



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Doncaster College

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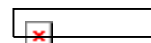
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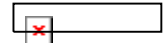
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Basic information about the college

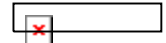


Name of college:	Doncaster College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	George Holmes
Address of college:	Waterdale Doncaster DN1 3EX
Telephone number:	01302 553553
Fax number:	01302 553559
Chair of governors:	Joanne Outram
Unique reference number:	130526
Name of reporting inspector:	David Martin
Dates of inspection:	22-26 November 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



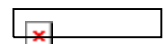
Doncaster College is a large general further education (FE) college in the Metropolitan Borough of Doncaster. It has three main sites, but also offers a wide range of provision in around 60 community venues, some 15 of which are in schools. It also has courses at various company premises. The college is the major provider of post-school education for the 290,000 inhabitants of Doncaster and is a regional and national centre for a number of specialist courses. Some 14 of the 17 secondary schools in the borough have sixth forms.

Doncaster is the largest metropolitan borough, by geographical area, in the country. It embraces a diverse community, with Doncaster itself, smaller townships, several villages and rural areas. With the demise of traditional industries, the borough experienced considerable social and economic decline, with high unemployment. Unemployment is still high in some of the Borough's wards, but overall unemployment, in September 2004, was 2.5%, compared with the national rate of 2.2%. In spite of significant recent inward investment, Doncaster is still one of the most deprived local authorities in England, being ranked the 36th most deprived out of a total of 354. Some 6% of the college's students were from minority ethnic groups in 2002/03 and 60% of students were female.

The college offers programmes from foundation to postgraduate degree level. In 2003/04 there were 24,364 students, of whom 88% were adults, enrolled for nearly 49,500 qualifications. Some 87% of all students attended part time and there is an extensive range of local adult learning programmes. Around 70% of the college's enrolments are by Doncaster residents. There were an average of 383 work-based learners during 2003/04, an increase of some 100 since 2001/02. The college has no contracts with Jobcentre plus. The college is involved with a number of centres of vocational excellence (CoVE), either in its own right or as part of consortia. Those for hospitality and catering, and business and management have full CoVE status and interim status has been awarded for manufacturing materials and engineering and health and social care. The college is an important partner in the Doncaster Education City (DEC) project. DEC is intended to regenerate Doncaster as a 'learning city'. Amongst other things, it proposes a borough-wide curriculum strategy, to bring together all learning providers in a collaborative and cohesive framework.

The college's mission is to meet 'learner needs and aspirations through excellence' whilst 'aspiring to be South Yorkshire's leading provider of learning'.

How effective is the college?



Education and training are good in two areas: business, management and professional studies, and health and social care, early years and public services. They are satisfactory in eight curriculum areas: sciences and mathematics, construction, engineering, technology and manufacturing, information and communications technology (ICT), sport, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty, visual and performing arts and media, literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory. Work-based learning is good in business, management and professional studies and satisfactory in construction, engineering, technology and manufacturing and hairdressing and beauty. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

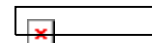
- clear strategic direction, purposefully pursued
- an extensive range of productive partnerships
- robust self-assessment
- good educational and social inclusion, that successfully widens participation
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- the good provision in business, management and professional studies, and health and social care, early years and public services.

What should be improved

- pass and retention rates for students aged 16 to 18, especially at level 3
- achievement of apprenticeship frameworks for work-based learners
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the quality of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the extent of additional learning support for vocational students
- the consistency of tutorial provision.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

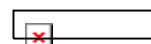


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Sciences and mathematics	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, but pass rates are low on most advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) science courses. Pass rates in 2004 are high on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and AS-level mathematics courses. Teaching is at least satisfactory, with a significant amount that is better, but practical work in sciences is insufficient and there is too little use of information and learning technology (ILT) in all teaching.
Construction	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Whilst level 2 pass rates are high in electrical installation, bricklaying and wood occupations, they are low in plumbing and painting and decorating. Achievement in work-based learning is low, but improving. Teaching is largely satisfactory, but poorer in theory lessons and better in practical lessons, where students develop good skills. Work-based learners, in particular, benefit from the work of well-informed and supportive employers.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Pass rates on level 2 engineering and manufacture and national certificate courses are high, with high retention and pass rates for quarrying. Pass rates on full-time courses, and retention rates on national certificate and diploma courses, are low. The completion of foundation apprenticeship frameworks is low, but improving. Students, who are well supported, achieve satisfactory standards using good training resources. Teaching is satisfactory.
Business, management and professional studies	Good. Contributory grade for work-based learning is good . Retention and pass rates on most courses are good, although on AS-level business, management and office studies they are low. Teaching and learning are often good, using particularly good accommodation and resources. Work-based learning is well managed, but progress reviews are sometimes weak. Leadership and management overall are good, although quality assurance is incomplete.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes are good, but are poor on the national diploma. A strategy to improve achievement is in place and many achievements are now satisfactory. Teaching is largely good or satisfactory, but an insufficient variety of teaching techniques is used. Individual tuition in practical lessons is good. There is insufficient monitoring and target setting to promote learning.

Sport, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are satisfactory overall, with high retention rates on most courses in 2004 and with low rates on level 3 sports courses. Students achieve good standards in their work, including practical activities. Teaching is largely satisfactory or good and uses a wide range of teaching methods which meet individual needs and are well matched to the needs of industry. Tutorial provision is of inconsistent quality and the provision of literacy and numeracy support is too slow.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Retention and pass rates are high on most college-based courses, but there is slow progress and poor achievement for work-based learners. Most students and work-based learners achieve satisfactory standards and work placements for apprentices are good. Teaching is often satisfactory, but unexciting, with insufficient challenge for students. All learners are well supported and progress reviews for work-based learners are good.
Health and social care, early years and public services	Good. Pass rates on most courses are high, with often satisfactory retention rates, although they are low on the national diploma in early years. Standards of attainment are high. Teaching and learning are good, although individual learning plans and reviews are inadequately exploited. Curriculum management is good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on first diplomas in performing arts and foundation studies, but low pass rates on most national diploma courses. Retention rates are low in AS-level media and in the national diploma in music technology. Teaching is good in performing arts and film studies, but dull in the visual arts. Specialist resources are well used and extensive. Students are well supported.
Literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	Satisfactory. Pass rates at entry level, on short courses and for GCSE English are high. Teaching is often satisfactory, but there is insufficient account taken of students' prior learning to plan teaching and inconsistent use of individual learning plans in ESOL. Overall, students are well supported, but literacy, numeracy and language support for vocational students is unsatisfactory. Strategies to widen participation are effective and there is good co-ordination of literacy, numeracy, ESOL and key skills across the college.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Unsatisfactory. There are well-managed transition arrangements between special schools and the college. The initial identification of students' needs is insufficiently detailed. Whilst there is good teaching on vocational option modules, most teaching does not match the individual needs of students. The monitoring of individual students' progress is unsatisfactory and they have limited access to specialist teaching and vocational facilities.

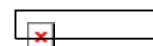
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new management structure has been successfully implemented since the last inspection. Overall, pass and retention rates have improved to at least satisfactory levels, although retention rates remain low for students aged 16 to 18 and their pass rates at level 1 are low. Pass rates for adults are generally high. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction. Extensive partnerships are used effectively to further the interests of

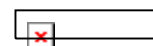
conduct rigorous self-assessment. Quality assurance procedures are established and clearly documented, although there are instances of less effective monitoring. The internal scheme of lesson observations is insufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment process is clear, comprehensive and largely accurate. There is a comprehensive workforce development plan. The management of data is much improved since the last inspection. Equality and diversity are integral to all college policies and procedures. Curriculum management is at least satisfactory in all of the areas inspected. Financial management is good. The college has met its funding targets in each of the years to 2004. It provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



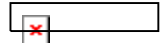
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. A well-established community development and outreach strategy underpins links with a wide range of community, voluntary and statutory organisations. There are clear targets and priority areas for the widening of participation. Innovative courses promote diversity. The college works closely with local schools. Significant numbers of disaffected and disengaged young people attend the college. The percentage of students from minority ethnic communities is higher than the community profile. A specialist team provide information and guidance for asylum seekers and refugees on employment, education, legislation and support. The college also organises courses for travellers. There are multifaith prayer rooms for students. Students with identified learning needs are well supported. The college has made good progress in response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Policies and procedures have been updated and appropriate training provided for staff. The race equality policy is detailed. Retention and pass rates are carefully monitored against all racial and gender groupings to identify and respond to areas of underperformance. Suitable adaptive technology assists students with restricted mobility. The college has conducted a full audit of all its premises and has set priorities for completion. Where access is poor for those with restricted mobility, the college makes reasonable adjustments or provides appropriate alternative accommodation. Students' literacy, numeracy and language skills support are well co-ordinated, but take up by vocational students is too low.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good. Support and guidance services are well planned and managed. A central information and guidance centre provides particularly effective and impartial advice and information for prospective students. Students' induction is effective. Initial assessment of students' additional support needs is thorough, but too few vocational students receive additional support in literacy and numeracy. The provision of a range of support, including adaptations to equipment and the provision of learning aids is good. Support for students with dyslexia is effective. The quality and effectiveness of tutorials varies and the good practice found in many is not consistently applied. There is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of tutorials for part-time students. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Teachers and tutors make good use of the student mentoring system to support individual students. Counselling and welfare services are good. Students have access to a good range of specialist support services through college links with external agencies. The quality of help available to students wanting to progress to higher education (HE) is very good. Careers guidance is good with effective partnership arrangements with the Connexions Service. The college has a designated member of staff who is responsible for child protection issues and the college's response to child protection guidelines and legislation is 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

- the friendly, likeable and supportive staff

- the mutual respect for staff and students

- the way that adult students are made welcome

- the safe college environment

- the wide range of activities, outside their studies

- the good support for HE applications

- the college intranet.

What they feel could be improved

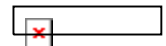
- the reliability and modernity of computer software

- students' social areas

- the amount of car parking

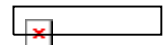
- the lighting of college sites in the evenings
- cafeteria facilities and the range of food
- communications between students and the student council
- heating control in some rooms.

Other information

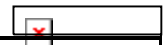


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The 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

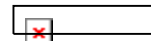


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	59	33	8
19+ and WBL*	55	39	5
Learning 16-18	54	35	11
19+ and WBL*	57	39	4

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. Judgements on college achievements and standards for the period 2001/02 to 2002/03 are based on audited data produced by Ofsted, derived from data supplied by the college in its individual learner report. Judgements on achievements and standards for 2003/04 are based on non-validated data provided by the college at the time of the inspection.

2. In lessons, students generally work at or above the level required for their course of study. A higher proportion of theory lessons compared with practical lessons are conducted at a lower level than that required. In business, management and professional studies and in health and social care and public services students were judged to be working at or above the required level in all lessons. In lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a significant proportion of the students were judged to be working at a level below that appropriate for the individual. Students' written and practical work is of a satisfactory standard overall. In health and social care, and public services, portfolios are well presented and the written work is of a high quality. Construction students produce good quality brick work and performing arts work is of a high standard.

3. Overall, the student attendance rate is similar to the national average for comparable colleges. In engineering, attendance, at 87%, is high, nine percentage points above the national average. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, literacy, numeracy and ESOL lessons and in lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or difficulties attendance is low.

4. In the following paragraphs the college pass rates are compared with those of similar colleges nationally, those in disadvantaged areas. At the time of the inspection, the national averages for 2003/04 were not available.

16 to 18 year olds

5. Retention rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 improved significantly in 2004. College data for 2003/04 show that, in this year, they were satisfactory at levels 1 and 2 and low at level 3. At levels 1 and 2, the improvements have reversed a downward trend which had placed the college, in 2002/03, in the bottom 10% of colleges for retention rates, at both levels. At level 3, retention rates had been steady in the three years to 2003, but had fallen below the national average. In 2004, the college rate improved, reducing the deficit to five percentage points. Retention rates on courses leading to NVQs, general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) improved significantly in 2004. Having been at or below national averages in the three years to 2003 they were all well above average in 2004. Retention rates are low on national diploma and certificate courses. They are close to the national averages in AS-level and GCE A-level subjects.

6. Pass rates have been broadly satisfactory at levels 2 and 3 in the four years to 2004. At level 1, the pass rate is low. It has been at least five percentage points below the national average in three of the four years. Pass rates on courses leading to NVQ and GNVQ courses are generally at or above national averages. They were high in 2004 on NVQ level 1 and GNVQ level 2 and close to national averages in the other categories. National diploma and certificate pass rates were close to the national averages in the three years to 2003. They were low in 2004. Pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level subjects are often low.

7. Success rates, showing the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications compared with the number originally enrolled, are low at levels 1 and 3, and satisfactory at level 2. At levels 1 and 3, the rate has been at least five percentage points below average in each of the three years to 2004.

