



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Hereford Sixth Form College

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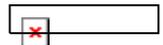
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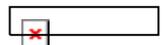
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Basic information about the college

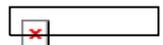


Name of college:	Hereford Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Dr Jonathan Godfrey
Address of college:	Folly Lane Hereford Herefordshire HR1 1LU
Telephone number:	01432 355166
Fax number:	01432 346901
Chair of governors:	Mr Rob Soutar
Unique reference number:	130718
Name of reporting inspector:	Patrick Geraghty HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 October 2004

Part A: Summary

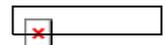


Information about the college



Hereford Sixth Form College was formed in 1973 following the re-organisation of secondary education in the city of Hereford and its environs. The college shares a campus near the city centre with Herefordshire College of Technology and Herefordshire College of Art and Design. The college serves the city of Hereford, but also attracts students from the large, sparsely populated rural areas of the county of Herefordshire and beyond including: Shropshire; Powys; Gwent; Gloucestershire and the Malverns. In the county area served by the college there are nine 11 to 16 comprehensive schools and four comprehensive schools with sixth forms. In 2003, the percentage of pupils in Herefordshire secondary schools gaining five or more grades A* to C in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) examinations was 58% compared with a national average of 53%. In September 2004, there were 1,387 students at the college, aged 16 to 19. Recent years have seen significant growth in the college's student intake, which has risen from 614 in 2000/01 to 821 in 2004/05, an increase of 34%. There are at present 65 full-time teaching staff, 23 part-time teaching staff and 36 support staff. In 2003/04, the college offered 41 advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses and 38 general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. In addition, the college offers a Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in sports and exercise sciences and a range of GCSE courses. A small number of adults enrol each year.

How effective is the college?



The inspection graded the quality of provision in 6 curriculum areas. Inspectors judged teaching, learning and attainment to be outstanding in three areas and good in the other three. There was a contributory grade of outstanding for art and design. The college's main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- outstanding provision in science, mathematics, art and design, and humanities

- high pass rates and excellent value added on many courses

- higher grade achievement above national averages on most courses

- skilful teaching

- high standard of students' work

- good range of subjects for students aged 16 to 18 at AS level and GCE A level

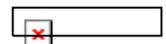
- effective support for students
- comprehensive and effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- welcoming and inclusive environment
- highly effective governance and outstanding leadership.

What should be improved

- retention rates on a small number of courses
- the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in the classroom
- some outdated and cramped accommodation
- study and social areas for students.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

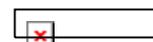


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Outstanding. There are very high pass and retention rates and

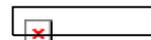
	students make excellent progress in comparison to their prior attainment. Teaching is very good, with rigorous monitoring of individual students' performance. Excellent academic support leads to very high standards. There is insufficient use of information and communications technology (ICT) in lessons.
Mathematics	Outstanding. There are high pass and retention rates and students are motivated by teaching which is very good and sometimes excellent. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are rigorous and academic support for students is very good. There is very effective sharing of good practice.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Contributory grade for art and design is outstanding . There are consistently high pass and retention rates on many courses with some excellent progress by students in comparison to their prior attainment in art and design. Much good teaching leads to high standards of students' work. There are excellent enrichment activities in music and drama. Some accommodation is poor and there are low retention rates in design technology and music technology.
Humanities	Outstanding. There are consistently high retention and pass rates at GCE A level and much very good and stimulating teaching. Students develop effective learning and examination skills. There is thorough assessment and tracking of students' progress and a comprehensive provision of subject support. The curriculum area is managed effectively. There is insufficient use of ICT in teaching and learning.
Sociology and psychology	Good. Pass rates are high and students generally achieve higher grades than those predicted by their GCSE scores on entry. Much good teaching leads to high standards of students' work. There is an effective network of support for students and good curriculum management. Retention rates on AS-level courses are low.
English	Good. Pass rates are high on GCE A-level courses and on the GCSE course. There is effective assessment which supports students' progress. There is very good academic support. Students are insufficiently challenged in a minority of lessons and there is some ineffective management of group work.

How well is the college led and managed?



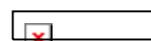
Leadership and management are outstanding. Students' achievements are excellent and their grades consistently and significantly exceed expectations based on their prior attainment. The overall achievement of high grades at GCE A level is outstanding. There is a large proportion of good and very good teaching. Governors and senior managers have set a very clear strategic direction for the college through the mission statement and supporting development plan. There is a very strongly shared ethos that places students and their success at the centre of all college activity. The self-assessment process is extremely thorough. Staff development is managed well. The college takes a very active role in shaping the local post-16 education agenda. The college provides good value for money, regularly meets its funding targets and has exceeded its growth targets for student numbers.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



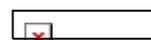
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college is committed to developing a community where there is mutual respect between students and staff, and where the qualities and aspirations of the individual are valued highly. It encourages students with specific learning difficulties to apply and provides them with very good support. The college monitors closely the retention and pass rates of minority groups and the analysis of these results demonstrates that these students' achievements are above the college's average. Many lessons are enriched through the selection of materials and topics which promote diversity and engage students in thoughtful discussion. The college has revised its equal opportunities policy in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA).

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are very good. Links with schools are strong. Pre-enrolment advice and guidance are comprehensive and help students make well-informed choices. Enrolment is organised well and well-planned induction enables students to settle into college life quickly and with confidence. Initial screening identifies students' learning styles and their need for literacy and study skills support. Learning support effectively meets individual needs. Students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good support. The impact of learning support is carefully monitored and evaluated. Liaison between learning support staff, personal tutors and subject tutors is good. Academic and pastoral support are effective. Guidance and support for students applying to higher education (HE) are very good.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- adult atmosphere

- broad range of subjects offered

- lessons that are enjoyable and promote an atmosphere of wanting to succeed

- good range of enrichment activities

- very supportive staff

- good teaching

- personal tutor system with one-to-one tutorials

- good library

- subject support workshops.

What they feel could be improved

- social spaces too cramped

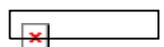
- not enough study space

- canteen not large enough

- car parking

- greater access to computers.

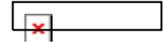
Other information



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).

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

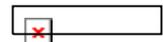


Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

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	88	12	0
Learning 16-18	86	14	0

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)

Achievement and standards



1. The standards of students' achievements are very high. The majority of students at the college are aged 16 to 18 and are enrolled on AS-level and GCE A-level courses; some 59 students are enrolled on GCSE courses. There are 13 adult students enrolled and these are integrated into level 2 and level 3 courses. Pass rates have been consistently well above national averages over the past three years. The proportion of students awarded grades A or B at GCE A level has increased significantly over this period.

