



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Thomas Rotherham College

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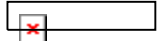
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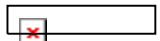
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Basic information about the college

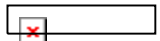


Name of college:	Thomas Rotherham College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Giles Pepler
Address of college:	Moorgate Road Rotherham South Yorkshire S60 2BE
Telephone number:	01709 300600
Fax number:	01709 300601
Chair of governors:	John Bingham
Unique reference number:	130530
Name of reporting inspector:	Vivien Shipley HMI
Dates of inspection:	8-12 November 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



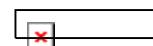
Rotherham, in South Yorkshire, has a population of around 248,000 and covers an area of over 190 square miles. Employment opportunities have changed significantly since the decline of traditional

economic and social deprivation. The number of people in Rotherham with no qualifications is higher than the national average (36.8% compared to 29% for England and Wales). In 2003, the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) 5 A* to C grade was 44.5% which is lower than the national average of 52.9%. Thomas Rotherham College is located one mile from the centre of the town. It was established as a sixth form college in 1967 on the site of a former grammar school which dates back to 1483. Until the opening, in September 2004, of Longley Park College in Sheffield, it was the only sixth form college in the South Yorkshire region. There are two colleges of further education (FE) in Rotherham that offer mainly vocational provision. The college's core business is the provision of full-time general education courses for students aged 16 to 18.

In September 2004, 1,393 students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled, of whom 1,270 (91%) are following level 3 programmes, 111 (8%) are following level 2 programmes and 12 (1%) are following the level 1 general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) business foundation programme. In 2003/04, there were 2,094 enrolments on part-time provision. The part-time programme of courses for adults is focused mainly on information technology (IT), childcare, basic skills, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and languages that have been identified as key areas of need in the local area.

The college mission is, 'To be a centre of educational excellence in Rotherham where students from local communities achieve advanced skills and qualifications and join together in lifelong learning in a welcoming and supportive environment'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching, learning and students' achievements to be good in three curriculum areas, and satisfactory in two. One curriculum area, visual and performing arts and media, was judged satisfactory overall, with media provision judged to be good.

The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on general certificate of education (GCE) A-level courses
- good key skills integration and achievement
- extensive individual support for students from subject teachers
- good access to Blackboard, the virtual learning environment, to support learning
- effective liaison with partner schools

- successful partnerships to widen participation
- comprehensive arrangements for work placements
- student participation in the life of the college
- sound financial management
- the provision of courses for adults studying at outreach centres.

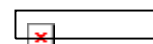
What should be improved

- low pass rates on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses
- achievement of high grades
- the overall quality of teaching and learning
- the use of individual learning plans to set targets and monitor student progress
- the rigour of self-assessment
- arrangements for quality assurance
- the sharing of good practice
- governors monitoring of students' performance and experience

- o the college response to Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

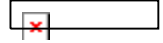


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory. GCE advanced-level (A-level) retention and pass rates are at or above the national average; most AS-level rates are below. Provision is good in geology, but progress in raising standards in physics has been slow. Although students receive a high level of individual academic support, much teaching fails to challenge students. Science technicians provide very good support to teachers. The wide range of provision and the opportunity to study different options allows students to follow their interests and skills.
Business, information and communications technology and computing	Good. Retention and pass rates on both full-time and part-time programmes are good. Students benefit from good teaching, using up to date information and learning technology (ILT). Assessment and marking supports learning. Recent pass rates on AS-level accounting, business and computing courses are unsatisfactory and there is insufficient sharing of good practice.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for provision in media is good . Pass rates are very good on AS-level media and on most GCE A-level courses, but there are too few high grades in visual arts and music. Retention rates are very good across the area. Media project work is well crafted. Most teaching in media and music is good and there is a wide range of support for individuals. Students are not sufficiently stretched to realise their full potential and there has been insufficient progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are mostly high, but the percentage of high grades is low at GCE A level. Whilst provision in geography is outstanding, pass rates in law are low. Students' learning is enhanced by a wide range of resources and the successful integration of key skills into their courses. Teaching is not always sufficiently demanding to enable all students to meet their potential.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Whilst pass rates are good on GCE A-level courses, there are too few high grades on many level 3 programmes. Consistently good teaching engages students in their learning. A wide range of modern

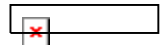
	foreign languages are offered to both full-time and part-time students. The range of provision below level 3 in English is narrow.
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How well is the college led and managed?



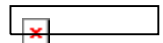
Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college enjoys a good reputation in the local community. Student numbers, buildings and facilities have improved since the last inspection. Success rates have risen over the last three years. Financial planning is strong and management of accommodation and resources are good. There is a strong commitment to partnership working. Curriculum management is satisfactory in three of the areas inspected and good in two. Implementation of the college's self-assessment processes and annual development planning is insufficiently rigorous. There are inconsistencies in learning experiences and outcomes for students. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons has declined since the last inspection and is below the sixth form college average. The corporation does not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and student performance with sufficient rigour. Senior management do not provide governors with sufficient guidance. Evaluation of the impact of change is not routinely undertaken. Senior managers have been slow in ensuring that the college fulfils its responsibilities under the SENDA and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college has effective strategies designed to widen participation. Senior staff are active and successful members of partnerships with a wide range of local organisations and community groups designed to promote the 'Skills for Life' agenda. A good range of IT, childcare, literacy and numeracy, ESOL and language provision is provided on the main college site and in 23 outreach centres. Many of these centres target groups which are under-represented in FE, such as Muslim women and asylum seekers. Links with partner schools are effective. The college's response to the SENDA and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 is unsatisfactory. The college does not have a formal policy or implementation plan in response to SENDA. Subject leaders have received recent training on disability awareness and on the legal duties under SENDA, but this training has not been extended to senior managers, governors, and support staff. There is a race equality policy and procedure, but no formal arrangements to ensure that they are implemented. The college does not collect data on the ethnic origin of students who apply to the college. Data on enrolment, retention and pass rates by ethnic origin are collected and made available to team leaders, but course teams and senior managers do not use this information to set targets or to identify actions. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds in the college is increasing and is similar to that in the local community.

