



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Chelmsford College

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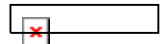
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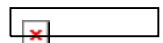
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Basic information about the college



Name of college:	Chelmsford College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	David Law
Address of college:	Moulsham Street Chelmsford CM2 0JO
Telephone number:	01245 265 611
Fax number:	01245 266 908
Chair of governors:	Dr Graham Evans
Unique reference number:	130679
Name of reporting inspector:	Shaun Dillon HMI
Dates of inspection:	17-21 January 2005

Part A: Summary



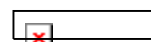
Information about the college



Chelmsford is one of the largest districts in Essex and its population of about 150,000 accounts for approximately 10% of the county's population. Unemployment, at 1%, and deprivation levels are low in Chelmsford, but significant deprivation exists in some wards. Chelmsford residents have higher levels of qualifications than the rest of Essex and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) performance is high in the town with 63% of pupils aged 16 gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. A high 80% of Chelmsford's year 11 pupils remain in learning and their main choice at post-16 is advanced subsidiary level (AS level) or general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), reflecting the large number of private and state sixth forms in the area. Chelmsford has its own Adult Community College which is run by the local education authority (LEA). Writtle College (higher educational institute designate) provides further education (FE) funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Many providers of work-based learning exist in the area. Anglia Polytechnic University (of which the college is a regional partner) is also based in Chelmsford.

Chelmsford College is a medium-sized, broadly-based general FE college which was formed in 1962 mainly to support the training needs of the local engineering industry. It operates from three sites: the main campus at Moulsham Street (built 1960s), the Princes Road site (1988) and the leased town centre premises housing the e-learning centre. Provision is in 11 of the 14 areas of learning. The college has three faculties: the sixth form centre, the adult, vocational and professional centre and the centre for innovation, partnership and development. The college is expected to exceed local LSC targets in 2004/05. A Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for electrical and electronic technologies is managed jointly with another Essex college. In 2003/04, 44% of the full-time students and 51% of the part-time students were female. About 12% of the students, compared with 6% in the college's catchment area were from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college had over 8,800 enrolments. Students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 30% of this number, over half of whom were on level 3 courses. The main areas for work-based learning are construction and engineering. The college's mission statement is: 'Chelmsford College will enable success for all learners through the provision of high quality, flexible teaching and learning opportunities across a broad range of vocational and academic disciplines'.

How effective is the college?



The college provides satisfactory teaching and opportunities for learning for most of its students. Pass rates have mainly risen over the last three years and are now above the national averages except for students on level 3 courses. Retention rates have mostly risen in the last two years and are now close to the national averages. Guidance and support for students are good and educational and social inclusion are satisfactory. Inspectors judged the provision to be good in two curriculum areas and satisfactory in five curriculum areas. Work-based learning was judged to be unsatisfactory in construction and engineering.

Key strengths

- good student support

- rising pass rates

- good enrichment for full-time students

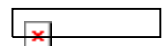
- effective partnerships and local collaboration
- good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- open management style.

What should be improved

- the proportion of good and better teaching and learning, especially for part-time and adult students
- the impact of self-evaluation on planning improvements
- the promotion of equal opportunities and celebration of diversity at curriculum level
- work-based learning provision
- the use of data to bring about change
- students' attainment.

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

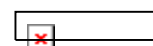


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were

judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Construction	Satisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade is unsatisfactory . Retention and pass rates on electrical installation and foundation courses are high. Completion of apprenticeship frameworks is low. Practical training facilities are good. There is inadequate use of information and learning technology (ILT) to aid learning.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Satisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade is unsatisfactory . Students achieve high standards of practical skills. Standards of engineering skills in the workplace are high. Assessment practices are good. Pass rates on engineering programmes and completion of apprenticeship frameworks are low.
Business, administration, management and professional	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on full-time business courses, but pass rates are low on professional courses. Support for students is good. Planning for individual students' learning is unsatisfactory.
Sport, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on vocational courses. Tutorial and personal support are good. Development of students' independent learning skills is poor. The range of provision is narrow.
Health, care and public services	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on most full-time courses, but a minority of courses have low pass and retention rates. Much of the teaching is good. Individual learning plans are used very effectively to meet individual students' needs. The planning and management of change are good.
Visual arts and media	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses. Students on GCE A-level media and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate art and design produce high standards of practical work. Support for students is good. Teaching does not meet the needs of all students and weaknesses identified in teaching have not been rectified.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Pass and retention rates are high. The range of teaching and learning activities is wide. Additional learning support is very effective. The use of individual learning plans is good.

