



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Derwentside College

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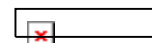
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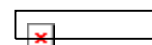
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Basic information about the college



Name of college:	Derwentside College
Type of college:	General further education college
Principal:	David Houpt
Address of college:	Front Street Consett County Durham DH8 5EE
Telephone number:	01207 585900
Fax number:	01207 585988
Chair of governors:	Tony Edwards
Unique reference number:	130658
Name of reporting inspector:	John Evans HMI
Dates of inspection:	15-19 November 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

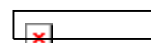


Derwentside College is a small tertiary college established in 1986 to combine the activities of Consett Technical College and the sixth forms of five local schools. It is the major provider of post-16 education and training in the semi-rural district of Derwentside in the north west of County Durham. The college's main campus is in Consett, in new buildings opened in 2002. There are further sites in Stanley and a sixth form centre in Lanchester. The college is organised into four curriculum areas and offers courses in all areas of learning with the exception of land-based and construction.

The college operates in a challenging environment. Derwentside is ranked 45th out of 354 councils in the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) Indices of Multiple Deprivation. It is an area of small communities, still struggling to regenerate after the decline of the coal and steel industries. Manufacturing remains the largest employment sector and the college has strong links with the engineering industry. Derwentside has a higher percentage of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills and with no qualifications than the rest of County Durham. In 2003, 45% of young people gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades A* to C, compared to 53% nationally. There are three other further education (FE) colleges within County Durham and one school sixth form in close proximity.

In 2003/04, the college had 1,000 full-time students and over 9,000 part-time students. Just over half the students enrolled at the college lived in deprived wards. Approximately 37% of college enrolments were at level 1, followed by 31% at level 2 and 22% at level 3. There are very few enrolments on higher-level courses. The largest number of enrolments was in health, social care and public services, followed by information and communications technology (ICT) and foundation programmes. Overall, approximately 52% of students were female and 48% male. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very small and reflects the local population. The college's vision is to offer 'a wide range of imaginative, innovative and client-centred responses to the education, training and other employment-related needs of the communities and individuals it serves'.

How effective is the college?



The inspection graded the quality of provision in seven curriculum areas. Inspectors judged teaching and students achievements to be good in three and satisfactory in the other four. Two curriculum sub-areas were judged to be unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning was good in the one area inspected. The college's main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- good teaching on courses for adults and level 3 students aged 16 to 18

- a welcoming learning environment

- good learning resource centres and information technology (IT) facilities

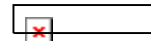
- good range of partnerships and initiatives to engage employers
- provision for young people aged 14 to 16
- academic, pastoral and learning support for full-time students
- good communications and high-quality publicity materials.

What should be improved

- strategies to raise standards at levels 1 and 2 for students aged 16 to 18
- the rigour of quality assurance
- a range of accommodation deficiencies
- identification of students' additional support needs
- access to support for part-time and off-site students
- use of individual learning and action plans
- contribution to meeting literacy and numeracy needs within college and the local community.

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
Business, administration, management and professional	Good. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. Students respond enthusiastically to well planned and effectively delivered teaching. Accommodation and resources enhance learning. Students' work is of a good standard. The small number of students in some groups limits learning opportunities.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for franchise is unsatisfactory . The college offers a broad range of courses. Accommodation and IT equipment at college sites are of a high standard and information and learning technology (ILT) is used effectively to enhance teaching. Learning activities sometimes fail to motivate all students and retention rates are poor on many courses. Self-assessment processes lack rigour.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good. The contributory grade for hospitality and catering is unsatisfactory . Retention rates are high in sport and travel, but the retention rate was low in hospitality at level 2 in 2004. Pass rates are mostly high. Stimulating and effective teaching in sport and travel helps students to produce good work, but strategies for teaching practical skills in hospitality and catering are not effective. There is extensive and relevant curriculum enrichment.
Health, social care and childcare	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is good . Pass rates are high on some general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses, but most courses have poor retention rates. Teaching is mostly stimulating, but a proportion of lessons are very dull. Some students have poor access to resources. Students generally develop good skills, although individual target setting is weak. Induction and assessment for work-based learners are good and work placements are of a high quality.
Humanities and English	Good. The contributory grade for English is satisfactory . Teaching is stimulating and purposeful on all courses, with good opportunities for students to participate in learning, which they take well. Teachers support their students well, and pass rates for general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) and access to higher education (HE) courses are mostly high. Retention and pass rates in GCSE English are very poor, and many advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses have low retention rates and low progression to GCE A2. The self-assessment report does not clearly identify and analyse key issues.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Satisfactory. There is comprehensive initial assessment of full-time students and good development of personal and social skills. Retention rates are high. Learning support is very effective. Some accommodation is inappropriately used. Students lack work experience opportunities and community provision is underdeveloped.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. There are good pass rates in key skills and national

	literacy tests, but low pass rates in GCSE mathematics. Additional support, where provided, is good. Too many learning activities are dull and uninspiring, and insufficient attention is paid to students' individual learning needs. Good staff development is providing the basis for long term improvement. The range of provision is narrow.
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How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although retention and pass rates have generally fluctuated year on year, overall there is improvement, particularly for adult students. The quality of teaching and learning is above the national average. Student satisfaction is high. Targets are carefully set and monitored. A range of partnerships effectively supports the college's widening participation and social inclusion strategies. Governors are representative of the college's stakeholders and adequately involved in determining the character, mission and strategy of the college. The college's lesson observation scheme has not identified unsatisfactory teaching and learning and contributes too little to raising standards. The self-assessment process overestimated some curriculum grades and did not identify any unsatisfactory provision or some key weaknesses. In many areas, actions to address weaknesses are underdeveloped. Management information systems provide accurate and timely data. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Financial management is effective and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

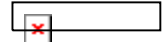
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Enrolments by those from the most deprived localities have increased by 15% over the last three years. Partnerships with community organisations, employers and schools are strong. The development of community-based accredited provision at entry level and level 1 has been less successful. The college has yet to make an impact in improving levels of literacy and numeracy in the local communities. It provides satisfactory learning experiences and good learning support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on college-based courses, but community-based provision is underdeveloped. The college meets its legal obligations under race relations, special education and disability legislation. All staff have received relevant training. Access for students with restricted mobility is satisfactory. The proportion of ethnic minority students in the college is slightly above that of the local area. The college promotes equality and diversity to full-time students well, is addressing gender stereotypes in some curriculum areas and is targeting male students, who are significantly under-represented among students aged 16 to 18.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Arrangements for advice, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. An impartial advice and guidance service at the main site is well used by full-time students, but is less useful for part-time students. Full-time students receive effective careers advice from careers officers and a Connexions personal adviser. The arrangements for supporting full-time and part-time students with

initially identified for literacy and numeracy support, a very low number take up the support. Part-time students receive very limited additional support. The college does not have effective strategies to encourage greater take-up of the support. Students with special needs, such as visual and hearing impairments and those with dyslexia, receive good support. The quality of group tutorials across full-time courses is good; however, the implementation of individual tutorials is less consistent across curriculum areas. Pastoral support is strong and greatly valued by students.

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

- good teaching

- good support from teachers and personal tutors

- friendly environment and staff

- flexible, individual learning

- learning support

- IT facilities

- good quality of refectory.

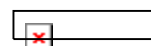
What they feel could be improved

- overlong lessons with the same teacher

- poor organisation of some lessons

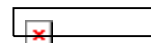
- o cramped classrooms and specialist areas
- o access to IT facilities.

Other information

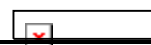


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The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

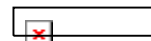


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	60	27	13
19+ and WBL*	80	20	0
Learning 16-18	57	32	11
19+ and WBL*	80	14	6

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. In 2003, overall success rates for long courses, which measure the proportion of starters who successfully achieve their qualification aim, were at the national average at level 1, well below national average at level 2, and just above national average at level 3. An all round improvement in success rates in 2002 was largely reversed in 2003, but there are clear indications that success rates have improved again in 2004. College data for 2004 indicate that success rates for adult students are now above the national average at all levels. However, data for students aged 16 to 18 were too incomplete at the time of the inspection to make the same judgement for the younger age group. The college itself prefers to use curriculum adjusted mean success rates, recently developed by the LSC, for benchmarking purposes. These show college success rates to be improving and above the national averages. The overall picture is one of inconsistency, with some significant fluctuations in success rates from one year to the next.

2. Retention rates for short courses and for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses improved to above the national average in 2002/03, but, overall, retention rates are below national averages. Although overall pass rates declined in 2003, they remained at or just above national averages, with the exception of students aged 16 to 18 at level 2 where the overall pass rate was significantly below the national average. There are few clear trends. A significant fall in retention rates averaging 10% in 2001/02 coincided with an improvement of some 20% in overall pass rates. The following year, an overall improvement in retention rates averaging 6% was offset by a fall in pass rates averaging 10%.

3. The college currently has some 200 work-based learners, more than three quarters of them on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Retention rates have often been low on work-based learning programmes. However, pass rates have been improving and most learners who complete their programme achieve either the full framework or a national vocational qualification (NVQ). Pass rates in engineering are well above average. There are currently some 30 learners on the entry to employment (E2E) programme. Most learners who leave the programme achieve positive outcomes in the form of further education or training or employment.