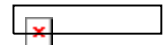
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. Student support services across the college are well managed. Team working between academic and support staff is effective. Arrangements for pre-

programme of study. The quality of tutorial provision is variable. The use of individual learning plans to monitor students' progress against agreed targets is underdeveloped. Students value the support they receive from tutors outside of lessons. Information on careers and progression to FE or higher education (HE) is comprehensive. A pro-active students' union provides an effective voice for student concerns. External funding has been used successfully to provide extra support and to fund projects aimed to develop life skills. Support for students studying in the community is good. The impact of learning support is not monitored or evaluated sufficiently. Attendance monitoring is rigorous. Attendance in key skills lessons is very good.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- supportive and accessible tutors

- general college facilities

- welcoming and friendly atmosphere

- teaching styles

- being treated with respect

- outdoor and sports activities available

- student union.

What they feel could be improved

- transport to college

- social areas

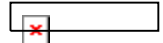
- access to computers in the main learning resource centre at busy times

- cramped accommodation

- support in the learning resource centre

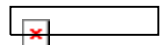
- the planning of group tutorials.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



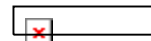
Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	71	25	4
19+ and WBL*	75	25	0
Learning 16-18	70	26	4

19+ and WBL*	75	25	0
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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. Students of all ages work at or above the level expected of them. Standards of work are highest when students undertake a mixture of theory and practical work, and lowest in theory lessons. Standards are highest in humanities, and business and information and communications technology (ICT). In humanities, students are competent in the use of IT and their evaluative and key skills are well developed. In business and ICT, students' portfolios are well organised and include a good index of the evidence.

2. The overall attendance rate in lessons is 88%. This is just above the national average for sixth form colleges of 86%. Attendance in science and mathematics is the highest at 92%, and is significantly above the national average of 87% for this subject. It is lowest in English and modern foreign languages, at 85%. The attendance of students aged over 19 is 74%.

16 to 18 year olds

3. The college offers a wide range of provision, mostly at level 3, for full-time students aged 16 to 18. In 2003, around 1,400 full-time students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled. Approximately 91% were following full-time courses at level 3, 8% at level 2 and around 1% at level 1. The pass rate for this year at level 1 was 81%, which was 8% above the national rate. At level 2, the pass rate has risen over three years and at 95% was significantly above the national rate. Overall, the level 3 pass rate was at the national average of 89%. Pass rates at GCE A level have risen over three years in line with increases in the national average. At AS level, overall pass rates were around the national average. Advanced-level vocational pass rates have improved over three years and are 4% above the national rate. Intermediate GNVQ pass rates have risen over the three-year period to 2003, and at 94% are 12% above the national average. Key skills pass rates are significantly above the national averages at all levels. Across the college, the percentage of students gaining higher grades is too low. The exceptions are in geology, geography, sociology and religious studies.

4. The retention rate at level 1 has risen over the last three years and is at the national average. At level 2, in 2003, the rate was 3% above the national average and has risen in each of the last three years. Level 3 rates have also risen over the same period and in 2003 were 2% above the national average of 90%. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses are better than on AS level and advanced vocational programmes. At GCE A level, the retention rate is 4% above the national average. AS-level retention rates are at the same level as the national average. However, the retention rate on vocational programmes is 5% below the national average for sixth form colleges.

Adult learners

5. The number of adults enrolling on part-time provision, mainly in the areas of ICT, childcare and modern foreign languages, has increased over the last three years. In 2003, 1,653 students aged over 19 were enrolled. The majority, around 45%, were on courses at level 1. Approximately 22% were on courses at level 3, 15% were on courses at level 2. The remainder were enrolled on other provision at entry level or on provision that does not lead to formal qualifications.

6. At all levels other than on short courses, the pass rates for adult students are declining and are significantly below the national averages. In 2003, the level 1 rate was 18% below the national average. At level 2, the rate was 41% below the national average and at level 3, the rate was 12% below. At GCE A level, students aged over 19 perform at the same level as those aged 16 to 18. However, at AS level, pass rates are significantly lower than the results for students aged 16 to 18 and are 25% below the national average. The retention and pass rates of adults on word processing courses are high.

Quality of education and training

7. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 100 lessons; 88% of lessons involved students aged 16 to 18; 72% were level 3 courses. Of the lessons inspected, 71% of the teaching was good or better, 25% was satisfactory and 4% was unsatisfactory. The proportion of good or better teaching has declined since the last inspection, and is five percentage points below the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of lessons graded very good or outstanding was 23%, which is significantly below the national average of 35%. In three of the five areas inspected, a small proportion of teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in science and mathematics, or humanities. In science and mathematics, and in visual and performing arts and media, the percentages of good or better teaching were significantly below the national averages.

8. In the best lessons, for example, in humanities, clear learning objectives are shared with students, who understand what they need to do. Well-planned lessons cover a range of stimulating activities which take into account the different levels of ability of the students. They begin with quick exercises to reinforce previous learning. Learning materials are of a high quality, varied and available on Blackboard, the college virtual learning environment that allows students to continue their learning outside of the classroom. The learning materials used in an outstanding geography lesson were varied, very well devised and appropriate to the subject and to the needs of the students. These materials included case studies, glossaries, illustrations, diagrams and extension activities. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and use imaginative ways to stimulate students' interest and promote learning. In media, teachers successfully engage students in lively discussion to develop ideas for story boards. They also set high standards for the production of project work. Most teachers provide good one-to-one support during group work, regularly check individual learning and maintain a brisk pace. Students are well motivated, work independently and enjoy their lessons. Foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to improving students' listening and speaking skills.

9. In the weaker lessons, there are insufficient strategies to challenge and extend all students. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the ability range of the students in the class and do not plan for the variety of needs. In a minority of lessons, there is an over-reliance on worksheets and textbook exercises. In these lessons, there is insufficient use of targeted questions to check and extend the level of students' understanding. Some lessons proceed too slowly and not all students are involved in the work. Teachers spend too much time talking, leaving insufficient time for students to be engaged in their own learning.

10. The delivery of key skills is well organised and managed. Key skills achievement has a high priority within the college and all students follow at least one key skill at an appropriate level. Pass rates have improved over the last three years and attendance is good, at around 83%. At level 3, key skills are effectively integrated into subject delivery, with additional workshops to support students to collect and prepare evidence for portfolios and to prepare for external tests. In one very effective communication lesson on the use of language and images in advertising, the teacher used a good range of learning materials. Students were motivated and worked well in groups to discuss the social context of advertisements. Application of number level 2 is successfully integrated into GCSE mathematics and English as part of a pilot looking at progression pathways for students with a previous grade E to F at GCSE.

11. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge and expertise. A significant number are external examiners or moderators with awarding bodies. Technical support in science and IT is good, but it is unsatisfactory in music. The overall arrangements for staff development are

satisfactory.

12. Most teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The college has a well-conceived accommodation strategy and most issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed. Accommodation is particularly good in modern foreign languages, but some mathematics and IT classrooms are overcrowded. Some science laboratories have fixed benches, which limit the range of teaching methods that can be used. The college is well maintained and there are some attractive displays of students' work in classrooms and corridors. Although 85% of all buildings are accessible for people with restricted mobility, not all reasonable adjustments have been made to ensure easy access. For example, the main entrance, a recent addition to the main college building located adjacent to a disabled parking space does not open automatically.

13. Health and safety procedures are good. A comprehensive health and safety audit was recently undertaken and a detailed action plan produced. The action plan addresses a wide range of health and safety matters and clear and timely actions are taken to minimise risk.

14. The learning resources centre is well used by students. There are adequate study spaces and a good choice of books, videos, journals and online resources. Opening hours are appropriate to meet the needs of both part-time and full-time students. The college has a modern computer network and a satisfactory ratio of computers to students. Use of the college virtual learning environment, Blackboard, by students and staff is increasing. It is used particularly well to support students' learning in sports studies, and in business, computing and IT. The facility is available for full-time students to access the virtual learning environment from home. Students on community learning programmes do not have the same facility. Daytime crèche facilities are provided on the main college site and nine outreach locations. A well-equipped fitness studio is available for all students to use for a small fee. Sports studies students do not have to pay. The facility operates as a successful commercial operation and is used by the local community. A floodlit all-weather pitch is used by sports studies students, by a neighbouring school and local football and hockey teams. A new canteen and social area for students is currently under construction.

15. All students undertake an initial assessment at the beginning of their programme, to identify additional support needs. Approximately 70% of the students who need support take it up. Support for students on advanced courses often takes too long to be arranged. In many curriculum areas, the results of initial assessment are not effectively used by teachers to plan lessons.

16. Systems to monitor attendance and punctuality are rigorous. An attendance officer closely monitors the attendance patterns of full-time students and unauthorised absences are followed-up quickly. Attendance at key skills lessons is very good. Overall attendance during the inspection was just above the national average for sixth form colleges. Parents receive regular reports on the progress of students aged 16 to 18 through parent evenings and written reviews. A comprehensive 'parent information pack' is sent to all parents at the start of the course.

17. Assessment practice is rigorous and fair. In most areas, it is regular, well planned and effective. Teachers provide good feedback to students on their performance that clearly identifies what they need to do to improve. In the majority of curriculum areas, homework is set regularly and returned promptly. Internal verification is well documented and applied rigorously on the majority of programmes. However, the college does not have a whole-college assessment policy to guide teachers. The use of individual learning plans to set targets for achievement based upon pre-entry scores is inconsistent. Targets are often vague and in some cases students find them demotivating.

18. The college provides an extensive range of courses and programmes that meet the needs of both full-time and part-time students, the community and local businesses. Full-time courses are available from level 1 to level 3. Vocational and academic options are provided including national vocational qualifications (NVQs), GNVQs and AS levels and GCE A levels. The range of GCE A-level courses is good. In humanities, students can choose from eight subjects, including philosophy and religious studies. Advanced extension awards are provided in 10 subjects. In 2004, 25 students successfully achieved these awards. A good range of courses for adults studying part time is provided in IT, ESOL, childcare and modern foreign languages. In modern foreign languages, there is a wide range of full-time and part-time courses including French, German, Greek, Italian and

Spanish at levels 1, 2 and 3. Adults can study in the day or evening at the college's main site and at 23 community venues. In 2003/04, there were 2,094 enrolments of adults on part-time courses. Provision for full-time students at level 2 is limited.

19. Links with schools, local community groups, employers and other external agencies are effective in ensuring that provision responds to local need. The community team works closely with local employers to provide tailored training on employers' premises, mainly in IT. The college has good links with local community associations, particularly those working with minority ethnic groups.

20. The work experience policy and programme are well developed and comprehensive. In 2003/04, 385 students benefited from work experience placements. There is a good enrichment programme and most curriculum areas provide additional short courses that enable students to gain further skills and qualifications which improve their employability. For example, English and modern foreign language students benefit from overseas study visits, theatre trips and writing workshops. Discounted driving lessons, sign language courses, first aid at work and a range of sports activities are also provided.

21. Guidance and support are good. Student support is well co-ordinated and communication between support and academic staff is effective. A wide range of support services are provided, including a counselling service, help with transport costs, and welfare and financial advice. Arrangements for pre-entry guidance and advice are generally good. Students aged 16 to 18 who apply to the college are invited to a one-day induction course in July. In addition, each student has a careers guidance interview to ensure that they choose an appropriate programme of study. Support staff and careers tutors are proactive in liaising with partner schools and external agencies to aid students' transition into college life.

22. Induction is generally well planned. All students receive a student handbook which clearly explains the college charter and their rights and responsibilities. Induction is effective in introducing students to the college and their courses. Effective arrangements are made for students who start their courses late. College managers review induction regularly.

23. Overall, academic and pastoral support is good. Students greatly value the support they receive from teachers both in and outside of lessons. All full-time and substantial part-time students have a weekly tutorial. Where possible, students aged 16 to 18 are allocated a personal tutor who has specialist knowledge of the courses they study. Tutorial provision is good in ICT, humanities, English and modern foreign languages. Not all students value group tutorials; some perceive them to be an administrative exercise. Equality and diversity issues are not sufficiently well promoted through the tutorial programme.

24. Students are actively encouraged to play a key role in supporting other students. A group of 18 'student crew' members, funded through the 'AimHigher' initiative, has been appointed to act as ambassadors for the college. Each student formally applies, is interviewed and trained for the position. A well-structured and highly proactive student union also provides an effective voice for students. Members of the elected student union are members of college committees.

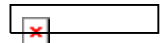
25. Information on potential careers and progression to FE or HE is very good. Students receive comprehensive support in preparing Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications and are helped to prepare for future study at university through the tutorial programme. The content of the tutorial programme has been revised for 2004 to include guidance for those students deciding to move into employment. There is very good support for gifted and talented students, particularly those wishing to apply to Oxbridge. For example, the college has recently worked with a number of agencies to secure support and funding for a student who excelled in her studies, but faced financial hardship. The student is now studying medicine at Oxford University. Many past students studying on HE programmes return to the college to give presentations and advice to students thinking of applying to university.