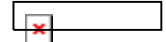
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. During the last three years, significant changes have occurred including the appointment of a new principal, strengthening of the governing body and improved clerking arrangements. A feasibility study for an ambitious building programme is in place. The college is in financial category A and provides value for money. Operating statements and other action plans lack rigour and contain insufficiently detailed quantitative and qualitative data to analyse and monitor success criteria. Many initiatives are in the early stages of development and have not yet been evaluated over time. Outcomes from the recently established quality standards committee have yet to impact significantly on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Duties under disability discrimination legislation and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 have been

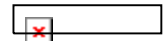
principal and senior managers. However, the minuting of debate in governor meetings is insufficient.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



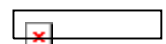
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Provision at levels 1 and 2 has been increased substantially. Partnerships with local schools are strong and the range of courses for students aged 14 to 16 has expanded. Full-time students benefit from opportunities to gain additional qualifications and work experience. The college has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and action plan, and a race equality policy. It complies fully with the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). However, the promotion of equal opportunities at curriculum level is insufficient. Data on the academic performance of students, broken down by gender, ethnicity and disability are collected, but insufficient use is made of these in course review and evaluation. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds at the college is larger than the proportion in the local community. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Wheelchair users are unable to access some parts of the college. The response to the national Skills for Life strategy is at an early stage of development.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. A comprehensive range of guidance and support services meets the needs of both young people and adults and has achieved the national Matrix standards. Careers education and advice on progression to higher education (HE) are delivered appropriately. Students' induction is often well organized and meets the particular needs of different groups. The provision of additional learning support is effective. Links between screening, assessment and the provision of support with associated records are managed well. Most students diagnosed as needing additional support receive it. In most areas, learning support assistants make valuable contributions in lessons. Support for students with dyslexia is good and increasing. Tutorial support is often good although in engineering tutorials are less effective. Students receive good pastoral and course-related support from teachers. Effective arrangements are in place to record and monitor students' attendance except in construction. Progress reviews and action planning in work-based learning are inadequate. The college has a designated senior manager with responsibility for child protection issues and the college's response to child protection guidelines and legislation is good.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- helpful and supportive staff

- friendly atmosphere

- being treated with respect

- library, gymnasium and sports hall

- accessible location of the college.

What they feel could be improved

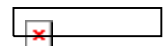
- access to computers outside lessons

- car parking

- canteen prices, opening hours and the quality of the food

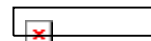
- course timetabling.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



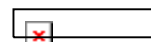
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	59	37	4
19+ and WBL*	30	52	18
Learning 16-18	56	40	4
19+ and WBL*	30	52	18

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. Retention rates have risen over the last three years for students aged over 19 on short courses and have fallen for the last three years for students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses. College data for 2003/04 show that retention rates in all areas have risen between 2002/03 and 2003/04 except for students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 and students aged over 19 on level 1 courses. Retention rates in 2003/04 on long courses were all close to the national averages for colleges of a similar type. The retention rates for all students on short courses are above the national averages. Pass rates have risen over the last three years for students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and level 3 courses and for students aged over 19 on level 1 and level 2 courses. College data show that most pass rates have risen between 2002/03 and 2003/04 except for students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses and students aged over 19 on level 3 courses. Pass rates are above the national averages except for students aged 16 to 18 and over 19 on level 3 courses and for students aged 16 to 18 on short courses. Pass rates are well above the national averages for students aged over 19 on levels 1 and 2 and short courses. College data for 2003/04 show that most success rates are at, or above, the national averages except for students aged over 19 on level 3 courses. Success rates are well above the national averages for students aged over 19 on level 2 and short courses.

2. In 2002/03, retention rates at level 1 were below the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and on courses of unknown qualifications, but were above for students aged over 19 on courses of unknown qualifications. At level 2, retention rates are at, or around, the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 on all courses. For students aged over 19, retention rates are above the national average for GNVQ qualifications, but are below national averages for GCSE and NVQ courses. At level 3, retention rates are above the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 on GCE A-level and GNVQ courses and for students aged over 19 on AS-level, GCE A-level and GNVQ qualifications, but they are below for students aged 16 to 18 on AS level and NVQ courses and for those aged over 19 studying an NVQ.

3. Overall attendance during inspection was satisfactory at nearly 76% which is just below the national average for similar colleges. The inspection took place at a time of national examinations

and attendance was below normal levels. Attendance ranges from 63% in construction to 90% in the foundation area for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attendance is high in sports, leisure and tourism and health, care and public services. Attendance is low in the engineering and business areas. Average class size is high at 11.4 compared with the national average for similar colleges of 9.8.

4. Pass rates are above the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 on GNVQ courses, but are below on NVQ qualifications. At level 2, pass rates are above the national averages for all students on all courses. Pass rates are high at level 2 for students from black and minority ethnic background, but many aged over 19 are unsuccessful at levels 1 and 3. At level 3, pass rates for all students are below the national averages except for students aged over 19 on GCE and GNVQ courses. The college has changed the management of its work-based learning. Contract management is now separate from curriculum delivery and learner support. Only 12 out of 109 learners achieved the full framework in 2001/02. In 2002/03, 7 out of 68 learners achieved the full framework. Apprentices make slow progress towards completing their frameworks. In construction, only 3 out of 113 work-based learners who were expected to complete by the time of the inspection have achieved the full framework. In engineering, completion rates have been low since 1999. Key skills pass rates in work-based learning are low.

