social care, and business administration, management and professional. Teaching of practical skills is generally good. Practical and theoretical aspects of subjects are often well integrated and students' interest is maintained effectively. Teachers frequently make good use of praise and constructive criticism. In sport, leisure and travel, and visual arts and design, peer evaluation is used effectively to improve students' performance.

11. The college's estate is clean and managed well. Over the last two years, there has been a significant programme of work to improve accommodation. The refurbished reception and student services area at the Hartford campus are attractive and welcoming. There are extensive displays of students' work in classrooms and corridors. There is access to most parts of the college for those with restricted mobility; however, at the London Road site, some accommodation is not accessible. All estate staff are qualified appropriately. The college has supported estate staff to gain NVQ level 2 qualifications in both cleaning services and a relevant occupational area such as electrical installation.

12. Classroom accommodation is generally satisfactory. In visual and performing arts and media, including the CoVE provision, there are high-quality specialist rooms that are spacious and well equipped. Beauty therapy salons and motor vehicle workshops are at a standard found in industry, but in the salons for the larger groups of students, there is insufficient equipment. In engineering, modern foreign languages and particularly literacy and numeracy, there are a few inappropriate classrooms with insufficient natural light, restricted access and insufficient space. College-based ICT resources are good and they are well managed. There is good access for staff and students to personal computers and the Internet, with the exception of literacy and numeracy. The college's intranet is well designed and provides access to a wide range of course materials and assignments. The college libraries are well stocked with relevant learning materials. Communications between library and curriculum staff to plan library resources are effective.

13. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Most full-time teachers hold or are working towards teacher training qualifications. Where appropriate, the majority of teachers hold assessor and verifier awards. Some ICT and business administration, management and professional staff have not had recent industrial experience.

14. The college has clear procedures, guidelines and policies for marking, assessment and internal verification. The standard of marking is mostly good and in some cases, very good. Students receive constructive oral and written feedback on their work. There are a few examples of marked work where teachers do not correct inaccuracies and poor work is marked as satisfactory. Art, design and media students are encouraged to critically self-evaluate their work to develop analytical skills. Most teachers keep students informed about assessment schedules, although for ICT students aged 16 to 18, several assignments are set at the same time and there is a delay in returning marked work. Assessment for work-based learners is regular and generally well planned. Internal verification is thorough and meets the requirements of awarding bodies.

15. All full-time students and those part-time students whose courses involve substantial hours receive prompt and effective initial assessment to identify additional learning support and students' preferred learning styles. Teachers use the results of initial assessment, in most instances, to plan learning effectively so that it meets the needs of individual students and assessment requirements. All full-time and substantial part-time students have individual learning plans. Most are detailed, with clear targets and are reviewed regularly. There are a few examples of incomplete individual learning plans. In literacy and numeracy, individual learning targets are insufficiently precise.

16. The college has good partnership arrangements with local universities, employers, schools and the community. The college is responsive to the needs of local employers. Collaboration with local companies has led to new initiatives to meet training needs and individual interests of employees by providing literacy and numeracy, NVQ programmes and an extensive range of short courses. Innovative projects aimed at widening participation have been successful in recruiting new full-time and part-time students to areas such as health and social care, in partnership with the local NHS Trust, and to modern foreign languages, in collaboration with local businesses. There is insufficient provision at level 1 in construction, ICT and beauty therapy.

17. There are good links with local schools to provide vocational choices for all young people aged 14 to 16. In partnership with 11 schools, including 3 special schools, over 200 pupils attend the college on vocational courses. Thorough advice and guidance are provided prior to the start of the courses to these potential students, their parents, and carers and teachers. Evaluation of the courses is rigorous and completed by students, school staff and other partners, and is used to review and revise the courses offered. The college works closely with Connexions to identify those young people at risk of leaving school and not entering education or employment. These young people are provided with taster days in the college and their possible areas of interest are analysed closely.

18. Most full-time and substantial part-time students take part in a range of useful additional courses and enrichment activities. These include external and residential trips, industrial visits, work placements and field trips. Engineering and construction students have taken part in an exchange programme with Japan, and health and social care students have visited Egypt.

19. In construction, health and social care and sports, leisure and travel, key skills are linked to vocational subjects successfully to improve the development of students' understanding of communication, numeracy and ICT. On most other courses, key skills are not linked in this way. Opportunities for the identification and assessment of key skills are often missed. The college has identified most of these issues in its self-assessment report and has appointed a manager to co-ordinate key skills. To resolve weaknesses in this area, the college has established key skills support workshops for students and a programme of staff development. It has also made greater use of team teaching in lessons to ensure that key skills is provided effectively to students and has included the assessment of key skills within the lesson observation process. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

20. Guidance and support for students are good. Student recruitment, student services and learning

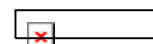
support are well led and managed. The college provides potential students with effective impartial advice and specialist guidance. There are good links with local schools and special schools to recruit students. Adult students are recruited through a range of activities including newspaper advertisements and links with local companies. The college has good recruitment arrangements with local organisations that care for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including young people leaving public care and adults with medium to severe epilepsy.

21. Personal tutors are informed quickly of the results of initial assessment. Students' written assessments are screened to identify those with dyslexia. Qualified tutors provide dyslexic students with separate support in lessons. There is good support for students with multiple and complex difficulties. Learning support is effective in improving students' performance. The take up of additional support is good. Learning support staff carry out a thorough analysis of students who decline help so that they can target support accurately in lessons and are successful in encouraging further acceptance of additional support. The college provides a welcoming learning support centre which further encourages students to seek support for a variety of learning needs, at times convenient to students. Communication between tutors, key skills and learning support staff is good.

22. Students receive comprehensive careers advice. Most progress to employment, further training or HE. There are close links with Connexions. Students have access to careers advisors who carry out individual interviews and presentations to tutor groups. There is good support for students applying to HE. Personal advisors from Connexions work flexibly with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities to provide advice and guidance on careers and progression.

23. Tutorial provision for students is satisfactory. In the best examples, students' progress is monitored closely and students receive good individual support. In a few instances, targets in individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed and unclear. There is central monitoring of tutorial schemes of work for full-time students and a central catalogue of tutorial resources. Students value the support they receive through tutorials. However, part-time students' tutorial provision is monitored insufficiently. Tutors for part-time courses arrange times with students within the course timetable to provide tutorial support. Student services do not monitor tutorial schemes of work and there was a poor response to a request for an audit of schemes for part-time students. Currently, the college does not have sufficiently accurate and prompt data on the attendance of students, although absence is acted on conscientiously and quickly. Students have good access to personal welfare advice and counselling. An analysis of retention rates shows an improved rate of retention for students using the college's childcare arrangements. The take-up and use of the learning support and access fund are good. The college has an appropriate child protection policy and guidelines for staff. The training is still to take place.

Leadership and management



24. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers have set a clear direction to raise the standards of education and learning, and students' achievements. In most instances, this is being attained. Managers and staff are clearly aware that the focus of their work is raising standards of provision. Inspectors found that the quality of education provided for students is good or better in 60% of curriculum areas compared to the 50% at the last inspection. No provision is unsatisfactory. Most teaching and learning in lessons are good or better and the proportion of teaching which is less than satisfactory, at 5%, is a significant improvement on the 11% at the last inspection. Attendance has increased from 72% at the last inspection, to 81%. Between 2001 and 2003, there was an increase in most pass rates and these were at, or above, the national average. In the same period, retention rates increased for adult students and were above the national average. However, most retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 declined and were below the national average. College data shows that there has been a significant increase in the retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 between September 2003 and March 2004. Managers have not been successful in resolving the

framework achievement for work-based learners.