26. Learning support staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. They support students with a wide range of needs including; dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD),

and Asperger's syndrome. Many students regularly access the learning support department on a drop-in basis for general study advice. They value the help they get on essay structure, proof-reading and interpreting assignment questions. Support for students studying in the community is good. A full-time ESOL and literacy tutor has dedicated time identified to provide tutorial support for adult students. The impact of learning support across the college is not sufficiently measured or analysed.

27. The college has a clear policy and procedures for child protection. A senior manager and a support manager are the named child protection officers. All college staff have received training.

Leadership and management



28. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has grown significantly. Student numbers have increased and accommodation and facilities have been considerably enhanced. Retention and pass rates have improved and are above the national averages. The college enjoys a good reputation in the local community. However, progress to address some of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has been slow. For example, issues relating to strategic planning, quality assurance and self-assessment are yet to be resolved. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed by inspectors has declined since the last inspection and is below the sixth form college national average. Evaluation of the impact of change is not routinely undertaken.

29. The recently reviewed strategic plan which was informed by the college mission, LSC priorities and needs analyses, incorporates clear position statements and three-year aspirations. It has clear links to whole college and curriculum development plans. The plan was validated by the teaching and learning management group involving staff from across the college. The implementation of the plan is not sufficiently monitored or evaluated by governors.

30. Members of the corporation, some long serving, have experience of the public and private sectors. They take pride in the college's development and achievements. Their stewardship of the college's finances and estate is impressive. The corporation has approved a risk management policy. The risk management group carries out sensitivity analyses and maintains a risk register, with regular reports to the audit and resources committees. Health and safety is a standing item on corporation agendas. Governors do not formally monitor the achievement of strategic objectives and the mechanisms through which they are able to hold senior managers to account for under performance are not well developed. Reports on academic performance do not include sufficiently detailed data, analysis, evaluation or professional guidance from senior managers, to allow rigorous assessment of student achievement. The corporation reviews its own performance against a limited range of criteria. At the time of the inspection, there were five vacancies on the corporation. No recent public advertisement has been placed to fill the vacancies. A formal programme of induction for new governors, an issue identified at the last inspection, has been introduced. A planned audit of the range of governors' skills is overdue.

31. Staff enjoy working at the college and are committed to its future development. Staff absence rates are low compared with national averages. However, successive annual staff surveys and a consultant's report produced in June 2004 have raised issues about senior management style and inadequate communication. Following a recent training day facilitated by an external consultant, the corporation, senior management and staff agreed to address these issues. As yet, there is no clear plan with measurable objectives.

32. The college's response to the SENDA is unsatisfactory. There is no formal policy or implementation plan to meet legal obligations under the legislation. Subject leaders have received recent training on disability awareness and on the legal duties under SENDA, but this training has not been extended to senior managers, governors, or support staff. The college has been slow in

fulfilling its responsibilities under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. There is a race equality policy and procedure, but there are no formal arrangements to ensure that they are implemented. Governors, senior managers and other staff have not had race relations training. Senior managers and governors do not formally monitor and evaluate the performance of different groups of students who attend the college. These are serious omissions.

33. Quality assurance and self-assessment processes are not sufficiently robust. Although inspectors agreed with the college self-assessed grades awarded to curriculum areas, some programme area self-assessments lack rigour and are not sufficiently self-critical. Most do not place sufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Insufficient use is made of centrally held data on, value added, retention and pass rates, in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and in setting targets for the following year. Arrangements for lesson observations were modified in September 2003. Attainment is no longer graded. There are only two grade descriptors, satisfactory and unsatisfactory and teachers are observed every two years. This methodology does not provide sufficient information to allow managers to make informed judgments about the quality of teaching within curriculum areas and across the college, nor does it support the easy identification of good practice to inform continuous improvement. Staff have not had sufficient training in self-assessment methodology. The college is aware of this and has a staff development programme in place.

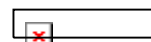
34. Curriculum management is satisfactory in three of the areas inspected and good in two: English and modern foreign languages and humanities. Some retention rates, examination results and value added outcomes are good or very good. However, there are too many variations and inconsistencies in performance. Middle and senior management was restructured in 2002 and 2003, respectively. Six curriculum areas led by programme managers were established. The purpose of the restructuring was to promote a stronger culture of leadership and management, to clarify lines of accountability and to encourage the sharing of good practice. Currently, teachers share good practice within subjects, but there is insufficient identification and dissemination of best practice across the college.

35. Teaching and support staff value varied opportunities for professional development. The annual staff development plan results from the outcomes of appraisals, lesson observations, self-assessment and from the whole college priorities identified by the staff development committee. Current priorities include the development of leadership and management skills and training in the processes of self-assessment. There are good induction arrangements that support new staff. There is no systematic evaluation of the impact of staff development on college and student outcomes, or on the quality of teaching and learning.

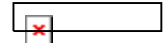
36. Senior and other college managers are actively and successfully involved in a number of partnerships designed to widen participation. In the last year, the percentage of students aged 16 to 18 from minority ethnic backgrounds increased from 10.5% to 12.8%. In most curriculum areas, there are examples of significant gender imbalance.

37. Financial planning and management of resources are strong. The college has no debt and is Category A financial status. It participates in the national pilot programme of reduced audit and is categorised by the LSC as strong. Since incorporation, the college has completed major building programmes costing at £9 million. Recurrent resources are distributed through transparent formulae. Staff and other resources are efficiently and effectively deployed. Trends in success rates are good. The college achieves good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- good provision in geology
- very good technician support in science
- wide range of flexible provision.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level courses
- insufficiently challenging teaching
- inappropriate accommodation in some areas inhibits effective teaching and learning
- slow progress in raising standards in physics.

Scope of provision

38. The college offers a wide range of provision in science and mathematics at advanced level. This includes AS level and GCE A level in biology, chemistry, environmental science, geology, mathematics, further mathematics and physics. There are 266 enrolments in biology, 43 in earth sciences 180 in mathematics and 205 in physical sciences. GCSE mathematics and science are offered at level 2, including a pilot offering GCSE mathematics combined with key skills application of number at level 1 and 2. Of the 157 students studying GCSE mathematics, 60 are following the combined programme. There are 30 students studying GCSE science. All students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time.