4. In recent years, the college has strengthened its procedures for monitoring and following-up student absences. The overall level of attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was 81%, which is above the national average. Attendance levels during inspection ranged from 62% in literacy and numeracy to 91% in humanities and English.

5. Many students at the college have low prior attainment. The college does not yet make widespread use of value added systems to measure the progress students make or as a tool for motivating students and helping them raise their levels of achievement. Nevertheless, most students, particularly adults, display good levels of motivation. Inspectors found the standard of students' work and practical skills to be mostly good in business, sports and travel, care, and humanities and English. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve a good range of personal goals and develop their social skills effectively. Adult students on literacy and numeracy courses are articulate, work together well and are very industrious. Work-based learners generally make good progress.

16 to 18 year olds

6. In 2003/04, students aged 16 to 18 represented only 16% of all college students, but some 64% of full-time students. Enrolments by this age group are evenly distributed between levels 1, 2 and 3. The retention rate at level 1 has been just below the national average in recent years; at level 2, the retention rate has been well below average; and at level 3, the retention rate improved in 2003 to above the national average. Retention and pass rates at level 3 have improved year-on-year during the last three years. Pass rates at level 3 are at the national average. However, the pass rates at levels 1 and 2, which were above national average in 2002, declined dramatically in 2003. At level 1, the pass rate fell from 95% to 77%, just above the national average. At level 2, the pass rate fell from 75% to 54%, some 19% below the national average. College data for 2004 indicate some clear improvement in the overall pass rate at level 2.

7. At level 2, retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been declining on GCSE and NVQ courses, while improving on GNVQ or equivalent courses. Trends in pass rates at level 2 have been the opposite of this. At level 3, except for a fall in the pass rate on advanced vocational courses in 2003, retention and pass rates for this age group have improved steadily year-on-year across AS-level, GCE A-level and vocational qualifications.

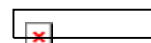
8. In key skills, retention rates are broadly in line with national averages, but pass rates are much higher than national averages in the three core skills at levels 1, 2 and 3. The college subscribes to the advanced level information system for measuring the value added to students' performance on advanced level courses when compared to their GCSE results. The data indicate that most students make average progress at AS level and GCE A level and slightly below average progress on advanced vocational courses.

Adult learners

9. In 2003/04, approximately 86% of students were adults, 96% of whom were on part-time courses. Most enrolments by adult students are at levels 1 and 2, with the large majority of enrolments being on short courses. In 2002/03, overall retention rates for adult students were below the national averages at all levels, significantly so at levels 2 and 3. Generally, retention rates have declined from the level they were at two years earlier. However, college data indicate that retention rates have improved significantly in 2003/04 and are now at or above the national averages at all levels. Against a trend of declining retention rates, overall pass rates for adult students improved dramatically in 2002 to 88% at each of levels 1, 2 and 3; sufficient to place the college in the top 10% of similar colleges. Although pass rates for adult students fell again in 2003, they remain at or above the national averages at all levels. College data indicate that adult students' pass rates have further improved in 2004.

10. Adult students generally achieve as well as students aged 16 to 18 at all levels. Pass rates for adult students are mostly higher, but retention rates are significantly lower at each level. Only on AS-level and GCE A-level courses is the performance of adult students appreciably poorer than that of students aged 16 to 18.

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 98 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 67% of these, satisfactory in 25% and less than satisfactory in 8%. The percentage of teaching that was good or better is 5% higher than the average for colleges of the same type. Teaching was very good or excellent in 24% of lessons observed. The percentage of good or better teaching in business and in humanities and English was much higher than that observed nationally. In most other curriculum areas, the proportion of good or better teaching is broadly in line with the national average for the area. In ICT the percentage of good or better teaching was below the national average. The quality of teaching varies considerably between curriculum areas. Almost all the unsatisfactory teaching observed was confined to ICT, hospitality and catering, and health and social care.

12. At all levels, the quality of teaching and learning is better on courses for adults. The teaching in 80% of lessons for adults was good or better compared to 60% of lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Whereas unsatisfactory teaching was observed in 13% of lessons for students aged 16 to 18, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed on courses primarily for adult students. This disparity in the quality of teaching for the two age groups is most pronounced in health, social care and childcare, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and literacy and numeracy. For both age groups, considerably more good teaching and learning takes place on courses at level 3 than at other levels. The lowest levels of good teaching are on courses for students aged 16 to 18 at entry level, level 1 and, most particularly, level 2.

13. The more effective lessons have been planned thoroughly by teachers who set clear objectives for the students to achieve through their participation in the lessons. Teaching in business, sport and travel, and humanities and English is enthusiastic, stimulating and knowledgeable. In these curriculum areas, teachers consistently devise a variety of often imaginative learning activities and make good use of different learning resources to help capture and maintain the interest of students and provide a range of opportunities for them to be actively involved in the lesson. Teachers use different questioning techniques very effectively, both to draw out students' own views and experiences and to check their understanding of the subject. ILT is well integrated into lessons and used as an effective learning tool in business, ICT and some care courses. However, in humanities and English, the use of ILT is conspicuous by its absence. On courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, the range of practical activities designed to help them to develop essential awareness and life skills is good.

14. In the less effective lessons, teaching is too often dull and fails to motivate the students. These lessons, largely in ICT, but also on some care, and literacy and numeracy courses, are often slow paced, have too little depth in their coverage of a topic and lack variety in the learning activities used. In these areas, and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers often pay insufficient attention to the different learning needs of individual students. However, there is also clear evidence on other care courses of students' preferred learning styles influencing lesson planning. There are some poor teaching and learning strategies in hospitality and catering. Students work on too many different practical tasks at once for teachers to supervise them effectively and as a result fundamental mistakes go uncorrected.

15. Students are generally attentive, interested and keen to learn. In a few instances, most noticeably on business courses, the small number of students within classes restricts the range of teaching and learning strategies which can be used. This in turn prevents students from developing some of the skills they would normally acquire on these courses. Overall, however, students appreciate being in relatively small groups.

16. The college has about 290 full-time equivalent staff, 108 of whom are support staff. About 25% of teaching is undertaken by part-time teachers. Some 92% of full-time teachers and 85% of part-time teachers hold substantial teaching qualifications. These proportions are well above national targets. The college provides good support for teachers who wish to gain teaching qualifications. Few full-time teachers have undertaken recent industrial updating. The college invests strongly in learning support staff. The system for performance management draws upon lesson observations. However, the lesson observation process does not sufficiently evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to adequately inform staff development activities.

17. The substantial investment in new buildings at Consett and Lanchester has resulted in much improved accommodation. Both sites provide good access for students with mobility difficulties. The main college site in Consett opened two years ago. The campus provides compact accommodation and a friendly learning environment. Most teaching takes place in relatively small classrooms that are mostly well equipped, but limit the scope for student activity. Some accommodation issues have yet to be resolved. For example, there is not enough social space for students to relax and eat in and student services is inappropriately located on the second floor. Specialist accommodation and resources in engineering, and hair and beauty are good. The central learning resource centres at Consett and Lanchester provide a satisfactory range of books, periodicals and careers information and good spaces for students to work independently. There is no such centre at Stanley.

18. There are good IT facilities for staff and students; with 1 computer to every 3.5 full-time equivalent students. Equipment and software are very up to date. Students have satisfactory access to computers, although in practice the booking system means that this is dependent on their ability to plan ahead. Teachers can use ILT in most classrooms. All sites are connected to the college network. The intranet provides staff and students with access to e-mail and the Internet and can be accessed from home. An ambitious virtual learning environment, which will provide a depository for student work to be submitted and returned as well as a learning resource facility, is in the early stages of implementation.

19. The initial assessment process does not systematically identify the literacy and numeracy

support needs of all full-time students. Instead, it consists of a key skills' assessment primarily designed to determine the most appropriate level of key skills each student should take. Those students identified with support needs through poor performance in the assessment undergo an initial screening using the Basic Skills Agency assessments. The preferred learning styles of students are identified and the outcomes are available on the college intranet for teachers to access. However, they are not used consistently to inform schemes of work and lesson planning. Part-time students have no initial assessment. The college relies too heavily on students to disclose their own needs or on teachers being able to identify them; this approach does not effectively identify those part-time students who would benefit from additional support.

20. The extent to which initial assessment informs the development of full-time students' individual learning plans and the target-setting process varies considerably between curriculum areas. There is also a lack of consistency in the types of targets identified in learning plans across curriculum areas. Most targets are not specific and too mechanistic, often related to deadlines for coursework or successful outcomes in examinations. There is little evidence in the students' learning plans of the actions and strategies identified by personal tutors to help students make effective improvements. Although the review process begins six weeks into the first term, some students do not have one-to-one reviews until they are already 10 weeks into their course.

21. In health and social care, humanities and sport, teachers provide detailed written feedback to full-time students on their assignments and coursework. This enables students to improve their work. In most areas, homework is well structured and marked work is returned promptly. Students are aware of deadlines and encouraged to comply with them and take greater responsibility for their own learning. Adult students receiving support in the flexi-workshop receive good verbal feedback and encouragement from teachers. This is greatly valued and these students make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

22. Work-based learners are assessed effectively at the start of their programmes and appropriate training plans are produced. Most trainees' have their progress monitored rigorously throughout their programme. Internal verification procedures are satisfactory and the college is highly responsive to feedback from external examiners, moderators and verifiers. In health, social care and childcare, the NVQ assessment planning process is very effectively implemented.