25. Quality assurance is generally effective and leads to improvement. Well-established, rigorous self-evaluation and good action plans to resolve weaknesses are in place. The college supports the range of good quality assurance activities by staff training and helpful documentation. These activities contribute to thorough reviews of performance and awareness by staff and governors of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Managers and staff meet regularly to monitor and review pass and retention rates, and standards of teaching and learning. Evaluative reviews of courses and support services use a good range of evidence, including students' views. The reviews contribute to the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is mostly accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and there are clear action plans to remedy issues. Managers monitor the carrying out of these plans to ensure that actions take place and that objectives are met. Managers check complaints, analyse issues and trends, and report them to governors. They take action to resolve complaints. The number of complaints in 2003/04 has fallen to 13, compared with 49 for the same period in 2002/03.

26. The college has effective procedures to support staff in improving their work and preparing for new roles. Managers identify staff development needs through personal development reviews, self-assessment and classroom observation. However, the grading for classroom observations is generous. The proportion of teaching and learning, judged by inspectors to be good or better, is well below that awarded by the college. There are effective arrangements to resolve weaknesses identified during classroom observations. The annual staff development plan is comprehensive and provides well-targeted arrangements to meet training needs. Objectives for training are linked to targets to increase students' success, pass and retention rates. The college evaluates the impact of staff development activities through the personal development review system and feedback from staff. The annual report on staff development activities includes an evaluative assessment which shows how the programme contributes to improved performance and the achievement of the strategic objectives. New staff are well supported through induction.

27. The quality of management information and the use staff make of data have improved since 2002. Accurate data on students' recruitment, retention and pass rates is readily available. Teachers and support staff have received training on how to use and understand data. They make effective use of the information in managing and improving students' performance. Staff at all levels are involved in setting targets for their area of work.

28. Communications are good. The regular meetings at all levels contribute to good communication. Staff appreciate the opportunities they have to contribute to the running of the college. To improve communications further, managers provide staff with a lively newsletter and encourage the widespread use of e-mail. The staff forum offers the opportunity for staff to bring professional issues to the attention of the principal. Staff speak well of the open and straightforward approach of senior managers. Staff absence rates are low.

29. The leadership and management of most curriculum areas and support services are good or better. Management of the large and dispersed modern languages team is outstanding. There is very good management in visual and performing arts and media, including the management of the CoVE in new media. Management in construction; sports, leisure and travel, health and social care, and literacy and numeracy are good. Senior managers recognise that the management of work-based learning and the performance of students in key skills are unsatisfactory. The management of work-based learning was reorganised in September 2003 and new managers have started action, with the aim of resolving weaknesses. For example, although the proportion achieving the modern apprenticeship framework remains low, the numbers who are completing successfully are increasing. The college has strengthened the management of key skills, but it is too early to assess if this has been successful.

30. The college has policies in place to promote equality of opportunity. Equal opportunities are an effective part of the staff development programme. The equality forum monitors the implementation of the college's comprehensive equality policy and the maintenance and dissemination of good practice. The college's response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the SENDA is satisfactory. The college analyses student and staff data by age, gender, ethnicity, disability and

postcode, but there is insufficient effective use of this information by course teams. The monitoring of equality issues in work-based learning is insufficient. The college has reviewed learning resources and documentation to ensure they comply with the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and their suitability for use with a wide range of students. The college adapts buildings and provides specialist equipment to support students with disabilities. Access for students with restricted mobility is poor at the London Road site.

31. Managers have developed clear and successful strategies to widen participation. They have changed the range of provision that the college offers and have strengthened the support offered to students to help them complete their studies. The college offers courses at a significant number of community venues and in the workplace. The number of students from areas where recruitment has been traditionally low has increased significantly in the past two years. The college makes provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at convenient locations and times. More than 200 young people aged 14 to 16 from local schools attend the college. Some of these students are at risk of not entering education, employment or training. They are well supported by the college. However, provision at level 1 is limited in a few curriculum areas.

32. Governors set a clear direction for the college through their involvement in approving the mission and the three-year development plan. The review of the college's provision in 2002/03 was thorough and included governors considering course costs and students' achievements. They have agreed that the college will focus on vocational courses. Governors monitor the quality of the provision and students' achievements effectively. Managers provide governors with clear reports of students' performance and the standard of provision. The standards committee of the governing body has a good understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the college's provision.

33. Financial management is satisfactory. The college's financial category is A. It has not met its funding targets for the past three years. This year, the college has met its overall recruitment targets, but not for students aged 16 to 18. The thorough financial performance reviews consider student recruitment against targets for each division, taking into account, the costs of staffing and other resources. Shortfalls in enrolments and expenditure being over budget are identified and actions are agreed to address the issues. The quality of the provision, as measured by students' achievements and the quality of curriculum provision, is improving. The college offers satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Construction

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on college-based courses

- good teaching of electrical installation

- very good support for students
- good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- very poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- unsatisfactory arrangement for resources in carpentry and joinery.

Scope of provision

34. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time construction courses from level 1 to level 3. Provision includes general construction, carpentry and joinery, and electrical installation. Courses lead to GNVQ, AVCE, NVQ, national certificates, diplomas and other vocational qualifications. These are available during the day and evening and through block release. There are 43 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 15 full-time adult students. Of the 178 part-time students, 121 are adults and 57 are aged 16 to 18. There are 7 carpentry and joinery foundation modern apprentices and 11 students aged 14 to 16 are on a schools links programme in carpentry and joinery.

Achievement and standards

35. Pass rates for college-based provision are high and above national averages. In electrical installation, retention and pass rates are very high and significantly above the national average. Most retention and pass rates for carpentry and joinery courses are above national average. Pass rates for GNVQ awards are mostly high and well above the average. However, the retention rates in 2003, for the foundation GNVQ and the intermediate construction award (ICA) in carpentry and joinery were low and well below the average. Of the small number of construction work-based learners, not one has completed the modern apprenticeship framework successfully, although 56% have achieved an NVQ.

36. Standards of work, both for students aged 16 to 18 and adults, are mainly satisfactory or good. They are particularly good in practical lessons. The progress of electrical installation students in both their practical and theoretical work is good. Students have effective occupational skills and have developed high levels of confidence when using equipment and hand tools. Most students' written work ranges from satisfactory to very good. Students' attendance and punctuality are good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation part 1	1	No. of starts	*	20	16
		% retention	*	75	88
		% pass rate	*	93	79
ICA carpentry and	2	No. of starts	21	34	15

joinery		% retention	76	94	40
		% pass rate	94	75	83
City and Guilds 2351 knowledge of electrical installation engineering	2	No. of starts	*	29	26
		% retention	*	97	96
		% pass rate	*	97	100
GNVQ advanced construction and the built environment	3	No. of starts	15	**	16
		% retention	73	**	63
		% pass rate	73	**	100

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

*** course did not run**

****fewer than 15 students enrolled**

Quality of education and training

37. Teaching and learning in electrical installation are good or better. In the rest of the provision, most teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the standards of teaching and learning for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Planning for practical lessons is good. The practical workshop lessons are very lively and all students are involved fully in learning. Teachers give good individual demonstrations to improve students' occupational skills. Most theory lessons are satisfactory. The better theory lessons are very well presented and engage students' attention and involvement well. Teachers are effective at changing their approach to meet the different learning needs of individuals and groups of students. Key skills are integrated into vocational programmes. The teaching and training of work-based learners are satisfactory.

38. With the exemption of carpentry and joinery, resources are satisfactory. Teachers are qualified appropriately and are experienced; there is a range of satisfactory accommodation and equipment. Arrangements for resources in carpentry and joinery are unsatisfactory. The number of staff in this section is small and there are insufficient appropriately qualified and experienced teachers to cover for absence. Levels of staff turnover and sickness have been high. In addition, there is insufficient technician support to assist carpentry and joinery teachers.

39. The well-planned initial assessment is rigorous and comprehensive; it has good arrangements which include assessment for literacy, numeracy and languages support. Assessment and internal verification are strong. The written feedback and the marking of students' work are good. Most students are clearly aware of the progress they are making.

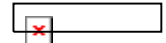
40. There are insufficient courses at level 1 in construction, plumbing, painting and decorating, and bricklaying. The college provides helpful guidance about other local providers to those who want to study these subjects. Students who want to progress to HE and employment receive good guidance. The useful programmes for those aged 14 to 16 in carpentry and joinery are run well.

