



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Aylesbury College

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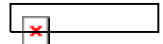
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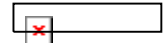
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Basic information about the college

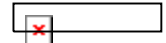


Name of college:	Aylesbury College
Type of college:	General Further Education College/Tertiary College
Principal:	Pauline Odulinski
Address of college:	Oxford Road Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP21 8PD
Telephone number:	01296 588 588
Fax number:	01296 588 589
Chair of governors:	Maurice Collins
Unique reference number:	130607
Name of reporting inspector:	Robert Avery HMI
Dates of inspection:	10-14 May 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



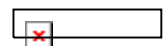
Aylesbury College is a medium-sized further education (FE) college. It draws most of its students from the central part of Buckinghamshire. The college operates on a main site close to the town centre, and a second site about three miles away. Within reasonable travelling distance, there are FE colleges at Amersham, Dunstable, Oxford, Milton Keynes, Hemel Hempstead and Thame. In addition, within the college's catchment area, most of the local education authority (LEA) maintained schools have sixth forms. Buckinghamshire LEA operates a selective system of secondary education with transfer at the age of 11. There are also four schools providing education for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the area. The LEA operates an adult education service in the town of Aylesbury and in other centres in the surrounding rural area.

The population of Aylesbury Vale in 2001 was approximately 166,000. Minority ethnic groups form about 6% of the population. In 2002/03, the college recruited a total of 6,513 students. Of these students, 4,641 were funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Approximately 62% of students were female, 38% were male and 27% were aged 16 to 18. Approximately 17% of students declared themselves as from a minority ethnic heritage. Enrolments by students aged 16 to 18 totalled 4,384, and enrolments by adult students totalled 5,073. The significant majority of enrolments were to courses at levels 1 and 2. The college offers provision in all 14 areas of learning, although numbers are small in some of these areas. Additionally, the college is responsible for approximately 400 foundation and advanced modern apprentices in construction, business, retail and customer service, hospitality, sports and leisure, hairdressing and health, social care and public services. In 2002/03, some 318 pupils from local schools were participating in vocational learning at the college.

In 2002/03, the college's overall operating budget was approximately £8.3 million. At the end of the 2002/03, the college completed the third year of its recovery plan. In the same year, the college achieved, for the first time in six years, the annual funding target set by the LSC. The college was last inspected in May 2002.

The college operates with a senior management team of three comprising the principal, vice principal and director of finance and information services. The curriculum is taught in the two faculties of services to people and industry and services to business and the community. Each faculty has a head of faculty, a curriculum development manager and several team leaders. The college mission is supported by six strategic aims. The college mission is to '... inspire learning and the achievement of excellence by encouraging participation and progression for all. We will release the social and economic potential of the community through innovative collaboration and partnership'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the overall quality of provision to be inadequate to meet the needs of all students. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in too many lessons is less than satisfactory. Inspectors

communications technology (ICT); hospitality and catering; humanities and English; and literacy and numeracy. Inspectors judged the provision in engineering; hairdressing and beauty therapy; and the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be unsatisfactory. Provision for work-based learners in construction and care were judged to be satisfactory. Provision for work-based learners in hairdressing was judged to be unsatisfactory. Leadership and management were judged to be unsatisfactory.

Key strengths

- good range of vocational programmes and progression routes

- achievement of enrolment targets

- improved financial position

- overall pass rates above the national averages on level 1 courses for students aged 16 to 18 and on courses for adults at levels 1, 2 and 4

- well-managed 14-to-16 provision.

What should be improved

- retention rates on many courses

- pass rates on many advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, some vocational qualifications, key skills qualifications and short courses

- quality of teaching and learning in many curriculum areas

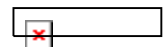
- monitoring and reviews of students' progress

- support for newly appointed teachers

- implementation of quality assurance procedures
- effectiveness of staff appraisal and assessment of teaching quality
- course reviews and identification of actions for improvement
- monitoring the implementation and the effectiveness of action plans
- rigour of self-assessment
- curriculum management in some areas
- lines of accountability for managers at all levels.

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



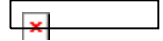
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	<p>Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory. Pass rates on some craft courses are high, but retention rates are low on some courses. Achievement of key skills qualifications on work-based learning programmes is low. Support for independent learning is very effective. Management of work-based learning for modern apprentices in wood occupations is good. Progress reviews for modern apprentices in plumbing are ineffective.</p>

Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Unsatisfactory. Teaching in motor vehicle engineering is poor, but teaching in some mechanical engineering lessons is good. Retention rates overall have improved on level 2 courses, but pass rates on level 1 courses and the national diploma course are poor. There is insufficient monitoring of students' progress and poor management of assessment. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
Business, administration management and professional	Satisfactory. There is much good teaching and retention rates on most courses are good. Pass rates are high on some courses, but are too low on most business, administration and office skills courses. Completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. Target setting and the monitoring of students' progress are undertaken inconsistently.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on level 1 and some full-time courses and improving pass rates on level 3 courses. Students on level 1 and level 2 courses develop good practical skills, but attainment is low on most level 3 courses. Teaching in many lessons for adults is good, but less effective in some lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Monitoring of students' progress is inadequate.
Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory. Retention rates on most courses are high. Pass rates on the national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1 and national diploma courses are low. Attainment in food production lessons is low. Teaching in some theory lessons is good. Some equipment and resources are outdated.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Unsatisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory . Contributory grade for beauty therapy is satisfactory . Pass rates on level 3 beauty therapy courses are high. The standards achieved by hairdressing students in some aspects of their work are low. Teaching in most beauty therapy lessons is good, but too much teaching in hairdressing is unsatisfactory. Work-based learning programmes are well structured to meet the needs of employers and trainees. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
Health, social care and public services	Good. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Pass rates are high on level 2 courses, although retention and pass rates on public services courses are poor. Achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor, but improving on foundation programmes. Teaching is highly effective. Assessment and tracking of students' progress is good. Leadership and management are good.
Humanities and English	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on many courses are low, although retention rates have improved recently. Students achieve high standards of work on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) English courses. Students' attendance at many lessons is low. Teaching in many lessons is good. Students' progress is monitored ineffectively.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Unsatisfactory. Students are making good progress in developing their personal skills. Teaching is unsatisfactory in a significant minority of lessons. The use of individual learning plans is underdeveloped. Review and target setting takes place at subject level, but there is no formal, managed review of each individual's overall progress. Management is unsatisfactory.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Pass rates on key skills at level 1 are low, although students achieve high standards of work in level 1 literacy and numeracy key skills lessons. Retention rates on the GCSE mathematics course are low. Teaching is good in literacy and numeracy learning support sessions, but insufficient attention is given

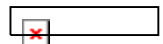
	to individual needs in key and basic skills lessons. Diagnostic assessment is comprehensive. Monitoring of students' progress in key skills is insufficiently rigorous.
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How well is the college led and managed?



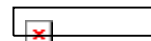
Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The college has improved insufficiently the overall quality of provision since the last inspection in May 2002. Too many of the key weaknesses identified in 2002 have not been addressed adequately and in some curriculum areas many of the previously identified strengths are now areas of concern. Managers have worked successfully to improve the quality of curriculum provision in the business, ICT and health and care areas, and have improved the provision for work-based learners in construction and care. However, the quality of provision in three other curriculum areas has weakened and become unsatisfactory since the last inspection, and the provision for work-based learners in hairdressing remains unsatisfactory. Management of the curriculum in three areas is unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning has not improved since the last inspection; in too many curriculum areas the quality of teaching and learning has declined. Aspects of quality assurance have improved, but there is insufficient rigour in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness in driving up standards. Self-assessment is insufficiently critical and too many staff and managers categorise satisfactory outcomes and developments as key strengths. Governors and senior managers have successfully improved the college's financial position. Realistic targets for growth have been achieved recently, with the college achieving and exceeding its funding targets. Over the last three years, recruitment has increased by approximately 17%. Managers have been successful in improving the pass rates on many courses for adults, and on level 1 courses for students aged 16 to 18. However, the pass rates on many level 2 and AS-level and GCE A-level courses for students aged 16 to 18 remain low. Managers have been less successful in raising overall retention rates, and these remain poor overall on level 3 qualifications for students aged 16 to 18.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



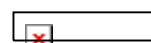
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. There are some effective strategies for widening participation. The college has formed partnerships with a range of local organisations and has some good community links. There are good links with some local schools which are used to promote participation and to encourage students to progress to FE. The provision for young people aged 14 to 16 is very effective. There is a good range of programmes and courses in many curriculum areas. However, there is insufficient provision of college courses in the community, particularly for literacy and numeracy. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory. The college has made a satisfactory response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Amendments made to the equal opportunities policy meet the requirements of the Act. However, the implementation of some of the requirements of the legislation has been slow and some work is yet to be completed. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds in the college is greater than that in the local community. Promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities are satisfactory. The college has satisfactory access for students with restricted mobility.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Students receive satisfactory guidance and support at the college. Guidance on to courses is effective and induction to the college is appropriate. The diagnosis of, and provision for additional learning support is good for many full-time students. The retention and pass rates of students receiving additional learning support are higher than those of the college as a whole. There is weak initial assessment and progress monitoring for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Full-time students receive satisfactory support from tutors. Individual progress reviews and action planning are weak in many areas. Students have access to a good range of effective personal, welfare and financial advice from specialist staff at the college. Careers education is satisfactory and provides effective guidance on progression to employment and higher education (HE).

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

- support from teachers and tutors

- being treated as adults

- the relaxed, friendly atmosphere

- learning support

- support on welfare issues

- wide range of information available.

What they feel could be improved

- availability of parking spaces

- the prices and quality of food in the refectory

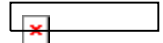
- the organisation of key skills

- availability of equipment in some lessons

- group tutorials

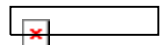
- the frequent changes in teachers.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



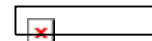
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	53	39	8
19+ and WBL*	56	29	15
Learning 16-18	52	35	13

19+ and WBL*	56	27	17
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Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. Overall pass rates for adult students have improved at all levels, and in 2002/03 were above the national averages on courses at levels 1, 2 and 4. The overall pass rate on level 1 qualifications for students aged 16 to 18 improved considerably in 2002/03, and exceeded the national average. However, the improvements in overall pass rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 have been less significant, and in 2002/03 these remained below the national averages. The overall pass rates on short courses for all students are significantly below the national averages. Overall, retention rates have notably improved on level 1 courses for adults and students aged 16 to 18, and in 2002/03 were well above the national average for adults. However, there has been little improvement in overall retention rates at other levels for both age groups, and overall, retention rates remain significantly below the national average on level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18 and level 4 courses for adults. Data supplied by the college during the inspection show that in-year retention rates were improving in most areas of learning when compared to the same period of the previous year. Achievement of key skills and full framework modern apprenticeships overall, although improving, are poor. The average attendance of students to the lessons observed by inspectors was 76%, and shows no overall improvement since the last inspection. Attendance at most lessons in the majority of curriculum areas is satisfactory, but is lower in construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, humanities and English, and literacy and numeracy.

Students aged 16 to 18

2. The overall pass rate on level 1 qualifications improved significantly in 2002/03 to 6% above the national average for the previous year. Overall pass rates on level 2 courses improved over the four year period 1999/2000 to 2002/03 and were just below the national average in 2002/03. Although overall pass rates improved from a low base on level 3 qualifications, these remained 11% below the national average in 2002/03. In the same year, overall retention and pass rates declined on short courses to below the national averages.

3. Overall retention rates on level 1 courses have improved significantly, but have remained almost unchanged overall on courses at levels 2 and 3. In 2002/03, data supplied by the college show that overall retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and level 2 long qualifications were close to the national averages for the previous year, but remained well below the national average at level 3.

4. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 courses improved overall in 2002/03 and were satisfactory, but overall pass rates declined on GCSE courses in 2002/03 to 15% below the national average. On level 3 courses, the pass and retention rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in 2002/03 were 16% below the national averages. Pass rates on advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) and NVQ level 3 courses improved in 2002/03 and were close to the national averages. In September 2004, the college is planning to introduce a system which compares the achievements of students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses with their prior attainment. Overall, retention rates on most courses are satisfactory, but in 2002/03 were significantly below the national averages on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Overall, the standards achieved by students during the majority of lessons are satisfactory or better in construction, business and administration, ICT and health and social care. However, overall attainment is low in a minority of lessons in engineering, hospitality and

catering, hairdressing, humanities and literacy and numeracy.

5. In September 2003, the college revised the arrangements for the delivery of the key skills programme. Pass rates on key skills qualifications have been poor, but data supplied by the college for 2003/04 indicate improvement in the number of students completing their key skills portfolios.

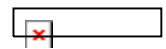
Adult learners

6. In 2002/03, data supplied by the college show that pass rates on long courses at all levels improved compared to the previous year. Notably, the overall pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 improved to 12% above the national averages. The overall pass rate on level 3 courses was close to the national average, and the overall pass rate on level 4 courses improved to above the national average. In the same year, the overall retention rate on level 1 courses improved to 13% above the national average. The overall retention rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 were close to the national averages. The overall retention rate on level 4 courses remained 18% below the national average. The overall retention rate on short courses was around the national average, but the overall pass rate, although improving, remained below the national average.

7. Pass rates on the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course are high, and contribute to the overall increase in pass rates on level 1 courses. Overall pass rates on NVQ level 2 courses have improved significantly and in 2002/03 were well above the national average. Attainment observed in lessons is mostly good in construction, health and care, humanities and literacy and numeracy, and mostly satisfactory or better in business and ICT. The standards achieved by adults in a significant minority of lessons in engineering, hairdressing and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are less than satisfactory.

8. Overall, achievements of work-based learners are low. The completion rates of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks have improved since the last inspection in care and construction. However, the completion of advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks remains low across all areas. In many programmes, students achieve their NVQ qualifications, but fail to achieve the key skills elements required for completion of the framework.

Quality of education and training



9. Of the 169 lessons observed during the inspection, inspectors judged most teaching and learning to be satisfactory or better. However, in 8 of the 10 curriculum areas inspected, teaching and learning in one or more lessons was judged to be unsatisfactory. Overall, the proportion of lessons judged to be good or better, at 54.4%, is 8 percentage points lower than the average for similar colleges inspected in 2002/03, and the proportion of less than satisfactory teaching, at 10.7%, is almost 4 percentage points higher. There has been no overall improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection in May 2002. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably in the business, ICT and health and care curriculum areas. Much teaching and learning is good in these areas as well as in the humanities and English curriculum area. However, since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has declined significantly in engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching and learning in a significant minority of lessons in these areas are unsatisfactory. In engineering, hospitality and catering, hairdressing, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and literacy and numeracy, there is too little teaching and learning which is good or better.

10. The proportion of good or better teaching in lessons attended predominantly by adults and those attended predominantly by students aged 16 to 18 is similar, but there is a higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning in lessons attended predominantly by adults and work-based learners. Teaching and learning in lessons taught by part-time teachers is notably weaker. Overall,

the better teaching and learning takes place in level 3 lessons. In lessons on entry level and level 1 courses, the proportion of less than satisfactory teaching is much higher than in lessons on courses at level 2 or 3. In lessons where students from courses of different levels are combined, the proportion of good or better teaching is low. Most teaching and learning in lessons on AS-level and GCE A-level courses, AVCE and NVQ level 3 courses is good or better. The weakest teaching takes place in lessons for City and Guilds, Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national and NVQ level 2 courses.

11. In the best lessons in the construction, business, ICT, health and care and humanities curriculum areas, lessons are well planned and teachers ensure that students understand what is expected of them at the start of the lesson. In some business lessons, teachers make effective use of teaching aids and information and learning technology (ILT) to motivate students and involve them in discussion activities. Teachers frequently use up-to-date examples of business and commercial practice to enliven their lessons, and encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. In ICT, some teachers cater effectively for the needs of individual students and plan changes of activity to maintain students' interest. Assignments are broken down into manageable tasks and teachers give clear guidance on how to achieve higher grades. In many health and social care lessons, students are well motivated, are encouraged to participate and achieve high standards of work. Teachers know their students well. They make effective use of students' preferred learning styles to plan lesson activities and to ensure individuals make good progress. Equality of opportunity is promoted across all topics. Equal opportunities are particularly well monitored in the reviews of work-based learners. Opportunities for students to develop key skills are embedded within the vocational topics covered during lessons.

12. In the humanities and English curriculum areas, handouts and other learning materials are well designed. Teachers skilfully use directed questioning to encourage students to participate and make progress. Students are given good preparation for examinations.

13. Weaker teaching is often characterised by poor planning and lack of pace which fails to motivate students. Often, the needs of individual students are not met. In motor vehicle engineering, lessons are often poorly prepared. Teachers insufficiently check students' understanding and progress. Poor behaviour and lateness are not dealt with effectively. Students arriving late to lessons often disrupt the work of others. In the weaker lessons in hospitality and catering, some students are insufficiently challenged and make slow progress. Lesson objectives are often unclear and some students become inattentive and talk amongst themselves. During some lessons, in both the restaurant and the kitchen, students on courses of a different level are not set tasks that are appropriate to them. In some practical lessons in hairdressing and catering, teachers insufficiently monitor the work being undertaken by individual students, and consequently the standards achieved by students are less than satisfactory. In the unsatisfactory lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers rely too heavily on a narrow range of teaching methods and students spend too much time on inappropriate activities, such as copying writing. During group lessons in literacy and numeracy, some teachers pay insufficient attention to the needs of individuals. In lessons where students of different abilities work together, whole class teaching is inappropriately applied. In these lessons, the more able students are not challenged sufficiently.

14. At the time of the inspection, teaching staff comprised 58 full-time teachers, 32-fractional full-time teachers, and 133 part-time teachers. Part-time teachers undertake just under one third of the teaching. There has been considerable turnover of teaching staff in the last two years, with many new teachers joining the college. Most full-time teachers are well qualified in their subjects, with over 88% holding a teaching qualification or working towards one. Many part-time teachers are not qualified as teachers or assessors and have little previous teaching experience. College managers are working hard to reduce dependence on part-time teachers and to increase the number of full-time teachers. There has been improved support for part-time teachers since the previous inspection and they are now paid to attend staff meetings and in-service training days. Further support for part-time teachers is planned for September 2004. Cross college in-service education and training for teachers has been linked to information technology (IT) developments, ILT implementation, equality of opportunities updating and other issues, including industrial updating. There has been extensive staff development in basic skills and key skills, although new learning support assistants have not had sufficient training for working with students with learning disabilities.

15. Accommodation and specialist resources are adequate in the majority of areas. Some accommodation and specialist equipment are outdated. The refectory is well managed and furnished, but there are no common room facilities for students. An accommodation strategy has been produced for the redevelopment of the main site. The main site comprises a series of separate buildings and many of the buildings are old and require significant maintenance. The general accommodation is maintained to reasonable standards. There are some significant shortcomings in the specialist learning resources and accommodation in several curriculum areas. For example, the accommodation for the engineering workshops, hair and beauty salons, and for some kitchen areas are outdated and in poor condition, and do not reflect industry standards. The college plans to improve the catering and hair and beauty facilities in July 2004. Most accommodation is accessible to students with impaired mobility, but there is no lift to the second floor of one building, and the college's audit of accommodation to identify compliance with the requirements of the SENDA is not yet complete. The learning resources centre may be accessed by a lift, but is difficult to use by some students with impaired mobility.

16. Classroom accommodation is mainly satisfactory. Many classrooms used for theory teaching do not have IT facilities, resulting in disruption to learning when students need to access computers elsewhere. Some general classrooms are poorly decorated and furnished, with furniture showing signs of wear and tear, and some having unsuitable blinds which make it difficult for students to see the whiteboard and screen.

17. The library and learning resource centres are well used and of high quality. However, students report some difficulties in gaining access to IT workstations at peak times during the week. The library and learning resource centres are well staffed and effectively managed; they include computer workstations, study spaces and areas for quiet study. A large independent learning centre has over 70 computers. It provides additional resources for taught groups in ICT and other subjects and for individual students. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant improvement in computer networks, hardware and software. Library staff liaise effectively with curriculum managers to maintain up-to-date collections of books, videos and periodicals for loan and reference purposes.

18. Since the previous inspection, assessment policies and procedures have been revised and assessment practice is satisfactory in most areas. In the construction curriculum area, rigorous assessment and internal verification arrangements are contributing to improving standards of work. However, in engineering, internal verification is insufficiently rigorous. Arrangements for the assessment of work-based learners in construction are effective, but are unsatisfactory in hairdressing.

19. Most curriculum teams have prepared clear assessment plans for their courses which are provided to students as part of the student course handbooks. They are scrutinised by team leaders and senior managers to avoid assessment overloads for students, although this is undertaken less effectively in the humanities curriculum area. The marking of assignments is usually systematic and accurate, providing students with good feedback on how to improve their work. In health and social care, the assignment briefs include grading criteria and students are well informed about these, but such practices are insufficiently undertaken in the ICT curriculum area. In most areas, the feedback provided by teachers on students' work is generally constructive, giving clear direction for improvement. In engineering, students are unaware of the assessment criteria for their programmes, or of their progress towards assessment goals. The initial assessment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not adequate to plan effective individual learning programmes for the students, and a co-ordinated overview of individual student progress is lacking.

20. Overall, the arrangements for monitoring students' progress are unsatisfactory. In most curriculum areas, progress reviews are undertaken with insufficient rigour. Many individual learning plans contain targets and actions for development which are unclear or are insufficiently demanding and fail to ensure students make better progress and improve their standard of work. In some areas, reviews are undertaken too infrequently. In the engineering, business, ICT, hairdressing, hospitality and catering and humanities curriculum areas, and on plumbing and key skills courses, students' progress reviews are weak. Individual learning plans are often not used appropriately and contain insufficient information, and the targets set for improvement are insufficiently specific. In provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, targets are set for individual students which

focus on the development of personal skills, but the overall progress of students across their learning programmes is not monitored. On care and early years courses, course tutors set measurable targets for individual students and these are used effectively to monitor their progress.

21. The college offers a good range of vocational courses, particularly at levels 1 and 2. Provision is offered in all areas of learning, although numbers are small in some areas. Most curriculum areas offer courses and programmes at levels 1 to 3 and there are clear progression routes for many students. There is insufficient provision at levels 1 and 2 in business administration and insufficient literacy and numeracy provision for adults. The college has a significant modern apprenticeship programme. The curriculum portfolio is reviewed annually. Staff review the provision in the light of recruitment trends, employer needs, local circumstances and national strategies. For example, provision in construction has been expanded to address local and national priorities. An employer advisory group meets once each term. Employers are consulted about their training needs and there is good collaboration on curriculum planning in some areas of learning, such as care and hospitality and catering. However, in other curriculum areas, employers are insufficiently involved in curriculum planning and co-ordinating work-based learning.

22. The college has good links with some local schools. There is particularly good collaboration with one local school, based on the same site as the college. The school provides AS-level and GCE A2 mathematics courses for college students and the college provides AS-level and GCE A2 humanities courses for students attending the school. The college also provides places on courses for a small number of students from a local pupil referral unit and a unit for severely disaffected young people. The provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 within the college is very effective. In the year of inspection, over 200 students from six local schools had participated in the increased flexibility (IF) programme and there are plans to increase participation from September 2004. Guidance on to the programme is thorough and progress monitoring is effective. Additional training has been provided for those staff teaching on the programme. Feedback from schools participating in the project is positive. Over 60% of the pupils completing their courses in 2004 have indicated that they would like to progress to other courses at the college.