23. Most curriculum areas offer an appropriate range of courses from entry level or level 1 to level 3. An extensive outreach provision, much of it provided on employers' premises, enables staff in residential care homes to achieve the necessary NVQ qualifications. However, this year the college has failed to attract sufficient students to run level 1 courses in sports and travel and level 1 and 2 courses in business. In areas including business, administration and care, the range of professional courses is very narrow.

24. The college has changed its curriculum to better meet the needs of its local community, local schools and employers. It has concentrated on developing more entry level and level 1 provision. Partnerships are strong with many community organisations, employers and schools, especially in the engineering sector. The college is part of an active engineering forum comprising representatives from trade organisations and employers. The college's franchise programmes enable local employees to develop their confidence and study skills. ICT and customer service qualifications are provided for women in the Jewish community based in Gateshead. Extensive outreach provision, much of it provided on employers' premises, enables staff in residential care homes to achieve the necessary NVQ qualifications. There are apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in six areas of learning and an E2E programme. Flexi-provision in literacy and numeracy is offered at the two main college sites. However, the college provides few discrete literacy and numeracy courses.

25. The college has an effective business development unit. In 2003/04, workforce development initiatives resulted in work with 287 local employers and training for more than 1,800 employees. The college successfully accesses project funding to support new initiatives aimed at improving skills and employment opportunities and overcoming gender stereotyping in certain industries. One current project is designed to help young people aged 16 to 25 not in education, training or employment into work. Another provides training to level 2 in first aid, health and safety and customer service for

young people from targeted areas of higher deprivation. At the time of the inspection, 36 students had been recruited and 3 had gained employment. There are no basic skills courses in the workplace.

26. The college works very successfully with six local schools to provide a good range of NVQ and vocational GCSE courses for young people aged 14 to 16. In engineering, for example, 135 pupils are taking a vocational GCSE and NVQ level 1 in welding. Pass rates are high and there is good progression to mainstream college courses. In total, some 250 pupils attend link courses at the college, including 30 pupils from special schools. The college also provides literacy and numeracy support where appropriate. Collaboration has enabled staff expertise and resources to be combined to provide young people with a more vocational and work-related curriculum.

27. The provision of work experience is mostly satisfactory. In care, students have very good opportunities to experience current practice in the sector. However, a lack of work placements with employers restricts the opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress into employment. Students' participation in enrichment activities, particularly sports activities, is increasing. There is a good range of external visits and visiting speakers on most courses. Key skills are promoted positively by the college. Their delivery is largely integrated into students' main courses of study. However, teachers of application of number and ICT do not adapt learning activities sufficiently to different vocational contexts. Nevertheless, pass rates in key skills are significantly above national averages.

28. The arrangements for advice and guidance are satisfactory. The pre-course counselling team and subject teachers provide advice on courses to prospective students in local schools on open evenings and arrange visits to the college for them and their parents. A professionally produced promotional video is used with Year 10 pupils in local schools. Publicity materials are attractively produced and provide the reader with clear and sufficient information about the college and its courses. Helpful information is posted on the college's website. In addition, a range of tasters and subject-based activities designed to promote courses are popular with prospective students.

29. An impartial advice and guidance service at the Consett site is well used by full-time students. They can obtain effective careers advice from a careers officer or a Connexions personal adviser. Subject teachers interview prospective full-time and many part-time students and provide specialist subject guidance. The large majority of students are placed on the most appropriate course. Guidance and advice services are less effective for part-time students. Services are publicised in the part-time course prospectus and during induction but the take-up of progression interviews is low. Part-time students rely more on informal advice and guidance provided by subject teachers.

30. Arrangements for supporting students with additional literacy and numeracy needs are unsatisfactory. Only a small number of full-time students are initially identified for literacy and numeracy support. The college has not developed effective strategies to provide support more extensively to those students who would benefit from it. Support for students with specific special needs, including dyslexia, is good. For example, students with cerebral palsy have a note-taker and visually impaired students are provided with information in Braille. Additional support for part-time students and full-time students on courses at Lanchester or Stanley is inadequate.

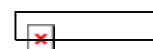
31. Students greatly value the good pastoral support they receive from their personal tutors, who refer students with financial or domestic difficulties to advocacy, welfare benefits or counselling services. A recently established cross-college group comprising all the strands of support, advice and guidance ensures the monitoring of 'at risk' students who are unable to stay on course or complete successfully. Very recent developments to extend the support available to these groups include the appointment of an education maintenance allowance (EMA) attendance monitoring officer and two learning mentors.

32. Induction procedures for full-time students are satisfactory. On full-time courses, personal tutors use the tutor handbook which contains a useful year planner and range of activities to plan their tutorial programme. Group tutorials are effective and well attended. They draw on a centralised pool of resources covering, for example, study skills and diversity and equality issues. However, the implementation of individual tutorials is less consistent; in some areas students have insufficient time

with personal tutors to discuss their personal and academic targets. Progress reviews with students do not consistently assess and record the learning that has taken place against targets identified from the diagnostic assessment. In many instances, targets agreed with students are insufficiently demanding and focused and usually plans fail to indicate what students need to do to achieve the improvements targeted. Parents and employers receive regular reports on students' progress. Induction and tutorial practice for part-time students is much more variable.

33. The college has a child protection policy and has developed guidelines for use by all staff to identify issues as they arise and points of referral. The college works well with inter-agency support, but has yet to develop guidelines for work placements. Learning support funds and partnerships with local nurseries and registered childminders are used effectively to support those students with childcare needs.

Leadership and management



34. Leadership and management are satisfactory. College data for 2004 indicate that success rates are now above national averages for adult students. Pass rates in 2003 for students aged 16 to 18 at advanced level and in key skills were at or above national averages, but below the national average at level 2. Data for 2004 were incomplete at the time of inspection. Achievement rates on work-based learning programmes continue to improve. Whilst the college has significantly increased participation from deprived wards in recent years, students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning have remained broadly in line with national averages. Student satisfaction as measured by external surveys is high. The college has substantially addressed weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

35. The college's strategic direction and associated risks are clearly understood by staff and governors and shared with community partners through the local strategic partnership. Through its mission, the college effectively meets a wide range of community needs. Partnership working is strong and pro-actively driven by senior managers. The college works with 35 community partners and led the establishment of a local engineering forum. It also provides courses for over 450 pupils, aged 14 to 16, through the Increasing Flexibility programme. A joint college-local authority sports centre adjacent to its main site in Consett is under consideration. The college provided training for large numbers of employees from over 250 local companies in 2003/04 through its Training for Industry unit.

36. Governance is satisfactory. The board receives timely, sufficient and accurate management information. Governors are representative of the college's community. They are appropriately involved in determining the college's character, mission and strategy through participation in three annual strategic planning days and their board meetings. Governors appropriately challenge managers on the implementation of strategic and financial priorities.

37. In recent years the college has taken positive action to increase social inclusion, with the proportion of enrolments from deprived areas increasing from 12% in 1999 to 52% in 2004. However, actions to address educational inclusion have been less effective. There is little basic skills provision in the community or for employers, and insufficient action to address the basic skills needs of most part-time and some full-time students. However, it is one of the college's current staff development priorities.

38. The college's equal opportunities policies clearly address the requirements of race relations and disability discrimination legislation. Implementation action plans are led and monitored by the Equality Forum, chaired by the principal. All staff have received training on equality and diversity issues, and their responsibilities under the legislation. The minority ethnic profile in the local area is below 1%, but the college takes appropriate steps to raise the ethnic and cultural awareness of its full-time students. Successful initiatives have attracted hard to reach learners. For example, half of

the 80 women who attended taster courses progressed on to accredited engineering courses. All female school links programmes in engineering are provided. Technical IT and electronics courses in the community have successfully attracted male students, but they continue to be significantly under-represented in the college's staff and full-time student profiles. The disability profile of staff is significantly below that of the local community. There is little action to address equality and diversity issues in some curriculum areas. Analysis of complaints, disciplinary cases, applications and market research data by equality and diversity factors is underdeveloped.

39. Staff development policy and practice appropriately link training and development to strategic priorities and the outcomes of performance management and course review. There is no formal management development programme to support staff who progress into managerial positions. The staff development programme has not improved teaching and learning significantly or effectively addressed the significant variations in the proportion of good and unsatisfactory teaching between curriculum areas. The sharing of good practice within and between curriculum areas is underdeveloped.

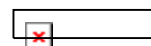
40. Quality assurance lacks rigour. The quality assurance processes and procedures are clearly detailed in a quality handbook, and compliance carefully monitored. Effective action is taken to address issues raised by external verifiers. However, despite external validation, most self-assessment grades were higher than those awarded by inspectors and the college had not identified any unsatisfactory provision. The proportion of good teaching identified through internal lesson observation was similar to that identified by inspectors. However, no unsatisfactory teaching or learning was identified in internal observations in the last year. Most teachers are only observed once every two years. This provides insufficient evidence for evaluation, analysis and improvement. In several curriculum areas the self-assessment process had not identified key weaknesses. Action plans do not focus sufficiently on securing improvements in students' achievements and teaching and learning, even where self-assessment reports identified weaknesses.