41. Support for students is very good. Teachers make use of the results of initial assessments to provide good support for students. There is effective co-operation between staff to provide support sensitively and discretely. Individual students' support needs are taken into account in the planning of lessons. Support workers give good individual support in lessons and away from the classroom. Where students are behind with their studies, teachers provide useful additional help to improve their progress while ensuring that other students are not held back. Teachers monitor the progress of those receiving support effectively. Tutorials are good and are managed thoroughly by staff. Tutors are good at monitoring students' performance and at developing actions to ensure students complete their course successfully. There is careful monitoring of attendance.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. Communications and the regular staff meetings are particularly effective. Managers and staff discuss student progress, quality assurance, equal opportunities and verification regularly and take actions to resolve any issues. There are thorough arrangements to set targets for enrolments, and retention and pass rates. Managers and staff monitor these very well through the effective course review and evaluation process. The results from the established programme of lesson observations are a key part in appraisal and staff development. All staff have professional development and training including equal opportunities. Where there are training needs, there are good arrangements to ensure these are met. Managers monitor courses to ensure that they are viable financially. Work-based learning has a history of poor management and achievement. The college has appointed new managers and they are setting a clear direction to improve performance and are starting to resolve the weaknesses in this area. For example, learners are now making better progress with their NVQ units. The construction self-assessment report is accurate, with an action plan to remedy weaknesses. Managers are making good progress in achieving the objectives of the action plan.

General engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates at level 3

- good range of learning activities

- good links with local schools

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates at levels 1 and 2 in performing engineering operations

- poor retention rates at level 1

- slow progress by advanced modern apprentices
- inadequate monitoring of employers in work-based learning.

Scope of provision

43. The college has a range of full-time and part-time engineering courses from level 1 to level 4 which provide effective progression to further study or employment. Courses are available during the day and evening. Provision includes motor vehicle, mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering, and fabrication and welding. Courses lead to GCSE, GNVQ, AVCE, NVQ, national and higher diplomas, and other vocational qualifications. The college has 161 full-time and 215 part-time engineering students. Of the full-time students, 145 are aged 16 to 18 and 103 of the part-time students are adults. There are 90 work-based learners and 50 students aged 14 to 16 who are on a schools links programme.

Achievement and standards

44. Pass rates for level 3 qualifications, in 2003, were high, particularly those for the national certificate. Pass rates for the Institute of Motor Industry award in vehicle maintenance have remained significantly above the national average. However, retention rates for this award were below the national average. Retention rates for City and Guilds auto computer-aided design (CAD) have increased significantly between 2001 and 2003, to well above the national average. Pass and retention rates for performing engineering operation at levels 1 and 2 were low, particularly the pass rate at level 2 in 2003. In work-based learning, progress by advanced modern apprentices has been slow. Over the last 5 years, only 8 learners out of 102 have completed the framework successfully.

45. There is little difference between the standard of work produced by students aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 and over. Most students' occupational skills are satisfactory. They are able to carry-out engineering tasks without supervision, use appropriate hand or machine tools in a confident and competent manner and work safely. Students' written work is well presented. There is particularly good use of algebra, trigonometry and physics in assignment work produced by the national certificate and diploma students. The practical work of students aged 14 to 16 is good. For example, students are able to arc weld to a high standard. Students' attendance is just below the average for this curriculum area. Punctuality is satisfactory, but for motor vehicle level 1 students, it is unsatisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Institute of motor industry award in vehicle maintenance	1	No. of starts	17	33	23
		% retention	65	67	70
		% pass rate	91	100	94
NVQ performing engineering operations	1	No. of starts	*	42	28
		% retention	*	60	64
		% pass rate	*	40	44
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	47	20	30
		% retention	56	80	40

		% pass rate	54	50	33
City and Guilds auto CAD 4351-01	2	No. of starts	46	44	41
		% retention	78	82	90
		% pass rate	78	86	78
AVCE engineering and precursors	3	No. of starts	24	19	**
		% retention	71	47	**
		% pass rate	65	67	**
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	**	15	15
		% retention	**	73	67
		% pass rate	**	100	100

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

*** course did not run**

****fewer than 15 students enrolled**

Quality of education and training

46. Most teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed appropriately. Teachers are fully aware of the learning characteristics of different groups and students' preferred learning styles. Teachers do not always use this information to take account of students' individual learning needs. In the better lessons, there is a good range of learning activities with particularly effective sequencing of theory and practical work. In one lesson, to introduce oscillations and the meanings of amplitude and frequency, the teacher projected on to the screen a plumb bob oscillating from side to side and, at the same time, drew a graph to show the wave produced by the movement. After this part of the lesson, the teacher moved the students' swiftly on to using real plumb bobs to measure frequencies. The quality of written learning materials is good, especially for the level 1 motor vehicle lessons. Teachers in theory lessons, reinforce key learning points effectively, but there is insufficient use of ICT and their questioning of students is not sufficiently thorough.

47. Staff are well qualified. Most have a teaching qualification. Work-based learning staff are vocationally competent. Resources in the workplace and for most of the provision range from satisfactory to good. In the fabrication and welding section, resources are extensive and students can gain experience in all aspects of welding. Some rooms are inappropriate for theory teaching.

48. Assessments are satisfactory. Teachers plan college assessments effectively and students are aware of what is expected of them. College assessment is rigorous and feedback to students provides good guidance on how they can improve. Work-based assessments use an appropriate range of evidence including observation, witness testimony and students' work. Internal verification is well planned and effective. However, in 2003, for a period of six months, no internal verification took place in work-based learning.

49. Links with schools to improve access to engineering are good. In 2004, some 50 students aged 14 to 16 have taken part in a range of interesting learning activities to develop their appreciation and enthusiasm for engineering, including welding, fitting and electronic assembly. Teachers support these well-planned learning activities with effective development of students' theoretical understanding. The college has recently introduced employer forums so that their views can influence learning.

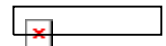
50. Support for students is good. All full-time and substantive part-time students go through an assessment for additional learning support. Those identified with additional learning needs are

provided with good levels of support. The support is good particularly in lessons and during practical work. The college provides additional support lessons on two evenings a week for students and learners to improve their key skills. There is thorough monitoring of students' and learners' progress.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have taken significant steps to improve provision. New managers, appointed in September 2003, recognised promptly that there were issues facing engineering provision particularly for work-based learning. They put in place a significant number of actions to resolve problems including employing more key skills teachers. Some outcomes have already been achieved successfully. For example, since March 2004, eight advanced modern apprentices have achieved the framework qualification. However, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the actions taken by managers. Monitoring of equal opportunities for work-based learning is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient checks on the equal opportunities policies of employers and there is insufficient checking of understanding of equal opportunities at learners' progress review meetings. Employers have a poor understanding of NVQ. The self-assessment report is mostly accurate with an action plan to remedy weaknesses. However, the grades for teaching observations in the report are significantly above those given by inspectors.

Business, administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- good support for students' learning

- high pass rates on AVCE and certificate in personnel practice

- effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business

- very poor pass rates for work-based learners

- insufficient involvement of employers in curriculum design and learning.

Scope of provision

52. The college offers provision from levels 1 to 4. Courses are available during the day and evening, and on a full-time, but mainly part-time basis. Provision includes programmes for text processing, administration, bookkeeping and accounting, management, legal and personnel. Students can work towards NVQ, GCSE, GNVQ, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), AVCE, national certificates and other vocational awards. There is insufficient entry-level provision. The college has a small work-based learning programme in business administration and accounting. There are 39 full-time and 744 part-time students and there are 16 work-based learners. Some 83% of students are aged 19 and over.

Achievement and standards

53. Pass rates for the AVCE, its precursors and the certificate of personnel practice have been very high for the last three years. However, the retention rate for the certificate in personnel practice has declined to well below the national average. Retention and pass rates for the GNVQ intermediate course were below the national average between 2001 and 2003, and in 2002 and 2003, the pass rates for this award were very poor and significantly below the national average. NVQ accountancy pass and retention rates were around the national average between 2001 and 2003, but in 2003, the pass rate declined at level 2 by 10% from the previous year. Pass and retention rates for work-based learners over the last five years have been very poor. Out of 54 starters, no one has completed the framework successfully and only 25% of learners have achieved an NVQ.