The level 2 success rate has been consistently close to the national average. At all three levels, the rate improved significantly in 2004. Success rates on NVQ and GNVQ courses improved markedly in 2004 and were all high in this year. In AS-level and GCE A-level subjects and on national diploma and certificate courses, success rates are persistently low.

8. The college has developed its own system of analysing the achievements of GCE A-level students. This system is based on GCSE point scores at entry to the programme. Data show that approximately 70% of the subject grades actually achieved are at, or above, the grade predicted by the system.

9. For key skills, retention rates improved in 2004 and were close to the national average in each of the three key skills. Pass rates were close to the national averages in 2003. In 2004, they improved slightly in application of number and in information technology (IT) and remained steady in communications. In 2004, about 1 in 5 key skills enrolments resulted in a key skills qualification, a proportion which, although low, is better than the 1 in 7 of the previous year and the national average of about 1 in 6.

10. The proportion of learners who achieve a full apprenticeship framework is low. For the programmes starting in 2001/02, only 24% of foundation apprentices and 18% of advanced apprentices have so far achieved the full award. The achievement of NVQs is better, but still low; 30% of foundation starts and 38% of advanced starts achieving the NVQ. Pass rates for the 2002/03 starts are lower at this stage of the programme with only 7% of advanced and 12% of foundation starts achieving the full framework and 11% and 13%, respectively, the NVQ. Curriculum inspectors identified improvements in both retention rates and achievement of frameworks in 2004.

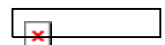
Adult learners

11. College data for 2004 show that, in this year, retention rates were satisfactory at levels 1 and 2 and high at level 3. The three-year downward trend which had taken these rates well below the national averages in 2003 was significantly reversed. For example, at level 2, the retention rate improved by 17 percentage points, taking the college from a place in the bottom 10% of colleges to close to the average. At level 3, a 14-point rise took the college from the bottom quartile to a position which is five points above average. NVQ retention rates improved in 2004. In this year, they were high at level 1 and at the average at levels 2 and 3. At level 1, the rate has been at or above the average in each of the three years to 2004. At levels 2 and 3, the improvement in 2004 reversed a downward trend that had seen the rates well below the average in 2002 and 2003.

12. Pass rates for adult students are high. In 2003, the rates placed the college in the top 10% of colleges at level 3 and in the top quartile at level 2. College data for 2004 show that the rates were at least five percentage points above the average, at all three levels. NVQ pass rates are consistently very high. In both 2003 and 2004, for example, they were above 90% at levels 1 and 2. At level 3, they were at least ten points above the average in each of the three years to 2004.

13. College data show that success rates were high in 2004, at least five points above the national average at all three levels. At level 1, the rate has been improving slightly more than the national rate over the four-year period to 2004. In the three years to 2003, the rates at levels 2 and 3, although remaining fairly constant themselves, had seen the college fall below the national averages. This was significant at level 2, where the college was in the bottom quartile of colleges. There were marked improvements at all three levels in 2004. NVQ success rates improved markedly in 2004. At level 1 they are generally high and were over 20 percentage points above average in 2004. At levels 2 and 3 they were slightly above average in 2004, a marked improvement on 2003 when they were low at both levels.

Quality of education and training



14. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded in 199 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 58% of graded lessons, satisfactory in 35% and less than satisfactory in 7%. The percentage of lessons judged to be better than satisfactory is slightly lower than the national average for similar colleges. It is also lower than at the time of the last inspection, conducted by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Overall, teaching and learning were considered to be better than good in only 16% and 14%, respectively, of the lessons observed, with just three lessons judged to be excellent. For the college as a whole, the quality of teaching is slightly better for students aged 16 to 18, whilst learning is slightly better for adults. In business, management and professional studies, teaching and learning for students aged 16 to 18 are much better than for adults. However, in engineering, technology and manufacturing, ICT, health and social care, early years and public services, and literacy, numeracy and ESOL, teaching and learning for adults are significantly better than for students aged 16 to 18.

15. There are marked differences in the quality of teaching and learning between the various levels of courses. Students on courses at levels 2 and 3, such as the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first awards, the GNVQ intermediate, GCE A level, national diplomas and the AVCE, benefit from the largest amount of teaching that is better than satisfactory. Two of the three lessons where teaching was judged to be excellent were at level 3. The smallest amount of teaching which is better than satisfactory is at entry level, for example, on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

16. There are significant variations in the quality of teaching between curriculum areas. The best teaching is in health and social care, early years and public services, and business, management and professional studies, where the amount of teaching which is better than satisfactory considerably exceeds national averages for similar colleges. In contrast, hairdressing and beauty therapy has a very small amount of teaching which is better than satisfactory. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has a similarly small amount, with a substantial proportion that is less than satisfactory.

17. The most effective lessons are the product of careful planning, both before and during lessons. Teachers think carefully about the context of their schemes of works, overall examination objectives, those of their students and of individual students' specific needs. In health and social care, early years and public services, for example, effective planning ensures that teachers use students' life and work experiences to motivate and engage them. Teaching is most successful when teachers are clear about what they want their students to achieve by the end of the lesson and when they share their objectives with students, as in performing arts and film studies. Enthusiastic teachers, most evident in health and social care, early years and public services, and sport, leisure and travel, use a broad range of appropriate teaching techniques to stimulate, engage, involve and challenge students. In sport, leisure and travel, for example, teachers ensure that lessons deal with many of the topical issues facing these industries and their students. Teaching is bright and lively in the best lessons, as in some provision for literacy and numeracy, and teachers use rigorous questioning to check, extend and reinforce learning. There is good use of ILT in some lessons in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business, professional and management studies, ICT and in performing arts and film studies.

18. Teaching in practical lessons for construction and engineering, technology and manufacturing is often good. In ICT, there is good individual tuition in practical lessons, especially for adults attending the well-organised workshops. Work-based learners' practical skills are largely developed effectively and safely, often in close collaboration with employers, who provide good opportunities for additional training at work.

19. The less successful lessons are insufficiently planned, with poor use of students' individual learning plans to inform teaching. For example, in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students' individual learning needs are inadequately determined and teaching does not match their needs. Similarly, in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, there is insufficient recognition of students' prior learning in planning teaching. In too many lessons, teachers do not apply the basic principles of sound teaching. Students are not given clear aims and objectives. They are given too few opportunities to contribute to the lesson and become bored and restless. In

construction, for example, much of the theory teaching is tedious and uninteresting, with too much copying of notes. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, lessons, including practical sessions, lack purpose and urgency. Students are insufficiently involved and there is little checking of students' understanding or learning. In many lessons, especially in construction and in sciences and mathematics, there is little use of ILT to stimulate and support learning. In the sciences, there is insufficient practical work.

20. Key skills provision across the college is well co-ordinated. Key policies and procedures provide a clear focus for managers and their staff. The extent to which teachers integrate key skills with their students' main vocational programmes is growing. For example, in hairdressing and beauty, key skills are well taught, using vocationally based activities and in health and social care, early years and public services, they are fully integrated into the main courses of study. In work-based learning, revised arrangements that place key skills at the start of learners' programmes are beginning to improve achievement.

21. The college's accommodation strategy is closely linked to the DEC project. Central to DEC is the college's new Doncaster 'waterfront' campus. This very large and imaginative project, centrally situated close to the river Don and the canal, is due to be completed in 2006. Current accommodation is satisfactory. The Waterdale site has some good accommodation but Hall Cross and Beechfield, which are part of this site, are intrinsically poor. Church View, although much improved and suitable for current use, is limited in its development potential. The High Melton campus is a very pleasant site with considerable residential accommodation. A thorough and regularly reviewed maintenance schedule keeps buildings well maintained, clean and generally fit for purpose. Improvements have been made in response to the Disability Discrimination Act. There are few areas of the college that remain inaccessible to those who use wheelchairs. There are good transport arrangements between sites.

22. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Approximately 77% of full-time and 61% of part-time teachers hold teaching qualifications. At the time of the inspection, a further fifth of full-time and part-time teachers were enrolled on teaching courses. A significant programme of staff development meets the wide range of needs identified. Recently, there has been an emphasis on training for the Disability Discrimination Act, race relations, ILT, improving middle managers and teaching and learning. The ILT training area at the local College for the Deaf is well used by many teachers to train to use ILT in lessons. Technician support is good. The use of technicians is carefully monitored and the service evaluated.

23. Learning resource centres are used extensively by students, where they have good access to a range of electronic and paper-based information resources. Links between the centres and college schools are good. Nursery provision is good at the Waterdale, High Melton and Stainforth sites. Students' social and recreational areas are insufficient to meet the demands placed upon them. Specialist teaching resources are largely satisfactory and often good. For example, there is a very good realistic working environment for business administration. However, there is only one science laboratory, which limits the amount and breadth of the practical activity that students undertake. The gymnasium at High Melton is old and does not meet current requirements. Some rooms are too small for the number of students using them. Noise and the lack of specialist resources hampers the delivery of some lessons.

24. There has been a substantial investment in IT infrastructure. Access to computers for students and staff is good. All main sites and many community venues have electronic links, enabling students and staff to access the college's 'virtual learning environment'. Computer hardware is well maintained and usage monitored carefully. The four-year rolling programme of replacement ensures that equipment is up to date.

25. Internal verification is effective in all curriculum areas. Thorough policies and procedures clearly set out assessment and internal verification requirements. A senior manager co-ordinates action planning based on an analysis of external verifier and moderators' reports. An internal verification/moderation forum meets termly to address standardisation and the sharing of good practice. Internal verification in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or learning difficulties is inconsistently documented.

26. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory and particularly good in construction, sciences and mathematics, ICT, hairdressing and beauty and for full-time students of business. Assessment is fair and accurate. Students have a satisfactory understanding of their assessment process and receive regular, timely and effective feedback. Teachers' written comments are usually helpful to students. Spelling and grammar are not always corrected on marked work.

27. There are regular opportunities for students to discuss their progress with teachers. Formal progress reviews vary in quality and are weak for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for work-based learners in business. The use of target setting for improvement is also weak in most curriculum areas. The use of individual learning plans to monitor students' progress and identify additional support needs is often underdeveloped. The college effectively keeps parents, carers and employers informed of students' progress.

28. The college offers an extensive curriculum across its main sites and in approximately 40 community learning centres. The offer is well managed, leading to a coherent programme, with good progression opportunities for most students. However, students of literacy, numeracy and ESOL and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have insufficient opportunities to integrate into mainstream courses or to progress to them. Links with schools are developing strongly, leading to a thriving 'Steps' programme for pupils aged 14 to 16. The college is the only provider of HE in Doncaster.

29. Links with external organisations are excellent. The college has developed a single point of contact for its large number of business and commercial partners. This has much improved its response rate to the needs of the community. These contacts have led to some innovative and highly collaborative projects. For example, in collaboration with a wide range of partners, there is a 'one-stop-shop' for the recruitment, education and training of potential staff for the developing Robin Hood Doncaster Sheffield International Airport. Marketing literature is well produced, much of it within the college.

30. Students benefit considerably from extensive course enrichment opportunities. At induction, for example, many full-time students engaged in team-building activities, including visits to museums, theatres and leisure complexes. Students on vocational courses frequently have visiting speakers or visits to appropriate industrial and commercial venues. There is significant expenditure on revision workshops, residential visits, a world of work unit and summer schools. Many courses offer qualifications in addition to the main course of study. For example, a number of students on vocational courses additionally take GCSE English or mathematics. A wide range of qualification courses is offered as part of the curriculum enhancement programme. Sporting and recreational activities are offered, but the take-up of these is low.

31. Support and guidance services are well planned and managed. A central information and guidance centre at the Waterdale site provides particularly effective and impartial advice and information for prospective students. Staff offering guidance and support are well qualified and experienced. Information on courses is comprehensive and widely available, including a good range of helpful information in community languages. In partnership with other agencies, the college responds well to meeting the needs of the increasing number of non-English speakers in Doncaster and environs.

32. Students' induction, particularly for full-time students, is good and is characterised by an extensive programme of activities to help students settle in to their new environment. In some curriculum areas, they are able to take short courses leading to awards.

33. Students receive good individual support on welfare and personal issues. The counselling service, available at all sites and offering a flexible appointments system, is effectively promoted and well used. Students have access to a good range of specialist support services through college links with external agencies. For example, an educational psychologist provides specialist assessment and evidence of the need for adjustments in examinations to accommodate individual students. The college uses welfare funds sensitively to assist students. Some 800 students are in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance.