41. Recent improvements in management information systems have resulted in significantly increased access to accurate and timely data. There is good online access to reports on attendance, enrolments, retention and pass rates, which compare performance against targets. Curriculum managers now use these data to monitor course performance, although teachers have yet to be trained to access the information.

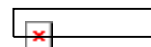
42. Overall management of the curriculum, including work-based learning, is satisfactory. The college's well-established management structure includes clear lines of accountability. There are effective processes to set and monitor progress against targets, and overall progress is satisfactory. Communication throughout the college is good. The principal meets all staff in small groups three times a year, following the strategic planning days, to discuss the outcomes and their concerns. The college intranet includes information for staff. However, management of franchised provision for the Orthodox Jewish Community who form a significant proportion of the college's full-time students is unsatisfactory, with unacceptably low levels of achievement.

43. Senior managers and governors closely monitor the college's financial position. Risk management is effective and staff are well-informed of any significant risks. The costing of courses is underdeveloped, although the college regularly achieves budget surpluses, largely through vulnerable non-core activities. These surpluses are used to support the accommodation strategy and to maintain a wide-ranging curriculum whilst the college explores other ways of safeguarding its viability, through collaboration between local post-16 providers. On the basis of student success rates, average class size, the range of provision for the local community and the quality of teaching and learning, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Business, administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most courses

- well-planned and effective teaching

- very good accommodation and resources which enhance the learning process

- good standard of student work.

Weaknesses

- small number of students in some groups constrains learning opportunities.

Scope of provision

44. The college offers courses from level 1 to level 5 in accounting, administration, business or management. Full-time courses comprise certificates in administration at levels 1, 2 and 3, advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in business, and AS levels and GCE A levels in accounting and business studies. Part-time courses include NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4 in accounting, a range of administration and book-keeping courses, introductory management courses and flexibly-delivered NVQs in management. At the time of inspection, there were 70 students on full-time courses and almost 300 students taking part-time day or evening courses. NVQ accounting courses are particularly well subscribed. In addition, 16 students from a local school attend a foundation administration programme as part of the Increasing Flexibility programme.

Achievement and standards

45. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. Pass rates in NVQ accounting courses are consistently higher than the national average, significantly so at levels 2 and 3. There have been pass rates of 100% in NVQ level 2 accounting in 2003 and in NVQ level 3 accounting in each of the last two years. Pass rates in AVCE business, AS-level business studies and GCE A-level accounting and business studies are also above the national averages, although these courses have small numbers of students. Pass rates on part-time administration courses are high, for example, the pass rate on stage 2 text processing has also been 100% in each of the last two years. Pass rates for foundation apprenticeships in accounting and in administration have been unsatisfactory.

46. Students make good progress. Course files, portfolios and assessed work demonstrate the considerable effort students put into their work and a good range of IT skills. Most students are confident, motivated and enthusiastic. They contribute in a mature and sometimes quite sophisticated fashion to class discussions. Attendance and punctuality are good. Not one student arrived late to any lessons during inspection.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	17	24	29
		% retention	88	79	93
		% pass rate	93	100	89
Text processing	2	No. of starts	23	15	28
		% retention	100	100	96
		% pass rate	96	100	100
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	*	12	12
		% retention	*	92	100
		% pass rate	*	91	92
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	20	23	14
		% retention	65	70	79
		% pass rate	85	100	100

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

*fewer than 10 starts

Quality of education and training

47. Teaching is carefully planned and very effectively managed. In all lessons, clear learning objectives are shared with the students. Teachers adopt an appropriate balance between theory and practice and whole class, group and individual work. During a lesson which examined the influence of 'first impressions', photographs of a variety of people were used to create a fascinating exercise. One visually impaired student added a different and extremely valuable dimension by responding to recorded voices which were played back to her.

48. Students participate well in lessons and take responsibility for learning effectively. In a lesson about motivation, the theories of Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor were considered in some depth and students used their own experiences to make critical and informed comments. In a lesson on accounting ratios, students brought in copies of published accounts to compare the validity and helpfulness of a range of calculations. The number of students in many classes is low and this constrains the range of learning activities which are appropriate, as well as limiting the diversity of opinion and experience which can be drawn on.

49. Some teachers use their own commercial experience and professional updating to good effect in providing practical illustrations. Students respond well to this. Teachers also make appropriate use of students' experiences from part-time and vacation work. Teachers are aware of individual students preferred learning styles and in the best lessons this influences the choice and range of learning activities they employ. Teachers often ask quite searching questions to check the understanding of students.

50. Most teachers have appropriate academic qualifications and some relevant vocational experience. Some teachers have undertaken vocational updating, in one case a teacher continued working with an organisation in his own time long after his period of placement had elapsed. Accommodation and physical resources are very good. Classrooms and other learning areas are bright and spacious; students' work and other relevant material are displayed on walls. Every classroom has an overhead projector, video playback facility and at least one computer. This equipment is well integrated into the teaching and learning process. Students respond very positively where teachers have the confidence and imagination to integrate ILT purposefully into the learning activities. The learning resource centres have adequate stocks of appropriate books and periodicals. Outside lessons, students can use good IT facilities which provide them with unlimited Internet and e-mail access. The college has a student business centre which provides a realistic, but carefully supervised, environment in which full-time administration students and work-based learners can develop their practical skills.

51. Links to assessment are clearly built into schemes of work and lesson plans. A good variety of assessment techniques are deployed. Assessment is related to previously set and regularly reviewed targets. Marked work is returned promptly, usually with adequate written comments. In some cases, written feedback from tutors is too brief or too generalised to help students to improve. Some teachers make good links within vocational lessons to key skills which students find helpful in managing the assessment process.

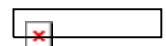
52. All full-time students are allocated a personal tutor, who they meet on a regular, timetabled, basis. These tutors liaise closely with the college counselling and careers advice team. Learning support assistants are deployed to good effect where they can be of benefit.

53. Full-time courses at levels 1 and 2 are currently only available in administration, not business. Foundation and intermediate level business courses have not recruited adequately in recent years. This restricts the opportunities for students to progress on to advanced level business courses. There are some curriculum links with employers, but they could be further developed. Several lessons observed would have been improved by the involvement of someone with relevant practical experience. There is good provision for young people aged 14 to 16 from local schools that extends a broad range of practical skills and areas of understanding.

Leadership and management

54. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Courses are well managed. Teachers fully understand their roles and accept responsibility for the performance of courses. They receive appropriate advice, support and guidance from their managers. Internal communication is good and teachers, including those on part-time contracts, share ideas and work well together. Self-assessment reports for the curriculum area are quite thorough and, on the whole, accurate. Students' awareness of equality of opportunity is good and is regularly reinforced.

Information and communications technology



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

Contributory grade for franchised provision is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good use of ILT to enhance teaching

- high standard of college accommodation and IT facilities

- broad range of courses.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates

- learning activities that fail to motivate all students

- unsatisfactory franchised provision

- insufficient rigour in self-assessment processes.

Scope of provision

55. At the time of inspection, there were 84 full-time students on college-based courses. The national diploma for IT practitioners is the most significant full-time course, with 40 students. The college also offers an entry level course in IT skills for working life, the GNVQ intermediate in IT and AS levels and GCE A levels in ICT. In addition, a franchise arrangement with the Agudist Women Information Technology and Teleworking Group (AWITT) in Gateshead provides courses leading to GNVQ intermediate and AVCE qualifications for Jewish women. There are 122 full-time students on these courses mostly aged 16 to 18. Part-time courses, studied by some 450 students, include the European computer driving licence (ECDL), new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and CLAIT plus, the Open College Network (OCN) PC installation and configuration and several qualifications for IT users at introductory and intermediate levels. Part-time students can attend on a flexible basis, day or evening, in the IT flexi-centres at Consett and Stanley, or can join classes offered at set times. Part-time courses are also offered at two community venues and there is a link course for a partner school.

Achievement and standards

56. Retention rates are poor on most college-based courses. For example, of the 12 students who started the national diploma for IT practitioners in 2003, only 4 progressed to the second year. Retention rates were also below national averages in at least two of the last three years for AS level, GNVQ intermediate, the first diploma and the GNVQ foundation diploma. Many students who enrol on ECDL, new CLAIT or CLAIT plus qualifications through flexible study arrangements fail to attend regularly and many withdraw from learning before completing all the assessments needed to gain full awards. Although retention rates on these courses have improved slightly over the last three years, they are still below national averages. The systems to monitor and follow up poor attendance on flexi-programmes lack rigour and there is no scheduled tutorial support or review for part-time students. Students who enrol on single units of full awards are more successful in completing their

studies and gaining unit certificates. Several short courses, such as the OCN certificate in PC installation and configuration, have consistently good success rates.

57. For those students who complete their courses, pass rates are satisfactory overall for the main college provision. Pass rates have improved to a level above national averages in key skills IT. For the franchised provision, pass rates for full awards are poor. For example, over the last three years, only 11% of the nearly 300 students who started the GNVQ intermediate IT course achieved the full qualification. However, most franchise students gain individual units that often prove to be useful in their subsequent careers.