54. There is little difference between the standard of work produced by students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Course files, portfolios and assessed work show students make effective progress on prior levels of attainment and that they have good ICT skills. Students work well in groups and many show initiative, commitment and enthusiasm when working individually. Many adult students have developed good levels of confidence in their work compared with when they started their course of study. Awarding bodies have given business administration, management and professional students, over the last four years, three national medals for the high standard of their work. Students' attendance during the inspection was above the average for this curriculum area.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Text processing part 1	1	No. of starts	23	*	15
		% retention	87	*	95
		% pass rate	80	*	86
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	31	22	23
		% retention	73	75	70
		% pass rate	77	35	27
AVCE and precursors	3	No. of starts	29	24	*
		% retention	86	38	*
		% pass rate	96	89	*
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	23	40	26
		% retention	91	90	88
		% pass rate	67	67	57
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	33	*	36
		% retention	100	*	97

		% pass rate	48	*	53
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

55. In most lessons, teachers plan carefully and manage learning effectively. Most teachers provide clear objectives and introductions to lessons. They use an appropriate range of teaching approaches including whole class, small group and individual work to engage students in learning. In the better lessons, teachers support students' learning well. They use students' preferred learning styles and take careful account of their individual learning needs. For example, some learning approaches use students' preference for oral presentation from notes, whilst others use students' preferences for presentation using overhead projections. Teachers use their own commercial experience and that of students' own experiences in the workplace well to provide practical illustrations to support learning. There is good use of ICT in learning. During lessons, teachers regularly question students to check learning and progress, and link key skills to coursework and assignments.

56. Most of the well-qualified teachers have relevant vocational expertise. Overall, accommodation is adequate. Classrooms are generally well equipped with a range of useful teaching aids to support learning. Some classrooms are cramped. Learning materials are up-to-date and cover new developments in the curriculum area. The library has an adequate stock of textbooks and periodicals relating to business studies. Students have good access to computers.

57. Assessment and verification of students' work are satisfactory. There are adequate arrangements to set and mark their work. The written feedback to students, in some instances, is too brief and is insufficiently clear.

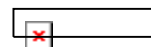
58. There is an appropriate range of provision at levels 2 to 4, but there is very little at level 1. The college has a number of links with businesses. It supports a local organisation which encourages networking between small and medium-sized enterprises and has links with some large business organisations. There is little use of these links by teachers to involve employers in contributing to curriculum design and learning.

59. Effective arrangements are in place to identify and provide for students' additional support needs. Support workers provide good support in lessons. Communications between support workers and students are good. All students are allocated a tutor. Full-time students have set timetabled tutorials and part-time students can arrange for them as part of their courses. Tutorials are effective; they cover a range of pertinent and helpful subjects. These include personal support, careers and progression guidance, and college information. Reviews of students' progress are thorough and action is taken, if it is needed, to improve students' performance. There is careful monitoring of attendance. The college adjusts course timetables to take account of students with care responsibilities. Student speak well of the help and support which they receive from staff.

Leadership and management

60. The leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. There are regular staff meetings and good communications between staff. Teachers attend regular staff development, training and updating events. Observation of teaching, the results of the students' survey and focus groups managers are used to develop actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The arrangements for self-assessment and course review are effective and involve all staff from the curriculum area. There are weaknesses with work-based learning, but new managers for this area have started taking action, with the aim of improving provision and resolving issues. It is too early to judge the success of managers in resolving problems in work-based learning.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for adult students

- good resources to support classroom teaching

- good feedback to students

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates for full-time students aged 16 to 18

- underdeveloped links with ICT-related industries

- narrow range of provision at level 1 for full-time students aged 16 to 18

- unsatisfactory scheduling of assessments for students aged 16 to 18.

Scope of provision

61. The college offers a range of provision from levels 1 to 4. Full-time and part-time courses are available during the day or the evening. Full-time provision includes GNVQ intermediate, diploma for information technology (IT) practitioners, advanced diploma in IT, AVCE and national diplomas. Part-time work includes 'computing for the terrified', new computer literacy and information technology (New CLAIT) and other vocational awards. Some 1,475 students are studying ICT courses, of which, 1,325 are part time. Students aged 16 to 18 account for 68% of the full-time provision, whilst students aged 19 and over account for 97% of the part-time work. Part-time courses are available at

the college, in the community and through distance learning programmes. Adult students can also attend college at times convenient to themselves to follow individual programmes of learning.

Achievement and standards

62. Pass and retention rates for adult students between 2001 and 2003 were mostly high. Pass and retention rates for European computer driving licence (ECDL) and CLAIT were well above the national average between 2001 and 2003. Retention rates for the 'computing for the terrified' course have been at a high level for the last three years and in 2003, the retention rate for the City and Guilds 7261 one-year course increased by 15% to well above the national average. The pass rates for students aged 16 to 18, between 2001 and 2003, declined and were low. The pass rate for the AVCE and its precursors declined significantly between 2001 and 2003, and in 2003, was well below the national average. The GNVQ intermediate pass rate declined by nearly 20% between 2001 and 2003 to below the national average. The proportion of higher grades for GNVQ and AVCE is low.

63. Adult students' work is better than that of students aged 16 to 18. Adults make good progress on previous levels of attainment. They appreciate new concepts quickly and are able to build on previous knowledge to understand new topics. Although most students aged 16 to 18 make satisfactory progress on prior levels of attainment, there are some in this age group who do not produce work of an appropriate standard. Students aged 14 to 16 have good levels of ICT skills and produce work of a high standard. Students' attendance is around the national average. Students' punctuality is generally satisfactory or good, but for GNVQ intermediate students it is poor.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
New CLAIT and precursors**	1	No. of starts	230	169	64
		% retention	84	72	89
		% pass rate	63	71	79
Computing for the terrified	1	No. of starts	485	300	331
		% retention	94	93	93
		% pass rate	56	49	72
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	27	35	34
		% retention	81	77	76
		% pass rate	77	74	58
City and Guilds 7261 diploma in IT users (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	53	118
		% retention	*	74	90
		% pass rate	*	68	73
ECDL (one year)	2	No. of starts	95	141	157
		% retention	80	79	90
		% pass rate	79	97	90
AVCE and precursors	3	No. of starts	29	25	38
		% retention	59	92	79
		% pass rate	82	61	57

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

64. Most teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching for adults is better than that for students aged 16 to 18. In the better lessons, teachers take account of students' learning needs, and motivate and maintain their interest. In an introductory lesson for adult students, the teacher provided a clear explanation and demonstration on the use of menus and toolbars. Students progressed quickly through the lesson and at the end, their confidence had improved significantly. In a lesson for students aged 16 to 18, the teacher's explanations of the problems associated with a popular software package, made learning enjoyable and increased students' understanding. In the weaker lessons, learning does not have clear objectives. For students aged 16 to 18, teaching does not challenge them sufficiently or take adequate account of individual learning needs. There are few industrial visits or guest speakers and no work experience for students to relate their studies to the computer industry.

65. Staff are qualified appropriately and have recent industrial experience, but there are no arrangements to maintain and update their skills. Students appreciate the good ICT resources to support learning. They have access to high-specification computers and good specialist hardware. Teachers make effective use of ICT for teaching. Learning materials to support distance learning are good. Teachers make effective use of the intranet to provide learning and assessment for students. However, students make little use of this facility. The library has a wide range of ICT books and periodicals.

66. Teachers provide students with good quality, detailed and constructive written and oral feedback on their work, and clear guidance on how to improve. There are deficiencies in scheduling assessments on courses for students aged 16 to 18. Teachers do not share assessment timetables with students and assessments are set too closely together. Students on these courses fail consistently to meet assessment deadlines. Students often have to wait excessively for the return of marked work.