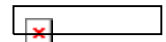
34. Full-time and work-based learning students are assessed for their literacy and numeracy needs. Many part-time students receive an initial assessment during their induction. Test results are quickly processed and fed back to students. However, the level of provision of additional learning support for literacy and numeracy is low. Of the 3,746 students assessed in this academic year, 1,079 are identified as needing support. At the time of the inspection, just over half of these receive literacy support, whilst only 31% needing numeracy support receive it. Test results do inform teaching, but inconsistently. Diagnosis and support for dyslexia is undertaken by a specialist. The college currently supports 22 students with dyslexia.

35. All full-time students are entitled to a weekly timetabled group tutorial. In addition, there are individual tutorials. The quality and effectiveness of tutorials varies and the good practice found in many is not consistently applied. Better tutorials are well planned and effectively tailored to meet the individual needs of students. The extent of use of target setting and individual learning plans varies. In some curriculum areas, students are set challenging targets for improvement that clearly link to their individual learning plan. In others, target setting and the use of individual learning plans is underdeveloped. Students' punctuality and absenteeism is closely monitored. An innovative system of student mentors effectively follows-up students who do not attend, encouraging and supporting them to return to study.

36. The quality of help available to students wanting to progress to HE is very good. Students receive close support at all stages of their application. Careers guidance is good with effective partnerships arrangements with the Connexions Service.

37. The college has responded well to child protection issues, including the action required should a member of staff be accused of abuse. Consultation with local child protection agencies was undertaken prior to the compilation of the current child protection policy and procedures. A college director is designated as the nominee on child protection matters. Appropriate training for the nominee and key college staff has been undertaken.

Leadership and management



38. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the appointment of a new principal in 2001, the college successfully implemented a new management structure in 2002, enabling the college to respond rapidly to local and national priorities. Ten directorates report to a purposeful executive team of nine. Overall retention rates have improved in 2004 from low levels to satisfactory retention rates at levels 1 and 2 and they are high at level 3 for adults, but remain low for students aged 16 to 18. The college makes good use of European Social Fund finances to support improvements for the latter, especially in retention rates. During the four-year period to 2004, pass rates have been broadly satisfactory at levels 2 and 3, for students aged 16 to 18, but remain low at level 1. For adults, pass rates are generally high. Overall retention and pass rates for key skills have improved. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant improvements in the use of management information, monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity and in the overall co-ordination of basic and key skills.

39. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college through the mission statement and supporting development and operational plans. All stakeholders understand well the strategic planning processes. College staff are fully involved in determining and communicating strategic priorities. National, regional and local contexts are fully considered in determining future direction and in anticipating the needs of students. The college has good representation on most local and regional development bodies. For example, the college works closely with local employers to meet the key objectives of the Regional Development Agency and has extensive involvement in community regeneration initiatives through the Doncaster Strategic Partnership.

40. The college is an active and leading partner in the DEC project, bringing together autonomous organisations to raise levels of educational participation, achievement and progression within Doncaster. The principal is the chief executive officer of the project.

41. Governors are well informed about the performance of the college and are strongly committed to its mission. They demonstrate a passionate interest in supporting the college to make improvements. There is an open and honest relationship between them and senior managers. Both understand well their respective roles. Much good use is made of governors' expertise, reflected in the composition and membership of corporation committees. For example, the quality curriculum committee is chaired by a governor with substantial experience in FE and HE. Governors receive regular and detailed performance reports from college directorates on operations, finance, quality assurance, and teaching and learning. They conduct rigorous self-assessment. Governors are effectively paired with curriculum areas. Since the last inspection, the governing body has established an audit of governors' skills to identify training needs. Well-attended training sessions have been provided in aspects of equality and diversity and health and safety. However, no training has yet been provided on child protection. Newly appointed governors receive a very good induction and are supported by a mentor.

42. Quality assurance procedures are established and clearly documented. An effective system manages actions arising from external verification. The academic board monitors the overall quality and performance of courses. An annual audit week is used to measure compliance against standard operating procedures. An action plan is devised and monitored in cases of non-compliance. However, in a minority of areas, there is insufficient use of target setting to improve students' and staff performance. The college does not have a system for monitoring the quality of tutorials for part-time students. The monitoring of franchise partners for audit purposes is insufficiently thorough.

43. The college is not making best use of its internal scheme of lesson observations. Deputy heads of school manage the scheme as part of the teaching and learning support network. However, the grading of lesson observations lacks clear criteria. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in observations are not sufficiently evaluative or detailed. Strengths are often no more than elements of a satisfactory lesson. Many action plans for improvement are incomplete, do not always contain specific and measurable objectives and some are insufficiently reviewed. The college considers a significantly greater proportion of lessons to be good or better than did inspectors. Although a range of grade profile reports at college and school level are produced, qualitative analysis of overall strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning is less developed. This was a weakness at the last inspection. In the inspection, the proportion of teaching graded good or better was almost 10 percentage points lower than at the last inspection.

44. Self-assessment is comprehensive and enables teachers to contribute to the overall report. Students' achievement is central to the self-assessment process. Self-assessment reports are accurate and identify many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. In 9 out of the 11 curriculum areas inspected, the self-assessment grade matched the judgement of inspectors. Clear and regularly reviewed development plans identify actions to improve weaknesses and maintain strengths.

45. The college has a responsive workforce development plan. Staff development, to which the college commits about 1% of its annual budget, is appropriately influenced by organisational, statutory and personal requirements. All full-time and permanent part-time staff are appraised annually. Newly appointed staff are well supported by a mentor throughout their induction. There has been much development of middle managers across the college. The management of data is much improved since the last inspection. A good range of accurate reports is now available to curriculum managers to monitor and evaluate course performance. Curriculum leaders receive accurate and detailed reports on recruitment, retention and pass rates. Learning mentors make good use of data to track students' attendance.

46. The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in its strong approach to widening participation. Equality and diversity are integral to all policies and procedures. A comprehensive action plan is monitored closely by the equality group. Good use is made of innovative approaches to increase staff and students' understanding of equality and diversity, such

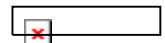
as specialist training materials, theatre and role-play. Some 500 full-time students successfully completed diversity training in 2004. There is a standard scheme of work to promote diversity in tutorials and many lessons plans include topical references. Teachers are assisted to incorporate wider cultural examples in their lessons. Marketing materials reflect diversity and posters which celebrate diversity are prominently displayed. In work-based learning, the college successfully seeks to raise employers' awareness of diversity and to promote apprenticeships to minority ethnic groups and has increased the proportion of minority ethnic apprentices.

47. The college has made good progress in response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and to SENDA. Policies and procedures have been updated and appropriate training provided for staff. There is a detailed race equality policy and retention and pass rates are carefully monitored against all racial and gender groupings to identify and respond to areas of under performance.

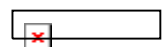
48. Curriculum management is largely satisfactory or better. In the better areas, course leadership is strong, roles and responsibilities are clear and there is evident emphasis on improving and monitoring teaching and learning and achievements. However, in some schools, strategies to address low recruitment and retention rates have been unsuccessful. In other areas, there is little sharing of good practice between schools offering similar courses, or indeed, between courses offered in the same school. Often, teaching strategies are narrow. In some curriculum areas, course teams pay insufficient attention to students' progress. There has been slow progress to implement recommendations for improvement in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

49. College finances are well managed. The college has been in financial health category A and has only recently moved to category B as a result of DEC project commitments. Funding targets in each of the years to 2004 have been met. In the three years to 2004, the college has invested over £8 million in its estates as part of a general refurbishment programme. Overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money. Some class sizes are small in sciences and mathematics, construction and ICT and achievement on level 1 courses for students aged 16 to 18 is still low.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Sciences and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- high pass rates on GCSE and AS-level mathematics courses in 2004

- effective curriculum support for individual students

- rigorous monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- insufficient practical work in sciences
- low pass rates on most AS-level science courses
- insufficient use of ILT.

Scope of provision

50. There are 330 students on science and mathematics courses. There is a wide range of provision at level 3. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, environmental science, physics and mathematics as full-time day provision, where the majority of students are aged 16 to 18. AS-level and GCSE mathematics, AS-level human biology, GCSE human physiology and health and GCSE chemistry are also offered as part of the community programme, during the day or evening, for mostly adult students. The BTEC national certificate in applied science (forensic science) was introduced for the first time in 2004 and has 13 students enrolled. There are no other vocational courses in science. Access to HE programmes are offered in science and mathematics, at both levels 2 and 3.

Achievement and standards

51. Retention and pass rates over the last three years are high for the relatively small numbers of students on GCE A-level courses in mathematics, physics, chemistry and environmental science courses. However, pass rates on most AS-level courses are low. In human biology, they are consistently low and in 2004 the pass rates for chemistry and environmental science were only 57% and 36%, respectively. Pass rates improved in 2004 for biology and physics. Retention rates on most AS-level courses are close to national averages, with the exception of human biology, which has been well below, at 54% and 50% in 2003 and 2004, respectively. The pass and retention rates for GCSE human physiology and health are close to the national averages. The achievement of adults on both level 2 and level 3 courses is good.

52. The pass rate for AS-level mathematics has improved over the last three years, and is now high, at 76%. Similarly, for GCSE mathematics, pass rates have improved since 2002 and were 22 percentage points above the national average in 2004, though the retention rate fell from 79% to 63% in the same period.

53. Overall, the progression rates from AS level to GCE A2, and the number of students achieving A and B grades, are low. In spite of this, many students progress to HE.

54. Students work well in lessons and are usually interested and attentive. The quality of their written work is good. Most GCE A-level students show well-developed mathematical techniques and sound algebraic skills. Many students produce good coursework and do well in tests. The standard of work produced by adult students is good. Attendance during the inspection was good, at 83%. Attendance

in GCE A-level lessons is particularly good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics (A* to C grades)	2	No. of starts	262	201	115
		% retention	79	72	63
		% pass rate	38	43	59
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	64	55	43
		% retention	69	64	70
		% pass rate	52	45	47
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	21	25	28
		% retention	86	88	75
		% pass rate	50	59	76
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	34	39	10
		% retention	74	54	50
		% pass rate	40	43	40
AS-level environmental science	3	No. of starts	**	23	17
		% retention	**	74	82
		% pass rate	**	65	36
GCE A-levels (biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and environmental science)	3	No. of starts	*	34	24
		% retention	*	97	96
		% pass rate	*	73	92

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

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching is at least satisfactory, with a significant amount that is better. Most lessons are well organised and planned, although some schemes of work lack detail. Experienced teachers have good subject knowledge and relate well to students, giving support to those who need it, both in and out of lessons. They give clear expositions of principles and techniques. In the best lessons, teaching is bright and lively and good learning results. In an effective forensic science lesson, students were given information cards and had to rank in order of their importance tasks carried out by science technicians. They initially worked in small groups and a lively discussion ensued as they compared their lists. In an AS-level mathematics lesson dealing with integration, the teacher gave clear and careful explanations, emphasising the techniques needed for examination success. The teacher set high standards and expected the same from the students who responded accordingly. Some teaching is unimaginative, with an over reliance on note taking and handouts. Handouts are not always well prepared and are often taken straight from textbooks. The small number of students in some lessons limits the range of teaching and learning opportunities.

56. ILT is insufficiently used to support teaching and learning. Inspectors saw little use of IT in lessons by teachers. In mathematics lessons, students undertake few practical activities and make

little use of computers and graphical calculators. Students enjoy the use of computerised presentations when they are used to introduce topics in biology and environmental science.

57. There is only one laboratory for the whole science section and some of the equipment used is out of date. Students have insufficient opportunities to practise their practical skills and science teachers are not always able to carry out demonstrations. Science teachers are well supported by two technicians and rooms are clean and well maintained. Wheelchair access is good in the laboratory. Science learning materials on the college intranet are in the early stages of development.

58. Students' progress is assessed regularly and teachers maintain extensive records. Information is routinely provided for their tutors, who monitor students' progress against target grades previously set. Homework is set regularly and returned promptly. Teachers provide encouraging and supportive feedback on students' work. All GCE A-level science and mathematics groups have a 30-minute academic tutorial each week to support the students on a one-to-one basis. Adult students following the access to HE courses are also well supported in their studies, with teachers recognising their particular needs and interests.

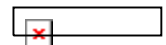
Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are good. The head of department provides a clear sense of purpose and direction and provision is well organised.

60. Courses are annually reviewed and findings are effectively summarised in an appropriately self-critical self-assessment report that focuses upon students' achievements. Challenging, but realistic, targets for improvement are set, based upon sector averages and students' current success. Strategies to address the low pass and retention rates in some subjects have been developed. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 showed a significant improvement in 2003/04. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, the grades awarded for the internal scheme of lesson observations are generous, leading to an underestimate of the extent to which teaching needs to be improved.