58. College students are adept in using a range of software and they make confident use of the Internet for research. Students on the national diploma for IT systems support are very motivated and develop good investigative and analytical skills. In 2004, the parent teachers association presented an outstanding commitment award to a national diploma student who worked with a charity to develop a website for a terminally ill child. Many franchise students are very articulate, gain confidence during their studies and demonstrate good levels of practical skill in the use of business software applications.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
CLAIT certificate for IT users (new CLAIT) and CLAIT plus	1 and 2	No. of starts	49	35	91
		% retention	76	71	32
		% pass rate	57	40	59
GNVQ intermediate in IT (college-based)	2	No. of starts	19	11	14
		% retention	84	73	64
		% pass rate	88	25	67
GNVQ intermediate in IT (franchise)	2	No. of starts	112	114	72
		% retention	16	70	77
		% pass rate	100	18	**
ECDL	2	No. of starts	*	597	351
		% retention	*	43	40
		% pass rate	*	80	91
AS-level IT	3	No. of starts	10	31	*
		% retention	90	68	*
		% pass rate	78	76	*
AVCE ICT single and double award (college-based)	3	No. of starts	18	28	20
		% retention	61	86	90
		% pass rate	82	96	78
AVCE ICT single award (franchise)	3	No. of starts	23	56	76
		% retention	26	96	84
		% pass rate	100	48	**

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

*fewer than 10 starts

*** data not yet available*

Quality of education and training

59. All teaching is well planned with clear objectives and strategies to develop skills and test understanding. College-based courses use ILT effectively as a medium to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. In the best lessons, students are enthused by lively and imaginative teaching, for example, by teachers using interactive whiteboards or short PowerPoint presentations. The use of the Internet as a research tool in lessons is viewed by many students as a valuable and rewarding part of their studies. In one lesson, students worked successfully in pairs to research up-to-date information about computer viruses before moving on to a practical activity to detect and delete viruses and consider the purposes and uses of anti-virus software. Students discussed the virus issues they had encountered when using computers and were keen to further develop their skills and knowledge.

60. Adults attend lessons in the flexi-IT centres at times to suit themselves. Learning assistants recommend the guided learning hours that students may need to complete their qualification, though many students make good progress and complete their qualification in shorter timescales. A comprehensive range of paper-based guides and textbooks provide students with support in the use of applications software as they work towards assessments. Learning assistants are particularly sensitive when adults lack confidence in the use of computers and recognise that many students enjoy working at their own pace.

61. Learning activities sometimes fail to motivate all students. Overlong or dull exposition by the teacher and complex descriptions of theory without references to business practice too often lose the attention of students. ICT students have been unable to contextualise or enhance their college studies through work placements, although such opportunities are planned for later this year. Many college lessons are long and several full-time groups spend much of their lesson time with the same teacher. The GNVQ intermediate group includes students who originally applied for other courses that failed to run. Several students on this course are not motivated by either the course content or the lesson activities.

62. Accommodation is of a high standard with dedicated areas for ICT students and welcoming learning resource centres. Computer equipment and software are up to date and students have good access. At Consett the large flexi-IT centre is also used for scheduled classes. At busy times, when several groups are in the centre, there are noise distractions from adjacent groups. Occasionally, classroom layout restricts the use of teaching and learning strategies such as small group work and presentations. Although the standard of ICT equipment at the franchise centre is satisfactory, the accommodation and facilities have several unsatisfactory features including cramped classrooms with poor projection facilities. Their faith prevents these students from having online access to the Internet, e-mail or the college virtual learning environment for research purposes and the range of software and support materials is less extensive than those at the main college sites.

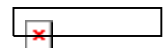
63. Assessment processes are satisfactory. Aspects of three courses highlighted by external verifiers as being leniently marked in 2004 have been quickly followed up. Many assignments have constructive comments from teachers and students receive good oral and written feedback on how they can improve their work. In flexi-IT centres, records of assessment and hours attended are kept up to date, but there are no scheduled opportunities for individual students to review their progress against their learning plans with a tutor. At the franchised centre, difficulties in reconciling the delivery and assessment of parts of the syllabus with the beliefs and traditions of the Jewish community have impacted on the students' completion of qualifications.

64. The broad range of courses for both full-time and part-time students offers good progression opportunities from entry through to advanced levels. One student in the first year of the national diploma has progressed successfully through the GNVQ foundation diploma and the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma. The majority of students progress from advanced level courses into employment in the region, with only a small proportion continuing to study IT or computing at university.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams meet regularly and are keen to adapt and develop the provision to meet community needs. Whilst targets are increasingly being set at course and curriculum level for retention and pass rates, difficulties with the analysis of data have hindered the process. Self-assessment lacks rigour and pays insufficient attention to students' achievements and teaching and learning. There are no curriculum links between the college ICT team and the franchise and consequently there are significant differences in approaches to teaching, assessment and quality assurance for the same qualifications, with no sharing of good practice. College managers recognise some of the unsatisfactory features in the franchised provision highlighted by inspectors and have started taking steps to improve the appropriateness of the curriculum for the needs of the students and the unsatisfactory trends in retention and pass rates.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel



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

Contributory grade for hospitality and catering is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high retention rates in sports and travel

- high pass rates in NVQ level 2 in food preparation, GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism and AS-level sports, games and recreation

- high standard of student work in sports

- stimulating and effective teaching in sports and travel

- extensive and relevant curriculum enrichment.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in hospitality and catering at level 2 in 2003/04

- low pass rates in food and drink service level 2 and AVCE travel and tourism in 2003

- ineffective strategies for teaching practical skills in hospitality and catering.

Scope of provision

66. There are some 150 full-time students on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in sports, hospitality and catering, and travel and tourism. In sport, the largest of the three areas, there is the foundation certificate in sport and leisure, the first diploma in sport, the national certificate or diploma in sport, and AS levels and GCE A levels. In travel, there is a one-year introductory certificate in hospitality, travel and tourism at level 1, the first diploma in travel and tourism at level 2, and at level 3 the national certificate or diploma is available over two or three years. In hospitality and catering, NVQs in food preparation and cooking and food and drink service at levels 1, 2 and 3 can be studied full time or part time. Part-time evening courses include the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) primary certificate, but most are catering courses such as cake decoration and dishes of the world. Short courses in food hygiene, first aid and health and safety are also provided. There are a small number of learners on work-based programmes in catering.

Achievement and standards

67. There are high retention rates in sport and travel. Retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, for example, have been excellent at 100% over the last three years. Pass rates in the AS level in sport, games and recreation have also been 100% over three consecutive years and, in 2004, all students achieved a grade higher than that predicted from their GCSE results. Pass rates in NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking have exceeded the national average by at least 10% over the last three years. However, in 2003/04, retention rates on both NVQ level 2 hospitality and catering courses fell significantly and only two of the seven students who started the AVCE in travel and tourism completed it successfully. Pass rates in key skills have improved over the last three years and are well above national averages.

68. Sports students develop very good study skills. In theory lessons, they demonstrate well-developed skills of evaluation and analysis. Level 2 students, who have only been at the college for a short period of time, consistently provide astute and perceptive responses to questions. Sports students also display good practical skills. First diploma students quickly develop basketball skills such as passing and marking to a good level. In hospitality and catering, students' practical skills are not adequately developed. Basic practical skills such as peeling and cutting vegetables are not carried out to a satisfactory standard. Some catering students work in an untidy manner, for example, by not clearing peelings away. In food service, glasses and cutlery are not polished and students do not show appropriate politeness to customers. At level 1, some students do not maintain satisfactory personal hygiene standards, and at level 2 some students do not meet the appropriate dress standards.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Introduction to food hygiene (and precursor)	1	No. of starts	701	1,102	1,053
		% retention	100	100	94
		% pass rate	90	85	97
NVQ food preparation and cooking/food and drink service	2	No. of starts	11	30	22
		% retention	82	83	64
		% pass rate	100	84	75
GNVQ intermediate in	2	No. of starts	16	*	*

leisure and tourism		% retention	100	*	*
		% pass rate	88	*	*
AS-level sports, games and recreation	3	No. of starts	*	10	10
		% retention	*	70	90
		% pass rate	*	100	100

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

*fewer than 10 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

69. Most teaching in sport and travel is good. Lessons are carefully prepared and involve relevant and stimulating learning activities, which students respond to very productively. Teachers encourage independent learning, for example, through research on the Internet and self-study using course textbooks. There is a clear focus on students developing appropriate intellectual skills such as analysis and evaluation. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject. In one travel and tourism lesson, the teacher cleverly used imaginary rewards and incentives to encourage students to retrieve details speedily and accurately from holiday brochures.

70. In some hospitality and catering lessons, the development of students' practical skills is not adequately supervised. Students are required to work on too wide a variety of individual tasks for teachers to be able to supervise and monitor progress effectively. In one kitchen production lesson, for example, the teacher did not notice a student slicing unwashed leeks because he was busy demonstrating an activity to another student. In food service, teachers do not spend enough time observing and correcting food service techniques. Unsatisfactory practice is not sufficiently challenged during lessons or during debriefing. Teachers are unable to introduce the range of new skills or supervise adequately the diverse range of practical activities undertaken by classes in realistic work environments.

71. Good use is made of the sports hall on sports and recreation courses. There are some shortages in equipment. A fitness room equipped with resistance and cardiovascular equipment provides the facility for students to test and analyse fitness levels. Use is made of outside pitches belonging to the local authority and local clubs. Plans for a civic sports facility on the college campus are at an advanced stage and include a new sports hall, outside football, netball and rugby pitches and all weather pitches. In hospitality and catering, there is a modern training restaurant and production kitchen. The kitchen is fitted with commercial-standard equipment, including a computerised combination oven. However, space is restricted and preparation areas are too small. As a result, students have difficulty keeping work areas tidy and organised. Some aspects of kitchen layout are poor; for example, there is no hotplate for the service or assembly of dishes and supplies are delivered through the kitchen. The small and cluttered stores area sets a poor example to students.