16 to 18 year olds

2. GCE A-level pass rates are high and consistently above national averages. In 2004, the pass rate for GCE A level was 98% and for AS level it was 92%. Pass rates are significantly above national averages in, for example, AS-level chemistry, at 97%, and GCE A-level mathematics (Mathematics in Education and Industry), GCE A-level art and design, and GCE A-level religious studies, all at 100%. Some 54% of students achieved high grades at A and B in 2004. Higher grade passes in several subjects are impressive. For example, in 2004, higher grade achievement in GCE A-level chemistry was at 64%, GCE A-level mathematics (MEI), at 76%, GCE A-level art and design at 73%, GCE A-level psychology at 66%, and GCE A-level English literature at 65%. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) performance tables for 2003 show that the average point score for each student at advanced level was 336.5, a figure significantly above local and national averages for all schools and colleges. In 2003, around 85% of students on level 3 courses progressed to university. The college offers GCSE courses in business studies, English, mathematics, geography, psychology, dance, travel and tourism, and Spanish. In 2004, 37% of these students progressed to a level 3 course at the college with an additional 15% progressing to other further education (FE) institutions and a further 10% accepted on apprenticeships. Pass rates in all of these subjects are

very good and above national averages.

3. The college uses national indicators of value added to assess its own performance. Analysis of students' value added achievements shows that, overall, students are doing significantly better than expected in comparison with their GCSE scores on entry. The college accepts a number of students on to GCE A-level courses with average GCSE scores below those typically found in sixth form colleges. Students make very good progress, regardless of their starting points. The overall judgement of national indicators of value added place the college in the 95th percentile for sixth form colleges for both AS level and GCE A level. The grades students achieve in comparison with their predicted grades are particularly impressive in art and design, biology, chemistry, geography, mathematics and psychology.

4. The college retention rate at level 3 in 2004 was 92%. The retention rate at AS level was 87% and, at GCE A level, 97%. Some areas have improved their retention rates impressively. For example, in 2004, GCE A-level mathematics (MEI) recorded 99% and AS-level mathematics 96%. However, a minority of subjects continue to have retention rates below national averages. For example, in AS-level psychology, the retention was at 81%, in AS-level music instruments technology, 81%, and at AS-level sociology, it was at 82%.

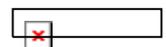
5. Inspectors judged that students' attainment was good or better in 80% of the lessons observed. Standards are particularly high in humanities, sociology and psychology. Students bring a sense of enjoyment and inquisitiveness to their work. The college has successfully developed a culture in which, in students' own words, they 'carry the enthusiasm for learning and debate back home'. When working independently, they demonstrate well-developed research skills. In humanities, students engage in intellectual debate using specialist vocabulary with confidence and demonstrate an impressive grasp of analytic, evaluative and listening skills. In mathematics, students show high levels of confidence with calculus and demonstrate a high level of competence when applying integrated techniques to problems. In art, students produce work of stunning individuality, with a vitality of colour and impressive use of mixed media to create rich textured surfaces.

6. Attendance during the inspection was high, averaging 92%. It was highest in mathematics at 95% and lowest in English at 89%. Students arrived punctually to lessons.

Adult learners

7. There are 13 adult students enrolled at the college and these are integrated into level 2 and level 3 courses.

Quality of education and training



8. There is much good and very good teaching. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 83 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 88% of these and satisfactory in 12%. Teaching was very good or excellent in 43% of lessons. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. All teaching observed in humanities was good or better with 62% being very good or excellent. Learning was good or better in 86% of lessons observed and satisfactory in 14%. There was no unsatisfactory learning. Attainment was good or better in 80% of lessons and satisfactory in 20%.

9. Lessons are characterised by skilful teaching, thorough preparation and well-written materials. Teachers demonstrate very good presentation skills with lucid and convincing delivery that enhance students' understanding and involvement. Teachers ask well-considered and apt questions, set appropriate extension tasks, and ensure that resources suit the learning objectives. High standards are demanded and students respond positively to the challenge. The development of analytical and evaluative skills is promoted well. Students bring enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, enjoyment and a

sense of ambition to learning. Group discussion work and debate is regularly of a high standard and on some occasions outstanding. Lessons are planned to enable students of differing abilities and learning styles to develop. Students learn how to acquire, organise and use new knowledge. Across the curriculum, support workshops enable students to receive additional help to consolidate and extend their knowledge.

10. The minority of lessons graded satisfactory are distinguished from the good or better lessons by a lack of pace and student engagement. Group work is less skilfully organised and less successful in challenging and engaging students. In some areas, ILT is underdeveloped. Occasionally students are not sufficiently challenged to evaluate and develop their ideas.

11. The college has 65 full-time teaching staff, 23 part-time teaching staff and 36 support staff. Teachers are well qualified with many holding second degrees and almost 99% have a teaching qualification. Technician support is good. Staff development is comprehensive and enables staff to develop their skills and address new curriculum challenges. The internal observation process and appraisal are effectively linked to the staff development programme. The principal observes all staff annually. New teachers receive mentoring support from experienced practitioners.

12. The college offers a welcoming, well maintained and safe environment. Many teaching areas have interesting and informative displays, and corridors are decorated with high-quality artwork produced by students. Good progress has been made to address the accommodation and resource weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The new library has more than doubled the previous available space. A major refurbishment of the science laboratories and the student centre was completed in September 2004. The college complies fully with disability discrimination legislation. Adaptations to classrooms, workplaces and workshops enable students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities to study effectively. Many classrooms have data projectors and interactive whiteboards. Students' social space is inadequate with overcrowding in the student café and other spaces at peak times. There is some inappropriate accommodation in visual and performing arts particularly in the provision for dance. The college's accommodation strategy includes the building of a new music and classroom block.

13. The library provides a supportive learning environment with a good book stock, and good periodical, CD-ROM, videotape and audiotape sections. Students value the support of library staff and the services they provide, and loans have more than quadrupled in the last three years. While library student study space has been increased, it is still insufficient to meet student demands.

14. The college's virtual learning environment effectively supports the curriculum and provides students with subject-specific electronic learning resources that contribute to the development of higher-order research skills. The ratio of computers to students is 1 to 4.4. All teachers are provided with laptop computers. There is insufficient access to personal computers in science laboratories and, at peak times, within the library.

15. There is a well-embedded culture of monitoring and assessment. Teachers and tutors monitor students' progress in relation to demanding target grades predicted by GCSE scores on entry. Target grades are reviewed and negotiated with students, giving them ownership of the progress, and adjusted when appropriate on a regular basis throughout their time at college. The staff make effective use of value added data to help students make progress. All students' progress is recorded electronically giving both teachers and tutors access to data enabling them to monitor and compare progress across a range of subjects. Students are aware of their progress and the actions necessary to improve their performance. There is good communication between subject teachers and tutors.