61. Managers readily try new initiatives to overcome problems, such as the need to improve the pass rate of key skills. For example, this year, some GCE A2 students are following an open college network (OCN) course in criminology. Students will use some of the work towards a level 3 qualification in key skills communication. Equality of opportunity is good, with teachers aware of individual students' needs and fostering a culture of mutual respect.

Construction



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates at level 2 in electrical installation, bricklaying and wood occupations

- good development of practical skills

- well-informed and supportive employers

- extensive range of courses

- good support for learners.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates at level 2 in plumbing and painting and decorating

- low pass rates in work-based learning

- uninspiring teaching in many theory lessons

- insufficient ILT resources.

Scope of provision

62. A wide range of courses, from foundation level to HE, is offered. They include school link courses; training for private training providers; full-time, day-release and evening-only courses; site management/supervision and industry required specialist courses; programmes for work-based apprentices and distance learning. There are 256 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 39 adult full-time students. Of the 714 part-time students, 543 are adults and 171 are aged 16 to 18. Link courses are provided for 100 school pupils aged 14 to 16. There are 93 work-based construction apprentices as part of the college's own scheme, 77 of whom are apprentices (formerly foundation apprentices) and 16 are advanced apprentices. Additional qualifications, such as abrasive wheel regulations and construction site safety certificates, are offered to enhance apprentices' employability.

Achievement and standards

63. Pass rates are high in electrical, bricklaying and wood occupations at level 2. They have been substantially above the national averages for the last three years. Pass and retention rates for courses at levels 1 and 3 are often at or around national averages and are satisfactory. Pass rates at level 2 in painting and decorating and in plumbing are low. The college has struggled to meet the changing requirements of the awarding body. In painting and decorating pass rates have declined from 44% in 2001/02 to zero in the last two years, against the national average of 81% as the course has changed to decorative operations. Pass rates in plumbing have declined significantly since the high of 100% in 2001/02.

64. In 2002, as part of a local work-based learning strategy to stimulate entry to the construction industry, the college recruited apprentices who had no placement or employer. The achievement of frameworks is low. For the 2001/02 and 2002/03 cohorts, even allowing for those still in learning, achievement cannot exceed 50% and 33%, respectively. Retention rates range from 33%, which is poor, to 66% which is satisfactory. However, many learners who left the apprenticeship programme transferred to other college courses as a result of gaining full-time employment in the buoyant local construction industry.

65. All apprentices acquire a wide range of workplace skills and carry out complex tasks. Many carry out their work without supervision and to high standards. For example, some are carrying out work on a development of very high-specification executive homes, at a higher level than might be expected at that stage of their training. One learner has recently demolished and rebuilt a section of a house, previously poorly completed by skilled bricklayers. All apprentices are aware of their progress and of the tasks they next need to complete. Students engage in high-quality work for national competitions. Attendance is good, at 80%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation construction and the built environment (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	19	47
		% retention	*	68	77
		% pass rate	*	54	78
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	*	41	27
		% retention	*	34	81
		% pass rate	*	100	91
City and Guilds 2351 knowledge of electrical installation engineering (1 year)	2	No. of starts	21	25	34
		% retention	57	60	65
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ trowel occupations	2	No. of starts	*	6	11
		% retention	*	83	82
		% pass rate	*	100	89
NVQ decorative operations	2	No. of starts	**	16	23
		% retention	**	0	61
		% pass rate	**	0	0

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

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

66. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical lessons are better taught than theory lessons. In the best teaching of practical subjects, teachers manage well-planned workshop activities that take account of students' differing needs and levels of attainment. For example, in a second-year level 2 bricklaying lesson, the teacher organised individual tasks for each of the 11 students, carefully building upon previous attainment. In theory lessons, there is too much copying of notes and time is wasted while students wait for the last person to complete the copying. There is little use of ICT for craft or foundation courses. Theory lessons make little use of visual aids. Many

overhead projector transparencies and handouts are of a poor quality. In a few lessons, teachers read from the textbooks that students all have.

67. The provision of key skills is satisfactory. Key skills are now delivered early, are integrated with main courses of study and are occupationally relevant. Work-based learners make good progress, both with key skills tests and their portfolios. The small number of learners in years 3 and 4 are given additional support to complete any outstanding key skills tasks.

68. The employers of construction apprentices are well informed and very supportive of their staff and of the college. They take an active interest in the progress of their learners including for the NVQ technical certificate and key skills. They enable learners to gather workplace evidence and help them to gain a varied range of job skills, and to be seconded to alternative employers to acquire specific skills not available in their company. Employers have appointed work-based mentors and evidence recorders. Many employers visit the college to monitor the progress of their apprentices, and take an active part in their progress reviews.

69. ICT resources are insufficient. Only three classrooms have appropriate equipment and not all levels of students have adequate access to these. Tools, equipment and most buildings are satisfactory. Buildings are old and in some areas a little cramped, but well maintained. Construction resources at the learning resource centre are adequate. Teachers are appropriately qualified and many have recent industrial experience. The college has appointed a full-time, work-based reviewer and has begun to appoint assessors to carry out work-based assessment. Sometimes, there is insufficient cover for teachers' absences.

70. The monitoring of students' progress and the assessment of their work are effective. Individual learning plans do not always have progress milestones, although assessment plans do. Progress is well reviewed at tutorials. Targets are set, are time bound and reviewed. Assessment is well planned and tasks are rigorously marked, with clear feedback to students. Apprentice progress reviews, regularly carried out in the workplace, are of a good standard, although there is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities and health and safety.

71. Students and work-based learners are well supported. The outcomes of comprehensive initial assessment are effectively used to help manage learning. Additional learning support, for literacy and numeracy, is sensitively handled to ensure that students understand its benefits. Most students take up the support offered by specialist vocational staff and by the central support unit. Students are retested to check progress. Good use is made of the learning mentors who identify issues for students and address them. The college runs a bus service to get students to college. Some students are provided with tools and they are all given significant help in finding employment.

72. An extensive range of courses meets a wide variety of students' and employers' needs. In addition to traditional craft and technician programmes, useful specialist areas such as plastering are available. The college is one of the few to offer courses in road building, concrete technology and asphaltting, responding to the industry's need to train and qualify their road builders. Training is by distance learning with on site assessments. The number of school pupils has grown significantly over the last year. Their rate of progression to full-time college courses is good. The college also works with disaffected pupils.

Leadership and management

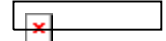
73. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, two deputy heads have been appointed to concentrate on improving teaching and learning, and general operations. Middle managers have clearer roles and responsibilities, focusing on students. The department has successfully relocated into better premises. Course meetings are regular and effective. Staff in the work-based learning unit work closely with construction staff. A comprehensive review of work-based learning has led to additional staffing, a new strategy for key skills and the benchmarking of performance.

74. Challenging action plans for improvement make good use of review and evaluation to ensure

continuous improvement, including target setting for retention and pass rates. Retention rates are improving, but it is too early to determine any impact on pass rates and the quality of teaching and learning. Internal verification is well-planned and rigorous. The self-assessment report accurately reflects the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

75. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, with particular emphasis on disadvantaged learners.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 2 engineering and manufacture and national certificate courses

- high retention and pass rates on the Institute of Quarrying courses

- wide range of programmes, with effective external links

- good support for students and work-based learners

- good training resources in engineering.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on full-time courses

- low retention rates on national certificate and diploma courses

- low completion of foundation apprenticeship frameworks

- some poor accommodation in motor vehicle engineering.

Scope of provision

76. Engineering provision is based at the Waterdale campus and offers a good range of learning opportunities for full-time students at levels 1 to 3 and for part-time students at levels 1 to 4. In the scope of the inspection there were 149 students aged 16 to 18, and 74 adults studying full time. There are 612 students studying part time of whom 488 are adults. Some 93 school pupils, aged 14 to 16, attend part time to study for vocational awards and GCSEs. At the time of the inspection, there were 130 advanced apprentices and 22 apprentices. Full-time programmes offer a broad curriculum experience and contain elements of manufacture, electronics, electrical engineering and motor vehicle engineering. Some part-time programmes are designed specifically for the quarrying and mining industries. Adult students wishing to improve their skills attend computer-aided design courses. The area has interim CoVE status in manufacturing materials and engineering.

Achievement and standards

77. Pass rates for the NVQ level 2 in engineering and manufacturing are high. In performing manufacturing operations, they have been 100% for each of the last two years. They are also high for the national certificate courses, where they have consistently improved over the last three years to 100% in 2004. Pass and retention rates are both high on the Institute of Quarrying courses. Overall, the achievements of adult students are satisfactory. For example, the large numbers of students on computer-aided design programmes achieve results very much in line with national averages. Pass and retention rates for full-time students aged 16 to 18 are much more varied and are often well below national averages, as is the case with the national diploma in electrical/electronic engineering.

78. Achievement of foundation apprenticeship frameworks is low. Poor achievement of key skills has been a contributory factor to the poor achievement of frameworks. However, this is now improving and learners achieve their key skills earlier in their programmes. The achievement of advanced apprenticeship frameworks is satisfactory at 60%.

79. Overall, the standard of students' work is satisfactory. Some students produce high-quality work, such as NVQ level 2 engineering manufacture students who produce very good test pieces. Students on the national diploma programme produce particularly good classroom work and present their results effectively. Students develop good practical skills in the use of hand and machine tools and take responsibility for their own measurement and testing of manufactured test pieces. Attendance in lessons is good and absences are closely monitored and reported. Many students progress through the courses and some full-time students gain employment and return as part-time students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, technology and manufacturing, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Certificate/diploma in motor vehicle studies	1	No. of starts	*	28	41
		% retention	*	82	78
		% pass rate	*	57	56
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	42	45	34
		% retention	86	62	85

		% pass rate	94	83	72
City and Guilds computer-aided draughting and design	2	No. of starts	120	88	123
		% retention	68	79	75
		% pass rate	74	84	83
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	60	100	24
		% retention	70	50	54
		% pass rate	88	98	100
Institute of Quarrying professional qualification	4	No. of starts	47	57	57
		% retention	100	100	98
		% pass rate	72	84	80

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

80. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons and courses are often well planned. Plans make reference to methods for meeting the different needs of students and are cross-referenced to aspects of key skills. However, in lessons, plans are not always put into practice and sometimes do not support individual students' requirements. Students receive good individual support from teachers, make good use of their time and in most lessons make progress at a rate that suits their needs. Some teachers build on students' previous knowledge, relate teaching to industrial applications and draw on students' experiences. In the best lessons, teachers use directed questioning to revise previous work and to test learning. In some lessons, there is good use of ILT to present learning materials.

81. Practical training on college-based courses is effective. Teachers set high standards and use a good range of tasks. Health and safety are given good consideration. In a few theory lessons, there is over reliance on the teacher and students make little contribution to the learning. Work-based learners undergo satisfactory skills development in their workplaces. Practical skills are developed effectively and safely.

82. Engineering training resources are good. In the workshop, there is a good welding area with good facilities for light and alloy welding. Some machine tools are out of date, but there has been recent investment in eight new centre lathes. The motor vehicle workshop is satisfactory. A new stock of training vehicles gives students an improved learning opportunity. In some classrooms, there are very good facilities, with dedicated theoretical areas adjacent to laboratory benches and access to interactive whiteboards and multimedia projection. Many classrooms have a very good supply of computers. Computer-aided design equipment is good, with modern software. Some classrooms used by motor vehicle students are poorly decorated, with old furniture and poor projection facilities.

83. Company resources for work-based learners are good. Their training and mentoring staff are very experienced. Some employers have highly advanced computer numerically controlled equipment. Work-based learners often undergo training on highly specialised equipment such as leading-edge spark erosion machines and explosive and underground flame-proof test equipment in the mining industry.

84. Teachers are well qualified vocationally and most have, or are studying for, teaching qualifications. Teachers take advantage of a good range of professional development opportunities in support of their professional work. The learning resources centre has a good range of textbooks and periodicals and adequate computing facilities.

85. Students' assessment is satisfactory. Most assignments and practical tasks are well designed and students are awarded appropriate grades. However, their marked work often does not contain sufficient written feedback to help them to improve. Internal verification is satisfactory. There is good assessment practice in workshops, where students assess their own performance before assessment by the teacher. Work-based assessment is satisfactory.

86. Engineering has a good range of courses from level 1 and level 4. Industry-specific courses meet the needs of the quarrying and mining industries. Adult students enrol on computer-aided design programmes to update their skills, work-based learning meets the needs of employers and learners and there are programmes for school pupils. Nearly half of these school-link pupils return to college as post-16 students. The department also has an undergraduate programme. Working partnerships with other organisations are good. Employers are consulted over the choice of NVQ optional units. There are very good working relationships with the Institute of Quarrying. In a joint venture with two other colleges, the school has recently achieved interim approval status for a CoVE in manufacturing materials and engineering.