Achievement and standards

39. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory. Retention rates are at or above the national average on all programmes. Pass rates on GCSE mathematics and science are above the national average. Pass rates at GCE A level are generally high; however, at AS level, most are below the national average. The exception to this is geology where provision is consistently good. Pass rate in AS-level geology have been above the national average for the past two years. GCE A-level geology pass rates are excellent, achieving 100% for three consecutive years. The proportion of students who achieve high grades is small in all areas, other than geology.

40. In all subjects, students show an enthusiasm for and are committed to learning. They are able to use technical language to describe what they are doing and to explain complex concepts such as gravitational potential, enzyme action, fractional distillation, probability and algorithms. Practical work is well organised and competently executed. The work is carried out safely with due regard for the development of practical techniques.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	217	178	181
		% retention	86	84	85
		% pass rate	46	48	50
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	60	33	33
		% retention	82	94	82
		% pass rate	61	35	69
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	132	141	161
		% retention	90	89	82
		% pass rate	76	75	84
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	75	79	71
		% retention	95	86	93
		% pass rate	79	87	79
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	136	143	131
		% retention	92	92	88
		% pass rate	55	66	64
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	51	68	53
		% retention	94	90	90
		% pass rate	71	77	39
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	69	77	78
		% retention	97	97	100
		% pass rate	94	97	99
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	60	55	67
		% retention	100	100	99
		% pass rate	98	91	91

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

41. Teaching and learning in this area are satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned; teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject expertise. They use challenging questioning and a variety of interesting activities to sustain student interest and develop their learning. For example, in one mathematics lesson, students were tossing coins and drawing graphs with graphical calculators. In another lesson, there was good student discussion and ideas on the effect of moving objects to infinity. In most lessons, staff prepare students for examinations stressing the type of answers required by examiners. Practical work is well planned and students are able to explain what they are doing and predict what they will find. In the best lessons, teachers have very good relationships with the students, offering a high level of support for individuals.

42. Too many lessons are overly dominated by the teacher and uninspiring. In these lessons, the pace is slow and there is an over reliance on a limited range of techniques, such as the use of textbook exercises and the completion of worksheets. Teachers do not always carefully consider the varying ability of students in the group; the most able students are not sufficiently challenged and topics are not always clearly explained for students having problems understanding difficult concepts. Teachers frequently talk too much and demand too little of the students. Questioning techniques are not always used effectively to check students' learning and understanding.

43. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. All hold relevant subject degrees; several have higher degrees and experience as examiners. Technician support in science is very good. All science experiments other than in physics, are displayed on laminated sheets and are available to the students on the Blackboard virtual learning environment. Some of the accommodation in both science and mathematics is cramped which limits teaching styles and makes access to individual students difficult. Practical work with large numbers in one of the biology laboratories has the potential for being unsafe. Staff are aware of this and where possible arrange to move rooms. All rooms and corridors are decorated attractively with relevant posters and student work.

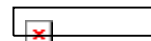
44. Homework is set regularly, marked carefully and returned promptly. There is good use of examination questions for homework. The conversion of numerical marks to a grade, allows students to judge their progress against their target grade. Teacher feedback is supportive and encouraging, as well as clearly identifying areas for improvement. Students not reaching their target grade are put on an 'at risk' list and are monitored and supported more closely.

45. The wide range of flexible provision, especially at advanced level, is good. The options offered in biology, chemistry and physics allow students to follow their personal interests and strengths. They meet the needs of those wishing to progress to university to study science related programmes. Field trips and university visits enhance students' learning. The majority of students progress to university on to courses such as medicine, pharmacy, biomedical science, mathematics, business, forensic science and pure science. The combination of GCSE mathematics and key skills application of number has been particularly successful in providing progression for students with a previous grade E to F at GCSE mathematics.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In the past, poor curriculum management and low standards in physics were not addressed. Physics pass rates have declined over a three-year period. A programme manager and two team leaders are new in post. They have a dynamic approach to raising standards. However, to date, progress has been slow. Regular team meetings are held and these are beginning to address the key issues. The self-assessment report successfully identifies the weaknesses in the area, but does not include clear strategies for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Business, information and communications technology and computing



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses

- good teaching in the majority of lessons

- very good use of IT to support learning

- rigorous assessment and marking supports learning.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level accounting, computing and business courses

- insufficient sharing of good practice.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a wide range of courses at AS level and GCE A2 including computing, ICT, business studies, accounts and economics. Vocational courses are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced level in business studies, and at intermediate level in ICT. A range of part-time IT courses are taught in the college and at a variety of community venues. These include IT beginners, IT level 2, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and CLAIT plus, the European computer driving licence (ECDL) levels 1 and 2 and word processing stages 1 to 3. At the time of inspection, there were 273 full-time students following computing and ICT courses and 392 following business courses; 581 students were enrolled on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

48. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. Pass rates are above the national average in 14 of the 17 most significant qualifications. For the last three years, pass rates on the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) business double award and GCE A-level economics have been 100%. On GCE A-level business, AVCE single award, word processing stage I and III, text processing level 1 and document presentation level 3, the pass rates have been 100% for the last two years. The pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate courses have been very high over the last three years. Retention rates are at or above national average on all but two of the most significant courses. In 2004, a 100% retention rate was achieved on text processing and word processing at level 1 and 3, GCE A-level accounting and GCE A-level economics. Pass rates on AS levels in computing, accounting and business were below national averages in 2004.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, information and communications technology and computing, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	37	31	37
		% retention	81	87	92
		% pass rate	93	96	94
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	33	35	29
		% retention	88	89	83
		% pass rate	83	94	100
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	76	70	72
		% retention	95	87	85
		% pass rate	67	74	60
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	23	45	69
		% retention	96	98	91
		% pass rate	73	84	97
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	52	56	57
		% retention	92	79	91
		% pass rate	88	75	52
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	45	52	30
		% retention	96	100	97
		% pass rate	95	93	97
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	66	68	57
		% retention	94	96	98
		% pass rate	98	100	100
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	34	27	30
		% retention	97	96	97
		% pass rate	85	100	97

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

49. Teaching is good in the majority of lessons. Well-planned lessons are placed in the context of good schemes of work. In most lessons, objectives are shared with the students at the start of the lesson. Classroom management is good. Interactive whiteboards and ICT are used effectively to manage class discussion. In the better lessons, teachers successfully check that learning has taken place and give good advice on examination techniques. In one very good economics lesson on oligopoly, the teacher had very good up-to-date subject knowledge and effectively used overhead projectors and the whiteboard to explain clearly the technical language. The weaker lessons are characterised by undemanding tasks and inadequate monitoring of individual progress. In some lessons, extension activities are not provided for the most able students who finish the tasks well before the others.