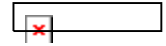
67. There is no level 1 full-time provision for students aged 16 to 18. Students with prior levels of attainment, more appropriate for level 1 provision, are enrolled on to level 2 courses. Many of these students have difficulties in completing their studies successfully. There is no provision for adults wishing to study specialist short computer courses. The key skills provision is underdeveloped. Students aged 16 to 18 are only working towards communication key skills award and all are at the same level.

68. Established and effective arrangements for initial assessment include the identification of additional learning needs. Students with additional learning needs receive good individual support in lessons. The college provides good support to AVCE students at risk of not finishing their course with support workshops so that they can complete their work. Each course has allocated tutorial time. Full-time students have group and individual tutorials. Tutors use individual tutorials to monitor students' progress effectively and to set individual achievement targets. Group tutorials cover a range of relevant and useful topics including careers advice and guidance, course and college information and personal support. Students on distance learning programmes and those using the college's ICT facilities on individual learning programmes, appreciate the good support they receive from tutors.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been recent changes to the management of the curriculum area. New managers have identified weaknesses promptly and have established actions to resolve them. However, it is too early to comment on their effectiveness. There are regular, minuted course team meetings with action points. There are two different teams of management for ICT. One team looks after college-based and community provision and the other is responsible for distance learning. There is no sharing of good practice between the teams.

Sports, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for sports courses
- good standard of students' work
- very good teaching and learning
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in AVCE in travel and tourism
- low pass rates in GNVQ intermediate travel and tourism
- insufficient formal pre-activity screening.

Scope of provision

70. The college's range of full-time and part-time courses in sport, leisure and travel meets the needs of students. In addition, students can take a range of further qualifications to extend their skills. Sports provision is available at levels 1, 2 and 3, and at levels 2 and 3 in leisure and travel. Courses in sport include the first diploma and national diploma, the foundation studies in exercise, and the community sports leader and higher sports leader awards. Students from the college's football academy attend a variety of sport courses. Leisure and travel courses include the diploma in travel operations, the GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism, AVCE in travel and tourism, and other vocational awards. There are 221 sports students and 142 leisure and travel students. Around 75% of students are aged 16 to 18. Some 37 students aged 14 to 16 are on sports provision and 15 are on leisure and travel provision.

Achievement and standards

71. Pass rates are very high for the first diploma in sports science and exercise. They increased between 2001 and 2003, and were significantly above the national average. Pass rates for national diploma in sports and exercise science have been high for the last three years and are well above the national average. The very high pass rates for the community sports leader and the higher sports leader awards are well above the national average. Pass rates for the GNVQ intermediate travel and tourism course were low in 2002 and 2003, and below the national average. Over the last three years, the pass and retention rates for this award have declined. The retention rate for the AVCE in travel and tourism, between 2001 and 2003, declined and was below the national average.

72. Students' practical and written work are of a high standard. Written assignments are good and clearly show students' knowledge and understanding of their subject. Students present their work well and they have developed good ICT skills. They carry out research work effectively and are able to analyse the results critically. Students communicate well. During lessons, they use argument and explain their ideas particularly effectively. Sports students have well-developed coaching skills. Students' attendance during the inspection was around the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Community sports leader award	1	No. of starts	47	43	38
		% retention	87	86	79
		% pass rate	78	86	97
Higher sports leader award	2	No. of starts	17	15	23
		% retention	82	93	87
		% pass rate	79	100	100
First diploma in sports science and exercise	2	No. of starts	21	26	26
		% retention	86	69	88
		% pass rate	94	94	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	31	22	27
		% retention	87	77	70
		% pass rate	78	65	68
AVCE travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	46	37	29
		% retention	59	51	52
		% pass rate	74	84	73

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

Quality of education and training

73. Teaching and learning are very good. Most teachers use a range of good teaching and learning methods including making particularly effective use of practical activities to develop theoretical subjects. In one lesson, the teacher had students making their own sports drink to reinforce a discussion in a theory lesson on the importance of appropriate levels of nutrition in an exercise regime. Teachers in most lessons challenge, motivate and maintain students' interest strongly. They pay careful attention to students' individual learning styles, abilities and needs. Teachers use questioning very effectively to check students' understanding and to develop their knowledge. Students receive very constructive guidance and advice from teachers during lessons. Teachers make good use of ICT for teaching. In a few examples, although the teaching is satisfactory, it is dull and fails to challenge students. Key skills are an integral part of most lessons.

74. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Resources are mostly satisfactory and include sports fields, a gymnasium, sports therapy rooms, access to tennis courts, a golf course and synthetic pitches. Sports and fitness equipment is adequate and includes a range of fitness testing equipment. The small fitness suite has restricted space and some equipment is out of date. Travel courses have an appropriate range of equipment. Learning resources include a good selection of books, good quality learning materials and ICT. Lessons sometimes take place in cold and uninspiring temporary classrooms.

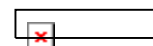
75. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Teachers use initial assessments effectively to plan lessons. They plan assessments well and most students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Most students receive good feedback on their assignments and they are given appropriate guidance on how to develop their skills. In a very few instances, teachers' marking is overgenerous and does not provide students with a commentary on how to improve. Internal verification is effective.

76. Support for students is good. All students have an initial assessment to establish if they require additional support. Teachers and support workers communicate well to ensure that the support is effective. Support workers provide particularly good help and assistance to students in lessons. There are effective meetings between staff and support workers to review the progress of those receiving help. Teachers provide additional study skills sessions to help students achieve better grades and complete work on time. Tutors use individual tutorials well to review students' progress and learning, and to deal with personal issues. In group tutorials, tutors keep students well informed about career and progression opportunities. There is careful monitoring of attendance and punctuality, and if there are any issues, tutors deal with these promptly. Students involved in physical activity, do not complete a pre-activity readiness questionnaire routinely. Those students who attend the fitness suite complete a suitable screening questionnaire prior to using the facility and students are asked to disclose any medical conditions at enrolment.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are good. Managers support teachers well. Staff are well informed about how the curriculum area and the college are performing. Staff support each other well and share good practice. Managers and staff meet regularly to discuss students' progress, the curriculum and review courses. Staff have clear responsibilities and roles. Staff development is effective and relevant. Course reviews inform the self-assessment process. Weaknesses identified during the process have been resolved. Staff are observed regularly when teaching and are appraised. Where there is a need for improvement, action is taken. There has been effective action to widen participation. Courses which attract adult students are timetabled to allow attendance during school hours and the provision for students aged 14 to 16 is successful in attracting new students to the college.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- good teaching and learning in practical subjects

- good additional support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on NVQ level 2 beauty therapy course
- insufficient use of key skills in vocational teaching
- insufficient resources in the beauty therapy salons.

Scope of provision

78. The college offers full-time courses in beauty therapy, at levels 2 and 3, holistic therapies at level 3 and part-time courses in Indian head massage, body massage, aromatherapy, reflexology, and manicure and pedicure. Courses are available during the day and evening. There are 226 students; of these, 135 are part time and 91 are full time; 55 are aged 16 to 18 and 171 are aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

79. Pass rates on all beauty therapy courses were high in 2003 and most were significantly above the national average. In particular, the pass rates for the diploma in aromatherapy and the diploma in holistic therapy, at 100%, were outstanding. The diploma in holistic therapies was 27% above the national average. Although the pass rate for the NVQ in beauty therapy at level 2 was high, just under one-third of students left early and the retention rate was below the national average. Other retention rates were around the national average.