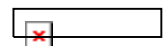
87. Support for students and work-based learners is good. All new full-time and substantial part-time students are assessed for additional learning needs. Students receive additional help in mathematics, identified as a particular priority. All students have a college mentor and full-time students have a timetabled tutorial with appropriate activities. Mentors, well informed by engineering teachers, collate information about students' needs and arrange appropriate support and guidance. Individual learning plans are used effectively. Work-based learners receive good support from employers, often through nominated mentors, and college training co-ordinators. Learners' progress is regularly reviewed by employers and they are given time at work to carry out evidence gathering. Rotational work programmes help learners to gather evidence for their NVQs.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Courses are well organised. Course teams meet regularly and always discuss students' progress. Managers have adopted a proactive approach to improving students' learning. Some actions have already had an impact and improvements are evident. This is particularly noticeable in the consistent level of good planning of teaching, where teachers have received training. Newly appointed teachers receive increased levels of support to enable them to integrate into the staff team quickly and effectively. Monitoring of teaching is carried out regularly, but requires more rigour. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory. The management of key skills has been weak and has impacted adversely on the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks. The self-assessment report is a robust document. Inspectors agreed with most of its judgements. It has an action plan to address weaknesses. Implementation of the interim CoVE is effective.

89. Equality of opportunity is promoted, monitored and reinforced in the workplace. All staff have undergone equality and diversity training.

Business, management and professional studies



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most courses

- much good teaching and learning
- particularly good accommodation and resources
- very good programme of level 1 courses, widening participation
- good leadership and management
- good management of work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level business, management and office studies
- weak progress reviews for some work-based learners
- unsatisfactory quality assurance.

Scope of provision

90. Most provision is offered by two of the college's schools. Courses are based at the Waterdale campus and at the Doncaster Business School. Many courses are offered, from level 1 to postgraduate degree. The area has full CoVE status in business and management, which extends to a significant number of courses not within the scope of this inspection. Courses for full-time FE students are at levels 1 to 3 and for part-time students at levels 1 to 5. In the scope of the inspection, there were 111 students, aged 16 to 18 and 155 adults studying full time. There are 1,883 students who study part time, of whom 1,715 are adults. The business school offers a range of professional qualifications such as the Certificate in Personnel Practice and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development graduateship. At the time of the inspection, there were 26 advanced and 42 apprentices undertaking NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Ten work-based learners were following NVQs at level 4.

Achievement and standards

91. Most courses have high retention and pass rates. For example, there are high retention rates on business administration courses at levels 1 and 2 and particularly high pass rates at level 1.

Retention and pass rates on the Certificate in Personnel Practice are outstanding and have been consistently high for all Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development programmes over the past three years. On the AVCE retention has been consistently high with very good pass rates. There is good completion of apprenticeship frameworks, particularly in accounting. There are some low pass rates. Those for AS-level business, management and office studies are particularly low and well below the national average.

92. Students' progression is generally good in both accounting and business administration. For example, over 90% of level 2 and 3 accounting students completing courses in 2004 progressed to the next level. In 2003, five business administration work-based learners progressed from apprenticeship to advanced apprenticeship and two of these have gone on to HE.

93. Students' standards of work are often good. They develop a range of relevant skills well and learn to use them appropriately in a variety of business contexts. Students acquire good research skills using both first-hand and second-hand source material. For example, students on the national diploma in business studies achieve high standards in their research work and present their results well using multimedia presentations. Work-based learners' portfolios are good and they take great pride in their work. The standard of work of part-time professional studies students is good. Some 3 students have received national or local awards from their professional bodies over the past 12 months. Students participating in the 'Young Enterprise' scheme achieved five awards for their entrepreneurial business ventures in 2004.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, management and professional studies, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Text processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	118	119	188
		% retention	89	82	79
		% pass rate	43	94	87
NVQ administration	1	No. of starts	118	70	41
		% retention	66	80	90
		% pass rate	88	70	86
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	89	63	59
		% retention	85	95	88
		% pass rate	75	70	67
Text processing stage 2	2	No. of starts	24	82	69
		% retention	92	95	93
		% pass rate	73	74	84
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	44	34	34
		% retention	91	100	97
		% pass rate	85	94	97
AS-level business, management and office studies	3	No. of starts	35	34	27
		% retention	94	59	70
		% pass rate	48	60	63
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	31	31	12
		% retention	74	71	83
		% pass rate	61	82	90

NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	41	53	43
		% retention	88	79	95
		% pass rate	64	67	29
CIPD graduateship	4	No. of starts	84	108	61
		% retention	86	63	90
		% pass rate	90	85	87

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

Quality of education and training

94. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned to include a range of activities that make demands upon students. In a personnel management lesson, students worked effectively in groups sharing their work experiences to enhance their understanding of diversity in the workplace. In one personal and professional development lesson for medical secretaries, very good teaching and learning significantly expanded the students' knowledge and understanding of disease and illness. In some lessons there is good use of ILT. Teachers and students show confident use of interactive white boards and multimedia presentations.

95. Teachers pay great attention to the effective development of office and business disciplines and encourage the use of ICT to enhance the presentation of work. Innovative learning activities are used to promote independent learning. For example, the opportunities offered by the 'Young Enterprise' programme are fully exploited. In work-based learning, study and research skills are developed as learners take responsibility for collecting evidence and matching it to their qualification standards. Assessment sessions in work-based learning are used well to plan teaching and learning, both on the job and off the job. In a few lessons teaching is undemanding and does not sufficiently maintain students' interest.

96. Resources and accommodation are particularly good, especially at the business school. The learning resource centre is particularly well-equipped, with access to paper-based and online resources, including subscriptions to a wide range of professional journals. Classrooms at the Waterdale campus are light and airy and of sufficient size to facilitate group work with ease. Many rooms have a good supply of computers and interactive whiteboards. There is a very good realistic office working environment, developed over ten years, in which students practice administration skills. An extensive programme of visits from specialist speakers and lecturers contributes significantly to students' experiences. Most teachers are suitably qualified and many have substantial experience in industry.

97. The programme of level 1 courses, especially in business administration, positively promotes the widening of participation. Courses are designed for students who do not traditionally participate in FE. For example, an office skills course has been re-designed with easy to assimilate modules, enabling more flexible attendance for adults returning to study. Good use of ESOL support workers in lessons enables students whose first language is not English to participate successfully and achieve. Young male students are encouraged to join business administration courses designed and marketed with them in mind. Community-based courses are delivered through effective partnerships with local schools.

98. Assessment is understood by students. An effective range of assessment methods supports students in their work, including observation of tasks and regular discussions between teachers, assessors and students. Assessment criteria and timescales are clear. Key skills are often successfully assessed alongside other tasks and activities. Monitoring and recording of students' progress is thorough and usually leads to verbal feedback to students in tutorials and work-based reviews. Work-based learners benefit from the good understanding and commitment by employers to assessment at work. However, progress reviews for some are weak. Learners are not always encouraged to participate in the process. Many reviews discuss progress made but fail to set targets

for improvement and completion. Equality of opportunity and safe working practices are insufficiently covered.

99. Support for students is satisfactory. Full-time students have a good induction, with an exciting programme of visits and activities relevant to students' future careers, but part-time students do not always have appropriate induction. Effective academic and pastoral support is provided in lessons and tutorials for full-time students. Initial assessment is largely effective for full-time students and identifies their additional support needs. Learning support is provided on an appointment basis although some is integrated into lessons. Customised learning materials are provided for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

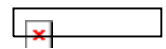
Leadership and management

100. Leadership and management are good. Recent senior management changes have provided a focus for rationalising and developing the curriculum, including the granting of full CoVE status. Good progress is being made with the implementation of the CoVE. Staff are well supported and personal and professional development and updating for teachers has been significantly extended, including two-week work placements in industry. Meetings to share good practice have been introduced and are well attended. Diversity and inclusiveness are actively promoted through the area's programmes, but there is insufficient promotion in lessons.

101. Work-based learning is well managed. New systems and procedures have been instigated by a new co-ordinator. Cooperation between teachers, the work-based learning centre and additional support tutors is good, producing a coherent and holistic experience for learners. Internal verification is rigorous and documented effectively. Good relationships with employers ensure that they understand and are fully involved in learning and assessment.

102. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Analysis and use of information on students' performance is insufficient to inform quality improvement planning. The outcomes of lesson observations are insufficiently used to plan actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Self-assessment is thorough. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on NVQ programmes

- effective strategy to improve retention and pass rates

- good individual tuition in practical lessons

- wide range of courses reflecting the needs of a diverse community.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates for the national diploma

- insufficient variety of teaching techniques

- insufficient monitoring and target setting to promote learning.

Scope of provision

103. Four of the college's schools provide most courses in ICT. Full-time courses include the GNVQ at foundation and intermediate levels, AVCE single and double awards and City and Guilds qualifications. There are HE courses. Part-time courses at entry level and levels 1 and 2 include introductory IT, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), European computer driving licence (ECDL) and specialist topics such as desk-top publishing and digital media. These are offered at Waterdale and more than 12 community locations. There is a course for women seeking to enter technological careers. NVQ courses in using IT are delivered on employers' premises for some large organisations. Professional training in using commercial IT products is offered to local businesses and public sector organisations. A business innovation centre and a business development unit deliver a considerable volume of full-cost training. There is provision for young people aged 14 to 16 and some joint sixth form work with local schools. There are good progression opportunities from one level of course to the next. Currently, there are 92 full-time students, the majority aged 16 to 18, and 2,738 part-time students who are mainly adults.

Achievement and standards

104. Retention and pass rates for NVQs have been well above national averages for the last three years. These courses recruit well and the students gain proficiency in IT skills which they successfully apply in a range of office, medical and other jobs. Retention and pass rates for many other courses have improved between 2003 and 2004. For example, in this period pass rates rose well above national averages for CLAIT, from 65% to 74%, for ECDL from 80% to 87%, and for the GNVQ intermediate from 74% to 86%. The main full-time courses at level 3 over the last three years have been the national diploma and the AVCE. The national diploma has had low retention and pass rates over this period. For example, only 41% of starters gained the qualification last year and the college now only runs the AVCE. Fewer students are now attracted to the AVCE than to the two precursor courses and recruitment of full-time level 3 students overall has fallen.

105. Most students show considerable enthusiasm for their subjects and, in many lessons, constructively help each other. Adult students find they can apply their IT skills at work, in hobbies, in helping their families, in voluntary activities, or by learning to use the Internet. Some adults speak of their excitement on realising the potential that ICT offers them. Full-time AVCE students are encouraged to consider realistic contexts within which to develop their skills. For example, last year, they visited a local car component manufacturing company and used the information in assignments. One student, new to IT and out of education for some 30 years, who could only study online from home due to mobility impairment, gained a student of the year award last year. College figures show that about 75% of full-time level 3 students progress into HE or employment. Attendance during the inspection was satisfactory, at 75%.

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

2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
CLAIT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	638	413	317
		% retention	78	74	72
		% pass rate	65	65	74
NVQ using IT	1	No. of starts	286	405	292
		% retention	84	83	90
		% pass rate	82	96	98
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	48	20	22
		% retention	75	60	73
		% pass rate	33	92	94
ECDL (1 year)	2	No. of starts	365	242	95
		% retention	77	74	72
		% pass rate	56	80	87
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	70	83	32
		% retention	87	70	91
		% pass rate	62	74	86
NVQ using IT	2	No. of starts	88	236	102
		% retention	77	85	81
		% pass rate	100	93	92
AVCE IT	3	No. of starts	19	38	18
		% retention	68	47	100
		% pass rate	85	83	78
National diploma IT	3	No. of starts	34	36	27
		% retention	38	25	56
		% pass rate	85	44	73

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

Quality of education and training

106. Teaching is largely good or satisfactory, with a small amount that is unsatisfactory. However, there is less good and better teaching and a narrower range of teaching methods than is usually found at similar colleges. In the better lessons, teachers use more varied techniques, such as use of large screen projection systems, well-prepared Internet searches and a variety of discussion sheets and quizzes. Schemes of work and lesson plans vary greatly in the level of detail. The best examples would permit a substitute teacher to take over the lesson effectively, but others do not contain enough information to permit this. For full-time students, there is insufficient monitoring and target setting for individual students to promote the maximum learning. Few lesson plans include a profile of the students in the lesson to show how teachers match the type of teaching to the needs of individuals. For full-time students, the use of different learning materials and activities to meet individual needs is limited. The college is at an early stage in developing use of a virtual learning environment to allow students access to structured learning materials, exercises and tests on the college intranet.