50. Teachers are well qualified in their subject areas, but very few have recent industrial or commercial experience. Outstanding specialist resources are supported by a reliable computer

network and infrastructure. All computer rooms are equipped with industry-standard computers, data projectors and interactive whiteboards. These are used to very good effect in many lessons. The virtual learning environment is well used as a learning resource both inside and outside the college. The use of laptop computers in welcoming community venues promotes social inclusion and successfully widens the participation of adults who would not usually join such courses. Some IT and general classrooms are too small for the classes using them and this inhibits the range of teaching methods that are used.

51. Good assessment and rigorous marking supports learning. Interim and formative assessments are used effectively to monitor students' progress and learning. Assignments are returned promptly with constructive verbal and written feedback. Feedback on assessed work is clear and detailed to ensure that students know what they need to do to improve their work. Timetabled support lessons are available outside of lesson times and much informal help and support is given by tutors. Rigorous internal verification systems are in place on vocational business and ICT courses. The recording of students' progress on community programmes lacks detail and is often cursory.

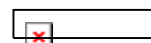
52. The college offers a good range of AS-level and GCE A-level qualifications in business, computing and ICT. There are good progression routes for vocational business students from the level 2 GNVQ foundation to the level 3 AVCE. However, there is no appropriate advanced level course for students undertaking vocational ICT courses at level 2 to move towards. A good range of IT courses targeted at members of the local community, are provided in Rotherham and local villages. These courses are popular and many students progress through the various levels enhancing their skills and employment opportunities. There are good links with local employers who provide work experience opportunities for full-time students on vocational programmes. The college also provides taster and introductory IT courses on the main site and on the premises of local companies.

53. Clear information, advice and guidance are given to students at interview. Induction programmes for students are good. All students undertake an initial assessment during induction which identifies learning and basic skills needs. Group tutorials take place weekly and cover a range of areas to support the students' development including progression to HE, careers advice and work placements. Part-time students do not have a formal tutorial and progress reviews are conducted on an informal basis throughout the year. An 'at risk' register is used to record underperforming students and additional support sessions are provided at lunchtime in subject areas. Monitoring of attendance and timekeeping is thorough and followed-up quickly with appropriate actions.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Diversity and equal opportunities are addressed adequately. Pass and retention rates are high and resources are deployed effectively. Staff development needs are generally well met, although there has been insufficient management training, and training in self-assessment processes. Good practice is shared between teachers of full-time subjects, but there is insufficient sharing across the curriculum area and the identification and dissemination of very good and excellent teaching and learning is not routinely undertaken. The programme area's overall self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous and lacks detail. Course reviews are of variable quality; some are detailed and contain thorough evaluative comment and analysis. Other reviews merely describe the provision without providing any real analysis or identification of issues which need addressing.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

The contributory grade for provision in media is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- very high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses and in AS-level media
- very high retention rates on most courses
- good teaching in media and music
- creative, well-crafted student work in media
- wide ranging and effective support for individuals.

Weaknesses

- students not sufficiently stretched to reach their full potential
- insufficient technical support in music
- insufficient action to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

55. The college offers mostly AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art and design, drama and theatre studies, music, music technology and media studies. Most students following these courses are aged 16 to 18. At the time of inspection, there were 434 students on full-time courses and 59 students aged 19 and over enrolled on part-time courses. Part-time evening courses are offered in digital photography and beginners and intermediate guitar.

Achievement and standards

56. Pass and retention rates are generally very high. Pass rates on AS-level media and most GCE A levels are above national averages. Retention rates are very good across the area. Students in media and visual arts achieve better than their entry scores predict. However, the proportion of high grades on music and visual arts are consistently below national averages.

57. In music and media, students work with enthusiasm, creativity and confidence. Their project work is good. For example, in a GCE A-level music lesson, students worked on imaginative arrangements of an Abba song, using specialist software. In a GCE A-level media lesson, a group of

students worked co-operatively to edit their trailer of a teen horror movie, whilst another group engaged in a lively and productive discussion of the storyboard of their gangster movie trailer. Media students' video production work is imaginative and carefully crafted and students talk confidently about their work using the correct technical language. In visual arts, students have good contextual knowledge, but their presentation skills, drawing skills and use of a wide range of mixed media are not sufficiently well developed. Attendance at lessons is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art studies/fine arts	3	No. of starts	73	59	86
		% retention	90	88	93
		% pass rate	88	94	88
AS-level drama	3	No. of starts	51	30	40
		% retention	80	90	90
		% pass rate	83	93	92
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	123	90	100
		% retention	88	84	88
		% pass rate	98	96	97
AS-level music technology	3	No. of starts	13	17	28
		% retention	85	94	89
		% pass rate	100	94	84
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	39	41	36
		% retention	100	98	100
		% pass rate	100	95	100
GCE A2 level media studies	3	No. of starts	51	77	49
		% retention	92	97	100
		% pass rate	100	97	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

58. Most teaching is good or satisfactory. The majority of the teaching in media and music is good. Teachers provide effective support and guidance of students in small group and individual project work. In media, teachers successfully engage students in lively discussions. Music teachers manage groups and individual students spread out over three floors with tremendous energy and efficiency. In a music GCE A-level lesson, students put great effort into the recording of live vocals on an arrangement of a standard rock song. In one effective AS-level drama lesson, students improvised a humorous modern interpretation of a conversation between two characters from *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students on art and design courses show good self-discipline in the achievement of their individual projects. Blackboard is beginning to be used to support learning, particularly in media.

59. Across the area, students are not sufficiently stretched to reach their full potential. In many lessons, there is a lack of targeted questions and ineffective pacing. Different learning styles and teaching approaches are not always used to best effect and some lessons lack variety. In music, there is a lack of diversity in the approach to teaching music composition and arrangement. Students' skills in producing original and creative work are not well developed. In visual arts, lesson planning is poor. Not all lessons have clear learning objectives and too often plans are generic,

taking little account of the needs of different groups or individual students. Basic techniques such as, drawing from direct observation, the use of a mixed media and the development of research skills are poor. Too much emphasis is placed on developing ideas from secondary sources.