80. Students' practical beauty and holistic therapy skills range from satisfactory to good. Students have competent body massage techniques and their skills in holistic therapies are effective. Students' punctuality and attendance are good. Attendance is well above the average for this area of learning. Students' written work, portfolios of evidence and coursework are of an appropriate standard.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Indian head massage diploma	2	No. of starts	*	*	65
		% retention	*	*	80
		% pass rate	*	*	88
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	*	*	26
		% retention	*	*	69
		% pass rate	*	*	89

Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	*	*	18
		% retention	*	*	89
		% pass rate	*	*	94
Diploma in aromotherapy	3	No. of starts	*	*	94
		% retention	*	*	19
		% pass rate	*	*	79
Diploma in holistic therapies	3	No. of starts	*	*	17
		% retention	*	*	82
		% pass rate	*	*	100

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

Quality of education and training

81. Teaching and learning in practical lessons are good. In these lessons, teachers plan well and teaching is enthusiastic. Teachers motivate students particularly effectively and provide learning which is challenging, maintains students' interest well and is relevant to the industry. In one lesson, students completed, in a commercially acceptable time, a range of body massages, and Indian head and aromatherapy treatments. In other lessons, teachers create conditions so that students work under industry-style pressure to complete manicures and facial treatments. Teaching of theory is mainly satisfactory or good. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of group work and give students demanding learning activities. In some other lessons, teaching is competent, but dull and lacks variety. In weaker lessons, teachers do not engage students' interest and fail to motivate them. There is insufficient use of key skills in vocational teaching and learning, and students do not value key skills. Although teachers identify in lesson plans how they propose to use key skills, they do not link key skills to vocational learning activities. For example, students working in the beauty therapy reception do not use the many activities in this area to gather evidence and develop their key skills. Teachers arrange for students to attend product manufacturers' demonstrations, exhibitions and competitions to widen their knowledge and understanding.

82. Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience; they regularly up date their occupational skills. Classrooms used for theory, are equipped appropriately with learning aids. There is a good spa pool and sauna. The reception area is adequate and has a computer for bookings and a retail shop. There are weaknesses with the beauty therapy salons which impacts on students' learning. Salons are too small for the number of students. There are insufficient beauty couches, electrical equipment, towels and pillows. In a few instances, there is insufficient attention paid to good health and safety practices.

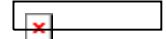
83. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. However, a lack of clients in the beauty therapy salons limits some students' access to assessment and slows their progress towards achieving a qualification. Although there is a generally appropriate range of courses to meet local needs, there is no provision at level 1 and there are insufficient places on level 3 courses at the college for those students who want to move from level 2. The college has made no suitable alternative arrangements for these students.

84. Students receive good additional support. They have an initial assessment which identifies clearly, any additional learning requirements including literacy and numeracy needs. In practical lessons, support staff and teachers work very effectively to provide students with high levels of additional learning support. Support staff are unobtrusive and provide help and assistance in a sensitive manner. All students have a personal tutor. The regular tutorials are planned well. Students are clearly aware and appreciative of the good range of services which the college provides for them. Managers plan timetables carefully to take account of students with care responsibilities and they provide childcare facilities. Students find these arrangements helpful in attending lessons on a punctual and regular basis.

Leadership and management

85. The leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Staff are well informed and there are regular, minuted meetings with action points. There are established arrangements for quality assurance including target setting, course review and self-assessment. The self-assessment report, although informative and judgmental, does not identify some key weaknesses. The report has a clear action plan to resolve weaknesses.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on many courses

- much good teaching

- effective development of key skills

- good support for students

- effective management.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on AVCE courses

- insufficiently stimulating teaching in a few lessons.

Scope of provision

86. The college offers a range of full-time early years provision, at levels 2 and 3, through Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) and Edexcel awarding bodies. Full-time programmes are offered at levels 1 to 3 in health and social care with GNVQ foundation and

intermediate level, AVCE health and social care (double award) and the national diploma in health studies and care. Part-time programmes include NVQ levels 2 and 3 in care and early years. Short courses for adults include counselling at level 2 and a range of first aid programmes offering certificated additional courses. The college offers a cadet scheme in collaboration with a range of partners across the region. There are 1,206 students. Of these, 1,064 are part-time students. Some 74% of students are adults.

Achievement and standards

87. Pass rates for most qualifications are high and above the national average. For example, the NVQ childcare and education level 2 pass and retention rates were significantly above the national averages in 2003. However, the pass rates on introduction to counselling skills, declined to below the national average in 2003. From 2001 to 2003, most retention rates increased and many are above the national average. However, retention rates on the AVCE in health and social care course declined to 33% in 2003 which is significantly below the national average of 77%. Pass rates in key skills national tests have improved. For example, 90% of students on the national diploma in childcare and education course passed level 2 application of number in 2003. Many students achieve higher grades than those predicted, based on their prior levels of attainment. There is good progression to FE, training and employment. A minority of students progress to HE to study psychology, nursing, teaching and forensic science. Attendance during the inspection was above the national average for this area of learning.

88. The standards of students work ranges from good to better. Students use the Internet effectively as a research tool, working well with others to present findings using a range of communication methods. For example, in a GNVQ intermediate group, students undertook research on the Internet confidently to prepare a survey on teenage smoking as part of their assignment for the 'promoting health and well being' unit. Students demonstrate a wide range of knowledge and skills whilst collecting evidence towards application of number, communication, IT key skills and the unit.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Counselling skills introductory awarding body consortium	1	No. of starts	86	33	66
		% retention	87	91	97
		% pass rate	79	100	77
First aid at work health and safety executive	1	No. of starts	226	163	191
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	17	21	15
		% retention	76	81	80
		% pass rate	92	100	82
NVQ childcare and education	2	No. of starts	29	24	29
		% retention	72	75	93
		% pass rate	86	78	81
Childcare and education	2	No. of starts	22	16	**
		% retention	72	94	**
		% pass rate	81	100	**
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	30	22	19
		% retention	80	77	68

		% pass rate	96	88	100
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	*	16	18
		% retention	*	81	33
		% pass rate	*	46	83
National diploma in caring services	3	No. of starts	18	23	25
		% retention	72	74	76
		% pass rate	77	82	100

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

* *course did not run*

***fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

89. Most teaching is good, with teachers providing a range of activities and maintaining students' interest and motivation. Teaching is well planned and managed. Teaching materials are well produced. Recent initiatives include the development of key skills throughout the vocational programme. There is close collaboration between key skills and vocational teachers, and students benefit from the opportunities to develop a wide range of key skills during lessons. Teachers emphasize successfully, the importance of developing research skills using the Internet. A designated computer suite is well used to access the Internet for research and to prepare assignments and presentations. Students' learning is extended successfully through talks by visiting speakers and visits to relevant organisations including trips to Barcelona and Egypt to broaden understanding of health and childcare services in different countries. In a few less-effective lessons, activities are not always appropriate to the level of the course. In these lessons, many students remain passive with teachers failing to encourage participation.

90. Initial assessment covers individual preferred learning styles, and learning and support needs, and it is used in teaching and learning effectively. Specialist services to support students' learning are available. For example, equipment for students with dyslexia and a signer for a student with hearing impairment helped participation and progress in group-work activities in a GNVQ foundation health and care lesson.

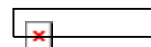
91. Assignments are relevant and are set at the appropriate level for the stage of the course. Teachers provide additional written guidance to assist students to understand requirements and the grading criteria. Teachers' feedback is constructive and provides clear guidance to students on how to improve their performance. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. There is an appropriate range of books and equipment to support learning.

92. There is very good pastoral and academic support for students including access to careers advice and guidance. The college identifies individual learning needs promptly and provides appropriate support. Tutorials are effective in monitoring students' progress and are valued by the students. Tutors encourage students to make good progress through the setting of challenging targets.

Leadership and management

93. Leadership and management are good. There are regular and purposeful team meetings which focus on teaching and learning, and improving provision. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses accurately and actions are implemented to address these weaknesses. There is effective communication between teachers, including part-time staff. Managers and teachers plan effectively to respond to future developments in the area.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Contributory grade for music and media is good (grade 2)

Strengths

- high pass rates in visual art and design

- outstanding practical work on new media and visual arts courses

- very good teaching and learning

- high-quality specialist resources

- very good progression

- very good support for students

- very good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- poor and declining retention rates on the national diploma in music technology course

- poor access for students with restricted mobility at the London Road site.