23. In September 2003, the college revised the arrangements for teaching key skills. All full-time students aged 16 to 18 are entitled to study for key skills qualifications in application of number, communication and ICT. The revised scheme provides weekly key skill development lessons in application of number and communication, taught by specialist key skills teachers. An additional weekly lesson is timetabled where both the key skill teacher and course tutor work together to enable students to build their portfolios in the context of their main course of study. At the time of the inspection, the number of students completing their portfolios had increased significantly compared to the previous year. However, it was too early to assess the impact of the new scheme on raising students' key skills achievements. Evaluation of the revised arrangements has not been undertaken with sufficient rigour: evaluation has been insufficiently informed by lesson observation, attendance monitoring and student feedback.

24. The curriculum enrichment programme is satisfactory. A wide range of sporting and recreational activities is organised by the sports department, including a number of activities aimed at raising funds for charities. Some good curriculum enrichment is organised within curriculum areas, particularly in hospitality and catering, and in humanities.

25. There are some effective strategies to widen participation in education and training. The college is an active member of Buckinghamshire's Lifelong Learning Partnership. The college has worked closely with the Buckinghamshire Agency for Supported Employment to find appropriate work placements for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a flexible approach to work-based learning in hairdressing, where employers and learners have a choice of different attendance patterns to suit their needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than that for Aylesbury as a whole. Some English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision is offered in the community in partnership with another FE college.

26. Advice and guidance arrangements are effective. Liaison with schools and the Connexions service ensures that relevant information about the college is made available to prospective applicants. Prospectuses for full-time and part-time students are well presented. They provide

prospective students with an up-to-date description of qualification routes and a comprehensive guide to courses. A well-planned sequence of presentations to schools and open days at the college help to ensure that students are prepared for the transition to the college and are placed on appropriate courses. All full-time students are interviewed prior to enrolment. Induction arrangements are generally satisfactory and ensure that most students are able to settle into college routines and are aware of the demands of their courses.

27. Personal support for full-time students is good. Students have access to a wide range of effective personal, welfare and financial advice from specialist staff at the college. The college has a counselling service and a day nursery on-site for use by students. Feedback from students on the services provided is mostly positive. In a recent survey, however, over one third of students questioned were unsure of how to get help with personal problems. Some of the support information available is produced in a range of languages. The student support fund is used effectively. Retention rates for students receiving financial support are above those for the college as a whole. In January 2004, the college introduced a project in partnership with Connexions to support students on level 2 courses considered to be at risk of leaving their courses early. At the time of inspection, 49 students had been supported through the project and all but one had been retained.

28. All full-time students receive an initial assessment, including diagnostic testing of literacy and numeracy skills. Diagnostic testing is also carried out for all modern apprentices, many part-time students aged 16 to 18 and some adult students. In some cases, further screening is instigated for specific purposes, such as dyslexia. Over 300 students are currently receiving support. Data supplied by the college indicate that the retention and pass rates of students receiving support are higher than those for the college as a whole. There is some good teaching in individual learning support sessions and learning support assistants offer effective additional support in many lessons. However, the teaching in some group literacy and numeracy lessons is less effective. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory.

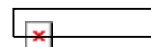
29. Some of the policies and procedures relating to student support are not yet fully in place. Child protection policies and procedures have been written in draft form, but not yet agreed by the corporation. There is no designated member of staff responsible for child protection issues. Appropriate checks are carried out for all new members of staff and retrospective checks have been undertaken or are in progress for staff involved in advising or teaching young people aged 14 to 16 or vulnerable adults. At the time of the inspection, the college was developing a Skills for Life strategy.

30. The effectiveness of some aspects of support for students is evaluated insufficiently. For example, there is insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of information, advice and guidance. Evaluation of induction and tutorial programmes are not informed by formal feedback from students. Although there is some monitoring of the effectiveness of the student support fund, there is no equivalent monitoring of personal and welfare support, such as the impact of counselling.

31. Careers education and guidance are provided through a contract with the Connexions service and is given primarily through tutor groups. Students applying for both employment and HE courses are appropriately supported and benefit from guidance from visiting external speakers. Increased opportunities to enter HE are being developed in conjunction with the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. There is a well-resourced careers library and useful additional resources to support students applying to employment or HE.

32. Full-time students receive satisfactory support on both personal and academic issues from tutors. Group and individual tutorials are provided. Students in most curriculum areas have at least one individual tutorial a term. Tutors are provided with a tutorial handbook and have received training on how to manage tutorials. There is an outline programme for group tutorials that is used on a flexible basis by curriculum areas. The college has policies and procedures for attendance and punctuality. A target has been set for 80% attendance in 2003/04. The average attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 76%, reflecting a small improvement on the college figure of 73% in 2002/03. Overall, students value the individual support they receive from tutors.

Leadership and management



33. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Although managers have worked successfully to improve the quality of curriculum provision in the business, ICT, and health and care areas, and have improved the provision for work-based learners in construction and care, the quality of provision in three other curriculum areas has become unsatisfactory since the last inspection, and the provision for work-based learners in hairdressing remains unsatisfactory. Curriculum management in three areas is unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning has not improved since the last inspection; in too many curriculum areas the quality of teaching and learning has declined. Quality assurance is insufficiently rigorous and self-assessment is insufficiently critical. Governors and senior managers have successfully improved the college's financial position. Realistic targets for growth have been achieved recently, with the college achieving and exceeding its funding targets. Over the last three years, recruitment has increased by approximately 17%. Managers have been successful in improving the pass rates on many courses for adults, and on level 1 courses for students aged 16 to 18. However, the pass rates on many level 2 and AS-level and GCE A-level courses for students aged 16 to 18 remain low and retention rates remain poor overall on level 3 qualifications for students aged 16 to 18.

34. The strategic plan for 2003 to 2006 sets ambitious targets for improvement and relevant actions are clearly linked to the college's development plan. Financial management is sound. Governors and senior managers monitor college expenditure carefully. There is no effective procedure for monitoring course costs, although revised methods for calculating and monitoring costs by course have been developed for use in September 2004. The appointment of a new senior finance post has led to a clearer accountability for finance and information. A new management information system has significantly improved the recording, accuracy and accessibility of student data. A wide variety of reports on recruitment, retention and pass rates are now available to staff and managers through the college's intranet. Data showing in-year retention rates are now readily available and this is monitored for each curriculum area. The recording of student in-year pass rates has also improved. Staff turnover is high at 17%. Many new teachers have little teaching experience and are in the early stages of in-service training for initial teacher qualifications. Strategies for supporting new staff have been developed; some have been implemented recently and others are planned for September 2004. Utilisation of accommodation has remained low at 17%. Overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money. However, in the three areas judged unsatisfactory, and in the humanities area where pass rates are low and class sizes are small, value for money is unsatisfactory.

35. Management of the curriculum in engineering, hairdressing and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory. In these areas, there is weak monitoring of quality assurance and ineffective attention is given to the needs of individual students. Curriculum management is good in health and social care. Management in this area, although relatively new, has achieved improvement through a strong focus on individual student learning. In many curriculum areas, monitoring of the achievement of objectives at curriculum and course level is not always undertaken effectively or with sufficient diligence. Lines of accountability for curriculum improvement and quality are insufficiently clear. Staff in many areas are uncertain about the role of the heads of faculty in driving improvement. The overall management of work-based learning is satisfactory, although it is weak in hairdressing. Management of key skills has improved. Key skills portfolio achievement improved in 2003, however, full achievement of all three key skills qualifications remained below the national averages. Attendance monitoring has shown little impact on improving student attendance since the last inspection. Attendance for the lessons observed during inspection was 76%. All permanent staff receive an appraisal of their performance. The setting of measurable objectives and targets for improvement, however, is weak. In the last 12 months, only 29% of teaching staff have been appraised. Informal interim reviews through individual meetings with line managers are held, but these are not clearly or systematically linked to objectives within appraisal. Objectives recorded in individual managers' appraisals do not clearly link to the college's strategic aims and there is insufficient reference to setting improvements in teaching and learning within

teachers' appraisals.

36. Quality assurance is not implemented effectively in most areas. There are clear procedures and policies in place, but course teams do not always comply with these. The monitoring and effectiveness of these systems vary considerably across the curriculum. Quality reviews identifying actions for improvement lack detail and measurable indicators. Much target setting is weak, and not used effectively to measure improvement. Many course reviews do not identify quantifiable targets to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, the college's self-assessment report does not accurately reflect the weaknesses found by inspectors. The assessment of individual curriculum areas lack rigour, with many areas quoting normal practice as key strengths. Some aspects of quality assurance have improved. The college's internal lesson observation programme has identified many of the weaknesses identified by inspectors, but the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning in many areas have failed to raise standards sufficiently. An additional, less-formalised peer observation is undertaken three times a year which enables teachers to introduce new ideas into their own teaching. Curriculum quality audits to check for compliance and standards have only recently been introduced.

37. Communication in the college is good. Staff consider that they are well informed on college developments through regular team meetings, newsletters, weekly bulletins and an allocated staff development hour held at the end of each month. Part-time teachers are paid to attend course team meetings and staff development events. Morale has improved and staff value the support they receive from managers. There has been significant investment to improve staff access to IT. Most staff now have access to a personal computer and have received training in how to access reports. However, not all staff use the information to plan improvements or monitor course and student performance.

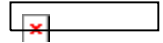
38. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college have revised their equal opportunities policy to comply with recent legislation and have a separate race equality policy. A discrimination working group has recently been established to monitor and audit college policies in accordance with new legislation. The equal opportunity committee is responsible for monitoring equality. Data on recruitment, retention and pass rates by gender, age and ethnicity have been available since September 2003. Although these data are reviewed by senior managers, analysis is not yet undertaken in sufficient depth, nor is action taken as required by the college's policy. For example, attendance by minority groups is not analysed or discussed. Clear and comprehensive procedures to deal with incidents of harassment are established. An annual 'Celebrating Diversity Festival' is held by the college. The two-week festival involves student competitions and exhibitions of work on the theme of cultural diversity. A range of cultural activities involving the college, local schools and public services are promoted to engage the local community. Some 17% of students and 15% of teaching staff come from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared to 6% in the local community. The college's response to the requirements of the SENDA has been satisfactory.

39. Overall governance is effective. There has been a 40% turnover of governors since the last inspection. The new chair is committed to the success of the college and has recently attended college open days and staff development events. Governors meet regularly and review the progress made against the college's strategic aims. Attendance at corporation and sub-committee meetings is mostly good, although only 30% of governors have received training on the Disability Discrimination Act. Governors scrutinise financial performance carefully, however, not all governors fully understand the key weaknesses in relation to the quality of curriculum provision and there has been insufficient focus on quality assurance monitoring and teaching and learning. The chairman recognises that a closer focus on aspects of teaching and learning is required. There are effective working relationships between senior post holders and the governing body. A member of the governing body attends the appraisal of each director. The corporation have only recently begun to monitor student recruitment, retention and pass rates by minority group at a detailed level. There is effective clerking.

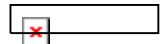
40. External links and partnership working are effective. Collaboration with local schools is very good. There is a growing, well-managed vocational programme providing vocational opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16. Links with other educational providers are enabling the sharing of good practice. For example, a programme of external lesson observation and joint staff development

initiatives has been developed successfully through collaboration with other local colleges. Links with the Buckinghamshire Lifelong Learning Partnership and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College have been particularly successful in promoting a range of projects and HE. Overall, links with employers are improving. The principal is actively involved in raising the profile of the college within the business community through presentations at business events. There are good links with employers within construction, hospitality and catering and health and social care curriculum areas.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Construction



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates in bricklaying and wood occupations
- very effective support for independent learning
- good management of work-based learning in wood occupations.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on intermediate construction certificate courses
- low key skills achievement on modern apprenticeships
- ineffective progress reviews for work-based students in plumbing
- ineffective management of resources in bricklaying.