60. Teachers are well qualified. Technical support in media is good but there is insufficient technical support in music. Teachers spend too much time maintaining equipment during lessons. Overall accommodation is well presented and suitable for the demands of the curriculum. However, there is no sound-proofing or muffling in the media area and there is significant noise leakage between rooms. The newly refurbished drama studio is spacious and well equipped, although window curtains are not lined, spoiling blackout.

61. Students' work is marked promptly and written feedback is generally detailed with useful points for improvement. Most teachers give helpful additional, verbal feedback to students. In music, the progress of individual project work is rigorously documented at the end of each lesson to ensure that students work to deadlines. Moderators' reports are positive.

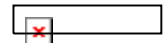
62. There is a good range of level 3 AS-level and GCE A-level courses, but there is no provision at level 2. A textiles option was introduced in art and design this year in response to local needs. An adequate range of enrichment opportunities are on offer within the department. Music students perform in local community venues and media students screen their videos at the Showroom cinema in Sheffield. Strong links with local schools are being developed through the provision of taster days.

63. Support for individuals is wide ranging and effective. All students can access support on a drop-in basis and subject staff are always ready to give extra help to their students. There is very good support of individual project work in media and music lessons. Group tutorials for GCE A-level students applying to university are good.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is clearly written with realistic targets. Targets set in 2003 for improving the proportion of high grades across the area were met. Action to improve the quality of teaching and learning, however, is ineffective. Weaknesses identified in internal lesson observations in January 2003 have not been addressed. There is very little sharing of good practice and small teams often work in isolation. Diversity and equal opportunities issues are addressed adequately in the curriculum. For example, improvisation work in drama includes themes around racism, sexism and disability.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- good development of students' evaluative skills

- outstanding provision in geography

- good use of resources to enhance learning

- effective monitoring of students' progress

- successful integration of key skills.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level law

- low proportion of high grades at GCE A level

- insufficiently demanding teaching.

Scope of provision

65. Provision in humanities is mostly offered at AS level and GCE A level. A wide range of subjects are available including philosophy, religious studies, politics and AS-level critical thinking. Psychology and sociology account for some 720 enrolments out of a total of approximately 1,340 enrolments. Nearly all students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

66. Overall, pass rates and retention rates are high. Pass rates at GCE A level have been consistently high, as have most retention rates. On five AS-level courses, pass rates have risen and are significantly above national averages. Pass rates in sociology, geography and religious studies are outstanding. In these subjects, students do better than predictions based on GCSE results on entry. In AS-level law, the pass rate is well below the national average despite an improvement in 2004. The proportion of students with higher grades remains generally low at GCE A level and close to the national average at AS level. In 2004, the percentage of students gaining high grades on different courses was varied. For example, in GCE A-level religious studies, 75% of students gained a high grade. In AS-level law, the figure was 17%. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was good.

67. Students produce good standards of work and are competent in the use of IT. Philosophy students can clearly express complex ideas. In sociology, students demonstrate good understanding of important concepts by applying them in different contexts. More able students show evidence of critical thinking. The essays of history students indicate very good progress in the presentation of well-structured and increasingly well-argued answers.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	203	230	258
		% retention	90	89	88
		% pass rate	91	91	95
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	108	117	172
		% retention	94	85	89
		% pass rate	84	96	95
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	132	111	110
		% retention	92	88	84
		% pass rate	65	64	73
AS-level philosophy	3	No. of starts	47	52	62
		% retention	87	88	87
		% pass rate	88	83	81
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	127	134	151
		% retention	98	97	97
		% pass rate	94	98	97
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	44	44	47
		% retention	100	98	100
		% pass rate	98	98	100
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	47	54	44
		% retention	98	98	100
		% pass rate	100	98	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

68. Most teaching is good or better, but standards vary across the curriculum area. The best teaching was seen in geography. In these lessons, students make very good progress in their learning. Lessons are very well planned giving students precise objectives and suitably demanding activities to enable them to secure their understanding and practise their skills. Students help each other, comparing findings in a mature and purposeful way. High levels of concentration are sustained. In one very successful religious studies lesson, students developed their understanding of the problem of 'evil' by first watching a computer-generated presentation given by a student. The teacher then stimulated further lines of enquiry using different materials including slides of paintings to illustrate the biblical account of creation and the fall of Adam. Students' evaluative skills are well developed. For example, in psychology, teachers give students a suitable framework within which they make their own evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of psychological studies and theories. Key skills assignments are effectively integrated into humanities subjects. Key skills pass rates are high.

69. In several lessons, the teaching is not sufficiently demanding. Too much use is made of whole-class teaching; the pace lacks suitable variety and students do not make sufficient progress. The teacher spends too much time talking. In one law lesson, too little was expected of students. They read aloud from a handout and all attempted the same set of questions. Questions by the teacher were too narrow in scope. Few students participated and the lesson failed to ensure that all students were working to achieve their full potential.

70. Staff are well qualified; many are examiners for their subjects. Teachers develop good materials to enhance students' learning. Many students make good use of the extensive materials available on the college's intranet to consolidate and extend their own learning. In sociology, students use discussion boards to share ideas. The book stock in the learning resources centre is up to date and journals are well used, especially in history.

71. Assessment practice is inconsistent. Assessment opportunities are not identified properly in several schemes of work. The frequency and extent of written work set by teachers varies between courses. Where assessment is well planned, it is regularly used and rigorous. Marking and feedback are generally very thorough. In a few subjects, assessment criteria are not explicit. In these subjects, it is difficult for students to know how to interpret the grade awarded.

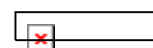
72. A broad range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses meet the need of most students, including philosophy, religious studies, politics and AS-level critical thinking. Advanced extension awards in history and geography are also provided for a small number of students. Provision for adult students is limited to law.

73. Overall guidance and support for students is good. The monitoring of students' progress is well planned and effective. Teachers and tutors help students to set realistic targets to improve their performance and there is good contact with parents. Students benefit from additional help with study skills provided by learning support staff. Subject teachers provide much informal support outside lessons. Initial guidance is effective in helping students to choose their courses. However, until 2004, entry requirements for AS-level law did not insist upon a high enough level of attainment in English.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management are good. Staff work effectively in course teams. Team leaders meet regularly with the programme manager to oversee the provision. Monitoring of pass and retention rates is effective. Most pass rates are high and improving. Course reviews and self-assessment are not rigorous enough. Insufficient attention has been paid to the identification and sharing of good practice. There has been insufficient progress in addressing the wide variations between courses in the quality of teaching and learning and in students' achievements.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- good teaching which engages students in their own learning

- wide range of modern foreign language courses

- o strong departmental leadership focused on the improvement of teaching and learning.