16. There is a coherent college-wide policy for the assessment and monitoring of students' work in all curriculum areas. Subject workshops are well attended and provide students with opportunities to develop examination techniques and to improve their knowledge and understanding. Formal tests are used effectively for examination preparation. Homework is planned well, set frequently and marked carefully. Most teachers provide students with constructive comments to help them to improve their performance. Those students who are not making satisfactory progress or are causing concern have additional one-to-one tutorials. Attendance is monitored closely through electronically generated records. Parents and guardians are given accurate information about the progress of

students.

17. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Initial screening identifies students' learning styles and their need for literacy and study skills support. Where appropriate, effective individual student learning profiles are given to subject teachers suggesting teaching and learning strategies to meet the individual needs of students. There is no formal diagnostic assessment of numeracy in place. There are highly effective internal verification procedures which include opportunities for assessors to share good practice across the curriculum. Many teachers hold positions as external examiners and good use of this expertise is disseminated within course teams.

18. The college provides an extensive range of courses at advanced level, including 41 AS-level and 38 GCE A-level courses as well as the national diploma in sport and exercise sciences. Level 3 students are able to combine a wide variety of subjects and modules at advanced level which reflect their interests and aspirations. A one-year programme is aimed specifically at students seeking to improve their GCSEs and progress to further study or employment. All students are required to participate in the general education programme which includes key skills, careers education, and general studies. The college works in collaboration with the other two colleges on the Folly Lane site with the aim of minimising duplication of courses to provide a coherent curriculum offer.

19. There is a wide range of enrichment activities that extend students' experience. These include individual and team sports, an extensive variety of music and performance opportunities, the Duke of Edinburgh award, Young Enterprise, and a European awareness course. About 110 students have enrolled in the college's rugby and football academies. There is a good record of student success in local, regional and national competitions. Students are also able to take accredited courses such as the Community Sports Leader Award and first aid. Educational trips and visits are integral to many courses. A good number of students become involved in community and volunteer projects. Students write and edit 'The Student Voice' magazine which was recently awarded a prestigious national award for student journalism. The college has an ecumenical chaplaincy to cater for the needs of students and staff of different faiths and beliefs. A room is made available for contemplation and prayer, and special arrangements are made to ensure that students are able to fulfil their religious obligations.

20. The college's links with employers are mainly through students' work experience placements. Good guidance and support are provided to help students find suitable placements. About 10% of students undertake work experience. With the exception of teaching placements, students undertake work experience in their own time. Curriculum links with employers remain underdeveloped.

21. The college has a key skills co-ordinator who is also responsible for the communication key skill while the heads of mathematics and ICT have responsibility for the key skills of number and ICT respectively. Students without GCSE grade C mathematics and English are required to work towards them in their first year. All first year students who are not studying ICT or computing are required to take an ICT programme at level 2 or level 3. The pass rate for level 2 information technology was 81% in 2003/04, and at level 3, 19%. Communication key skills are integrated into students' academic programme of study. Students are encouraged to compile portfolios of evidence from their studies for communication and number at level 3. Few students choose to complete a key skills portfolio and many do not see the relevance of key skills to their college courses or further studies.

22. There are very good support and guidance arrangements for students. The prospectus is attractive and informative. Entry criteria are clear and are applied flexibly. Links with the nine main partner and other schools are strong. A combination of taster sessions, interviews, open evenings and presentations at schools' careers evenings enables pupils to make well-informed choices. Recruitment procedures are well planned and thorough. All applicants are interviewed twice prior to enrolment. Applicants who declare a learning difficulty and/or disability are invited to a supplementary interview with a specialist learning support tutor.

23. Enrolment is organised well. Appropriate arrangements are in place to allow students to change options within the first few weeks of their course. The well-planned induction programme is effective and helps students to settle into college life and their studies quickly. Care is taken to ensure that

late entrants are supported appropriately and are not disadvantaged. Procedures to identify the learning support needs of students prior to enrolment are well established. Where needs are identified through initial assessment, students undertake additional screening for literacy and dyslexia.

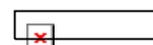
24. Support is well planned and tailored to meet the needs of individual students. Students have easy access to additional learning support and can self-refer or can be referred by their tutors at any time during their course. Learning support for students with a specific learning difficulty and/or disability is good. Subject-specific workshops effectively provide support for students who need extra help as well as extension activities for more able students. The progress of students receiving additional support is monitored closely and is well documented. There are good links between personal tutors and learning support staff. In all subjects, teachers provide excellent formal and informal academic support.

25. The tutorial programme is structured well. Students meet as a tutor group once a week to complete administrative tasks and receive information and updates from the college bulletin. In addition, there is a planned programme of individual reviews to monitor students' progress and to deal with personal matters. Students find these meetings helpful and value the individual attention they receive. Poor attendance and punctuality are followed-up routinely. Parents or guardians receive regular reports on students' progress. Quality assurance arrangements for tutorials have been strengthened. There are few college-wide events to target issues such as health and drug awareness, bullying and harassment, and celebrate diversity, however, some of these issues are addressed within the general studies programme.

26. Careers education is very good. Guidance and support for students applying to HE and for gap year students are excellent. Students are encouraged to do work experience and community work to support their HE applications. Careers staff and Connexions provide a high level of support for the small number of students seeking employment after college. Additional support is provided for students considering applying to Oxbridge and the more competitive courses such as medicine. A large proportion of these students are successful in their applications. The careers library is comprehensively stocked. Students benefit from visits to universities and careers fairs. These are supplemented by careers information evenings with presentations from representatives from HE. Attendance by students and parents at these events is very high.

27. A designated senior member of staff has responsibility for child protection issues and liaison with the local Safeguarding Children Board. The college does not yet have a policy for child protection and members of the governing body have not received updated training about child protection issues. However, the college is aware of its statutory duty. Child protection is included in the induction of new staff. There are appropriate policies on harassment and bullying. An independent specialist counselling service is accessible to all students. The learner support fund and college fund effectively assist students who have difficulty meeting the costs relating to their course.

Leadership and management



28. Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors and senior managers have set a very clear strategic direction for the college. There is a strongly shared ethos that places students and their success at the centre of all college activity. The college has a culture of high expectation of its students and staff. Governors, managers and staff understand well the strategic planning processes and there is much involvement of staff at all levels in determining and communicating the strategic priorities. The college takes a very active role in shaping the local post-16 education agenda. In particular, the college has taken into account local and national priorities in determining its future direction. The development plan responds well to the key objectives of the local LSC. Plans are advanced for new buildings, some of which will complement the current activity of the Folly Lane site

agreed a timetabling structure which enables some students to attend partner colleges for courses that are not available in the college in which they are enrolled. The college works very closely with a number of school sixth forms. The achievement of the mission and strategic objectives is supported by a detailed three-year development plan, with challenging annual improvement targets.