72. Teachers have appropriate qualifications and industrial experience. Most take up the staff development opportunities provided by the college. Recent examples include assessor updating, new legislative requirements and initiatives to improve teaching and learning.

73. Assessment in sports and recreation is particularly effective. Teachers provide useful feedback which explains their grading decisions in specific terms. In lessons, teachers vigilantly check students work independently to ensure grading opportunities are not compromised. Monitoring of students' progress is not systematic. For example, individual learning plans are not related to specific assessments and targets are not sufficiently focused. Nevertheless, most students meet their assessment deadlines and produce high-quality work.

74. Curriculum enrichment activities are extensive and relevant to students' courses. Students in hospitality and catering, and travel and tourism participate in an exchange scheme with an Italian

college, preparation for which includes the opportunity to learn some Italian. These students gain a valuable insight into Italian life and culture through work placements and staying with families. Sports students have worked with the local authority to promote healthy living initiatives. Most sports students participate in the college football, netball, rugby or other teams. They also have the opportunity to lead activities with pupils in local primary schools. All courses have a schedule of visits and study tours that are closely linked to the assessment programmes.

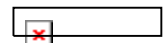
75. There are clear and appropriate progression routes from level 1 to level 3 in all areas, although level 1 courses in sports and travel and tourism have failed to recruit this year. Students can take appropriate additional qualifications that will help them to progress in their chosen careers. Sports students undertake the community sports leader award and coaching qualifications. In catering, students complete basic food hygiene and health and safety qualifications. Travel and tourism students have additional training in air fares and ticketing and for resort representatives. In addition, students have the opportunity to study a foreign language, although the take-up is low.

76. Students receive very good advice and guidance. Prospective students find the advice and information they receive accurate and valuable. Course inductions are interesting and help to alleviate the anxiety students may feel in their first week at the college. Course guides provide extensive information on course organisation and assessment requirements and are used by students as useful reference documents.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are good. Course teams are small and most communication is informal but effective. Clear and demanding targets for courses are set and closely monitored. Course reviews closely analyse attendance, retention and pass rates. However, the evaluation of teaching and learning is too superficial and does not focus enough on specific strengths and weaknesses. Teaching strategies in hospitality and catering are not effective for developing students' practical skills. Equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted within the curriculum; obvious opportunities during inspection, such as the England football team's 'kick racism out of football' campaign, were missed.

Health, social care and childcare



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates in foundation and intermediate health and social care

- good standards of student work and skills development

- stimulating range of teaching activities in many lessons

- good induction and assessment practice in work-based learning
- good quality work placements.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on many college courses
- poor achievement on foundation modern apprenticeships in early years
- dull teaching and slow pace in a few lessons
- inadequate resources for a significant number of students
- weak target setting in students' reviews.

Scope of provision

78. There are more than 500 students on a range of health and social care, care, early years and uniformed services courses offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. The full-time GNVQ foundation and intermediate in health and social care and the BTEC national certificate and diploma in care are based at Consett. At Stanley, over 100 students in early years care and education are taking Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) qualifications on a full-time or part-time basis or part-time NVQ courses at level 2 or level 3. At the old fire station in Stanley, 42 students are on full-time courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in preparation for entry to the uniformed services. There are 59 students on work-based learning programmes, almost all of them following apprenticeships or advanced apprenticeships in early years care. Some 85% of students are part time, including 80 students on counselling courses and a large number of adult students following a roll-on, roll-off programme of NVQ training to meet care standards regulations for qualified staff.

Achievement and standards

79. Retention rates are poor on the majority of courses and continuing to decline on some. The retention rate on the GNVQ foundation in health and social care, for example, has declined from 85% to 58% in the last three years. However, on uniformed services courses, retention rates have improved over the last three years, reaching 100% in 2003/04. There has also been an improvement in retention rates on work-based learning programmes over the last two years, with 70% of starters still in learning. Pass rates on the GNVQ foundation in health and social care, which also has good retention rates, and the GNVQ intermediate in health and social care, have been consistently high over the last three years and are well above the national averages. On other courses, pass rates are

mostly satisfactory, although pass rates on the foundation apprenticeship early years programme have been poor.

80. The standard of students' work is generally good. Students' portfolios for NVQ level 3 in care show good links between theory and practice. Students in care, early years and uniformed services develop good personal and vocational skills. Students' work in key skills is satisfactory and largely contextualised to the vocational area. However, on work-based learning programmes, there is insufficient use of the workplace to provide key skills evidence.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and childcare, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation in health and social care	1	No. of starts	26	17	12
		% retention	85	71	58
		% pass rate	100	92	100
GNVQ intermediate in health and social care	2	No. of starts	24	25	25
		% retention	83	80	84
		% pass rate	75	90	95
Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) preparation for uniformed services	2	No. of starts	30	24	19
		% retention	77	88	100
		% pass rate	96	67	74
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	*	42	178
		% retention	*	17	31
		% pass rate	*	71	31
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	24	21	20
		% retention	46	67	30
		% pass rate	100	69	100

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

*fewer than 10 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

81. Teaching and learning is mostly satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers ensure that students have a stimulating range of learning activities. These might include role play, foam modelling play, social stereotyping and communicating without speaking. Teachers use a variety of resources to support teaching in an imaginative way. In one lesson, for example, the teacher had brought in shower curtains, glitter and paint to enable students to experiment with different types of play. ICT is used both by teachers and students in a good proportion of lessons.

82. In the minority of unsatisfactory lessons, teaching is too dull and the pace too slow to maintain students' interest. The lessons either lack clear learning objectives or use learning activities unlikely to promote achievement of those objectives which have been set. Students' understanding is not checked sufficiently.

83. Resources are inadequate for a significant number of students. Some classrooms are too small and cramped for the size of class groups occupying them, making group work difficult to arrange and uncomfortable. At the fire station site, the main ground floor room is dull, dirty, and noisy. Teachers recognise this and have rearranged seating and put up screens to make the room more suitable for

teaching. At Stanley, students' access to a learning resource centre and an appropriate range of relevant books is inadequate. The self-assessment report recognises the need for a larger budget for learning materials to support these courses. There are, however, longer-term plans to relocate these courses to Consett. Access to computers is unsatisfactory for some students, also recognised as an area for improvement in the self-assessment. At Consett and Lanchester, resources are generally good, with appropriate displays of student work in classrooms. The learning resource centres at both sites contain a satisfactory and relevant range of up-to-date textbooks, journals, videos and CD-ROMs.

84. Teachers in the curriculum area have suitable vocational qualifications which, for the most part, make them appropriately matched to the courses they teach. Assessors and verifiers for work-based learning and NVQ programmes hold the appropriate assessor and verification awards and are well supervised in these roles.

85. Induction procedures are satisfactory and most students can recall the range of issues and topics covered, including equality of opportunity. An initial assessment is systematically used to identify the likelihood of additional learning needs for all students. Careers guidance and support is available for those learners who are felt to be unsuitable for, or who decide they do not want to proceed with, an apprenticeship.

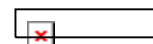
86. There is effective assessment practice in work-based learning. Assessments for NVQ qualifications are well planned, systematically recorded and clearly referenced to the standards. Feedback is clear and provides learners with constructive criticism. Assessment on all other programmes is satisfactory; work is returned promptly with suitable feedback. Internal verification is satisfactory and adheres to cross-college procedures. Standardisation meetings are regular and have clearly recorded outcomes. The college internal verification panel quality assure the process and sample verification files on a regular basis. Target setting in individual student reviews is weak. Targets are not sufficiently specific or measurable, the actions needed to bring about their achievement are unclear, and completion deadlines are not agreed.

87. The range of courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 is good. Students with learning difficulties can take an introductory, entry level course in health and social care. There is no provision at level 4, but students can access such courses with other local providers. Work placements for students on care and early years courses are of a high quality. Workplace supervisors are supportive and frequently arrange additional training opportunities. Students normally receive an effective induction into the workplace that mirrors the induction for employees. Senior staff act as mentors and each student has day-to-day supervision. Early years students are able to undertake job rotation and work with different age groups.

Leadership and management

88. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams meet regularly and communications across the area are good. All teachers contribute to the course reviews which inform the self-assessment process. Internal lesson observations are not extensive enough to act as an effective tool for raising the standards of teaching and learning; not all teachers have been observed within the last year. Work-based learning is managed effectively. The college took over the work-based learning contract from a previous provider at the request of the local LSC. The provision, including retention rates, has subsequently been improved. Appropriate action is taken to identify and support learners who are at risk of or approaching their end date.

Humanities and English



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

Contributory grade for English is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE A-level and access to HE courses

- stimulating and purposeful teaching

- very good participation by students in lesson activities

- very effective subject support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates in GCSE English

- low retention rates on many AS-level courses

- low progression rate from AS level to GCE A2

- insufficient rigour in self-assessment.