Scope of provision

41. The college provides a range of full-time and part-time courses in construction at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Craft qualifications are offered in bricklaying, painting and decorating, wood occupations, electrical installation and plumbing. The college also offers the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation course in construction. At the time of inspection, there were 459 students on construction courses. Of these, 108 were on full-time courses and 389 on part-time courses, including the modern apprentices. There were 99 advanced modern apprentices, 114 foundation modern apprentices and 3 students on other NVQ work-based learning programmes.

Achievement and standards

42. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall. Pass rates on NVQ courses in bricklaying and wood occupations qualifications are high and some are well above the national averages. There are low retention rates on the intermediate construction certificate courses. In 2001/02 and 2002/03, the retention rates were well below the national averages. Achievements of key skills qualifications on modern apprenticeship programmes are low and prevent many apprentices from gaining the full framework. Of 37 electrical installation trainees scheduled to complete their programmes in 2003, almost half achieved the NVQ level 3 qualification. However, due to the lack of key skills achievement, no full apprenticeship frameworks were successfully completed. Of 64 foundation modern apprentices scheduled to complete in 2003, one quarter achieved the full framework; half of the remaining trainees left their programmes having completed the vocational NVQ, but did not complete the key skills element of their framework. Nevertheless, the college has made progress recently in rectifying this weakness. Key skill development is now scheduled into the off-the-job training activities. Students are completing portfolios and routinely being entered for the key skills tests.

43. Students produce a range of satisfactory work both in the college and in the workplace. There is a successful programme for the development of personal and learning skills for full-time students. Attendance to some lessons is low.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ construction (bricklaying)	2	No. of starts	39	18	19
		% retention	46	56	68
		% pass rate	61	100	92
NVQ mechanical engineering services (plumbing)	2	No. of starts	41	69	36
		% retention	41	54	53
		% pass rate	29	62	63
NVQ electrical installation (construction)	3	No. of starts	17	29	15
		% retention	94	72	47
		% pass rate	25	57	100

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

Quality of education and training

44. Teaching is good in the majority of lessons, and overall has changed little since the last

inspection in May 2002. In the best lessons, teachers plan their lessons well and set clear objectives which take account of the different abilities of individual students. In these lessons, students participate well in whole class discussions, group work and individual learning activities. Students are challenged and are encouraged to work to their full potential. Learning is checked by discussion and directed questioning. Students are well motivated and are able to manage their own learning. In the weaker lessons, a few teachers fail to demonstrate best practice during practical sessions. During an unsatisfactory lesson, insufficient attention was given by the teacher to the needs of individual students when allocating practical tasks to students. There has been satisfactory progress made in embedding key skill development with vocational activities.

45. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in their specialist subjects. Plans are in place to enable those who do not hold teaching or assessor qualifications to attend suitable courses in the 2004/05 academic year. Since the last inspection in May 2002, the quality of tools and equipment has been improved. Small tools and equipment are sufficient in number, enabling students to make good progress in practical lessons. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety in the practical workshops. Students are able to access computers in the learning resource centre and computer workshops, but there are insufficient computer facilities in the construction area.

46. Arrangements for assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Assignments are marked to appropriate standards and teachers provide feedback to encourage improvement. The internal verification process is sound. Plans and records are comprehensive. Meetings take place at regular intervals for training and updating of assessors. Full-time students receive regular individual progress reviews. These are well managed and refer to actions identified at previous reviews and progress made towards achieving targets. Relevant issues are discussed and short-term targets are set. There are ineffective progress reviews for work-based learners in plumbing and many learners are making insufficient progress. Reviews are undertaken too infrequently. The progress reviews are insufficiently rigorous and the targets set are insufficiently specific. The reviews fail to inform trainees how to use evidence from the workplace for NVQ and key skills assessment.

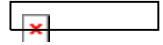
47. The college offers courses in all major construction crafts, except in plastering and gas installation. The curriculum includes wood occupations, plumbing, brickwork, electrical installation and the construction and built environment. Pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools attend the college to study for the foundation craft award in building. The course is well planned and the pupils are making good progress. Many of the pupils plan to progress to higher-level construction courses when they leave school. The department has received recognition from the Construction Industry Training Board for the successful delivery of this course.

48. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment identifies the numeracy and literacy skills of students and includes a vocationally specific interview. The support for additional learning needs is effective and is provided both within the vocational lessons and through individual sessions with learning support staff. Induction is comprehensive and covers health and safety, course arrangements and behaviour expectations of students. Personal tutors are allocated for all full-time students and provide effective support on vocational and personal issues.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new management structure is working effectively and communication in the area is good. Staff meetings are held twice weekly to share good teaching and learning practice and to discuss course management issues. The meetings provide effective support for newly appointed teachers and supplements the guidance provided by the senior tutor. Management of work-based learning in wood occupations is effective. However, management of the bricklaying workshop is poor. The work of students attending part time is often damaged. This leads to these students often having to repeat their previous work and slows their progress. There is little active promotion of equal opportunities within the construction area. Some aspects of the monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace are weak. Quality assurance is undertaken satisfactorily by course teams. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in the self-assessment report.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing



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

Strengths

- good teaching in some mechanical engineering lessons
- improving retention rates on level 2 programmes.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on level 1 motor vehicle and the national diploma courses
- poor teaching on motor vehicle engineering courses
- insufficient use of practical resources
- poor assessment practices
- insufficient monitoring of students' progress
- unsatisfactory management.

Scope of provision

50. The engineering provision includes motor vehicle repair and servicing, mechanical engineering, electronic engineering and computer-aided design courses. Courses are offered from level 1 to level 3. At the time of inspection, there were 179 students enrolled on engineering courses. Of these, 124 students were aged 16 to 19. Very few students are sponsored by employers to attend courses. A very high majority of students are male.

Achievement and standards

51. Although overall pass and retention rates have improved at level 1 and level 2, too many students fail to successfully complete their engineering courses. On some significant courses, the pass rates have improved whilst retention rates have declined. Due to low enrolments on many courses and the changes made to the qualifications offered since the last inspection in 2002, the table below presents aggregated pass and retention rate information at each level rather than by individual qualification. Overall pass rates on level 1 courses have improved, although the pass rates on some courses in motor vehicle engineering remain poor. Pass rates on level 2 courses have improved: mainly attributable to the high pass rates on the computer-aided drafting course and the first diploma course in engineering. The overall pass rates on level 3 courses have declined over the last two years. On the national diploma course, the pass rates have been consistently below the national average.

52. Overall retention rates on most level 1 courses have improved. However, the retention rate on the motor vehicle engineering full-time course is below the national average. Retention rates on most level 2 courses have improved over the last three years, although on the first diploma course they remain poor. The overall retention rates on level 3 courses declined in 2002/03 and were below the national averages on most courses. The retention rates on the national diploma and national certificate courses have been significantly below the national averages for the last two years.

53. Students on motor vehicle programmes achieve a satisfactory level of competence when undertaking practical tasks in the workshop. However, during theory lessons, students often demonstrate insufficient understanding of underpinning engineering principles and those related to health and safety. Students studying mechanical engineering are competent in applying analytical skills when completing calculations and demonstrate appropriate understanding of engineering manufacturing processes.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Engineering courses	1	No. of starts	31	46	49
		% retention	45	63	80
		% pass rate	29	31	49
Engineering courses	2	No. of starts	152	108	47
		% retention	72	74	83
		% pass rate	47	42	71
Engineering courses	3	No. of starts	65	58	41
		% retention	88	61	46
		% pass rate	53	88	68

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

Quality of education and training

54. Overall, teaching and learning in too many lessons are unsatisfactory and little is good or better. Much of the poorer teaching is in motor vehicle lessons. Teachers are often poorly prepared and students are insufficiently challenged in lessons: teachers often fail to involve all students in discussions, question and answer sessions or group activities. The poorer lessons lack clear objectives and pace. Teachers insufficiently check students' understanding and progress. Poor behaviour and lateness are not dealt with effectively. Students arriving late to lessons often disrupt the work of others. Learning materials provided by teachers during theory lessons are often of poor quality, comprising photocopied diagrams from textbooks and handwritten handouts. In many theory lessons, teachers insufficiently link engineering principles to practical examples by use of

demonstrations.

55. Teaching in some mechanical and electronic engineering lessons is good. These lessons are well structured, have clear aims and objectives and fully involve most students. For example, during a mechanical engineering lesson on manufacturing processes, the teacher ensured all students understood what was expected of them. Students were directed to list the manufacturing processes and tooling required to manufacture the components and provide brief presentations on their findings. Through the presentations, most students were able to demonstrate that they had made good progress.

56. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in their subjects. Too few motor vehicle engineering teachers are qualified as assessment verifiers. Some students have expressed dissatisfaction over the frequent changes in teachers on some courses. There is an over-reliance on part-time teachers and some full-time teachers are timetabled to teach the same group of students for too many consecutive periods. Specialist resources in the motor vehicle, mechanical engineering and electronic workshops are satisfactory. A well-equipped computer room is available for engineering students. Much of the accommodation is drab and uninspiring with rooms being poorly maintained and cluttered. Storage facilities are inadequate. Some rooms have insufficient lighting and window blinds and during lessons students often commented that they were unable to see the information being presented on the whiteboard. Teachers make insufficient use of the engineering workshops to enliven theory lessons with practical demonstrations.

57. Internal verification procedures are inconsistently applied and often lack sufficient rigour. Internal verification is poorly planned and the monitoring of assessment standards is insufficient. The planning of assessment on the national diploma course is good.

58. Feedback provided by teachers on students' work is often poor, with insufficient information provided to help students to improve their work. Homework is set too infrequently. Individual learning plans used to review students' progress do not include sufficient information on students' performance and often lack measurable targets for improvement.

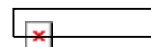
59. Since the last inspection, the college has reduced its engineering course offer. Courses with declining demand have been closed. Some courses have been reviewed and replaced with qualifications offered by different awarding bodies. The number of enrolments to many courses has been low. For example, on the first diploma in engineering, annual enrolments over the period 2000/01 to 2002/03 did not exceed 10 students. On the City and Guilds level 1 motor vehicle maintenance and repair course, offered in 2000/01 and 2001/02, enrolments were no more than 12. Similarly, enrolments to the national diploma course have remained low over the last three years.

60. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment tests are used to identify those students with learning support needs and appropriate additional support is provided. However, some teachers are insufficiently aware of how basic skills support may be provided during lessons. Some learning materials fail to take sufficient account of individual students' needs.

Leadership and management

61. The management of engineering programmes is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has declined. The college has had difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced engineering teachers. The post of senior tutor remains unfilled. Staff development activities have failed to improve the quality of teaching. The range of support and training arrangements for newly appointed teachers is being broadened, but it is too early to assess the impact of these activities on raising standards across the area. The implementation of quality assurance procedures is insufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment report fails to identify significant weaknesses in teaching and learning, retention and pass rates. Satisfactory practices are often identified as strengths and action planning is weak. The college has recently appointed a new curriculum manager and strategies to address some of the weaknesses are now being developed. Teachers ensure that health and safety practices are observed in the workshops.

Business, administration management and professional



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

Strengths

- very good pass rates on the certificate in personnel practice course

- good retention rates on most courses

- good and very good teaching in the majority of lessons.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory completion rates of modern apprenticeship frameworks

- poor pass rates on many business, office skills and administration courses

- inconsistent practice in target setting and monitoring students' progress.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time business, administration, and management and professional courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 51 students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses and 555 part-time students. Most part-time students were adults. Provision for business includes AS-level, GCE A2 and AVCE courses in business studies and office skills and administration courses offered at the main site. Adult students studying for management and professional qualifications, including NVQ accounting, attend the Hampden Hall centre. Some specialist training is undertaken at employers' premises. Over 200 students are studying on distance learning courses which include the certificate in supervisory management, risk assessment and personnel development programmes. There were 11 trainees on modern apprenticeship programmes.