29. Governors demonstrate an excellent understanding of the college, its mission and the environment in which it operates, and they use this knowledge well to resolve key challenges. They approve the annual self-assessment report and closely monitor on a monthly basis the implementation of both the operational and the self-assessment action plans. The principal ensures that governors receive regular and informative reports on all aspects of college performance and updates on both regional and national priorities. The governing body has conducted a thorough skills audit and maintains a comprehensive register of members' expertise and areas of competence. The search committee has actively sought and successfully appointed a number of new governors whose skills complement those of the current members. The governing body has a very good gender balance and one governor is from a minority ethnic group. Since the last inspection, the governing body has reviewed its clerking arrangements and employs a clerk whose professional interests are completely independent of the college.

30. The college has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to support all areas of student activity. The quality assurance procedures are very well established and staff have a good understanding of these procedures. The college uses students' feedback well to improve systems and processes. Students' progress is monitored closely and improvement targets are set for each student against their minimum target and their predicted grade. All development plans are monitored regularly at strategic, operational and departmental level. However, in a minority of cases, some action plans lack sufficient detail to identify improvements in teaching and learning.

31. The college has clear and detailed procedures for the observation of teaching and learning. An annual observation period ensures that all staff and departments are observed and receive appropriate feedback. The college links with a similar college to assure the quality of these observations and managers and teachers from both colleges observe staff respectively. The grade profile from the annual observation cycle matched exactly the grade profile for the lessons observed by the inspection team. The college shares good practice observed in teaching in many effective ways. In addition to workshops and pairing teachers together, the college has produced a number of DVDs which demonstrate the good use of resources to promote effective interactive teaching.

32. The management of self-assessment is excellent. The self-assessment process is extremely thorough and involves all staff and governors, and makes very good use of students' feedback and lesson observations to identify issues. The self-assessment report is accurate and clear. The strengths and weaknesses of the self-assessment report match closely those identified by inspectors. The self-assessment development plan describes clearly how weaknesses will be addressed and there is much evidence of close monitoring of milestones.

33. Since the last inspection, the college improved greatly the use of management information in the setting and monitoring of targets. Managers and teachers receive timely and accurate reports on students' recruitment, retention and pass rates. Access to the management information system (MIS) is good for most staff. Staff value the reduction in paperwork and attribute this to improvements in MIS. The college has designed its own menu system for regular reports. Teachers and managers make good use of MIS as a tool to record students' progress.

34. Senior managers have successfully reduced the administrative burden on managers and teachers by ensuring that routine tasks are simplified and supported by IT wherever possible. Planning and review cycles are well co-ordinated and scheduled to enable heads of departments and teachers to focus on the needs of students and to contribute to wider college initiatives when most relevant. A detailed staff handbook, which includes details on roles and responsibilities, supports this well. Heads of department are supported well in their roles through regular meetings with their managers. Overall, curriculum leadership is very strong; teamwork is successful and communication is highly effective. There is much sharing of good practice.

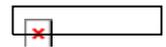
35. Staff development is very well managed. Staff development activities are closely evaluated for

impact and value for money, and methods are identified to share the training with other staff. Newly qualified teachers receive very good support and are allocated an individual mentor for their induction period. In addition, staff who take on new responsibilities are provided with a mentor. There is a particularly effective annual staff appraisal and review process which identifies staff development needs and reviews staff performance from a range of evidence. The performance element of the appraisal links to the college's performance-related pay scheme. This annual appraisal is supplemented by a further short review about five months later which monitors the status and completion of targets identified at the appraisal.

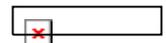
36. The college demonstrates its commitment to equal opportunities through its equality and diversity policy and procedures which link very closely to the college's other strategic objectives. Promotional material includes a wide range of images, including students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students receive and understand the complaints procedure and anti-harassment policy. Each department has produced its own curriculum equal opportunities policy which sets out key equality and diversity targets in terms of gender balance, the use of differentiated material and choice of lesson material. The college has identified the improvement in the achievement of boys as its target for its equality and diversity impact measure. The college has produced a detailed race equality policy in response to the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. The college monitors closely the retention and pass rates of minority groups within the college and the analysis of these results demonstrates that achievement by these students is above the college's average. The college has revised its equal opportunities policy in response to the SENDA.

37. The college provides good value for money, regularly meets its funding targets and has exceeded its growth targets for student numbers. The college is in financial health category A. The college has successfully completed three major capital projects to improve its accommodation and meet the demands of growth. Internal budgets are managed well and governors maintain a very close oversight of the financial affairs of the college.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates

- large proportion of students who achieve grades A or B in chemistry and biology

- high achievement relative to prior attainment

- very good teaching that promotes effective learning

- strong academic and personal support for students

- highly effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT in lessons.

Scope of provision

38. Students in science are aged 16 to 18 and attend college full time. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in biology, chemistry, physics and environmental science. A GCSE course in environmental protection is also offered. There are 812 students enrolled on science courses.

Achievement and standards

39. Pass and retention rates are outstanding and almost all are higher than national averages. For example, in 2004, 90% of students passed AS-level biology compared with a national average of 81%. The number of students who achieve higher grades on GCE A-level courses is also very high. In 2003, 72% of students achieved grades A or B in GCE A-level chemistry compared to the national average of 49%. Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. AS-level and GCE A-level biology and chemistry students consistently achieve higher than predicted grades.

40. Students produce work of a high standard. They ask interesting and demanding questions and demonstrate good analytical skills. In one lesson, on the function of the kidney, students were able to discuss in detail the wider consequences of kidney failure, transplant and dialysis, demonstrating a high level of background knowledge. In practical lessons, students work quickly and have the appropriate skills to carry out the practicals competently and safely. Attendance in lessons was 93%, slightly above the college average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	209	149	149
		% retention	89	93	91
		% pass rate	80	89	90
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	102	108	104
		% retention	89	86	92
		% pass rate	95	92	97
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	82	73	77

		% retention	95	93	94
		% pass rate	86	79	79
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	100	107	101
		% retention	98	100	99
		% pass rate	94	99	98
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	63	66	76
		% retention	97	97	99
		% pass rate	100	100	96
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	39	64	43
		% retention	97	98	98
		% pass rate	79	94	95

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

Quality of education and training

41. Teaching is very good. Almost all lessons observed were good or better. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. All teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject and develop very good relationships with their students. Teachers skilfully use a variety of teaching and learning methods to build on initial content and to check understanding. Practical lessons and front bench demonstrations are used as effective learning tools. In a biology lesson, students were asked to match scientific descriptions with pictures in cut and paste exercises. Effective use of easily remembered acronyms and symbols are used to help students recall complex scientific terms. Students are frequently given tests using past examination papers to familiarise themselves with examination techniques.

42. Well-written handouts are produced for each topic. The handouts use a variety of styles to help students learn. For example, gapped fact sheets, unlabelled photomicrographs and blank data tables that, when completed, provide useful revision material. Lively question and answer sessions involving all students are used to build understanding. Students are able to answer most questions correctly and expand their answers with more detail. One student was able to give a clear description of the effect of playing harmonics on a guitar string in a physics practical lesson on standing waves. In some lessons, the wide range of students' abilities is not taken fully into account. Occasionally, the less able students leave work uncompleted as the lesson moves on.