Scope of provision

89. There are 294 students enrolled on humanities and English courses, of whom 24 study part time in the evening. Courses include AS levels and GCE A levels in communication studies, English language, English literature, geography, history, law, psychology and sociology, access to HE courses and GCSE English. The GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level courses are part of the daytime provision for full-time students aged 16 to 18. GCSE English and AS-level psychology are also available as part-time evening courses.

Achievement and standards

90. Pass rates are good on GCE A-level and access to HE courses. They exceed the national averages for general FE colleges, and have improved over three years. Pass rates were above 90% for all GCE A-level subjects in 2004. Retention rates are also good on most of these courses. On AS-level courses, however, retention and pass rates have fluctuated above and below national averages. Retention and pass rates in GCSE English have been very poor for the last three years. In

2004, the retention rate was 56% and the pass rate at A* to C was only 20%. Progression from AS level to GCE A level is low in several subjects. In law and psychology, less than half those who started the AS-level qualification in 2002 continued to GCE A level in 2003. Progression to HE, especially by access students, is good.

91. In lessons, students work confidently and make regular, well-articulated and well-informed contributions. They learn quickly and effectively. In one access psychology lesson, students, with little knowledge of Freud at the start of the lesson, were soon able to talk confidently about his theory of the id, ego and superego. They related this to their own behaviour, for instance in impulse buying while shopping. Students work well with their teachers and with each other. Attendance during the inspection was good at about 90% and students attend punctually.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	63	46	27
		% retention	43	39	56
		% pass rate	48	44	20
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	13	19	25
		% retention	85	58	52
		% pass rate	100	82	100
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	19	25	34
		% retention	100	80	79
		% pass rate	84	75	100
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	88	87	71
		% retention	76	76	70
		% pass rate	70	83	76
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	19	32	34
		% retention	89	97	100
		% pass rate	88	100	97
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	39	43	50
		% retention	77	77	86
		% pass rate	80	94	93

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

Quality of education and training

92. Most teaching is purposeful and stimulating. Teachers have clear objectives and provide students with a wide variety of learning activities. These offer students excellent opportunities to contribute in lessons which they readily accept. In one GCE A-level psychology lesson, students worked very well in groups producing posters to demonstrate key aspects of the main eating disorders. Their combined feedbacks produced a comprehensive account of the main characteristics of anorexia and bulimia. In a GCE A-level English language lesson, students used a range of dictionaries compiled over the last 200 years to track the changes of meaning in ordinary words such as 'soon'. In an access sociology lesson, students volunteered ideas about the way the state supports families. They used their own experiences of benefits and other forms of support to discriminate between effective and ineffective assistance. The teacher managed this very sensitively. In many lessons, teachers use good handouts and study guides. They ensure students

are well prepared and practiced for different kinds of assessment.

93. In a minority of lessons, teachers rely too extensively on presenting ideas and information to students with limited opportunities for students to learn for themselves or contribute. In one instance, the teacher talked for more than 20 minutes before inviting any response from students.

94. Classrooms are well furnished, clean and attractive. Many are used extensively by one subject and have a strong subject identity through displays including students' work. In an AS-level history lesson, posters on the walls effectively illustrated the contrasts between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King as key figures in the American civil rights movement. GCE A-level communication studies students made effective use of the Internet to find out about changing television viewing patterns over recent years, and the impact of satellite and digital TV. In the lessons observed, however, there was only one example of teachers or students using ILT within teaching and learning. There is good book stock for humanities and English courses in the learning resources centres at both the sites where these courses are based. The development of subject sites on the virtual learning environment, however, is at a very early stage of development.

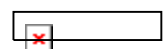
95. Teachers support their students well. In lessons, they are aware of the support and encouragement which individuals need, and they provide it. Students value this. The help students need to plan and organise their work and improve their essays is met either by their subject teachers or by additional learning support. Response is quick and effective. The tutorial programme is designed to give the guidance needed at particular times of the year, for instance in preparing HE applications or developing examination and revision skills. Teachers mark work carefully and give good written guidance for further improvement, although in some cases this could be presented more clearly. Students value the termly individual progress reviews which clearly show them the progress they are making. However, the targets set at these reviews are often not sufficiently precise and measurable enough to be effective in improving performance.

96. There is a good range of trips and visits to extend students' curriculum experience. A recent theatre visit to a performance of *Hamlet* by the Royal Shakespeare Company was enjoyed by students. Students join art students on a regular yearly trip to either Paris or London. An annual geography field trip to Norfolk provides experience of a very different geographical area as well as valuable information for coastal studies.

Leadership and management

97. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers, including those on part-time contracts, work well together. They share common aims about helping students to achieve to their full potential, and making lessons interesting. Courses are well planned and managed efficiently. Annual course reviews are thorough. These identify clear issues, which the curriculum manager follows up systematically with subject teachers. Improving attendance has been identified as a way of raising retention and pass rates. Teachers check absences quickly and effectively and attendance has improved on many courses. The self-assessment report fails to identify some weaknesses such as the low progression to GCE A level. The outcomes of the lesson observation programme are not used systematically to improve teaching and learning. There is too much reliance on informal discussion to improve teaching, learning and student achievement, and insufficient emphasis on formally identifying and sharing good practices.

Provision for students with learning difficulties



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

Strengths

- good development of personal and social skills

- comprehensive initial assessment of full-time students

- effective learning support.

Weaknesses

- inappropriate use of accommodation

- lack of work experience opportunities for students

- underdeveloped community provision.

Scope of provision

98. The college offers a broad range of discrete courses for adults and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The courses have flexible attendance patterns to provide for the individual needs of students with severe, moderate and mild learning difficulties, and for disaffected young people. Student achievement is measured against individual learning targets identified as a result of an initial assessment. There are currently 65 students on full-time courses and 64 students on part-time courses within the essential skills curriculum area. A further 45 students are taking entry level 3 courses which are now taught within the vocational areas of catering, ICT/business administration, and health and social care. The majority of courses are based at the main college site in Consett. Most courses are accredited using college certificates.

Achievement and standards

99. Retention and pass rates are high across all courses. In 2003/04, the retention and pass rate for all courses were in excess of 90%. Teachers ensure that the work undertaken by the students is at a level suitable to their academic ability. All courses include sessions designed to assist students with their personal development and to provide them with opportunities to gain a range of social and life skills. In 2004, over 90% of students progressed on to higher level programmes within the college. However, the rate of progression into employment is very limited.

100. Most students achieve challenging personal targets and make good progress in the development of their personal and social skills. Punctuality and attendance are good and students on all courses are motivated to learn and do well. During the inspection, attendance averaged 90%. On all courses, students complete work of a good standard in relation to their own individual targets.

Quality of education and training

101. Much teaching is good. All lessons are well planned and take account of students' individual

learning goals. The range of practical activities within lessons on entry level 1 and 2 courses are particularly effective in helping students to develop their social and personal skills. Schemes of work and lesson plans clearly identify the involvement and role of the learning support assistants. Teachers are supportive and encourage each student to move at a pace that will help achieve their full potential. Students feel valued and supported. Teachers are adept at creating an atmosphere in which students have the confidence to practice new skills. In the better lessons, teachers combine a strong sense of humour with sensitivity in order to create an effective learning experience through which students' self-esteem is boosted. In one lesson on health and safety, the teacher dealt with the issue of discrimination in this style, using self-disclosure as a method of putting the students at ease. There is too little emphasis on developing students' employment-related skills. In some lessons, good opportunities are missed to contextualise learning activities within the world of work and so extend and develop the students' work-related skills and awareness. There are no opportunities for students to undertake periods of work experience. Sometimes, in lessons involving students who cannot read or write, too much emphasis is placed on written words.

102. Classroom accommodation, located in a prominent part of the main college site, is dedicated to these courses. However, not all the rooms are appropriate for some of the learning activities planned by teachers. On occasion, this results in a frustrating learning experience for the students and potential health and safety hazards. In one instance, for example, an art lesson was carried out in a small, general-purpose classroom, which provided no access to water and had limited working space. Students had to walk some distance to the nearest toilets to wash paint brushes, spilling water en route. In another lesson, a relaxation exercise was severely constrained by the small size of the room and the amount of furniture it contained.

103. Teachers are enthusiastic and dedicated. They maintain very positive attitudes throughout their contact with students. There is a high level of effective learning and pastoral support for students. Learning support assistants are present in all lessons, supporting students who have been identified as having specific learning needs. They are well motivated and effectively deployed, actively taking part in all lessons and supporting teachers as necessary. They work closely with the teaching team, attend regular meetings and take an active part in course reviews. Students speak highly of the support they receive.

104. All full-time students have a comprehensive initial assessment to determine which programme and level will suit them best. The results of this assessment forms the basis of each student's individual learning plan. All learning plans are realistic but challenging and individual targets are set for every lesson. Teachers review students' progress at the end of every lesson. The outcomes are used to regularly update individual learning plans and agree appropriate new targets. Students' progress towards their targets is reviewed regularly and recorded. Reviews are conducted jointly between teachers, learning support assistants and the student. In some instances, the process also includes parents or carers and relevant external agencies.

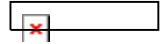
105. The college has good arrangements with local schools to reach students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and provides free transport for current students. Whilst good links with a range of external agencies provide students with effective support on health-related issues, there is no collaboration to provide work experience opportunities or community-based courses. There are no taster sessions to encourage a wider range of students into the college and no courses designed for specific learning difficulties and disabilities, such as mental health issues. The college tried to set up one community outreach course for students with mental health issues, but was unable to provide the daytime provision needed. Some initial links have been made with community organisations which support vulnerable young people. However, such outreach initiatives are relatively new and have yet to lead to any provision being established.