107. Most adults learn in well-organised IT workshops. They work from well-designed workbooks, allowing work at a variety of pace and levels. Inspectors noted quick, accurate, patient and enthusiastic one-to-one help for students in all these sessions. In the best examples, students work co-operatively, and help to motivate each other and build up confidence. In less effective sessions, students work largely in isolation with little use of target setting to promote progress through the workbooks or achievement of personal learning goals. In some lessons, adults take workbooks home to practice between lessons, but in others this was not allowed.

108. The resources to support learning are satisfactory. Students at Waterdale have access to up-to-date computers and software. Full-time students have good access to computers and the Internet for work outside lessons. The supply of IT projectors and interactive whiteboards has recently improved, but they are not yet fully used. Accommodation is in satisfactory condition, but rooms are often small and filled with computers, with limited workspace and no separate teaching area. This limits the teaching of theoretical topics and students' working in groups. At venues away from the main college sites accommodation and equipment is of variable quality. Most learning materials are good, with a mixture of commercial and college produced. Most teachers have appropriate qualifications and there is a good level of staff development.

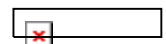
109. Assessment and verification are carried out in line with awarding body requirements on all courses. Students feel they are given accurate initial advice about choosing courses. Full-time students speak highly of the value of tutorials in helping them understand and plan how to improve their performance. Full-time students are screened to see if they would profit from additional learning support and many lessons for full-time students have support workers provided. Each school has a student mentor who supports any full-time students falling behind with their work.

110. The college provides an unusually wide range of full-time and part-time courses in ICT, effectively meeting the needs of a diverse community. All age groups and abilities are catered for and courses are offered from early levels to HE. Partnerships with schools and industry address the needs of pupils, employees and employers. A business innovation centre and a business development unit deliver a considerable volume of full-cost training.

Leadership and management

111. Overall, leadership of this large and diverse provision is satisfactory. The strategy to improve retention and pass rates has been successful, but teaching still lacks sufficient variety to maintain students' interest. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. The college observes teachers in the classroom at least once a year and the college evaluation of the quality of teaching is in line with the judgement of inspectors. There is a co-ordinating committee for the four schools responsible for the courses. This avoids unnecessary duplication. The college recognises a need to present the course offer more clearly to potential students and to ensure that the offer is balanced. At present, there is considerable variation in practice between schools and courses and good practice is not fully identified and spread.

Sport, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses in 2004

- teaching that is well matched to the needs of industry
- wide range of teaching methods, meeting individual needs.

Weaknesses

- low pass and retention rates on level 3 sports courses
- slow arrangements to meet support needs for literacy and numeracy
- unsatisfactory implementation of tutorial arrangements.

Scope of provision

112. Programmes are offered from level 1 to level 4. Additional industry-recognised qualifications, such as coaching, first aid, life-guarding and leadership awards are also offered. There are 594 students, 403 of whom are adults, mainly undertaking travel and tourism courses. Some 122 students are full time and the remaining 472 are part time. There is sports provision for seven pupils aged 14 to 16. Thirteen work-based learners follow apprentice and advanced apprentice training in sport and 36 students attend the college's sports academy in football, netball or basketball. There are 20 students who attend from courses in other areas of learning. The majority of provision is offered at one college site, but other college venues and eight local community sites are used.

Achievement and standards

113. Overall pass and retention rates are satisfactory. Retention rates are much improved for 2004 and rates are high on most courses, other than for the national diploma in sport and exercise sciences. The retention rate in 2004 was excellent on the first diploma in sport and exercise science, where all students completed their studies. Pass and retention rates on level 3 sports courses are low. Pass and retention rates for the national diploma are particularly low, but there are also some poor pass and retention rates on AS-level and GCE A2 physical education, games and recreation and the treatment and management of injuries programmes. Action has recently taken place to address the low retention and pass rates on these courses, including changes to the curriculum offer and delivery. It is too early to determine the impact of the changes made.

114. Students can study a range of qualifications in addition to their main course. There is a mixed picture of pass rates on some of these awards, with satisfactory to poor pass rates. The poor performance has been identified and an action plan to improve performance implemented. Pass rates in key skills tests are poor. Vocational teachers are now leading the teaching of key skills to try to improve students' interest and performance.

115. The standards of students' work are satisfactory overall, with some high standards demonstrated in both practical and theory lessons. For example, students in sports coaching lessons demonstrate good levels of skill acquisition.

116. Students' attendance was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Action to address this has included the appointment of a dedicated mentor to monitor and follow up any issues. Attendance overall is now satisfactory, at 81% during the inspection.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and travel, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Certificate in coaching football	1	No. of starts	*	37	102
		% retention	*	92	100
		% pass rate	*	88	98
First diploma and precursor in sport and exercise science	2	No. of starts	22	19	**
		% retention	91	53	**
		% pass rate	20	90	**
Certificate in travel (travel agency)	2	No. of starts	*	24	23
		% retention	*	67	87
		% pass rate	*	62	65
National diploma and precursor in sport and exercise sciences	3	No. of starts	22	40	40
		% retention	82	60	63
		% pass rate	78	88	68
National diploma and precursor in travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	**	15	15
		% retention	**	53	80
		% pass rate	**	100	75

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

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

117. Teaching is satisfactory or better. Inspectors observed no unsatisfactory teaching. A wide range of teaching methods is used to meet the needs of students. Activities are at the correct level, motivating and stimulating students. Effective links are made between theory and practical lessons. Technical language is developed. Students' experiences are used effectively and built upon in lessons. Most teachers are aware of students' preferred learning styles and learning needs and use this knowledge sensitively during teaching. For example, a student identified with semantic pragmatic disorder was given appropriate support. The use of IT in teaching is underdeveloped.

118. Teaching is well matched to the needs of industry. Students gain significant benefits from the up-to-date expertise of teachers. Current local and national issues are discussed during lessons to engage the interest of students and to help them see the relevance of their work. On travel and tourism courses, good, topical learning materials are used. For example, some outline the plans for a local international airport that is due to open early next year. In lessons, there are detailed discussions about the changes within the airline industry as a consequence of terrorism. In sport, students learn and talk about employment opportunities. A range of role models and sporting examples are used to enhance teaching and learning. Good links with employers ensure that the curriculum is up to date and that there are good opportunities for staff and students to gain work experience. In sports, for example, there is curriculum development to address the health-related issues in line with national agendas, such as improvements in well being and obesity.

119. Students are appropriately guided in lessons. Their progress is effectively monitored and teachers ensure that students are aware of the progress they have made. In practical lessons, some good one-to-one coaching enables students to understand their progress to date and how they could further improve.

120. Satisfactory resources promote learning and skills development. Travel and tourism students have a travel office and a simulated cabin crew environment, providing opportunities for building their confidence and skills prior to entering employment. Sports students use a fitness suite, large outdoor playing pitch and a sports hall on site. The sports hall has a glass wall which restricts the level of activities that can take place. At the time of the inspection, the fire evacuation area from the hall was obstructed. Students also have access to a local leisure centre and facilities at another local college. Staff and students have access to the college's virtual learning environment for information about their courses, including assignments and lesson notes. The learning resource has sufficient range of books, journals, periodicals and videos. The opening times meet the needs of the students. All teachers are working towards or have gained a recognised teaching qualification. The majority have relevant industrial experience which they use effectively in their teaching.

121. Tutorial arrangements are inconsistently applied. The level and frequency of support varies greatly and many students have not received a tutorial since starting their course. Students' assessment is satisfactory across the range of qualifications. Assessment activities and students' work meet awarding body requirements. Most assignment briefs are of a good standard. Assessed work varies in the level of written feedback provided to improve performance. One-to-one verbal feedback is effective in enabling students to recognise the progress they have made. Internal verification is satisfactorily planned and executed.

122. Students are interviewed and advised effectively on suitable courses. Initial information and guidance is well received and highly regarded by students, including the two-week induction prior to enrolment. In travel and tourism, students gain accredited qualifications during the induction. Students appreciate the pastoral support they receive and the good access to teachers.

123. Arrangements to meet students' additional support needs for literacy and numeracy are too slow. Diagnostic assessment takes place and the results are shared with teachers, but practical support is tardy and many students do not receive the support they need. There is little recording and monitoring of additional support needs in students' individual learning plans.

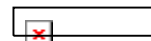
Leadership and management

124. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Regular team and course meetings take place to review the curriculum. Within sports, there is a weekly meeting to share issues and good practice, but in travel and tourism, teachers are only just planning to have a regular weekly meeting next academic year. There is effective management of resources and funding applications are made to improve the facilities. However, issues identified as part of a risk assessment of facilities have not been adequately addressed.

125. The self-assessment process is inclusive and self-critical and identifies actions to seek continuous improvement. Some of the strengths identified in the report are normal practice, but inspectors agreed with most judgements. Data are effectively monitored by managers and there are significant improvements in retention rates on most courses. The internal scheme of lesson observations has identified issues and improvements in teaching have taken place.

126. There is a good awareness of equality and diversity and most staff have attended equal opportunities training. Targets are set for equality and diversity.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most college-based courses

- effective reviews of progress for work-based learners

- good work placements for apprentices

- good support for learners.

Weaknesses

- slow progress and poor achievement for work-based learners

- some poor teaching

- unsatisfactory aspects of resources

- insufficiently rigorous individual learning plans for full-time students.

Scope of provision

127. The college offers a broad range of courses leading to NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1, 2 and 3 and in beauty therapy levels 2 and 3. The range of complementary therapy and related courses includes holistic therapies, reflexology, aromatherapy, Indian head massage and nail treatments. Courses are provided on six sites across the borough. Beauty therapy is offered in partnership with a local training provider and in three community venues. There are 171 students aged 16 to 18 and 118 adults on full-time college courses. Some 80% of the 295 part-time students are adults. Twelve pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the hair and beauty school for one day a week from local secondary schools. There are 36 work-based learning apprentices.

Achievement and standards

128. Most college-based programmes have high retention and pass rates which are well above the national averages. For most levels, there has been consistent improvement over the last three years, with retention and pass rates often at or very near 100%. Pass rates for reflexology and Indian head massage are also good, although retention rates, especially for reflexology, have fallen over the last three years and are now below the national average.

129. Work-based learners have made slow progress and the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks has been low. For example, of the 35 who started their programmes in 2001/02, 6 are still in learning and due to complete in 2005. For this group of learners, retention rates are currently 51% and framework achievement 34%. Of the 33 learners who started in 2002/03, 12 are still in training. The retention rate is currently 48% and framework achievement 12%, with the possibility of rising to 48%. The retention rate is 70% for the most recent group of learners, with 18 still in learning. The issue of slow progress has been recognised by the college. Current learners are making satisfactory progress.

130. Most students achieve satisfactory standards in their written and practical work. In the latter, they often work competently and independently, showing initiative, good skills and good levels of commitment to health and safety and to client care. Attendance in some lessons observed was low.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	15	36	61
		% retention	94	78	100
		% pass rate	45	82	95
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	82	61	72
		% retention	43	57	65
		% pass rate	77	86	87
NVQ beauty	2	No. of starts	32	49	64
		% retention	91	67	81
		% pass rate	97	91	100
Indian head massage diploma	2	No. of starts	49	72	55
		% retention	96	93	80
		% pass rate	98	97	95
NVQ beauty	3	No. of starts	17	24	31
		% retention	88	88	84
		% pass rate	93	95	92
Reflexology	3	No. of starts	26	29	**
		% retention	85	66	**
		% pass rate	100	100	**

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

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

131. Teaching and learning are largely satisfactory. Little of the teaching is unsatisfactory, but only a small proportion is good. In the best lessons, teachers are well prepared and work effectively with their students. In a lesson on personal development, students were taught the effects of body language and listening skills by playing charades and using 'Chinese whispers'. This enabled them to understand the value of good communication and listening skills, especially when dealing with clients. There is good rapport between teachers and students and teachers use this well to help develop students' confidence. All teachers use lesson plans, but the evaluation of students' individual learning is not included.

132. In many lessons, teaching is uninspiring and unstimulating and students are insufficiently engaged and motivated. There is a lack of purpose and urgency and lesson tasks do not always require students to build on their earlier learning. Students have clear aims and objectives for each lesson in their 'personal tracker' that they take to each lesson, but these are insufficiently challenging for some students and their interest is not maintained. Teachers make insufficient use of the outcomes of students' initial diagnostic tests to plan their teaching. There is limited use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning. Interactive whiteboards have recently been made available at one site used by hairdressing students.

133. Key skills are well taught. There is good use of vocationally based activities during the teaching of key skills, especially for work-based learners to make the key skills element of courses much more relevant and meaningful for students.