43. In September 2004, science moved to new purpose built accommodation. Laboratories are modern and well equipped. Science teachers are well qualified and experienced. The area is efficiently supported by three well-qualified full-time laboratory technicians who have recent industrial experience. The use of ILT to teach science is underdeveloped and not integrated into the curriculum. Departments have recognised this in their self-assessment reports and have taken positive steps to address the issue. For example, some teachers now use data projectors in lesson to show diagrams and to supplement note taking. These resources are posted on the college virtual learning environment for students to access. There are no computers for students' use in the laboratories. Students use very few computers or other digital equipment such as data loggers in both theory and practical lessons. The college library has a good supply of modern science texts. Students are able to carry out computer-aided searches using the Infotrack system which accesses a database of over 100 newspapers and 7,000 journals.

44. Assessment in all subjects is regular and thorough. Students' written work is marked comprehensively and teachers give helpful feedback on improvement strategies. They are given detailed and appropriate guidance at the start of their course on, for example, how to write a practical lesson report. Later in the course, students show progressively more independence in report writing and data presentation.

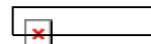
45. An impressive range of enrichment activities is offered in science. Field trips provided by the biology and environmental science departments enhance students' experience of practical science. This year, AS-level environmental science students are going on a five day field trip to an outdoor field centre in Rhyd-y-Creuau to study sand dune ecology and freshwater ecology and pollution. Chemistry students are able to visit a nearby university for a day of lectures and a visit to a local cider factory is planned for students to get first hand experience of large-scale chemical engineering processes.

46. The area has very good provision for supporting students through topic-specific workshops at which attendance is excellent. Other informal drop-in workshops are arranged throughout the year. The physics department runs a special 'maths for scientists' course. The biology department runs a workshop for students who may be interested in reading medicine or veterinary science at university. Students are unanimous in their praise for the extra curricular support provided by the science staff.

Leadership and management

47. Curriculum management is very effective. Course reviews are consistent in quality and are based on analysis of students' achievements and students' feedback. There is a commitment to continuous improvement amongst all the teaching staff. The self-assessment reports are realistic and accurate. Action points are generated and monitored at regular team meetings. Regular appraisal addresses staff training needs, but the self-assessment report action points do not focus sufficiently on how to improve classroom practice.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates

- very good teaching which motivates students

- very good academic support

- thorough, rigorous assessment and monitoring of students' progress

- effective sharing of good practice.

Weaknesses

- o no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

48. The curriculum area offers AS level and GCE A level in mathematics, further mathematics and statistics. There are optional modules in mechanics and statistics within advanced-level mathematics. GCSE courses in mathematics are offered with options for a short revision course. There are 421 full-time students taking mathematics.

Achievement and standards

49. Pass rates are consistently outstanding on all advanced courses. For example, in 2004, the pass rate at GCE A-level mathematics was 100% with 76% of students gaining A or B grades. In both AS-level mathematics and AS-level statistics, pass rates were well above national averages. Retention rates on all courses are very good and have shown sustained improvement over recent years. Pass rates for GCSE mathematics are also high and in 2004 the pass rate, at 67%, was 23% above the national average. Students consistently achieve higher than their predicted grades.

50. Students are highly motivated and make very good progress. They give confident answers to questions showing understanding of mathematical concepts as well as factual recall. In AS-level further mathematics, for instance, students become very confident with calculus and show a high level of competence when applying integration techniques to problems. In AS-level statistics, students work well with the chi-square test and handle concepts of confidence limits skilfully. Students on GCE A-level mathematics courses display good equation solving skills and sound understanding of algebraic trigonometry. In GCSE mathematics lessons, some students lack confidence with fundamental concepts at the start of their courses, but make excellent progress in basic algebra and trigonometry.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	119	128	102
		% retention	93	82	86
		% pass rate	99	98	100
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	190	175	150
		% retention	73	91	96
		% pass rate	82	87	85
AS-level statistics	3	No. of starts	43	45	35
		% retention	81	82	91
		% pass rate	80	78	84
GCE A-level mathematics (MEI)	3	No. of starts	64	77	89
		% retention	84	99	99
		% pass rate	98	99	100
GCE A-level statistics	3	No. of starts	18	20	23
		% retention	94	90	100
		% pass rate	82	94	96

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

Quality of education and training

51. The standard of mathematics teaching is very high and teachers are extremely confident, enthusiastic and encouraging. They have high levels of subject expertise and very good skills of exposition, including the use of ILT. Lessons are planned well and provide for students with differing abilities and learning styles. They include a variety of activities to maintain students' interest and motivation. In a GCE A-level mathematics lesson on gradient functions, the teacher gave a skilful exposition on the use of graphical calculators. The students were then able to use the calculators to plot graphs from their own data tables and calculate gradients as an introduction to differentiation. In a very effective GCSE lesson on algebra, the students learned to solve equations by expanding brackets. The teacher used imaginative handouts, sequenced whiteboard summaries and sensitive oral questioning to enable the students to make good progress.

52. Accommodation is very good and rooms have attractive and stimulating wall displays, many of which reinforce key points. All rooms have smartboards and data projectors for teaching purposes and a dedicated computer room is available for mathematics tutors. Students have very good ILT skills which sometimes could be used to greater effect within lessons to further enhance learning. All students are issued with relevant textbooks and the library has a good range of up-to date books, many of which provide in-depth material for the more able students.

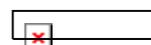
53. The monitoring and assessment of students' progress are good. All students are given challenging targets and respond positively. Progress is monitored routinely against targets through regular revision tests and course reviews. Homework is set and marked regularly and returned very promptly. Written feedback is particularly constructive and gives clear guidance to students on improvement strategies. In order to help students prepare for revision tests, an excellent range of revision materials is made available on the college's virtual learning environment.

54. There is excellent study support for students. Teachers provide an extensive series of drop-in lunchtime workshops where students can receive extra help in small groups or as individuals. In a support session on trigonometry, for instance, a small group of GCSE students made very good progress with calculations involving sine, cosine and tangent through a lively powerpoint presentation followed by a discussion. All staff are very responsive to requests for help from students.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are good. There is a good team ethos within the mathematics department and teachers work collaboratively towards common goals of maintaining high levels of achievement. There is a culture of improvement and excellent sharing of good practice. Teachers constantly evaluate lesson activities in the light of students' different learning styles. The self-assessment report is appropriately self-critical and weaknesses are addressed and action planned. There are very good arrangements for staff development. Schemes of work are defined clearly although not yet fully developed for new specifications. Meetings are held regularly at both subject and course levels. Course leaders and managers understand the need to be positive in their approach to equal opportunities. Females are encouraged to study all mathematics courses, although they are at present under-represented in GCE A-level mechanics. The organisation of key skills is underdeveloped.