Achievement and standards

63. Retention rates have improved since the last inspection and are above national averages on most courses. Retention rates on the certificate in personnel practice course have been at 100% for the last three years. Pass rates provide a mixed picture. On four of the six most significant courses,

pass rates are above national averages. However, on the business, office skills and administration programmes, pass rates were below national averages on two thirds of the courses that recruited more than 10 students in 2003. These courses include AS-level business and economics, book-keeping, word processing stage II and NVQ administration. Pass rates have improved significantly on NVQ accounting programmes at levels 2 and 3. Pass rates on the certificate in personnel practice and the FE teachers' certificate have been consistently high over the last three years, with good retention rates. The completion rate of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is very low. Most students achieve a satisfactory or better standard of work during lessons. They organise their files well and maintain good notes.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ accounting one year	2	No. of starts	26	28	30
		% retention	96	89	80
		% pass rate	24	52	96
Certificate in supervisory management short	2	No. of starts	*	28	89
		% retention	*	93	69
		% pass rate	*	58	56
City and Guilds 7307 further and adult education teachers certificate short	3	No. of starts	45	45	31
		% retention	93	100	100
		% pass rate	79	84	87
NVQ accounting one year	3	No. of starts	30	40	51
		% retention	93	100	82
		% pass rate	18	23	74
AVCE business and precursors two years	3	No. of starts	37	21	*
		% retention	38	71	*
		% pass rate	93	87	*
Certificate in personnel practice one year	3	No. of starts	19	16	21
		% retention	100	100	90
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

64. Much teaching is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Schemes of work are effective. Most lessons are well planned and in many lessons teachers ensure students understand what is expected of them at the start of the lesson. Teachers make effective use of teaching aids and ILT to motivate students and involve them in discussion activities. Teachers frequently use up-to-date examples of business and commercial practice to enliven their lessons, and encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. In the best lessons, teachers carefully summarise the topic being covered at the end of the lesson and check that students have made the progress expected of them. The weaker lessons are characterised by: a lack of pace; students being allowed to spend too long on a task; and ineffective group work.

65. The majority of teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Due to recent changes in teaching staff, some recently appointed teachers are less well qualified and experienced. The college has taken action to improve teacher retention rates and is providing a staff development programme for newly appointed teachers. Accommodation is satisfactory. The accommodation at the main site provides students with spacious rooms. However, the rooms lack displays of students' work and provide a dull and uninspiring work environment. Furniture and specialist resources are mostly adequate, but there is a shortage of typist chairs. The accommodation at Hampden hall provides a good professional atmosphere. Rooms are well equipped with overhead projectors and flip charts, and some have data projectors.

66. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Initial assessment to identify students' literacy and numeracy needs is undertaken thoroughly during course induction. Preferred learning styles are also identified, although during lessons teachers make insufficient use of the information collected on the preferred learning styles of individuals. Most students' work is marked accurately, but there is insufficient written feedback given to help students to improve their work. Verification practices are sound and meet the needs of awarding bodies. The monitoring of students' progress is inconsistent. Students receive one-to-one progress reviews three times a year. In too many cases, details are omitted from individual learning plans. Action plans are inadequate and records of the dates of reviews are not kept. The targets set for individuals are often too general and lack completion dates.

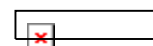
67. The college offers a broad range of management and professional courses. The range of courses offered at level 3 is adequate. At the lower levels, the range of courses is narrow with few specialist office skills and administration courses and no courses at level 1 or 2 in business studies. The number of learners participating on modern apprentice frameworks has declined and is low.

68. Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Students are provided with impartial advice and guidance and are placed on courses that are suitable for them. Induction includes the key aspects of students' rights and responsibilities and provides a good introduction to the college. Group tutorials are held for full-time students and a framework exists for the content of these. Additional learning support is available outside of the main course timetable, although some students are reluctant to attend these sessions.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection in May 2002, effective action has been taken to raise standards. Appropriate staff development programmes have been developed to raise the quality of teaching. The senior tutor structure has been used to strengthen both teaching and the embedding of key skills into the main curriculum. Equality of opportunity is well addressed in documentation and some classroom activities. Some inconsistent practices remain. The rigour and documentation of course review is insufficient in some areas. Curriculum planning has been responsive to changing recruitment patterns, but has been insufficiently proactive in developing new courses.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses

- high pass rates on CLAIT courses

- good development of practical ICT skills for level 1 and 2 students

- good teaching in many lessons for adults.

Weaknesses

- low standard of attainment on most level 3 courses

- ineffective teaching in some lessons for students aged 16 to 18

- inadequate monitoring of students' progress.

Scope of provision

70. At the time of the inspection, approximately 270 students aged 16 to 18 were studying full time on GNVQ foundation, intermediate, AVCE ICT, GCSE ICT and BTEC national courses. Some 340 adults were studying part time on courses in visual basic, web design, CLAIT and on the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course.

Achievement and standards

71. Pass rates on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses are high with students achieving grades significantly above the national averages. Pass rates on the CLAIT course are high and in 2002/03 improved to significantly above the national average. Pass rates on the AVCE and BTEC national diploma courses improved in 2002/03, although few students achieved high grades. Pass rates on the GCSE course in IT declined in 2002/03, and at the time of the inspection, enrolment, attendance and attainment were poor. Retention rates have been above the national average on the GNVQ intermediate course for the past two years. In 2002/03, retention rates were satisfactory on most other courses.

72. On courses at levels 1 and 2, students develop good practical skills and are able to demonstrate competence in spreadsheet and database applications and website design. Students on the foundation course continue to produce a high standard of work and achieve high grades for their assignments. Students on the national diploma course show high levels of application and skill during lessons on robotics and expert systems. However, the standards achieved by students in the second year of most level 3 courses are low. Some students are making slow progress and demonstrate weaker practical skills than would be expected at this stage of their courses. At the time of the inspection, there had been some improvement in the assignment grades achieved by first-year students on the AVCE course and a significant improvement in the grades achieved by first-year students on the national diploma course.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	*	16	22
		% retention	*	88	73
		% pass rate	*	93	81
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	20	16	*
		% retention	75	94	*
		% pass rate	53	80	*
GNVQ advanced/AVCE double award	3	No. of starts	23	26	25
		% retention	61	50	40
		% pass rate	29	62	90
CLAIT-short course	1	No. of starts	259	137	90
		% retention	66	78	81
		% pass rate	66	71	90
ECDL-short course	2	No. of starts	147	147	49
		% retention	93	86	80
		% pass rate	51	60	59
BTEC national diploma	3	No. of starts	24	25	25
		% retention	25	36	68
		% pass rate	50	56	82

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

** course did not run*

Quality of education and training

73. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved considerably, particularly in lessons for adults. Teaching in some lessons for students aged 16 to 18 is less effective. In the best lessons, teachers cater effectively for the needs of individual students and plan changes of activity to maintain students' interest. For example, in a foundation lesson, students worked productively in groups to explain technical vocabulary in job advertisements and identified where they might improve their interview skills. During another lesson, students keenly observed an animation demonstrating the behaviour of neurons. Students articulated their findings well and demonstrated good analytical skills as they discussed artificial intelligence. The teacher managed the discussions well and asked challenging questions. Most teachers provide a high level of support and guidance for their students and use praise appropriately to motivate students to improve their performance. Assignments are broken down into manageable tasks and teachers give clear guidance on how to achieve higher grades.

74. In the weaker lessons, some teachers fail to sufficiently involve students, talk too much and provide insufficient practical activity. Some lessons lack pace and students are not challenged to aspire to higher grades. In one lesson, the teaching was at too high a level for most of the students and the teacher failed to check students' understanding sufficiently frequently.

75. Since the last inspection, resources have improved and are now adequate. Teachers either hold teaching and vocational qualifications at an appropriate level or are working towards them. A new

network is in place and new hardware and software have been purchased. Adaptive technologies are available for students with physical and visual impairment and technical support is good. Some chairs in the computer rooms have no adjustable back rests and there are insufficient copyholders for worksheets.

76. Arrangements for assessment and verification are satisfactory. Assessment schedules are provided to students at the start of their courses and displayed in the base rooms. Most assignments are of high quality with interesting tasks, structured in a logical sequence. Some assignment briefings do not provide sufficiently clear guidance to students on how they may achieve high grades. Teachers provide helpful written feedback to students on their assignments showing them how to improve their work. The arrangements for monitoring students' progress are inadequate. Individual learning plans vary in quality. Most do not contain prior qualifications or set target grades for achievement. Subject tutors, personal tutors and key skills tutors complete an action plan following individual discussions with students on their progress, but these are not systematically copied to teachers or included in students' personal files. Many of the targets given in the individual action plans and agreed during the reviews are too general and insufficiently demanding. Examples include: 'settle down in class' and 'concentrate more on tasks'.

77. Courses in ICT range from level 1 to level 4. Approximately 50% of students progress from one level of course to the next. Some recent changes have been made to the curriculum. Provision has been developed for school pupils aged 14 to 16. There are good links with the local pupil referral unit and there is provision for students whose first language is not English. Since September 2004, the revised arrangements for teaching key skills have been implemented. Students attend two key skills sessions each week. ICT teachers work with key skills tutors in one of the sessions. It is too early to assess the impact of these arrangements on improving the pass rates on key skills qualifications.

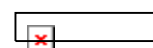
78. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Induction programmes help students settle into their courses and initial assessment ensures they are on the right course. Course handbooks vary in quality. The course handbook for the national diploma course provides comprehensive information, but others simply contain a copy of the course standards.

79. Most students find their tutorials helpful. An excellent group tutorial provided students with useful facts about the cost of university education and encouraged students to undertake cost comparisons of attending different universities and to evaluate the worth of a university education. Students with identified learning needs are supported appropriately during lessons. Careers guidance is provided towards the end of the course.

Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The quality of the ICT provision has improved since the last inspection in May 2002. The curriculum leader uses management information effectively to identify underperforming courses and there are comprehensive action plans for improvement. Targets for retention and pass rates have been set recently for course teams. Staff receive regular management briefings which have emphasised the need to improve quality. Actions taken to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and through self-assessment have included better communications with part-time staff, the development of ILT, early initial assessment and the provision of learning support at the start of courses. Self-assessment is informed by effective course reviews. Students' attendance is closely monitored and tutors follow-up poor attendance effectively. The outcomes of the lesson observations undertaken by the college have informed the development of staff training programmes.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses
- good theory teaching in some lessons
- very good support for students
- effective vocational enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on the NVQ level 1 and national diploma courses
- poor attainment in food production lessons
- outdated equipment and resources in some areas
- ineffective use of individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

81. The college provides full-time NVQ courses in hospitality and catering, housekeeping, food and drink service, food preparation and cooking and a national diploma course. Pastry courses at certificate and diploma level are also offered. Short courses include: the national licensees' certificate and basic food hygiene certificate. At the time of the inspection, there were a total of 436 students enrolled on courses, of which 40 were full time aged 16 to 18. School pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the college part time to study for the NVQ level 1 food preparation and cookery qualification. Students are able to progress from level 1 to higher level qualifications.

Achievement and standards

82. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 courses are improving, and in 2002/03 the pass rate on the NVQ level 2 course in food preparation and cooking was above the national average. The pass rates on the NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking, housekeeping and the national diploma courses are poor. On the NVQ housekeeping course, the pass rates are considerably below the national average, but have improved from the previous year. In 2002/03, pass rates on short courses were close to the national averages. In 2002/03, the retention rates on NVQ courses had improved from

the previous year and were above the national averages.