Scope of provision

94. The curriculum area has a CoVE for new media. The range of provision in visual and performing arts and media is extensive. The college offers courses from levels 1 to 4. Students can study a foundation course at level 1 in art and design, and there are two first diplomas in art and design and performing arts at level 2. At level 3, the college offers an AVCE in art and design, and national diplomas in graphic design, fashion and clothing, photography, three-dimensional design, multimedia, media, music practice and music technology. Students are offered a range of additional qualifications including GCE A levels. There are 1,901 students. Of these, 43 % are aged 16 to 18. Some 78% of students are on part-time courses. Approximately 85% of students are studying visual arts and the remainder are studying music and media. In addition, there are vocational and non-vocational part-time courses and a schools link course for students aged 14 to 16.

Achievement and standards

95. There are high pass rates in visual art and design, with all pass rates above the national average in 2003. The diploma in foundation studies, the national diploma in design, arts and craft, at level 2, and the City and Guilds creative skills certificate, have had very high pass rates for the last three years. Retention rates on most courses are at, or above, the national average. For example, retention rates for the national diploma in design, arts and craft, at level 2, in 2003, were significantly above the national average. The retention rate for the national diploma in music technology course has declined over the last three years and was significantly below the national average in 2003. Progression to HE and employment is very good. For example, in 2003, 98% of students on the art foundation diploma course progressed to HE. In the same year, 55% of national diploma music students progressed to HE and 40% into employment in the music profession.

96. Students' practical work in visual art and design, including the work covered by the CoVE in new media, is of outstanding quality. Students produce work which is lively and experimental, and demonstrates a wide range of skills and understanding of visual art and design concepts. The standard of work in life drawing is exceptional and there is a strong and successful emphasis on sketchbook research and reflective diaries. The work of adult part-time students is also of a high standard. Students on the schools link programme handle complex processes and equipment to create high-quality artwork.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds creative skills certificate: life drawing	2	No. of starts	82	64	73
		% retention	91	79	92
		% pass rate	93	89	94
Art and craft studies	2	No. of starts	137	134	96
		% retention	93	84	92
		% pass rate	93	88	97
National diploma music technology	3	No. of starts	31	25	30
		% retention	65	52	30
		% pass rate	95	77	100
National diploma popular music practice	3	No. of starts	31	22	28
		% retention	58	55	68
		% pass rate	94	83	100
Diploma in foundation studies	3	No. of starts	53	87	68
		% retention	96	91	82
		% pass rate	98	87	98

National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	84	70	76
		% retention	70	74	94
		% pass rate	95	96	93

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

Quality of education and training

97. Teaching and learning are very good across the curriculum area including that for CoVE provision. Teaching is particularly well planned and structured, and lesson plans identify preferred learning styles and take account of the different learning needs of students very effectively. There is excellent classroom management with clear learning objectives. Teachers check and recap learning very effectively. There is particularly good use of constructive criticism by teachers and students. For example, in a fashion lesson, students presented their portfolio work to the rest of the class for their comments. The comments were well informed and helped students to improve their work. Teachers make very good use of demonstrations to develop students' practical skills in art and design. Explanations of techniques by teachers are very clear and provide students with a very good understanding of how particular methods are used to produce and develop a piece of work. Teaching and learning approaches are very effective at motivating students' interest. Most students are very enthusiastic. Teachers are well qualified with strong industrial links and experience which they use very effectively to help students use professional disciplines and standards in their practical work. For example, in music technology, students prepared a studio for a live recording confidently with clear awareness of issues such as health and safety. Seminars given by a wide range of guest speakers, and regular visits and trips including art and fashion shows and live music events broaden students' knowledge and understanding.

98. Rooms and studios are mostly spacious and well equipped, and students have good access to ICT. There are excellent photography and new media resources. The college has used funding from the CoVE to provide improved facilities and high-quality equipment. Redesigned studios allow students to work in professional conditions. Access for students with restricted mobility at the London Road site is poor. The college makes reasonable adjustment for students to have access to teaching, but communal facilities such as the canteen are inaccessible.

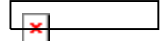
99. Assessment is very good. Assignments are well planned and presented clearly with detailed criteria which are well understood by students. Most students' work is marked in detail with helpful comments to assist students to improve their performance. Internal verification is rigorous. However, in music and media, a few assignments are not marked in sufficient detail and some recording of students' performance and grades are incomplete.

100. Support for students is very good. There are clear individual learning and tutorial plans and records. Action plans for individual students are thorough and well checked. Tutorials are effective in monitoring progress against minimum target grades. Initial assessment is prompt and accurate with students receiving good additional learning support.

Leadership and management

101. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum area is well organised and run. The management of CoVE provision is particularly good. Managers support staff well. There are strong arrangements to mentor new members of staff. There is an established system of lesson observations and managers take effective action if a member of staff needs to improve the quality of their teaching. Good practice in teaching and learning is shared effectively. The detailed self-assessment report is thorough and identifies strengths and weaknesses accurately. The report's action plan is clear and, where needed, actions have been taken which have resulted in improvements in teaching and learning.

Languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all courses

- high standards of oral and written work

- outstanding teaching and learning

- rigorous and effective assessment

- very broad range of language courses

- good support to meet individual needs of students

- outstanding management.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

102. The college specialises in language courses for adults. It made the decision in 2003 to discontinue GCSE and GCE provision for students aged 16 to 18, who are already well catered for in the neighbourhood. It offers a particularly broad range of languages, currently providing courses leading to open college network (OCN) qualifications in Spanish, French, German, Italian, Welsh and Arabic, at levels 1 and 2, and Spanish, French, German and Italian at level 3. Around 20% of students progress from one level to the next. The provision has been expanded recently to include holiday French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, short courses in Japanese and Greek, and courses designed specifically to meet the needs of two large local employers. The number of students

studying languages is increasing, with 956 students on roll which represents an increase of almost 100% over 2003. The college's timetable allows students to choose between day and evening courses, and to attend on Saturdays. There is a choice of venue, with courses being run in local centres as well as on the college's campuses.

Achievement and standards

103. Since 2001, pass rates on almost all courses have exceeded national averages for OCN qualifications by 20% or more. Retention rates have also met or exceeded national averages with very few exceptions and they are increasing.

104. Students' written and oral work is of a very high standard. Written assignments are well presented. Students are aware of the importance of accuracy and of the need to check their work thoroughly. Most students, at all levels, speak confidently and fluently. A good number of students at all levels have the confidence to be adventurous when speaking. They take the initiative in conversation and one or two even attempt puns and jokes.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
OCN Spanish	1	No. of starts	**	**	298
		% retention	**	**	73
		% pass rate	**	**	94
OCN German	1	No. of starts	**	**	54
		% retention	**	**	89
		% pass rate	**	**	94
OCN Welsh	1	No. of starts	**	**	19
		% retention	**	**	89
		% pass rate	**	**	94
Spanish short course	1	No. of starts	**	**	118
		% retention	**	**	98
		% pass rate	**	**	100
OCN French	2	No. of starts	**	**	58
		% retention	**	**	78
		% pass rate	**	**	91
OCN Spanish	2	No. of starts	**	**	39
		% retention	**	**	87
		% pass rate	**	**	76

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

**** Figures for languages not available for publication, as in 2000-2001, in line with national practice, data for OCN courses from all programme areas were aggregated for reporting and audit purposes.**

Quality of education and training

105. Teaching and learning are of a very high standard. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and

imaginatively, with tasks that are both interesting and challenging. In one advanced Spanish lesson, students were asked to draw up detailed plans for a two week touring holiday in Spain and then to present their plans to the rest of the group. Their presentations showed an outstanding command of the Spanish language and thorough research, using the Internet as well as their own considerable experience of the country as major sources of information. Teachers make consistent use of the foreign language in lessons and expect students to do the same. They draw on their extensive knowledge of foreign life and culture to enliven lessons. Teachers and students pay great attention to grammatical accuracy. Students consult grammar books and dictionaries frequently when carrying out tasks. New structures are reinforced thoroughly. In a French lesson for beginners, students gained ample practice of a newly-learned tense through interviewing every other member of the lesson in turn in order to complete a questionnaire. By the end of the lesson, students were using the new structure with confidence.