Visual and performing arts



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

Contributory grade for art and design is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- consistently high retention and pass rates on many courses

- outstanding value added and high grades in art and design

- high standards of students' work in fine art, music and drama

- good use of a variety of teaching strategies to develop learning

- excellent enrichment activities in music and drama

- well-managed curriculum.

Weaknesses

- some poor and cramped accommodation

- low retention rates on design technology and music technology courses.

Scope of provision

56. The curriculum area offers GCE A level and AS level in music, music instrument technology, dance, drama and theatre studies, art and design - fine art, textiles and design, and technology - product and graphic design. Photography is available by agreement at the adjacent college of art. There is one level 2 course in GCSE dance. There are 484 students studying visual and performing arts.

Achievement and standards

57. Retention and pass rates on many courses have been consistently high. Pass and retention rates in art and design, and GCE A-level drama and theatre studies have been above national averages for the last three years. In 2004, there were above national average pass rates in GCE A-level music, AS-level and GCSE dance. Art and design students achieve much better grades at GCE A level than would be expected from their GCSE results. In 2004, 53% of AS-level and 73% of GCE A2 art and design students gained grades A or B compared to the national average of 39% and 46% respectively. There were low retention rates on GCSE dance, AS-level and GCE A-level design technology, and AS-level music technology courses in 2004.

58. There are high standards of work on most courses. In art, students are developing strong visual research skills and have created some ambitious large-scale paintings. For example, homework for AS-level students involved colour and surface studies of a red pepper with students being directed to refer to the work of Georgia O'Keefe. The results were stunning in their individuality, the vitality of colour and the use made of mixed media to create rich textured surfaces. In drama, students are confident in using technical language. They work well in groups, supporting each other in exploring dramatic style and theatrical concepts through set texts. In music, the level of instrument skill and knowledge of musical theory is high with ensemble work performed with considerable enthusiasm.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art - fine art	3	No. of starts	102	97	84
		% retention	89	87	90
		% pass rate	97	100	93
AS-level drama	3	No. of starts	72	68	64
		% retention	86	94	84
		% pass rate	94	92	98
AS-level music history/theory	3	No. of starts	37	31	26
		% retention	89	84	85
		% pass rate	100	96	95
AS-level design and technology	3	No. of starts	64	53	41
		% retention	80	71	76
		% pass rate	82	83	87
GCE A-level drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	39	47	52
		% retention	95	98	96
		% pass rate	100	100	98
GCE A-level music	3	No. of starts	25	28	22
		% retention	100	96	95
		% pass rate	96	96	100
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	51	70	63
		% retention	100	97	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level design and technology	3	No. of starts	22	31	16
		% retention	95	87	88
		% pass rate	100	89	100

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

Quality of education and training

59. Lessons are well planned and organised with teachers developing a variety of activities to enhance learning. In one drama lesson, the concepts to be developed were outlined on the whiteboard, a video clip was shown to illustrate ideas of physicality and students developed this theme in groups performing to their peers. There is good use of ILT and computers in all subjects. In music and music technology, data projection and interactive whiteboards are used effectively to deal

with complex learning material such as musical notation and chord structures. The learning materials are well prepared and well written, and include grade descriptors and good reference material.

60. All staff are highly qualified and experienced, many being practising artists and musicians. Most accommodation is adequate. The art studios and printmaking facilities are good and well managed. There are lively displays of students' work in studios and in the public spaces of the college. Music is housed in a temporary building which is cramped and hot, especially when large groups and bands rehearse. There is a lack of sound recording spaces and practise rooms for music and music technology students. The drama space is adequate; however, the use of the sports hall for some lessons is inappropriate because of the acoustics and the cold temperature. There is no specialist studio or sprung floor for dance.

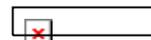
61. Assessment in all subjects is regular and thorough, with good written feedback. In art and textiles, students benefit from regular individual portfolio reviews. There is good use of target grades, with students being clear about the standards they achieve and how to improve. The marking of written work in drama and music is detailed with written guidance on how to improve. In drama, students are given essay packs to support their written work. These include model essays which students mark using examination criteria, a practice which develops their critical and examination skills.

62. There are excellent enrichment opportunities in music and drama. In music, students can join the concert band, the swing band, the choir or the orchestra. An annual series of concerts involving the choir and orchestra is organised at Hereford cathedral. These involve a large number of students as well as local schools. Students manage a theatre company, the 'Upstage Theatre'. Staff are available to students out of lesson hours and students access studios in their free time. Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications and careers advice are thorough and well received by students.

Leadership and management

63. The management of the curriculum is good. Staff meet in subject groups to share good practice and discuss common approaches. There are very clear and thorough quality assurance subject files, which analyse results and trends. The self-assessment in each subject is detailed and accurate. There is effective use of value added analyses. The management information system is seen as very useful and reliable by staff, cutting out much paper work. There is annual observation of teaching, which is discussed in staff appraisal interviews. Equal opportunities issues are integrated into curriculum content.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates at GCE A level

- much very good and stimulating teaching

- effective development of learning and examination skills
- thorough assessment and tracking of students' progress
- comprehensive and effective subject support
- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

64. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are provided in geography, government and politics, history, law and religious studies, and GCSE courses in geography and law. There are 1,044 enrolments; these are almost entirely 16 to 18 year olds. Approximately 60% of students are on AS-level courses.

Achievement and standards

65. Over the last three years, pass rates have been high and sustained well. They are outstanding on most GCE A-level courses. In geography, politics and religious studies 100% pass rates are achieved regularly. The percentage of students achieving a high grade on most courses at GCE A level is significantly higher than the national average. AS-level pass rates for 2004 are also well in excess of national averages in geography, history, politics and religious studies. Retention rates of students on GCSE and GCE A-level courses are very high. There is positive added value to learning on most courses. The progression rate from most AS-level to GCE A-level courses is high. Many students progress to subject or subject-related degree courses in HE.

66. Students' work is of a high quality. There is an appetite for learning and students enjoy their study. They are able to organise new knowledge and use it intelligently. High standards are also attained in the development of study skills. Written work is fluent and content is well argued. Students demonstrate growing confidence in the use of specialist vocabulary. Attendance during inspection was 93%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	109	110	121
		% retention	91	93	91
		% pass rate	91	99	96

AS-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	57	51	67
		% retention	82	86	91
		% pass rate	91	82	93
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	156	161	171
		% retention	89	91	89
		% pass rate	92	94	98
AS-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	63	71	92
		% retention	81	83	84
		% pass rate	98	86	97
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	72	66	78
		% retention	99	95	97
		% pass rate	99	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	56	100	96
		% retention	95	94	99
		% pass rate	96	98	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	67	67	70
		% retention	96	94	99
		% pass rate	98	98	93

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

Quality of education and training

67. There is much very good teaching across the subject areas. All the observed lessons were judged to be good or better. Lessons are carefully structured and there is much excellence in teaching style and techniques. Understanding is tested regularly in lessons. Teachers demonstrate excellent presentational qualities. Delivery is lucid, often passionate and always convincing. A small number of lessons are too teacher focused. Visual stimulus material is used frequently to reinforce and enrich learning. Digital photography is well used in geography lessons. For example, excellent images were used to illustrate key features of a case study of flooding and mass movement in Haiti. Most teachers use questioning effectively to probe understanding, involve a wide range of students and promote discussion. However, there is insufficient use of ILT within lessons to enhance greater variety within teaching, further promote research skills and as an alternative source for information and student presentation.