83. The standards achieved by many students in practical food production lessons at all levels are poor. Many students pay insufficient attention to standards of professional dress, hygiene, safety and working practices. Protective clothing was not worn in all areas and some students wore un-ironed jackets or dirty aprons. Spillages were not mopped up and herbs were unwashed. Cooking temperature checks were not carried out. Some students on the level 3 pastry course achieve a low standard of practical skill. Students did not follow recipes with sufficient care resulting in wastage of food. The service and clearance skills of some students are below the standard required at this stage of course, and other students lack confidence in their work. Nevertheless, some students demonstrate high levels of competence in some skills. For example, during practical lessons in the kitchen, students presented dishes attractively. In one lesson, a first-year student successfully made a floaters coffee in front of customers in the restaurant. In both theory and practical lessons, students did not always pay sufficient attention when given instructions or when asked questions by teachers. Achievement of key skills achievements is poor. Students' attendance to lessons is satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Basic food hygiene certificate-short half day course	1	No. of starts	108	132	145
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	98	90	94
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	18	*	21
		% retention	11	*	57
		% pass rate	100	*	58
NVQ housekeeping	1	No. of starts	*	21	21
		% retention	*	100	95
		% pass rate	*	0	43
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	45	44	63
		% retention	53	48	60
		% pass rate	33	33	87
NVQ serving food and drink	2	No. of starts	24	18	20
		% retention	50	39	95
		% pass rate	83	14	71
National Licensees' certificate-short 1 day course	3	No. of starts	220	188	234
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	69	62	76

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

84. Overall, there has been no significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. Teaching in most theory lessons is good or better. The best lessons are well planned and teachers set high standards of behaviour. In these lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to draw out the prior knowledge and experience of all students and to reinforce learning. They use

comprehensive, high-quality handouts and make effective use of trade publications to emphasise relevance to modern working practices. Teachers use a range of teaching and learning methods to maintain students' interest. Teaching in most practical lessons is satisfactory. In the weaker practical lessons, some students are insufficiently challenged and make slow progress. Lesson objectives are often unclear and some students become inattentive and talk amongst themselves whilst the teacher directs questions to others. In some lessons, in both the restaurant and the kitchen, students on courses of a different level are not set tasks that are appropriate to them. Teachers do not monitor sufficiently the work being undertaken by individual students, and consequently the standards achieved by some students in some practical lessons are less than satisfactory. The teaching of key skills is satisfactory or better. In an IT key skills lesson, students made good progress in using spreadsheets. During a communications lesson, students were able to practise spelling difficult French culinary terms.

85. There are few full-time teachers in the area and at the time of the inspection one post was being advertised. Some teachers do not hold teaching qualifications or vocational qualifications at level 3, although most are working towards achieving these qualifications. Procedures to support new or inexperienced teachers are insufficient to ensure appropriate standards are maintained. There are good opportunities for professional updating and skills development for all staff, although these may be accessed more easily by full-time teachers. Some of the kitchen facilities do not reflect industry standards. The 'D block' kitchen facility has ageing equipment: mixers have peeling paint; there are missing vinyl floor tiles and extraction is poor. The facility is planned to be replaced during the summer period. Production kitchen and restaurant facilities are good. The restaurant is spacious, furnishings are modern and it is situated on the ground floor. Few students make use of the library facilities.

86. The arrangements for internal verification have been revised, although, at the time of the inspection, there was a backlog of assessment work requiring verification. Students on the national diploma course are aware of the assessment demands of their course, but students on the NVQ courses are insufficiently aware of assessment requirements. Tutors have yet to use individual learning plans effectively. Target setting and monitoring of students' progress is underdeveloped. Plans used for students on NVQ courses often do not refer to initial assessment results, preferred learning styles and learning support needs. Arrangements to inform learners, parents and employers of students' progress are effective.

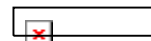
87. Students benefit from a broad range of course enrichment activities. They are able to gain vocational experience by working for contract catering companies at prestigious catering events. Teachers have fostered productive links with local employers. Students on the housekeeping course undertake a three-week period of work placement and often obtain part-time employment as a result.

88. Support for students is good. Support is provided both in college and by assessors for work-based learners. The additional learning support provided during theory and practical lessons is effective. An employer spoke positively of the support provided by college assessors during their visits to the workplace, helping employees to achieve qualifications, often in difficult circumstances.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Most of the significant weaknesses identified during the last inspection in May 2002 have been rectified, contributing to the recent improvements in retention and pass rates on some courses. Recording of students' achievements on the college's management information system has been improved. Improvement targets are set for underperforming courses. Strategies have been developed to raise the quality of provision, but are not yet fully embedded. Self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous and the most recent report failed to identify weaknesses in students' attainment and poor pass rates on NVQ level 1 courses.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

The contributory grade for beauty therapy is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on beauty therapy NVQ level 3 courses

- good teaching in most beauty therapy lessons

- high-quality learning materials in beauty therapy

- effective work-based learning attendance arrangements to suit trainees and employers.

Weaknesses

- too much unsatisfactory teaching in hairdressing

- low standards achieved by hairdressing students in some aspects of their practical work

- poor provision and maintenance of resources

- insufficiently rigorous course review

- unsatisfactory leadership and management of the hairdressing provision.

Scope of provision

89. The college offers a range of provision in both hairdressing and beauty therapy for students aged

16 to 18 and for adults. Full-time courses include NVQs in hairdressing and beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3, and the national diploma in beauty therapy. Full-time courses are also offered in holistic therapies, theatrical make-up and sports therapy. Some courses are arranged to enable adult students to attend at times suited to them. Part-time courses are offered in hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies, such as body massage and barbering. An NVQ course at level 1 is offered to pupils who attend on a school link programme. The college also offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in hairdressing. At the time of the inspection, 315 students aged 16 to 18 were attending full-time and part-time courses. The significant majority were enrolled on full-time courses. Approximately 460 adults were enrolled on courses, and most were attending part time. The college was managing the programmes of 59 modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

90. Pass rates on the NVQ level 2 course in hairdressing have improved from below the national averages in 2000/01 and 2001/02 to well above the national average in 2002/03. The pass rate on the NVQ level 3 course in beauty therapy has remained well above the national averages for the last two years. However, the pass rate on the NVQ level 2 course in beauty therapy declined in 2002/03 to 10% below the national average. Retention rates on the NVQ beauty therapy courses at levels 2 and 3 have improved and in 2002/03 were above the national averages. Retention rates on the NVQ level 2 course in hairdressing declined in 2002/03, but remained above national average. Retention and pass rates on all other hairdressing and beauty therapy courses are satisfactory. Retention and pass rates for modern apprentices have been unsatisfactory for the last three years. Completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks are low. However, there has been a significant improvement in retention rates for those who began training in 2003, and 87% have been retained. Achievement of NVQ qualifications by modern apprentices is satisfactory.

91. Students studying beauty therapy demonstrate appropriate standards of practical skills in epilation, aromatherapy and reflexology, and are confident when carrying out electrical facial treatments. They undertake massage techniques to a high standard and develop good personal and social skills. Many modern apprentices work competently and professionally in their salons. They have regular clientele and are able to develop a range of skills in supportive environments. Adult students in beauty therapy demonstrate high standards of skill. Assignments are well presented. Many are word processed and include some good examples of personal research into products and treatments.

92. In hairdressing, students achieve lower standards during some practical lessons. Unsatisfactory aspects of their work include: putting hair grips in their mouths before using them in clients' hair; not wearing protective gloves when applying bleach to foils; applying incorrect hairdressing procedures during conditioning treatments, blow drying, cutting and using clippers. There are insufficient steps taken to ensure the cleanliness of students' personal equipment. Students do not always conform to the college's dress code and often do not present an appropriate professional image. Too many students arrive late to lessons and are not always questioned appropriately by teachers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	22	35	40
		% retention	50	83	68
		% pass rate	64	69	100
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	39	53	71
		% retention	82	81	87
		% pass rate	78	98	73
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	20	20	32
		% retention	80	85	91

		% pass rate	63	100	97
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

93. Teaching and learning in hairdressing are unsatisfactory. The weaker lessons in hairdressing are characterised by: poor planning with insufficient variety of activities; insufficient use of visual aids to help students to understand technical information on products, creative cutting and styling; and failure to identify and correct some poor practices carried out by students. Hairdressing teachers encourage students insufficiently to discuss their work with each other during practical sessions. Insufficient emphasis is placed on developing students' skills in selling hairdressing and beauty products to support client aftercare. In the majority of beauty therapy lessons teaching is satisfactory or better, and in a significant number of lessons it is good. In the best beauty therapy lessons, teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of individual students. A wide range of effective teaching strategies is used. These challenge students' abilities and extend learning. Teachers use good learning materials. Demonstrations are very effective and are supported by gradual introductions to technical terms. Teachers give helpful information that relates to the topic being taught to industry practices. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT in hairdressing and beauty therapy lessons.

94. A significant number of new teachers were appointed in 2003/04. Those that do not hold teaching qualifications are working towards gaining appropriate awards. The provision and maintenance of resources is poor. Consumable resources in hairdressing are insufficient. Students are prevented from completing practical tasks through equipment shortages. For example, in one lesson, the lack of hair-grips and setting pins impaired the progress of students and restricted assessment opportunities. General maintenance and cleaning of the salons and equipment is inadequate. There are too few clients available to practise on and for assessment in both hairdressing and beauty therapy.

95. Arrangements for assessment and verification are satisfactory. Assessment of the prior learning of modern apprentices is not undertaken to ensure trainees are placed at the appropriate starting points of their programmes. Progress reviews are undertaken, but some individual learning plans are not updated sufficiently. There is poor recording of progress and ineffective target-setting for work-based learners.

96. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Initial assessment tests are used to identify additional learning support needs in literacy and numeracy. However, although learning support is offered, many students identified as needing support do not attend these sessions. Full-time hairdressing and beauty therapy students have individual and group tutorials. The course tutor also visits work-based students to provide individual support. Students speak positively about the support they receive from their tutors.

97. A broad range of courses are offered in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. A hairdressing course is offered for adult women which enables attendance at weekends. Students in hairdressing and beauty therapy are offered appropriate curriculum enrichment activities that which include opportunities to attend national shows, exhibitions and manufacturers' product training. Attendance patterns are designed to suit the needs of employers and work-based trainees. Provision at level 1 is provided for school pupils aged 14 to 16.

Leadership and management

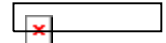
98. Leadership and management of hairdressing and work-based learning are unsatisfactory. Although managers have provided some support and training for recently appointed teachers, the overall quality of teaching and learning has declined significantly since the previous inspection in May 2002. Course reviews lack rigour and insufficiently specify the actions required to rectify identified weaknesses. The outcomes of course reviews are used insufficiently to inform the self-assessment report for the curriculum area. The self-assessment report did not include many of the

strengths or weaknesses identified by inspectors. Many of the strengths given in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice.

99. Communication between staff teams and management is satisfactory. Teachers receive information from managers about college and departmental priorities. They have access to management information such as retention and pass rates, but these are not used appropriately in course planning or course reviews. For hairdressing work-based learners, training at work is not sufficiently co-ordinated with the training offered at the college. Salon owners have recently been asked by the college to contribute to a training plan, but this has yet to improve the co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training.

100. Overall, the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. However, some hairdressing work-based learners have a poor understanding of equal opportunities and this aspect is insufficiently reinforced during their progress reviews. At the time of the inspection, the college was rectifying this weakness. Although some male students attend part-time courses, at the time of the inspection, there were no male students enrolled on full-time hairdressing courses.

Health, social care and public services



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 2 courses

- highly effective teaching

- wide range of resources and specialist expertise

- good assessment and tracking of students' progress

- good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on public services courses

- low achievement of modern apprenticeships

- low retention rates on the counselling certificate and caring for young children courses in 2003.