Weaknesses

- o too few high grades on many courses
- o narrow range of provision below level 3 in English.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level courses in English language, English literature, and the combined language and literature course. A pilot offering GCSE English combined with key skills communication at level 1 and 2 is also provided as a progression pathway for students with a GCSE below grade C. A wide range of modern foreign language courses at AS level, GCE A level and introductory level are available to full-time and part-time students. These include French, Spanish, German, Italian and Greek. At the time of the inspection, there were around 500 students enrolled on programmes in English. Around 120 full-time students were enrolled on modern language courses, with around 70% enrolled on either French or Spanish courses. There are 270 enrolments on evening class programmes, which range from elementary to advanced level.

Achievement and standards

76. Overall, retention and pass rates are good. Pass rates on many GCE A-level courses are high. Pass rates on GCE A-level English literature and English language were 100% in 2004. Pass rates are very high on French GCE A level, on AS-level Spanish, and on both AS-level and GCE A-level German. On AS-level programmes in English, the pass rate is below national averages for sixth form colleges. The proportion of passes at the higher grades on English and on most modern foreign languages is consistently below the national average. High grades on AS-level English language show an upward trend, but are still below average for the sector. Increasingly, a number of the most able students in English and modern foreign languages are being entered for the Advanced Extension Award with very good results.

77. Students produce good standards of written and oral work. In one AS-level English language lesson, students examined the use of different narrative voices and invented languages and vocabulary to create futuristic fantasies. Students in modern foreign languages make sophisticated use of the excellent ICT provision, which includes satellite access to authentic national TV programmes.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Practical languages	1	No. of starts	41	93	105
		% retention	54	75	62
		% pass rate	86	74	89
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	159	140	145

language		% retention	84	84	84
		% pass rate	98	99	100
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	184	167	185
		% retention	94	92	90
		% pass rate	84	97	90
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	39	38	30
		% retention	92	89	90
		% pass rate	81	94	85
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	88	96	109
		% retention	98	97	95
		% pass rate	99	99	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	38	57	60
		% retention	97	98	93
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	*	16	18
		% retention	*	100	89
		% pass rate	*	100	94

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

78. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons are generally well planned. Teachers develop very good relationships with their students, engaging them in their own learning. In one effective literature lesson, students discussing a scene in a play drew on critical vocabulary and complex terminology. Most of the students in the group were able to demonstrate a thematic understanding and analysis of poetic language. In a German lesson, students took part in a very lively debate on atomic energy and confidently took on the roles of expert panel members and members of the public. They presented and defended their own views and challenged those of others skilfully using a wide range of vocabulary and complex language. English teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge which they use to enhance student motivation. In modern foreign languages, teachers of GCE A-level students use the foreign language as the main means of communication and regularly check that students have understood the meaning of new vocabulary through targeted questioning. Foreign languages assistants are particularly effective in helping to prepare students for oral examinations. In the weaker lessons, particularly in modern foreign language provision, planning is poor, the teacher talks for too long without checking what is being learned, and there is insufficient use of the target language and too few activities to actively engage the students.

79. Teachers of English are experienced and well qualified, many have post-graduate qualifications. Several are external moderators or examiners. In modern foreign languages, the vast majority of staff are native speakers who are also well qualified and teacher trained. The library and other areas are well equipped and include an effective indexing system for English learning resources available in both magazines and scholarly journals. There is an open-access policy for the foreign languages workshop, which includes a languages laboratory and two personal computers. An additional language laboratory is used effectively to support the delivery of timetabled lessons. The use of this area is identified clearly in schemes of work and on lesson plans. In English however, several rooms are too small and inflexible for the groups sizes that use them and the activities they are required to undertake. Although all rooms are well decorated and suitably furnished, only one has a data

projector and whiteboard.

80. Thorough assessment and helpful feedback are linked to formal attainment objectives. Students appreciate the regular written and oral feedback they receive. Comments on their work are supportive and help them to identify what they need to do to improve. In English, an initial assessment of style and competence helps teachers plan lessons and set individual targets for student attainment. Students understand awarding body grading and assessment criteria.

81. There is a good range of English and modern foreign language provision at advanced level. Advanced Extension Awards, for the most able students, are available in English. However, the range of provision below level 3 in English is narrow, particularly for students with a previous grade E to G at GCSE.

82. Support for students is good. Teachers establish very good working relationships with students. Subject support both in class and outside of timetabled lessons is good. Students value the individual support they receive for application to university through the tutorial programme. Attendance is rigorously monitored.

Leadership and management

83. Leadership and management are good. Departmental leadership is clearly focused on improving learning and achievement. Communication is good. There is effective engagement with part-time staff who regularly contribute to the preparation of course materials. Within individual subjects, teachers exchange systematically information on schemes of work and course materials. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice across the area. The self-assessment report is rigorous and analytical and makes good use of data on recruitment, retention and achievement. The development plan includes clear strategies to address the gender imbalance on English programmes.

Part D: College data

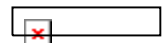
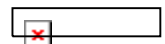


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	2	22
2	15	17
3	79	13
4/5	0	0
Other	4	48
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	977	6	13
Business administration, management and professional	411	5	5
Information and communications technology	351	632	13
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	477	13	6
Health, social care and public services	107	155	4
Visual and performing arts and media	461	62	7
Humanities	1,918	46	26
English, languages and communication	739	297	13
Foundation programmes	820	213	13
Total	6,261	1,429	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 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	77	41	137	270	211	271
	Retention rate %	64	71	83	64	82	84
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	71	90	81	70	58	58
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	814	799	547	197	107	225
	Retention rate %	76	87	84	83	72	60
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	91	94	95	33	67	33

	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,230	4,608	4,503	156	79	82
	Retention rate %	82	90	92	54	70	91
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	86	87	89	62	69	65
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 2001 to 2003: *College ISR*.

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	71	25	4	72
Level 2 (intermediate)	78	17	5	18
Level 1 (foundation)	80	20	0	5
Other sessions	40	60	0	5
Totals	71	25	4	100

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