106. Teachers are aware of the preferred learning styles of their students, and of any difficulties they may have in learning; they consider them effectively in planning lessons. For example, they provide a range of exercises to help both the most able students and those experiencing difficulties with the subject.

Leadership and management

107. Leadership and management are outstanding. The programme manager, together with two course tutors on fractional contracts, lead a team of 25 part-time staff. The course tutors act as their first point of contact. Lines of communication are clear and effective in ensuring that teachers who do not meet in the normal course of their work receive the information they need. There is a two-tier system of formal meetings. Those for the whole of staff are held twice a term and are well attended; they have a strong focus on disseminating good practice. In addition, the programme manager meets the course tutors to discuss operational and administrative matters. E-mail is used effectively as a means of keeping in touch.

108. Course and quality files are well maintained and informative. Courses are reviewed regularly and all staff attend review meetings and contribute to development plans. All teachers are aware of the development points that have been agreed and of targets for improvements in retention and pass rates. There is a strong and successful focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on adult courses

- high retention rates on adult courses

- good teaching, meeting individual needs

- good initial assessment

- effective individual support

- good management.

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources for adult students

- insufficient detail in individual target setting.

Scope of provision

109. The college offers a range of literacy and numeracy courses in the division of care and skills for life. A team of two full-time and two part-time staff manage a team of part-time staff and volunteers. There are 680 students enrolled on discrete courses in the college, in the community and on employers' premises. Individual and group support are provided to 372 students. Some 70% of students attending literacy and numeracy courses or receiving support are adults. Support for literacy and numeracy is provided in lessons in all curriculum areas.

Achievement and standards

110. Pass rates for adult literacy and numeracy qualifications were significantly higher than the national averages for 2002 and 2003. Between 2001 and 2003, these pass rates have all increased. For example, the pass rate for OCN family education had increased by around 50% over the last three years and in 2003, was 32% above the national average. Retention rates for these courses were also high and in 2003, were all above the national average.

111. Initial assessment of the needs and aspirations of students is rigorous. Results are recorded in detailed individual learning plans. Many students are on non-accredited courses and achievement is measured against students' personal learning goals. Students make good progress in attaining these learning goals and gain additional personal benefits including increased confidence in their ability to learn. Many students progress from non-accredited courses onto access and vocational courses or employment. In 2003/04, all students completing their return to learn course progressed to a college course or found employment. Attendance rates are high. Teachers monitor absence closely and are prompt in following up any attendance issues.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
National tests in literacy	1	No. of starts	66	161	235

precursors		% pass rate	58	66	86
OCN literacy through computers	1	No. of starts	317	244	207
		% retention	94	94	87
		% pass rate	52	72	81
OCN family education	1	No. of starts	60	90	77
		% retention	93	83	92
		% pass rate	43	72	92

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

Quality of education and training

112. Most teaching is well planned and uses a variety of teaching and learning activities to stimulate students' interest and participation. Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced. Lessons are planned for students to learn topics in short, easy stages and teachers check the understanding and progress of students frequently. Learning support workers are well informed and well directed by teachers, and students are helped to achieve their individual targets effectively. Students are well motivated and enthusiastic. There are frequent, lively lesson discussions that are successful in developing students' speaking and listening skills. For example, in one lesson, students were encouraged effectively to develop their speaking skills by giving short presentations that represented the views of their groups on a particular topic. In another lesson, practical skills in cookery were combined successfully with numeracy skills. Students work well together in small groups and pairs. Teachers use good questioning techniques to check students' understanding and knowledge, and they value the contributions that students make to learning.

113. There are inadequate resources for adult students, with some unsatisfactory accommodation and facilities at the main site and in the community. The often cramped classrooms restrict the range of activities available to teachers. There is insufficient access to ICT in many classrooms. There are instances where there are inadequate teaching materials. For example, dictionaries are not always available. There is insufficient sharing of the good quality learning resources between staff.

114. Initial assessment is prompt and support arrangements are negotiated effectively. Lesson plans reflect accurately the assessments made and the preferred learning styles of individual students are taken into account. All adult students on literacy and numeracy courses receive a thorough initial assessment. Information gained on prior learning is recorded on individual learning plans and referred to as work is completed and planned. For those on non-accredited courses, this forms an effective basis of the continuing monitoring of students' progress and their achievement of personal objectives. Internal verification is effective, with planned assessments carried out by qualified and experienced staff.

115. Individual literacy and numeracy support for students aged 16 to 18 is good. Particularly good provision is made for students with dyslexia. Most students identified have individual help with literacy and numeracy and some are supported in lessons. All foundation level courses have full-time support arrangements and particularly good teamwork promotes students' learning and achievement. The progress of those supported individually is monitored thoroughly and personal tutors are well informed about students' progress from reviews. Students attend the learning support centre for help with assignments and gain skills and confidence from support with coursework. There are insufficient detailed targets set for both adult students and students aged 16 to 18. Most individual learning plans contain thorough summaries of work undertaken in sessions in adult provision. However, negotiated targets for learning are too broad and long term. Students receive satisfactory advice and guidance. Clear information and advice on provision are available in well-presented and easy to understand programmes and simplified leaflets.

Leadership and management

116. Leadership and management are good. Managers and staff are particularly effective in seeking partnership with employers, the healthcare trust, schools and other community organisations to provide courses in the community. Frequent meetings with recorded and named actions are held with external partners. Staff are highly committed and well informed. The management of adult literacy and numeracy discrete provision is good. The considerable growth in enrolments and students taking qualifications has been well managed. Teachers attend national and in-service training in curriculum and diagnostic assessment. Managers and teachers link learning materials to the national curriculum. Communications with part-time teachers are good. Equality of opportunity is a priority for staff and students. The college has a culture of widening participation and is successful at welcoming and supporting students with diverse needs. Teachers cover rights, responsibilities, and issues of race, age and gender effectively at induction. Teachers complete course reviews and improvements are made in response to these and to students' views. Regular staff meetings take place and prompt responses are made to any issues arising. The self-assessment report and development plans identify the key strengths and weaknesses accurately.

Part D: College data

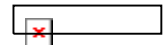
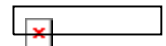


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

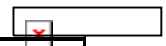
Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	17	20
2	44	24
3	32	12
4/5	0	2
Other	7	42
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	808	347	5
Land-based provision	0	102	0
Construction	150	83	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	487	514	4
Business administration,	231	1,266	6



management and professional			
Information and communication technology	829	1,777	11
Retailing, customer service and transportation	104	246	2
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	630	1,878	11
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	134	377	2
Health, social care and public services	272	1,435	7
Visual and performing arts and media	1,333	1,795	14
Humanities	171	1,232	6
English, languages and communication	1,261	630	8
Foundation programmes	331	307	3
Unknown area of learning	451	3,965	20
Total	7,192	15,954	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
		1	Starters excluding transfers	867	909	378	1,592
	Retention rate %	86	75	66	69	72	77
	National average %	75	76	0	69	70	0
	Pass rate %	75	73	76	82	84	87
	National average %	69	71	0	68	71	0
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,106	1,321	998	1,355	1,543	1,433
	Retention rate %	79	72	70	68	68	76
	National average %	70	72	0	68	68	0
	Pass rate %	81	72	80	80	78	85
	National average %	69	71	0	68	72	0
3	Starters excluding transfers	940	974	1,081	899	912	951
	Retention rate %	74	65	66	59	61	68

	National average %	71	77	0	68	70	0
	Pass rate %	77	77	82	75	72	75
	National average %	77	79	0	69	72	0
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	50	66	27	104	108	208
	Retention rate %	0	0	78	61	59	67
	National average %	73	71		67	67	
	Pass rate %	0	0	76	44	59	61
	National average %	54	53	0	59	56	0

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*.

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)	62	31	7	85
Level 2 (intermediate)	67	28	5	54
Level 1 (foundation)	73	22	5	22
Other sessions	57	43	0	17
Totals	65	30	5	178