Scope of provision

101. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in health, care and public services from level 1 to level 4. At the time of inspection, there were 151 students on full-time courses, of which 75% were aged 16 to 18. There were 162 part-time students, of which 82% were adults. Some short courses are also provided. The early years provision includes the foundation award in caring for young children at level 1, the certificate of childcare and education at level 2 and the diploma in childcare and education at level 3. Care and public service provision is offered through the AVCE in health and social care as a single or double award, the GNVQ intermediate in health and social care, and the national diploma in public services. There are also NVQ care and early years programmes at levels 2 and 3. Work-based learning is offered through advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship programmes in early years and care. There are 46 learners on work-based learning programmes.

Achievement and standards

102. Pass rates on level 2 courses are high. The pass rates on many other courses are improving. Pass rates on the NVQ care course are significantly above the national average. Progression to further study or employment is good. There are low retention rates and very poor pass rates on the national diploma in public services course. In 2002/03, the retention rates were low on counselling certificate and caring for young children courses. Achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. On the advanced modern apprenticeship programmes, achievement is very poor. However, achievement of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks improved from 8% in 2001 to 50% in 2003.

103. Students develop good analytical and interpersonal skills and are able to evaluate their own performance effectively. Students demonstrate awareness of cultural diversity, ensuring socially inclusive practice and good interpersonal skills. Good use is made of the Internet as a research tool by students. Students readily draw on life and work experiences to help them understand theory in lessons. Work-based learners manage their portfolios well.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	41	42	45
		% retention	85	86	66
		% pass rate	89	100	97
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	*	46	38
		% retention	*	50	89
		% pass rate	*	91	97
NVQ early years and education	3	No. of starts	20	31	36
		% retention	75	77	64

		% pass rate	80	79	96
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	17	18	*
		% retention	76	83	*
		% pass rate	62	60	*
Advanced certificate in counselling skills and practice	3	No. of starts	*	24	29
		% retention	*	88	93
		% pass rate	*	100	96

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

104. Most teaching is good or better, and some is very good. The quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably since the previous inspection in May 2002. In the majority of lessons, students are well motivated, are encouraged to participate and achieve high standards of work. Teachers know their students well. They make effective use of students' preferred learning styles to plan lesson activities and to ensure individuals make good progress. Equality of opportunity is promoted across all topics. This, in turn, informs practice in the workplace. Equal opportunities are particularly well monitored during the progress reviews of work-based learners. Teachers make effective use of life and work experiences to confirm and extend learning. Opportunities for students to develop key skills are embedded within the vocational topics covered during lessons. All full-time students complete a job-search project, providing evidence for key skills whilst researching their career options. Materials for independent learning enable students to progress at their own pace. An interactive computer-based learning package has been developed and piloted successfully. In a minority of lessons, teachers dominate the lesson, with some students remaining passive and others becoming inattentive. During these lessons, teachers insufficiently check students' progress through questioning.

105. Resources to support learning are good. Teachers hold appropriate vocational qualifications and all have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification including appropriate assessor awards. There is a wide range of equipment to support practical activities. Teachers work closely with staff in the learning resource centre, ensuring adequacy and currency of book stock, periodicals and regularly updated topic files. The majority of classrooms are equipped with a computer, although some teachers make insufficient use of ILT during lessons.

106. Initial assessment is rigorous, and the outcomes are recorded in students' individual learning plans. Course assignments are generally well structured and relevant to the vocational area. However, opportunities to use evidence for key skills are not routinely identified. Arrangements for internal verification are sound, although on some full-time courses the feedback to assessors is not sufficiently detailed to improve assessment practice. Work-based learners are credited for skills already achieved in the workplace. Assessment in the workplace is well planned and managed. During work placements, students are well supported by visits from the course tutors. Course tutors set measurable targets for individual students and these are used effectively to review progress, particularly on the care and early years courses. Parents and employers are regularly informed of students' progress.

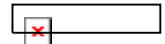
107. Initial guidance is thorough. All potential students complete a written task, followed by an interview, to ensure that they are placed on courses suitable for them. A one-week induction programme for all full-time students provides an opportunity to work on a shared project entitled 'celebrating diversity'. Part-time students and work-based trainees have a college and a workplace induction. Specific learning needs are identified during induction. Support for additional learning needs is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

108. Leadership and management are good. A well-established teaching team is ably led by a recently appointed manager. Regular faculty and course team meetings, which are attended by part-time staff, are used to exchange information and share good practice. The appraisal system is effective. Teachers are members of the early years development child care partnership. Links are being developed with other health and social care agencies and a local pupil referral unit. The curriculum area has developed effective links with schools through the IF programme and school pupils aged 14 to 16 are studying for the 'caring for children' foundation award. Many of the pupils have indicated that they would like to progress to courses at the college when they leave school. Management of work-based learning is good.

109. There is strong commitment to equal opportunities. The promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity are good. Course teams use student feedback to review the provision and make improvements. This information is also used in self-assessment. Inspectors found all areas of weakness identified in the self-assessment report were being rectified. However, there were some inconsistencies in the thoroughness of the implementation of quality assurance procedures across the area.

Humanities and English



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on the access to HE and AS-level literature courses
- high standards of students' work on GCSE English courses
- much good teaching
- good subject-related enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on many courses
- poor attendance

- underdeveloped key skills provision

- ineffective monitoring of students' progress.

Scope of provision

110. A wide range of subjects are offered in humanities at AS level and GCE A level which include sociology, psychology, law, philosophy, and government and politics. The access to HE course can be studied over one or two years. GCSE courses are offered in history, geography, psychology and sociology. The English provision includes GCSE English language and GCSE English literature. Both subjects are offered at AS level and GCE A level. Many courses are also offered during the evening. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 500 enrolments to courses. Of these, approximately 300 enrolments were by students aged 16 to 18 and 200 by adults.

Achievement and standards

111. The pass rates on the one-year access to HE course and on the AS-level English literature course are high. However, the pass rates on most GCE A2 humanities subjects, AS-level English language and GCSE English language courses are low. Retention rates on most AS-level humanities courses are low, although data provided by the college for 2003/04 show a significant improvement in retention rates compared to the previous year. Both the retention and pass rates are low for GCSE psychology, GCSE sociology and GCE A2 English literature courses. In 2002/03, the pass rates on AS-level law and psychology and GCSE English literature improved compared to the previous year. At the time of inspection, the college did not compare the achievements of AS-level and GCE A-level students with their prior attainment.

112. Students demonstrate good study skills, take appropriate notes, and work co-operatively and productively on group tasks. Written work is accurate and shows good understanding and subject knowledge. Students are able to use specialist terminology with confidence. Students achieve high standards of work on the GCSE English courses where they produce extended and imaginative pieces of creative writing. There are, however, few examples of high-quality work on humanities courses. Many students do not use IT to improve the presentation of their work. Attendance in some classes is poor. Some teachers set insufficiently demanding standards for attendance, punctuality and meeting of deadlines.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	23	**	17
		% retention	70	**	47
		% pass rate	88	**	13
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	70	112	97
		% retention	73	70	65
		% pass rate	82	35	41
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	17	23	28
		% retention	47	65	64
		% pass rate	25	33	78

AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	19	67	89
		% retention	74	61	58
		% pass rate	57	81	77
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	*	16	19
		% retention	*	81	79
		% pass rate	*	92	100

* course not offered

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

113. There is much good teaching. Schemes of work are comprehensive and lessons are well planned, and include a variety of effective teaching and learning activities. Handouts and other learning materials are well designed. Good use of directed questioning by teachers encourages all students to contribute in lessons. Students are given good preparation for examinations. In a AS-level English literature lesson, students worked well in analysing the lyrics of popular songs from three different eras to help them understand the growth of feminism and the work of Carol Ann Duffy. During a sociology lesson, students used role-play effectively to help them understand the principles of wealth redistribution. In the less effective lessons, teachers emphasise insufficiently homework and wider reading around the subject. In some lessons, the very small group size limits the possibilities of group interaction.

114. Resources are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and hold an appropriate teaching qualification, or are planning to complete one. There is good participation in staff training and development. Accommodation is adequate. Classrooms are of a suitable size. Unsuitable blinds in some rooms make it difficult for students to see the whiteboard and overhead projections. Windows in some classrooms are not easily adjustable, leading to uncomfortably hot or cold temperatures. There is interesting student work displayed, although some displays lack visual impact. In the learning resource centre, the subject-related book stock is small, although adequate. A range of newspapers and relevant periodicals is available. There are insufficient computers for students, particularly at peak times. There are few books to encourage students to read fiction.

115. Assessment overall is satisfactory. In most subjects, students receive helpful written feedback on their written work and good oral feedback on how to improve. Assessment is undertaken thoroughly by some teachers, but not by all. Students are often unclear about their assessment schedule and workload can be uneven, with periods of inactivity followed by assignments being set in many subjects at once. In the best assignments, there is an emphasis on students being set real tasks for real audiences. Other assignments are unimaginative and fail to motivate the students to produce interesting work. Assignment briefs are only in place on some courses, and these do not always give success criteria. Monitoring of students' progress is ineffective. Target setting is weak. Students are not clear as to what grade they should be aiming for. Targets set for improvement are not specific. Few students receive regular, productive progress reviews.

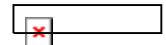
116. A wide range of courses and modes of study meet the needs and interests of students. Good working relationships with a local grammar school allow mutual exchange of some students for minority subjects. There are good subject-related enrichment activities including theatre and BBC studio visits for English students, visits to Crown and Magistrates courts for law students, and placements at the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust for psychology students. The college encourages and supports students to attend subject conferences and workshops. Key skills provision is only partly developed. There has been some progress, with two-hour key skills sessions to provide underpinning knowledge, but the organisation of these has been problematic and few students in the area actually attend them. Too few students use the designated tutorial session to develop portfolios of key skills evidence.

117. Students receive effective guidance as to their chosen programmes of study and are given useful information at interview and during the induction process. Students speak highly of the support they receive from both teaching and non-teaching staff. A tutorial programme, covering areas such as drugs education, the writing of curriculum vitae and applying to study in HE, is provided for some groups, but sessions are poorly attended. Many individual tutorials take place in the library, or during class, with consequent lack of privacy.

Leadership and management

118. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been an overall improvement in retention rates in the current year. Although there have been a number of new teacher appointments in the area since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. English teachers meet regularly, but there is no formal identity or means of communication for humanities teachers. The recent sharing of a staffroom has improved informal communications. Performance targets for retention and pass rates are set and monitored at course level. Overall curriculum area self-assessment is well organised and the action plan addresses key weaknesses. At course level, however, quality reviews lack depth and statistical detail, and are not sufficiently rigorous in highlighting and addressing all low achievements. Feedback from students is not systematically collected or monitored for individual courses. There is not yet a shared agreement by staff of the priorities for improvement.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- good development of personal skills

- differing students' needs well catered for in the best lessons.

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment

- underdeveloped individual learning plans

- too much unsatisfactory teaching

- unsatisfactory management.

Scope of provision

119. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time programmes for students with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a two-year, full-time programme that focuses on developing generic skills with the opportunity to sample vocational opportunities in a college environment. A one-year, full-time programme provides progression opportunities and is designed to support and prepare students for employment. These include opportunities for work experience in the college and increasingly in a commercial setting. A new full-time programme, 'Citizenship', has been introduced to assist students to play an active role in the community while developing job skills. Improved partnership working with local special schools has resulted in an increased number of applications to the provision. At the time of the inspection, 128 students were enrolled on courses.

120. Part-time provision is aimed at adult students. The courses include 'Moving On', designed to meet needs at pre-entry level and 'Progressions', for adults who want to develop more independence and skills for work. There are over 100 part-time students in the college. In conjunction with Social Services, the college plans to increase enrolments for part-time students including provision at outreach centres.

Achievement and standards

121. Most students are making good progress in developing their personal skills. This includes adapting behaviour to a range of situations and contexts, listening to others and developing a range of social skills. Respect and dignity are provided to fellow students and the students are well integrated into the life of the college. Many students attending full time are developing skills in drama. Students on the Citizenship programme participated effectively in a drama production presented to students and staff in the college. Students were able to stay in character, to maintain the mood, and to deliver their lines clearly without assistance or prompting. All props had been made by the students. A public performance in a local theatre is planned.