68. Students learn how to acquire, organise and use new knowledge. They also develop high-order skills such as analysis, evaluation and critical appraisal. A history lesson made excellent use of video footage on the Crusades to sharpen students' critical faculties. In religious studies, students analysed articles on the subject of miracles and engaged in lively critical debate. Outstanding teaching and learning was observed in a GCSE geography lesson of mixed ability. Students applied themselves diligently to statistical exercises. They learned how to apply correlation techniques to test hypotheses using data on footpath erosion collected on a preceding field trip to Sugar Loaf Mountain, Abergavenny.

69. There are good resources to support teaching and learning. Well-qualified staff are deployed efficiently. Lessons are accommodated in designated and shared rooms which are attractive, comfortable and clean. They have satisfactory provision of audio-visual equipment and some have spacious storage for books. Each room has a computer linked to the college network. Some rooms are barely adequate to accommodate large groups. Library stock has also been improved significantly to meet the growing demand from increased recruitment.

70. There is a well-embedded culture of monitoring and assessment. Assignments are set regularly and marked fairly. Written comments and classroom feedback on students' work are constructive and good guidance is given on how to improve performance. Marks are recorded and matched against minimum target grades and students' progress is discussed regularly in departments. Weaker students are monitored closely.

71. The increase in enrolments has been sustained well over several years. Good links with schools ensure that potential students are kept informed of the range of choices and progression routes. There is a high rate of progression from AS-level to GCE A2 courses. Course contents are selected to match students' interests. They promote awareness of equal opportunities and provide contributory key skills assignments. Students with special learning difficulties receive excellent support. Geography students are given enriched learning experiences in a challenging programme of curriculum-related visits, including residential ones. There is insufficient provision in other subjects.

72. There is excellent and extensive provision of additional subject learning support. Lunchtime workshops are provided on a daily basis. Attendance is voluntary and the needs of students of all abilities are addressed. Strenuous efforts are made to attract the weaker students. There are good links with the college learning support service. Excellent support is also given to students with special learning needs to ensure that they are integrated successfully into classroom work.

Leadership and management

73. Curriculum management is very good. Heads of department understand their roles and responsibilities. Quality assurance policies are recorded in departmental files and effectively put into practice and monitored. Subject leaders share with their teams a culture of continuous improvement. The sharing of good practice is promoted. Newly-appointed staff are given excellent guidance and support. Communication between teaching staff is regular and effective. Student opinion is valued. Performance data is analysed thoroughly and used to advise management decisions. Some practices vary in quality and style. Schemes of work are generally well developed, but some do not adequately integrate key skills development opportunities or itemise learning skills as anticipated outcomes. Self-assessment is carried out methodically and judgements are based on sound evidence. Some action plans arising from them lack quantifiable targets and milestones.

Sociology and psychology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- very good value added and above average percentage of high grade passes

- good subject support meets individual needs

- effective teaching resulting in high standards of students' work
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in AS-level psychology and sociology.

Scope of provision

74. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level psychology and sociology, and GCSE psychology. Nearly all students are aged 16 to 18. There are 499 students studying psychology and 177 studying sociology. Some 51 students are enrolled on GCSE psychology.

Achievement and standards

75. Pass rates are high and most are well above national averages. For the last three years, AS-level pass rates have also been at, or above, national averages. GCE A-level pass rates in both psychology and sociology are outstanding, with 100% passes in psychology between 2001/02 and 2003/04, and 100% passes in sociology in 2002/03 and 2003/04. In both AS-level and GCE A-level subjects, the percentage of high level grades is excellent and above national averages on most occasions for the last three years. Retention rates in AS-level psychology and sociology are low and, in the case of psychology, significantly below the national average. There are high pass rates in GCSE psychology. Value added for AS-level and GCE A-level subjects is very good. Most students achieve better GCE A-level grades than would be expected from their GCSE scores. Overall, the standard of students' work is high. Coursework is of a high standard and students are encouraged to develop good study skills and skills of analysis in all subjects. Attendance and punctuality are good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	38	32	37
		% retention	79	69	92
		% pass rate	97	95	97
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	262	287	322
		% retention	88	86	81
		% pass rate	90	87	90
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	66	61	112
		% retention	77	74	82
		% pass rate	90	96	92
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	137	165	172
		% retention	94	98	97
		% pass rate	100	100	100

GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	24	37	36
		% retention	88	95	94
		% pass rate	95	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

76. Most teaching is very effective and results in high standards of students' work. Some 92% of lessons observed were good or better. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed. Lessons are well planned and preparation is thorough, ensuring that students are actively involved in learning. Well-designed materials are used to support learning. Teaching and learning strategies are varied and maintain students' interest; they include formal, timed examination questions and informal strategies such as quizzes and card matching games. Teachers give a sense of fun to some of the tests. For example, in a GCSE psychology lesson, students played bingo, shouting 'house' when they had fully matched a set of nine definitions to nine psychological terms.

77. Students develop good study skills, and are well prepared for the demands of external coursework and examinations. Students are expected to develop and regularly use skills of analysis and evaluation. Assignments are set regularly and marked fairly. Materials are presented in a variety of ways to meet the needs of students and encourage extended discussion. For example, in a sociology lesson, students studied different theoretical models of the media. Once they had summarised a model in their notes, they drew cartoons to represent that model and discussed their cartoons, which generated debate.

78. Accommodation for psychology and sociology is good. Most rooms are light, well furnished and have attractive displays of subject-related materials. There is a networked computer in all classrooms and most have data projectors installed. IT and audio-visual equipment is used regularly in lessons to support learning. Curriculum materials are available on the college's virtual learning environment and are designed to support independent learning. Increasing use is being made of these materials by students. Each classroom has substantial stocks of textbooks. Library staff are seen to be very responsive to requests for learning materials. There is a good book stock in the library.

79. Students' performance is monitored closely. Subject teachers undertake regular individual student reviews in which target grades are identified for each student. There is a strong relationship between final target grades and the actual grades achieved by students. Effective subject workshops are available regularly providing additional subject support for students. They set out to meet a range of needs including those of able students who are aspiring to higher grades, and less able students who need additional curriculum support. There is some focused use of workshops, for example, at revision time, or to support students who are judged to be at risk of leaving a subject. Students find these workshops helpful.