134. There is a limited number and range of hairdressing clients, especially for work-based learners in college lessons. Students often have to work on head forms for a large part of the lesson when waiting for clients. Apprentices are often expected to provide their own clients for practice and assessment. Assessment opportunities for most learners are limited by too few clients. Most of the college's salons are appropriate, although often untidy. However, there are too few beauty couches at one location and a shortage of IT for students to help build their portfolios of evidence. Some rooms are used inappropriately. For example, inspectors observed craft activities and hairdressing theory being taught in a beauty therapy salon, with beauty couches used as tables. At one location, external noise from a school playground is often distracting and noise from adjacent salons can disrupt teaching. Teachers are well qualified and some have recent industrial experience. However, the staff development plan places too little emphasis on continuing professional development.

135. Work placements for apprentices are good. Salons provide high-quality, supportive environments for students. Employers provide good learning opportunities. They ensure that working experiences are relevant to their programme of study and informed by their reviews and schemes of work. Experienced salon staff observe and mentor students and there is some direct teaching during planned 'lessons' in salons. Students also learn from their participation in 'model nights' and through 'training days'.

136. Students are well supported. Support in lessons is delivered in a sensitive manner so that students do not feel intimidated. They value the pastoral support which is given by the hairdressing and beauty staff and are confident in asking for help and guidance. Each student has a personal tutor who reviews and monitors progress every six weeks. However, individual learning plans for college-based students are insufficiently detailed, with broad and imprecise targets. They are not effectively used to drive learning forward.

137. Progress reviews for work-based learners are particularly effective. Employers, learners and teachers all contribute to the reviews. Employers feel very much part of the process and learners value the support they receive through their reviews. There are regular meetings between teachers and assessors and copies of reviews are retained at both the workplace and at college.

138. Assessment and internal verification are effective. Assessment criteria are clear and shared with students. Feedback is positive and encouraging. Standardised paperwork is used by both work-based assessors and college assessors. Tracking of students' progress is inadequate and the number of work-based assessors is low. Most internal verification visits are suitably planned. Comments made by verifiers are constructive and accompanied by action plans for assessors' improvement.

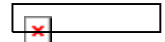
Leadership and management

139. Many aspects of leadership and management are good. There are clear lines of management responsibility, devolved from the head of school to two curriculum co-ordinators. Staff and assessor meetings are regularly held and students' progress is fully considered. Work-based assessors attend standardisation and information meetings at the college. Employers are kept informed and are very knowledgeable about learners' college course and progress.

140. The quality of courses is thoroughly reviewed, with outcomes and evidence consolidated into the area self-assessment report. Targets for improvement are set at curriculum level and monitored by the head of school. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but identified additional weaknesses in relation to the quality of teaching.

141. Aspects of equality of opportunity are covered during students' induction and throughout their programmes, but continuous monitoring of students' understanding is limited. Equality of opportunity is not promoted through the curriculum.

Health and social care, early years and public services



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- high standards of attainment

- much good teaching and learning

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on the national diploma in early years

- ineffective use of initial assessment

- unsatisfactory use of individual learning plans and reviews.

Scope of provision

142. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in health, care, counselling and public services from entry level to level 4. There are 459 students aged 16 to 18 and 2,455 adults. About 340 students study full time. Full-time courses include national diplomas in early years and in public services, certificate and diploma courses in childcare and education and GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in health and social care. Nearly 2,600 part-time students study during the day or in the evenings. Courses include counselling, first aid, door supervision vocational award and NVQs in care and early years care and education. A number of access to HE and college accredited course are offered, including access to nursing and social care. The college also offers the Council for Awards in Childcare and Education (CACHE) foundation award in caring for children to school pupils aged 14 to 16. The college was awarded interim CoVE status in health and social care in the month of the inspection.

Achievement and standards

143. Pass rates are high on most courses, and particularly so on the national diplomas in public services and in early years, where pass rates were 100% in both 2003 and 2004. The NVQ level 2 in care and the door supervisor's vocational stage 2 course also have pass rates that are well above the national averages. Most courses have satisfactory retention rates. On the national diploma in early years, however, the retention rate was well below the national average in both 2003 and 2004. Attendance in lessons is satisfactory.

144. There are high standards of attainment. Students' portfolio work and the work produced in lessons, assignments and course work are of a high standard. Students are expected to produce good work and their research and analytical skills are well developed. During one lesson, the students worked well researching theories relating to childcare and education and how these link to child observation. Students use a wide variety of research methods and gather information from many sources including textbooks and the Internet.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, early years and public services, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Foundation award in caring for children	1	No. of starts	32	29	29
		% retention	69	66	69
		% pass rate	0	100	90
GNVQ intermediate in health and social care	2	No. of starts	17	31	26
		% retention	76	77	73
		% pass rate	77	67	79
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	*	76	83
		% retention	*	25	63
		% pass rate	*	89	85
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	35	38	38
		% retention	97	66	79
		% pass rate	74	92	77
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	*	21	23
		% retention	*	67	35

		% pass rate	*	100	100
Door supervisors vocational award, stage 2	3	No. of starts	117	43	50
		% retention	96	100	94
		% pass rate	77	91	100

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

145. There is much good teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers use detailed schemes of work. They organise activities that motivate and engage students' interest by using work and life experiences. An appropriate variety of teaching and learning strategies and of learning materials and resources successfully develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding. Students develop good collaborative and interpersonal skills when, for example, working together to produce high-quality, informative displays. Teachers make good use of questioning to check students' learning and to move lessons forward. Students' progress during lessons is good. Where appropriate, key skills are integrated into the main programme of study. Students have a suitable awareness of key skills requirements and demonstrate a good understanding of the levels they are working towards and how they can best present their work for assessment.

146. Resources to support students' learning are satisfactory overall. Most accommodation is comfortable and well lit. A few rooms have no natural lighting and are too cold. There is a wide range of books, journals and learning materials to support learning, both in lessons and during independent study. Access to IT during lessons is satisfactory, but is not fully utilised to support teaching and learning. Teachers are well qualified in their subject areas and most hold appropriate teaching qualifications.

147. Assessment is fair and accurate. Internal verification is thorough. External verifier reports support the judgements made by markers and internal verifiers. Assignment briefs are clear and detailed, and marking is stringent. Feedback to students is constructive. Teachers make corrections to students' work and clearly indicate how students can improve their grades.

148. Students receive adequate advice and guidance about their intended programme of study. They are placed on appropriate courses after careful consideration of their prior achievements. Induction programmes are satisfactory. Appropriate careers information is available.

149. Most students undertake an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills to identify any additional learning support needs. Some students' assessment takes place too late in the first term to enable support to be provided early in the course. Results of assessments are often recorded on students' individual learning plans, but it is not always clear if additional support is needed nor what kind of support. Additional learning support provided is not clearly documented and information regarding progress or review of needs is insufficient. Some students who have learning support needs are not identified by this process.

150. Unsatisfactory use is made of individual learning plans. These are completed at the start of the course but are not regularly reviewed or updated. Progress reviews are held regularly with each student, but they do not consider students' progress sufficiently rigorously or set useful learning targets.

151. The college plays a suitably active role in meeting community needs for training in health, care, early years, counselling, public services and first aid. The course portfolio is broad. Good progression routes enable students to advance from level 1 to level 3, and on to HE. Many courses are provided on a full-time and part-time basis to meet the needs of students and employers. Links with external agencies and employers are good and enable the development, for example, of

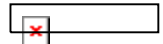
learning packages which are well suited to their needs.

Leadership and management

152. Leadership and management are good. A clear direction is set for staff which appropriately focuses on providing a good standard of teaching and learning. There are good opportunities for staff to update their skills and attend relevant training courses. Roles within the department are clearly defined and staff work well as a team to develop well-organised and effective courses. Staff attend fortnightly staff meetings and use them to share good practice. Implementation of the interim CoVE is effective.

153. Quality assurance procedures are implemented rigorously. They include observations of teaching and the careful evaluation of courses. Targets for retention and pass rates are set and progress towards them monitored regularly. Self-assessment is accurate. Well-founded equal opportunities practices are part of all aspects of the area's work.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on first diplomas in performing arts and foundation studies in art and design

- good teaching on performing arts and film studies courses

- extensive and well-used specialist resources

- good range of enrichment activities

- effective student support.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AS-level media and on the national diploma in music technology

- low pass rates on many national diploma courses

- dull teaching in visual arts lessons

- slow management response to weaknesses in the teaching.

Scope of provision

154. The provision includes both academic and vocational courses. At level 3, national diplomas are offered in 10 specialist areas of work, including dance, music technology, and fine art. AS-level and GCE A-level subjects include media, film and dance. There is a diploma in foundation studies in art and design. Level 2 courses include a first diploma in performing arts and GCSE drama and dance. The extensive range of part-time courses includes DJ skills, embroidery, upholstery, life drawing and water colour painting. Part-time courses take place in a variety of community venues during the day and evening. At the time of the inspection, 304 full-time students were aged 16 to 18 and 194 were adults. Enrolled on part-time courses were 69 students aged 16 to 18 and 1,280 adults.

Achievement and standards

155. Retention and pass rates are high on the first diploma in performing arts, acting and dance and in GCSE drama. Retention rates are low on AS-level media and on the national diploma in music technology. Pass rates are low on many national diploma courses. The average attendance during inspection was 81%, which is similar to the national average.

156. The standard of students' work is high in performing arts and in life drawing and on the first year of the national diploma in multimedia. Dance, music, media and performing arts students often work collaboratively to compose, rehearse and perform. Students new to multimedia had quickly mastered the software needed to complete a film project. Each group had written a script and drawn a story board and were able to digitally edit the film before adding audio tracks. Second year national diploma in design students lack the necessary drawing or technical skills to develop and extend their ideas in, for example, multimedia and illustration. Experimentation and creative individuality are often lacking.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	25	32	29
		% retention	68	84	83
		% pass rate	94	81	83
First diploma in performing arts (dance and acting)	2	No. of starts	*	18	23
		% retention	*	78	91
		% pass rate	*	93	90
BTEC national diploma in design	3	No. of starts	63	42	53
		% retention	65	69	81

		% pass rate	93	90	84
BTEC national diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	*	18	25
		% retention	*	89	68
		% pass rate	*	100	76
Diploma in foundation studies art and design (1 year)	3	No. of starts	23	20	24
		% retention	83	90	96
		% pass rate	63	100	91
BTEC national diploma in music technology	3	No. of starts	20	16	21
		% retention	70	63	43
		% pass rate	86	80	89
AS-level media	3	No. of starts	29	24	*
		% retention	76	58	*
		% pass rate	91	79	*

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

157. Teaching is good in performing arts and film studies. Lessons are well planned and have clear aims and objectives. Teachers use a diverse range of methods to aid learning including 'buzz groups', lecture, seminar, coaching, question and answer sessions and demonstrations. In one animation and games lesson, the students' knowledge of computer software was enhanced by the use of a multimedia projector to compare large images of the work of Jason Brookes and Bo Lundgren. Independent learning is encouraged and many teachers make good use of peer teaching. Teaching caters well for the needs of students of lower attainment and more challenging tasks are set for the more able. In the visual arts, teaching is often dull and uninspiring. Some lessons lack structure and purpose. In the best lessons, high demands are made of students and they are encouraged to evaluate and analyse their work and extend their own creative practice. In a life drawing lesson, students used torn paper collages to draw a series of short poses which gradually built up a complex silhouette. In the less successful lessons, introductions are too long, individuality is not encouraged, teachers answer their own questions and there is insufficient analysis. Where new concepts are introduced, learning is neither checked nor consolidated. Low group numbers sometimes limit opportunities for group work and peer learning.

158. Teachers are qualified practitioners and have good subject knowledge. Many have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Teachers use examples of their own industrial experience to strengthen the links between theory and practice. A mentoring system supports new teachers, although some receive insufficient support to help them improve their teaching. For example, weaknesses noted during observations of their teaching are not addressed satisfactorily.

159. Resources are extensive and well used. Studios are spacious and many have good natural light. The wide range of studios and workshops is well equipped and includes rooms for printmaking, multimedia, wood, ceramics and textiles. Performing arts resources include theatre and dance studios, music rooms and editing suites. Rehearsal space is insufficient. ILT is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning on some courses, such as the national diploma in animation and games. On others, such as media and multimedia, there is little use of ILT. In some rooms, there are no ILT facilities. Some teachers have not been trained in the use of ILT. The learning resource centres contain a wide range of books, periodicals and recorded material.

160. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. Additional qualifications in life

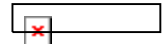
drawing and printmaking complement full-time students' main visual arts qualifications. In performing arts, innovative activities such as the circus skills of juggling develop students' eye/hand co-ordination and concentration. Visiting international speakers work with students. Professional Indian tabla players and African drummers contribute to enrichment.