Leadership and management

106. Curriculum management is mostly effective and individual courses are well managed. Weekly course team meetings are well attended by both teachers and learning support assistants. There is a strong team identity and a strong commitment to continuing professional development. New staff are well supported although they do not have access to a mentor system. Targets are regularly monitored at course level. Although course reviews are thorough, the self-assessment report is not

sufficiently self-critical and fails to identify any of the weaknesses identified by inspectors. There is no clear strategy for extending the range of provision to ensure the needs of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are properly recognised and responded to within the broader 'Skills for Life' agenda.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- good pass rates in key skills and national literacy tests
- effective learning support
- good pastoral support
- effective staff development for Skills for Life.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCSE mathematics
- too much dull and uninspiring learning activity
- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- narrow range of provision.

Scope of provision

107. There are about 100 part-time adult students attending discrete literacy and numeracy courses during the daytime or in the evening. Around 700 full-time students aged 16 to 18 students are

enrolled on key skills in application of number and/or communication at level 1 or level 2. Some 80 students are taking GCSE mathematics. There are currently 30 learners on the E2E programme, who receive literacy and numeracy support on a weekly basis. Students with dyslexia and other specific special needs receive support. Apart from additional support sessions provided for care students and some GCSE mathematics, which are based at Stanley, all other courses take place at the main Consett site. Within the college these courses are known as Skills for Life provision.

Achievement and standards

108. Pass rates in key skills have generally improved and, in 2004, they were very much higher than the national averages in both application of number and communication at levels 1 and 2. However, retention rates on these programmes are generally below the national averages. Whilst there are only low numbers of students, achievement levels in the new national literacy tests are good. In GCSE mathematics, however, retention and pass rates are poor. In each of the last two years, only 28% of students who completed the course achieved an A* to C grade. Learners on the E2E programme are making at least satisfactory progress. More than half those leaving the programme since its introduction have progressed into employment or training; 72% had gained a level 1 qualification before leaving the programme.

109. Some students on Skills for Life courses make good progress in developing their skills and can talk confidently about how much they have improved. Some students on entry level programmes display good levels of confidence in their work. Most students are very motivated and keen to progress. Dyslexic students talk knowledgeably about their needs and are developing effective coping strategies. Adult students on courses leading to the national literacy tests are articulate, work together well and are very industrious. Some younger students on key skills programmes, however, are less keen and are sometimes disruptive in lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	133	111	152
		% retention	59	67	65
		% pass rate	57	61	65
Certificate in adult literacy	1	No. of starts	41	*	44
		% retention	98	*	84
		% pass rate	100	*	84
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	75	111	140
		% retention	76	67	64
		% pass rate	58	61	69
Key skills application of number	2	No. of starts	248	199	188
		% retention	70	76	88
		% pass rate	72	42	53
Key skills communication	2	No. of starts	302	346	191
		% retention	82	84	75
		% pass rate	78	21	65
GCSE mathematics (1 year)	2	No. of starts	88	81	86
		% retention	57	58	66
		% pass rate	42	28	28

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

**fewer than 10 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

110. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teaching is well planned around a variety of different learning activities which the students find stimulating. Students actively participate and engage in lively questioning and challenging of the teachers. Students are supportive of each other and take time to help each other. Learning activity is well differentiated to meet the range of individual needs. Students actively participate, engage in lively questioning, and are supportive of each other. Learning support assistants are effective. They actively intervene to ensure both individuals and small groups of students keep on track with activities. In one lesson, when a dyslexic student became confused with an exercise, the support assistant taught alternative spelling strategies to overcome the difficulty.

111. Despite this good level of support, too much learning activity is dull and uninspiring. In some lessons where students exhibit a range of needs and challenging behaviours, the planned activities do not keep them sufficiently interested or actively involved. There is often too much reliance on worksheets and little attempt to provide differentiated learning activities to meet the different individual needs within the group of students. In one lesson, too much time was spent by students laboriously copying text from a whiteboard rather than developing their skills at solving mathematical problems.

112. Resources are satisfactory with good accommodation and books, and adequate access to computers. Classrooms are modern, well equipped and bright. Good use is made of wall posters and displays to brighten rooms. Rooms, however, are small and are cramped when occupied by a group of more than 10 students. The quality of most handouts is good, but some overhead transparencies are poor and difficult to read. Teachers and support assistants in Skills for Life and E2E are appropriately qualified and are working towards further qualifications. Those teaching key skills are generally adequately qualified for the role, although few are qualified in literacy or numeracy teaching and some show poor awareness of, and sensitivity to, the issues faced by students with poor literacy or numeracy skills. Most learning support assistants have a qualification in literacy and numeracy, and in one case a qualification in supporting students with dyslexia.

113. Insufficient attention is given to the different learning needs of individual students. Full-time students are initially assessed by an in-house key skills assessment rather than for literacy or numeracy. Only if students score below a certain level are they referred for additional help. Key skills tutors often have insufficient detail of the individual needs of students within their groups and do not adequately plan for them. In one lesson, a student was asked to read aloud in front of the rest of the group even though the teacher knew the student had literacy difficulties. Individual learning plans for full-time students are co-ordinated through the tutorial system; the target-setting process relates strongly to their main course of study and does not reflect the totality of student experience.

114. Learners on Skills for Life courses, the E2E programme and full-time students who are referred for additional support are assessed by a nationally recognised, paper-based assessment tool in literacy and numeracy. Their preferred learning styles are also assessed. While the information on literacy and numeracy is used to inform teaching, little systematic use is made of the learning styles outcomes to plan courses or lessons to better suit individual learners. Apart from core curriculum references, there are few specific and measurable targets in plans or reviews. For full-time students receiving additional support, individual learning plans continue to relate entirely to their main course of study and fail to pay sufficient attention to the development of their literacy or numeracy skills.

115. Pastoral support for students is good. Learning mentors are assigned to students for individual, confidential counselling. Although a new initiative, it is already leading to more students being identified for additional support. The support workers are trained and experienced in dealing with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities. They work well in lessons to provide both physical and

personal support to students. In E2E, staff use a range of partnerships to support students. For example, when a student became homeless, college staff contacted an organisation specialising in supporting young homeless people and accommodation and transportation was arranged. Where students are going into specific vocational areas like hairdressing or engineering, materials and clothing is provided and the college also covers the cost of some interview clothing.

116. The range of courses is narrow and nearly all based at the Consett site. There is no community-based provision. Although the Skills for Life team worked with two employers last year, there is currently no employer-based provision. Very little weekend or evening provision is available. There are no intensive courses or courses teaching literacy and numeracy through ICT. There is no team teaching on any vocational courses to help embed literacy and numeracy into mainstream college provision. While some staff training has been given in dyslexia awareness, the general awareness of Skills for Life among college staff is variable.

Leadership and management

117. The leadership and management of Skills for Life provision are satisfactory. Curriculum managers strive to be responsive and supportive. Communication is open and effective. Staff development opportunities support clear career pathways. For example, many support workers have achieved the new level 3 qualifications in support for literacy and numeracy. Their next step is to gain a teaching qualification and then the level 4 qualification. The self-assessment and development planning processes do not adequately identify either key strengths or weaknesses. Much planning is short term with targets that cannot easily be measured. The college's Skills for Life strategy does not provide a robust basis for developing and extending future provision.

Part D: College data

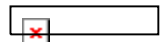
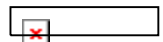


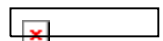
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	36	46
2	33	12
3	22	4
4/5	0	1
Other	9	37
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in 2004

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



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	508	532	7
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	57	224	2
Business administration, management and professional	211	407	4
Information and communication technology	677	3,448	26
Retailing, customer service and transportation	58	6	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	427	1,257	11
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	129	144	2
Health, social care and public services	457	3,043	22
Visual and performing arts and media	88	580	4
Humanities	177	283	3
English, languages and communication	339	145	3
Foundation programmes	420	2,133	15
Other/Unknown	20	82	1
Total	3,568	12,284	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	255	201	239	986	1,121	796
	Retention rate %	87	73	72	86	60	67
	National average %	75	76	76	70	71	71
	Pass rate %	70	95	77	61	88	84
	National average %	67	69	73	68	70	77

2	Starters excluding transfers	559	557	597	931	756	1,092
	Retention rate %	80	60	65	70	65	65
	National average %	70	71	71	68	68	67
	Pass rate %	55	75	54	57	88	74
	National average %	68	70	73	67	71	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	730	539	666	557	425	391
	Retention rate %	72	74	83	59	56	56
	National average %	70	77	77	68	70	69
	Pass rate %	69	77	79	67	88	82
	National average %	75	77	80	68	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	31	17	60
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	39	82	60
	National average %	**	**	**	67	68	69
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	83	36	100
	National average %	**	**	**	54	54	58

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: *College ISR*.

* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

** data unavailable

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	79	16	5	43
Level 2 (intermediate)	52	29	19	21
Level 1 (foundation)	55	36	9	11

Entry level	67	28	5	21
Other sessions	50	50	0	2
Totals	67	25	8	98

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