122. Full-time students are achieving nationally accredited modules and are progressing within the programme structure available on the entry level provision. Some are progressing to level 1 programmes, for example, in care and IT, or gaining employment. Others are not making sufficient progress and are inhibited by the lack of opportunities in some vocational areas. Many part-time adult students have been attending courses for many years without suitable progression opportunities.

Quality of education and training

123. Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable decline in the quality of teaching and learning. Although teaching and learning in most lessons are satisfactory or better, in a significant minority of lessons teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers pay good attention to the individual needs of students. There is some very skilful teaching that breaks down tasks in a way that students can understand and which focuses on practical or work-related activities. For example, a group of part-time students with a diverse range of needs worked hard and participated throughout a long music lesson. They were challenged, concentrated hard on what the instruments were called and how they sounded, and were subsequently able to identify them as part of a lotto game. The lesson was planned with exceptional detail to involve each student, to sustain their interest and enjoyment and to develop their skills. In the unsatisfactory lessons, teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods, students spend too much time on inappropriate activities, such as copying writing, and rapidly lose interest. In these lessons, the accreditation process tends to dominate learning rather than providing a vehicle and structure to assist individual needs to be met.

124. Resources for the provision are satisfactory. Full-time teachers are supported by 13 part-time teachers. In addition, the work is supported by 21 learning assistants who provide effective support to individuals in the classroom. In the best lessons, learning assistants are briefed and prepared to support students in specific activities. In the weaker lessons, their skills are not used to best effect

due to poor planning. The quality of accommodation varies from excellent to inadequate. For example, students worked in a well equipped IT room developed specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, some general classrooms are drab and provide an uninspiring environment despite displays of students' work.

125. The sharing of information by teachers on the needs of individual students varies from good to poor and is often carried out informally. The college is undertaking pilot work on individual learning plans and the process is yet to be fully completed. Within subjects, targets are set for individual students which particularly focus on the development of their personal skills, and progress is monitored and reviewed. However, students' overall progress across their learning programme is not co-ordinated and monitored against an individual learning plan that identifies and prioritises the skills they need to assist their progression.

126. There is good personal support for students. Teachers and learning support assistants know the students well and provide effective support for their personal, physical and welfare needs. Initial assessment is not adequate to plan effective individual learning programmes for students. There are entry criteria to inform student placement on available courses, but this is undermined by weaknesses in carrying out initial assessment. No initial assessment had been conducted at the beginning of the academic year. This has been addressed subsequently. However, some teachers and many learning assistants are not aware of the outcomes of the process. Information on student destinations is not used sufficiently to inform curriculum planning.

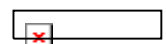
Leadership and management

127. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Some quality assurance measures are undertaken and these include regular, minuted course team meetings and curriculum area meetings chaired by the head of faculty. There is an internal verification system in place. The data available to plan and improve the curriculum is insufficient. For example, data on student destinations is not available. Teachers were aware of many of the weaknesses identified during the inspection and had begun to address them. However, some significant aspects of the quality assurance system lack rigour. The self-assessment report gave insufficient prominence to key weaknesses and judged some aspects that are no more than normal practice as strengths. The report fails to identify key weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.

128. Since the last inspection, there has been a substantial change of staff that has had an adverse impact on the leadership and management of the provision. At the time of the inspection, there was a vacancy for a team leader. A specialist consultant had been employed two months prior to the inspection to help address significant issues in the provision. The head of faculty has been active in liaising with agencies, special schools and care homes to develop the work in the college. For example, work has been undertaken with local social services to plan more effective lifelong learning programmes for part-time adult students. Good links are being established with local businesses to provide work experience for students. These initiatives are at an early stage of development and the impact and benefits to students were not evident at the time of the inspection.

129. At the time of the inspection, teachers had not been appraised and the training planned for individuals is currently insufficiently targeted to support improved practice. Co-ordination of learning materials to support the sharing of good practice is inadequate. Equality of opportunity is well promoted with the students. An equality and diversity exhibition in the college was used as the theme for developing an understanding of the concepts. Positive images of equality and diversity issues are used to illustrate handouts in some lessons. Students are encouraged to respect each other and value the diversity they encounter in their working groups and in the college.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high standard of key skills work at level 1
- good teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy learning support sessions
- comprehensive diagnostic assessment of students' abilities
- effective additional support for full-time students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on key skills at level 1
- low retention rates on GCSE mathematics courses
- insufficient attention given to individual needs in key and basic skills lessons
- insufficient monitoring of students' progress in key skills
- insufficient literacy and numeracy provision for adults.

Scope of provision

130. The college provides a key skills programme at level 1 in communications and application of number for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Literacy and numeracy courses are provided to develop students' basic skills needs. At the time of inspection, there were 310 full-time students receiving additional learning support and 98 students on GCSE mathematics and other numeracy programmes. Many numeracy courses are available in the day and evening. Additionally, there is a small programme of literacy and numeracy courses offered to adults based in the local community.

Achievement and standards

131. Pass rates on level 1 key skills qualifications are poor. In 2002/03, the pass rates for level 1 application of number and communications subjects were below the national average. Students' portfolios were not submitted for accreditation and many students did not attend the key skill tests. At the time of the inspection, there were early indications of satisfactory levels of achievement by students, with improvements in key skills tests and in the development of portfolios. Retention rates are low on the GCSE mathematics course. Strategies to improve retention rates, such as the introduction of higher entry criteria, have proved ineffective. At the time of the inspection, the in-year retention rates remained low at 52%.

132. Students receiving additional learning support in literacy and numeracy make good progress relative to their prior attainment. Evaluations undertaken by the college show that they are more likely than other students to remain on their programme of study and achieve their main qualification. Students value the individual and in-class support they receive. On some courses, such as those in construction, ICT and care, key skills are successfully embedded in vocational subjects. Students are able to demonstrate high standards of key skills in vocationally specific assignments. Students demonstrate good subject knowledge through their portfolios, assignments and within lessons. During a numeracy lesson, students completed calculations at a standard above that required of them. In a beauty therapy lesson, students were able to price stock and compare discounts efficiently.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	343	344	373
		% retention	76	69	83
		% pass rate	21	0	3
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	218	318	62
		% retention	74	69	92
		% pass rate	22	0	30
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	113	189	98
		% retention	72	60	47
		% pass rate	46	34	38

Quality of education and training

133. Teaching and learning in most lessons are satisfactory or better, although they are unsatisfactory in a small minority of lessons. Teaching is good in one-to-one literacy and numeracy learning support lessons. In the majority of these lessons, teaching is focused on the needs of individual students, and learners make good progress. Teachers establish productive, professional relationships with students and are successful in keeping them focused on their work. During a one individual support session, the teacher skilfully adapted the work to meet the student's needs. In a subsequent vocational lesson, the student was able to demonstrate a greater understanding of mathematics and improved confidence in undertaking associated tasks.

134. During some group lessons for key skills and basic skills, some teachers pay insufficient attention to the needs of individuals. For example, in lessons where students of different abilities work together, whole class teaching is inappropriately applied. In these lessons, the more able students are not sufficiently stretched. During a weaker lesson, the teacher failed to motivate and gain the attention of the group: students were casually surfing the Internet and talking among themselves rather than working productively. Most key skills portfolio building workshops are effective in enabling students to develop key skills in a vocational context. In one well-managed workshop session, students on a bricklaying course enthusiastically reviewed their progress with an assignment on scaffolding. The work enabled the students to demonstrate effective communication skills. In a subsequent discussion, students outlined what they had learned and how much they

valued the approach. Teaching and learning in GCSE mathematics lessons are satisfactory, although some teachers rely too heavily on the use of textbooks rather than provide handouts with explanations and exercises that would more adequately suit the needs of some students.

135. Teachers are well qualified and there is an extensive staff development programme in key skills and basic skills. However, newly appointed learning support assistants are not specifically trained to support those students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. Teaching accommodation for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Most lessons are taught in appropriately equipped classrooms. Few rooms, however, are equipped with computers, and students often have to move to separate rooms to access IT resources, disrupting their learning.

136. Monitoring of students' progress in key skills is insufficiently rigorous. Too many students are set identical learning targets which are not appropriate for them. Students are unclear about their progress or their potential to improve further. Additional literacy and numeracy support teachers use assessment outcomes effectively to evaluate students' progress. Learning targets are reviewed and, if appropriate, adjusted to be more demanding. Further additional support is then planned.

137. In September 2003, the college implemented a revised key skills policy. Initial assessment and the placement of students on key skills programmes at a level more appropriate for them have improved. The level of a student's key skills programme is now more closely linked to the student's main programme of study. The college has developed a strategy to develop and expand literacy and numeracy provision for adults over the next two years, through working with community groups and employers. However, at the time of the inspection, literacy and numeracy provision for adults was insufficient.

138. The diagnosis of individual learning needs is comprehensive. Initial literacy and numeracy assessment is undertaken by all full-time and some part-time students at the beginning of their courses. The outcomes of assessment are used effectively: to identify additional literacy and numeracy needs; as an initial screening for students needing diagnostic assessment for learning disabilities; and contribute to the selection of key skills levels for individuals. The full diagnostic assessment is completed externally and reports are thorough and give clear, practical strategies for overcoming individuals' difficulties and disabilities. Learning support assistants provide effective support in lessons and informal support on personal issues. There is insufficient additional literacy and numeracy support for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students who attend part time.

Leadership and management

139. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The revised arrangements for key skills are proving to be effective in some areas, although it is too early to assess the full impact of these arrangements on students' achievements. The monitoring and evaluation of the revised arrangements by managers are underdeveloped, and impact measures are poorly defined. Quality assurance on the GCSE mathematics course is not undertaken sufficiently rigorously and has failed to drive up retention and pass rates. Action planning at course level is weak. Group sizes are small in some lessons, leading to an inefficient use of staff. Some schemes of work and assignments do not take sufficient account of the diversity of cultures and students' religious beliefs.

Part D: College data

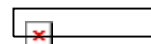
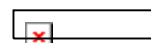


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	26	30
2	52	40
3	17	22
4/5	0	3
Other	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	726	137	9
Land-based provision	18	107	1
Construction	208	259	5
Engineering, technology and manufacture	181	175	4
Business administration, management and professional	142	898	11
Information and communication technology	545	229	8
Retailing, customer service and transportation	35	69	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	410	688	12
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	285	374	7
Health, social care and public services	188	1,154	14
Visual and performing arts and media	58	208	3
Humanities	194	129	4
English, languages and communication	869	215	11
Foundation programmes	525	431	10
Total	4,384	5,073	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	142	227	188	439	496	632
	Retention rate %	61	67	79	70	76	83
	National average %	75	76	**	69	70	**
	Pass rate %	42	36	78	47	45	83
	National average %	69	71	**	68	71	**
2	Starters excluding transfers	858	974	714	740	792	588
	Retention rate %	65	62	67	63	60	67
	National average %	70	72	**	68	68	**
	Pass rate %	59	63	67	64	77	83
	National average %	69	71	**	68	72	**
3	Starters excluding transfers	594	645	594	785	735	732
	Retention rate %	60	61	63	68	61	70
	National average %	71	77	**	68	70	**
	Pass rate %	50	68	68	57	68	72
	National average %	77	79	**	69	72	**
4	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	137	155	175
	Retention rate %	**	**	**	39	30	49
	National average %	**	**	**	67	67	**
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	17	77	85
	National average %	**	**	**	55	56	**

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for General FE and tertiary colleges.

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000/01 to 2001/02: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 2002 to 2003: College ISR

** numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

*** data unavailable*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	68	25	7	68
Level 2 (intermediate)	45	44	11	55
Level 1 (foundation)	53	34	13	15
Other sessions	42	42	16	31
Totals	54	35	11	169

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