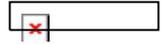
80. There is an effective network of support for students. Personal tutors and subject teachers work closely together and students speak highly of the level of support they receive from both their teachers and their tutors. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is rigorous. Lateness is challenged, and contact is made with parents over poor attendance.

Leadership and management

81. Curriculum management is strong. This has resulted in effective teams, good communication between staff and an emphasis on continuous improvement. The self-assessment report is self-critical and evaluative. It identifies appropriate strengths and weaknesses and related action plans. Analysis of student data, student feedback, and the views of staff informs action planning. Action points are monitored within departmental meetings. For example, detailed responses have been made to low retention rates in AS-level psychology and sociology, including rigorous attendance monitoring, monitoring weaker students' progress, and the focused use of subject workshops to

support such students. There is a strong emphasis upon teaching and learning and sharing good practice. The sharing of resources is common. Appraisals are informed by the outcomes of the lesson observations. There are good arrangements for staff development.

English



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A level and GCSE courses
- effective assessment which supports students' progress
- very good academic support for students.

Weaknesses

- ineffective management of group and pair work in a number of lessons
- insufficient challenge for students in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

82. The curriculum area offers AS levels and GCE A levels in English language, English language and literature, and English literature. There is a GCSE course in English. There are 233 students on AS-level courses and 128 on GCE A-level courses. Some 82 students are enrolled on the GCSE course, 29 of whom will sit the examination in November. The Advanced Extension Award is also offered to the most able students and 10 students will be taking the examination this year.

Achievement and standards

83. There are very high pass rates on GCE A-level courses. In GCE A-level English language, pass rates have been at 100% for three consecutive years. In English literature at GCE A level, they have been at 100% for the last two years. Pass rates on AS-level courses are high and consistently above national averages. Higher grade achievement in English literature in 2004 was excellent at 65%, some 17% above the national average. Retention rates on AS-level courses in language, and language and literature are just below national averages. The GCSE pass and retention rates are high and significantly above national averages for retention and A to C grade achievement. Seven students took the Advanced Extension Award exam in 2004 with five achieving distinctions and two

gaining merits.

84. Students make good progress and achieve their predicted grades. They demonstrate an ability to think and write critically. There is good use of textual reference and students can accurately apply linguistic theories to the analysis of source material. There is good progression to English courses at HE. Attendance across the area during the inspection was 89% which was below the college average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	79	77	59
		% retention	78	74	90
		% pass rate	66	79	69
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	69	65	66
		% retention	86	91	85
		% pass rate	97	86	96
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	56	82	61
		% retention	96	95	95
		% pass rate	98	90	98
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	87	87	97
		% retention	87	84	85
		% pass rate	100	95	96
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	40	44	41
		% retention	95	98	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	44	33	44
		% retention	100	94	98
		% pass rate	98	100	100
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	58	64	49
		% retention	91	98	94
		% pass rate	100	98	100

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

Quality of education and training

85. Teaching is mostly good. Some teaching is very good and students are given the opportunity to tackle difficult concepts. They respond with sophistication and maturity. Students develop skills of critical awareness and are articulate in class discussion. In one lesson, students gave mature responses in an exploration of the symbolism in *Wuthering Heights*. In another lesson, students were invited to give a detailed response as to how their senses reacted to cloves. They then explored the use of the image in a line of love poetry. They focused on the connotations which their experience of the cloves suggested and applied these, for example, their spicy and exotic qualities, to the relationship described in the poem.

86. In other lessons, the pace is less challenging and students are less focused. There is insufficient

challenge for students in a minority of lessons, where students do not fully participate or demonstrate a good understanding of the topic under discussion. In some lessons, the teacher does not engage all students in the activity. There is ineffective management of group and pair work in a minority of lessons.

87. Teaching staff are well qualified and three members of the department are examiners. Rooms are well equipped with projectors and other technology is used effectively to promote learning. The library book stock is good and is well used by English students.

88. Students' progress is monitored regularly and students know the level at which they are working and are helped to develop strategies for improvement. Most students work hard and enjoy the subject. Assessment is thorough and effective. Work is marked carefully and useful feedback is given to students. Students have individual tracking sheets on which they record their strengths and areas for development. Most students are on target to achieve their predicted grades. Schemes of work in English highlight opportunities to develop the key skill of communication.

89. Students speak highly of the support given to them by teachers. They have access to weekly subject workshops in addition to learning support sessions. However, attendance at these workshops is low. Some GCSE lessons have a support teacher present in addition to the class teacher, but they are not always deployed effectively. Students have access to Advanced Extension Award workshops, which support the most able students. There is a good range of enrichment activities for students to participate in including theatre visits and study days. A book club has recently been established.

Leadership and management

90. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The team is consolidating its work after a period of staffing changes. A newly-established workroom facilitates collaborative working. The self-assessment report is generally thorough and quality assurance arrangements are systematic and are understood by staff and students. In 2003, arrangements for cover for absent teachers resulted in a diminution of quality in teaching and learning. Staff have responded to student questionnaires by making improvements in the organisation of the course modules. All staff are involved in quality assurance arrangements. MIS data is accurate and available to staff on a timely basis. Staff have addressed issues of poor student attendance by developing their own monitoring system. All staff are appraised annually and individual targets are set. These targets relate directly to issues raised in lesson observations and other aspects of the quality assurance system. Staff appreciate the opportunities which the college gives them for staff development. New members of staff are well supported. The English department addresses equality and diversity issues by choosing texts written by a variety of male and female authors from different cultural backgrounds and by raising issues in class discussions.

Part D: College data

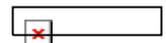
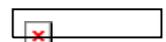


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age in 2003/2004

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	0
2	11	7



3	72	74
4/5	0	0
Other	17	19
Total*	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

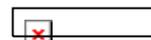
* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,098	8	17
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	57	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	276	1	4
Information and communication technology	789	4	12
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	132	0	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	0	0	0
Visual and performing arts and media	410	2	6
Humanities	2,895	28	47
English, languages and communication	683	4	11
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Total	6,340	47	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement



Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year		
		16-18		
		2002	2003	2004
1	Starters excluding transfers	136	40	0
	Retention rate %	100	100	*
	National average %	75	83	**
	Pass rate %	96	95	*
	National average %	75	72	**
2	Starters excluding transfers	425	419	470
	Retention rate %	87	81	85
	National average %	81	81	**
	Pass rate %	100	98	99
	National average %	84	86	**
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,475	5,580	5,483
	Retention rate %	91	86	92
	National average %	89	90	**
	Pass rate %	90	92	95
	National average %	87	88	**

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 2002 to 2003: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2004.

2. College rates for 2001/02 to 2002/03, 2003/04: College ISR.

* no courses offered

** no benchmarks available

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)	92	9	0	68
Level 2 (intermediate)	73	27	0	15
Level 1 (foundation)	0	0	0	0
Other sessions	0	0	0	0
Totals	88	12	0	83

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