161. Student support is effective. Teachers, the learning mentor and support staff work as a team to monitor attendance and build students' confidence and self-esteem. Additional support, for example, communicators for the hearing impaired, is integrated unobtrusively into lessons. Assessment is good. In foundation studies, for example, there is clear verbal and written feedback which informs students what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

162. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Visual arts, media, and performing arts are managed by different heads of school. All staff contribute to the self-assessment reports which are accurate. In performing arts, there is a clear direction from the head of school to improve teaching and learning and develop the curriculum. Action plans address identified weaknesses. Courses are well managed, with good communications between curriculum teams. Management and curriculum restructuring in visual arts is gradually leading to improvements in the standards of creative work. There has been a slow response to the need to improve the quality of teaching. Lesson observations have identified areas of weakness, but there has been little action to improve teaching on some courses. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory.

Literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates at entry level and on short courses

- high pass rates in GCSE English

- good support for students

- effective strategies to widen participation

- good co-ordination of literacy, numeracy, ESOL and key skills across the college.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of prior learning to plan teaching

- inconsistent use of individual learning plans in ESOL

- insufficient promotion of progression opportunities

- unsatisfactory literacy, numeracy and language support for vocational students.

Scope of provision

163. The college offers part-time literacy, numeracy, and family learning courses and courses in ESOL, from entry level to level 2. Courses are provided on college and community sites and in the workplace during the day and in the evening. The school of basic and key skills is responsible for courses in literacy, language and numeracy, key skills provision and literacy, numeracy and language support across the college. Currently, 326 students are enrolled on literacy courses, 270 students on numeracy courses and 317 students on ESOL courses. In addition, 387 students receive literacy, numeracy, language and dyslexia support. This support is delivered either in lessons, in small groups or in the 'Learning Zone' workshop. A key skills co-ordinator and a small specialist team, based in the school, offer curriculum support and standards moderation for the key skills provision across the college. GCSE English courses, studied by 100 students, are taught by teachers in the school responsible for GCE A-level programmes.

Achievement and standards

164. Students on adult literacy and numeracy courses at entry level achieve high pass rates. For example, in 2003/04, the pass rate on the certificate in adult literacy course was 80% and on the certificate in adult numeracy it was 75%, both well above the national averages. The pass rate on the portfolio-based OCN qualifications is high, at 81%. The pass rate on ESOL courses improved from 57% to 70% between 2003 and 2004. Pass rates are high in GCSE English. In 2004, 80% of the students completing the course achieved the higher grades A* to C, compared with a national average of 49%. The retention rate is high at 87% on literacy and numeracy courses.

165. Students on ESOL courses gain in confidence and develop useful language skills which enable them to participate more fully in everyday life and access FE or training. Students on community-based provision also develop confidence, become more self-aware and achieve useful qualifications. In one family learning literacy lesson, parents created 'story sacks', increasing their own language skills and also engaging their children in reading. Students working in a local hospital gain qualifications which enable them to progress to higher-level courses.

Quality of education and training

166. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching on the GCSE English course is good. Some literacy and numeracy lessons are well planned and taught. They are stimulating and enjoyable and provide a good variety of real-life activities which succeed in improving students' literacy and numeracy skills.

167. Too much teaching is aimed at the needs of the class group as a whole and gives insufficient consideration to students' prior education, employment experience and existing levels of attainment.

This is especially the case for ESOL students. Learning targets set for each student are not sufficiently challenging so that students are not enabled to achieve their goals in the shortest time possible. For example, the skills of one student, who had been a nursery manager, were not recognised and exploited adequately and the learning targets set for her were not suitably challenging to enable her to gain employment quickly.

168. ESOL teaching is not sufficiently differentiated to allow individual students to practise the skills they need most urgently. Individual learning plans are not used consistently to plan the most appropriate learning activity for each student. For example, in some ESOL lessons, teachers spend too much time talking and students are given too little time to practise their oral skills. In a level 1 lesson, too much time was spent teaching grammar to a student who possessed good writing skills and too little on speaking and listening.

169. In some one-to-one literacy, numeracy and ESOL support lessons for vocational students the teaching does not relate sufficiently to the students' current vocational coursework. Students perceive the English and mathematics support as additional work and do not see its relevance. Some of these support sessions are poorly planned and dull.

170. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. Most have teaching qualifications. Those that do not are undertaking training. Staff development is appropriate. The quality of teaching materials is satisfactory. ESOL materials are linked appropriately to employment opportunities, for example, in health and social care. In some lessons, good use is made of ILT. Computers are available for use in the community. Classrooms are mostly fit for their purpose, although some are too small for the size of the group. Listening tasks are sometimes adversely affected by extraneous noise. The 'Learning Zone' is a comfortable area at the heart of the college. It is well resourced with, for example, interactive whiteboards and computers.

171. Students' assessment is satisfactory. All students on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses and full-time students on vocational courses receive initial and diagnostic assessment. Individual learning plans do not consistently draw on information from the results of this assessment. Internal verification of the assessment processes is appropriately rigorous. Students' work is generally marked appropriately, but in some cases grammatical and spelling errors go uncorrected. Students' progress is reviewed regularly. The college makes good use of online testing for literacy and numeracy. Internally accredited college certificates based on the completion of individual learning plans give good encouragement to less confident students.

172. Students studying literacy, numeracy and ESOL are given insufficient opportunities to taste vocational courses or study for vocational qualifications. Progression routes to vocational or academic courses are unclear and the students are unaware of them.

173. Students receive good support. Initial advice and guidance are good and all students are interviewed and assessed to help place them on courses at the appropriate level. Teachers are appropriately informed of the personal circumstances of students. Students value the pastoral support provided. Too few vocational students receive additional support in literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Only a third of those identified as needing it were receiving it at the time of the inspection.

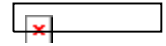
Leadership and management

174. Basic and key skills provision is well co-ordinated across the college. Managers set a clear direction. The quality assurance system is satisfactory. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths of the provision, but failed to identify some key weaknesses. Retention and pass rate targets are set at course level, but teachers are insufficiently aware of them. Teachers are observed teaching, but necessary follow-up action is not always timely. Good use is made of the graduate training programme to recruit new teachers. All staff are appraised annually. New teachers receive additional reviews of their work and also benefit from a mentoring scheme. Staff development provides opportunities to gain professional teaching qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

175. Strategies to widen participation are effective and benefit from an extensive range of

partnerships with, for example, schools, libraries, community organisations and employers. Community based courses, such as 'Maths for nursing', appeal to a wide range of people. Fast track courses prepare students for the national literacy or numeracy tests and provide a good response to the needs of employers. One project is successful in attracting homeless people into learning. A number of events are held to celebrate students' achievements.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- good teaching on vocational option modules

- well-managed transition arrangements between special schools and the college.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently detailed initial identification of students' needs

- teaching which does not match the individual needs of students

- limited access to specialist teaching and vocational facilities

- unsatisfactory monitoring of individual students' progress.

Scope of provision

176. The range of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is wide. Three pathways, the 16 to 19 essential skills, the pre-vocational youth access and the community adult pathway are offered at pre-entry and entry levels and at level 1. Full-time students take core modules which, depending on the pathway chosen, can include tutorial and progress review, career management, work experience, literacy, numeracy, ICT, personal development, enterprise and daily living skills. Students also choose from a range of vocational option modules which are designed to aid progression on to other courses or into employment. Where appropriate, students can study to gain OCN qualifications. There has been an increased demand for full-time courses. At the time of inspection, of the 248 enrolled students, 96 were studying full time and 152 part time.

Achievement and standards

177. Retention rates are satisfactory. Retention rates on part-time courses declined in 2004. In most vocational option lessons, students make good progress and achieve a high level of skill. For example, in a motor vehicle workshop, students, when checking tyre pressure and depth of tread, were able to read the results accurately from the gauges and worked in a safe and professional manner. In a catering module, students planned menus and prepared simple foodstuffs for sale in the college bistro. They were allocated individual tasks and placed under realistic work place pressures. Other students took customer orders, served the food and handled the cash transactions in the bistro, working well with real clients.

178. In unsatisfactory lessons, learning goals are insufficiently defined, progress is slow and more able students are not sufficiently encouraged to achieve. Attendance and punctuality are variable across the courses.

Quality of education and training

179. Where students have access to specialist vocational resources much of the teaching on the vocational option modules is good. A wide variety of teaching methods is used and students are well motivated and work enthusiastically. Teachers use effective questioning to check understanding. Students demonstrate a good level of vocational skill in these lessons. Individual support is used effectively to enhance the learning experience of students. Work placement opportunities were introduced in September 2004. At the time of inspection, 20 students had accessed work placements.

180. Initial identification of students' needs is insufficiently detailed. Full-time students have their levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and their personal and social development needs assessed at the start of their course. Learning targets are agreed and recorded on individual learning plans. These targets are too broad and insufficiently detailed to enable short-term and specific learning goals to be established for each student. The targets are often the same across groups of students.

181. Much teaching, particularly that which is not linked to the vocational options, is unsatisfactory. The teaching does not match sufficiently the individual needs of students. Planning is geared too much to group tasks. Lessons lack sufficient variety and do not inspire students. Activities are not well suited to the needs of all students.

182. In many lessons, the pace of teaching and learning is too slow and more able students are insufficiently stimulated to achieve their potential. Some learning resources are of poor quality and out of date.

183. The monitoring of students' progress is unsatisfactory and inhibits learning. Reviews of individual students' overall progress are carried out in tutorials. However, the review of progress against individual learning targets is not undertaken sufficiently frequently, sometimes not until the end of the term. Progress in lessons is reviewed against the tasks given in the lessons rather than against students' individual learning targets. There is a heavy emphasis on the achievement of behavioural targets and students are mostly clear about their progress against these. They are unclear about the progress they are making in their learning.

184. The access students have to specialist teaching and vocational facilities is too little. In some vocational options, students do not have access to the required range of equipment and classrooms are used unsatisfactorily to simulate workshops. For example, in a beauty therapy option, the lack of beds means that students apply mini-facial treatments to other students who are sitting upright and have their heads bent backwards uncomfortably. There are too few opportunities for students to work alongside vocational students. Where they have access to specialist workshops, they are mainly taught in discrete groups.

Leadership and management

185. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Transition arrangements between the special schools and the college are well managed. Each special school has a designated link person who attends transition review meetings. Assessment is carried out in the year prior to the student joining a college course. Customised courses, taster sessions and open days are arranged with the schools to aid pupil choice and ease transition into college. Pupils are also invited to attend social events at the college. Equality of opportunity is promoted. Students recognise their rights and responsibilities and are represented at the student council meetings.

186. Following a review of the curriculum area, major changes have been made in the last 12 months. Whilst much work has been completed, staff recognise the need for further improvement. A strong team ethos is developing and staff implement the self-assessment action plan satisfactorily. The report does not identify some key weaknesses in the teaching.

187. There is slow progress towards the development of a whole college approach to the integration of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with mainstream students and the use of specialist vocational resources. Integration is effective in some curriculum areas, for example, in performing arts where the students work productively with national diploma students.

Part D: College data

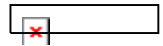
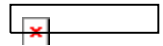


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	34	36
2	31	39
3	13	10
4/5	0	3
Other	22	12
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,591	596	4
Land-based provision	194	512	1
Construction	427	1,178	3



Engineering, technology and manufacture	428	1,011	3
Business administration, management and professional	1,076	2,989	8
Information and communication technology	1,208	5,951	14
Retailing, customer service and transportation	83	681	2
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	952	3,917	10
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	256	540	2
Health, social care and public services	1,603	8,299	20
Visual and performing arts and media	802	1,970	6
Humanities	337	543	2
English, languages and communication	1,268	1,577	6
Foundation programmes	1,566	2,381	8
Unknown area of learning	2,827	2,737	11
Total	14,618	34,882	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	1,406	1,432	1,493	4,891	4,084	4,931
	Retention rate %	69	66	60	73	73	67
	National average %	75	74	75	73	74	71
	Pass rate %	54	64	65	64	79	78
	National average %	64	65	73	68	68	76
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,642	1,797	1,573	4,786	5,124	6,260
	Retention rate %	70	65	59	68	63	54
	National average %	70	70	70	70	69	68
	Pass rate %	63	68	80	67	72	81
	National average %	67	68	73	65	69	73

3	Starters excluding transfers	1,852	1,503	1,340	1,871	2,290	2,775
	Retention rate %	64	68	65	73	69	58
	National average %	67	75	75	67	69	67
	Pass rate %	70	68	72	67	70	80
	National average %	70	73	76	65	69	73
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	882	917	972
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	72	75	68
	National average %	**	**	**	65	67	70
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	54	56	62
	National average %	**	**	**	50	48	56

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000/01 to 2002/03: College ISR.

** fewer than 15 students enrolled*

*** 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)	63	31	6	70
Level 2 (intermediate)	61	34	5	59
Level 1 (foundation)	53	44	3	34
Other sessions	47	36	17	36
Totals	58	35	7	199

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