5. The college has restructured its management of key skills across the college to improve the low pass rates for external tests and completion of internal portfolios. The pass rates in 2003/04 for both the test and the portfolio elements range from 0% to 11% in application of number, 2% to 22% in communications and 7% to 58% in information and communications technology (ICT). Although more than half the students who take the key skills tests pass, the rates for the successful completion of portfolios are much lower. Key skills are integrated within the curriculum areas as part of the students' main programme. Key skills pass rates have been low for the past three years. The college has no data on the achievement of its students relative to their prior attainment and potential. The college has been slow to implement a system to determine the expected outcomes of students based on their prior achievement. A scheme commenced in September 2004 is only for those students taking AS-level subjects and those on the single award of the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE).

6. In 2003/04, 44% of full-time students and 51% of part-time students were female. About 12% of students, compared with about 6% in the college's catchment area were from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college had over 8,800 enrolments, of which, about 30% were by students aged 16 to 18, many of whom enrolled on more than one qualification aim. Over three quarters of the 7,204 students were aged over 19 and about 20% of students attended on a full-time basis. Although the number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 fell by 13% between 2003/04 and 2004/05, the total number of students of this age increased. This reflects the increasing provision made at levels 1 and 2 for students who take mainly one qualification. The number of students progressing from AS-level subjects to GCE A-level subjects has increased slightly over the last three years to 59%. The percentage of students on level 3 programmes applying to HE has increased over the last three years from 23% to 33% and the proportion gaining employment has dropped from 66% to 57%.

7. In most areas of the college, students produce high standards of work in relation to their learning goals. Students aged 16 to 18 develop good personal and learning skills. Work-based learners only achieve satisfactory standards of work and their personal and learning skills are unsatisfactory. Construction students are competent in the use of hand tools and work confidently with appropriate attention to health and safety. Engineering students on level 1 and level 2 courses have good hand and machine practical skills, especially in the mechanical engineering workshop. Pass rates in key skills application of number are high for full-time business students, but overall key skills results are low. Students on the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in sport improve their fitness levels well. However, the practical sports skills and fitness levels achieved by female students on the BTEC courses are low. Public services students develop good team-building skills and show a high degree of self-discipline. Students achieve a high standard of practical work on the GCE A-level media course. However, most of the students in art and design work on similar projects and show little creative experimentation. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good teamwork and communication skills. They attend well, are punctual and show exemplary

behaviour.

16 to 18 year olds

8. About 30% of the enrolments in 2003/04 were by students aged 16 to 18. Of these, over half were on level 3 courses and over a quarter were on level 2 courses. About one fifth of the students in the college were aged 16 to 18. Over three quarters of these students attended on a full-time basis. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 rose between 2002/03 and 2003/04 at all levels except level 2. The retention rates for courses at all levels are around the national averages. Pass rates for this age range are also close to the national averages except for level 1 where they are well above the national average. Pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 3 have increased over the last three years. Work-based learners progress slowly and few complete their frameworks. Key skills pass rates for these learners are also low.

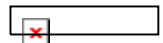
9. The standard of students' work is mainly high in most areas of the college. Students make satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment and in line with their potential. Their development of personal and learning skills is mostly good. Work-based learners achieve satisfactory standards of work, but the development of independent learning skills by engineering apprentices is poor.

Adult learners

10. Adult students accounted for about 70% of the enrolments in 2003/04, one third of which were for level 1 courses and over one half for level 2 courses. Over three quarters of the students in the college were aged over 19. Only 4% of these attended on a full-time basis. Retention rates for these students are all slightly below the national averages except for students on short courses. Pass rates for adult students have risen over the last three years on courses at levels 1 and 2 to be well above the national averages. Pass rates are also well above the national average on short courses.

11. Adult students' work is satisfactory in most areas of the college. Students in health, care and public services and in engineering reach high standards of work relative to their learning goals. Students in health, care and public services and in business develop their personal and learning skills well.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 95 lessons and tutorials. Teaching is good or better in 51% of lessons, satisfactory in 41% and less than satisfactory in 9%. The percentage of lessons which are good or better is considerably below the national average for comparable colleges. However, the proportion of less than satisfactory lessons is only slightly above the national average. The proportion of good or better lessons is much lower than in the previous inspection undertaken by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the percentage of less than satisfactory lessons is higher. Inspectors found significant variations in the quality of lessons between curriculum areas. The best teaching is in health, social care and public services, and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Two thirds of the lessons in these areas are good or better and this is above the national averages for these two areas. The proportion of good or better lessons is lower than the national averages in sports, leisure and tourism and significantly lower in business, administration, management and professional and visual arts and media. In construction, only 27% of lessons are good or better. Overall, the percentage of good or better learning is slightly lower than for teaching and is also below national averages. The percentage of good or better attainment is also below the national average for similar colleges. The grades awarded by inspectors for good or better teaching, learning and attainment were significantly lower than those in lesson observations undertaken by the college and reported on in its most recent self-assessment report.

13. Teaching for students aged 16 to 18 is significantly better than that for adults. Students aged 16 to 18 learn more effectively and have higher levels of attainment. Only 30% of lessons for part-time students are good or better, compared with 59% for full-time students. Teaching is most effective on entry level and level 1 courses. On level 2 and level 3 courses, which cater for the majority of students, around half of the lessons observed were good or better. Practical teaching is better than theory teaching in most areas. In general, the lessons taught by part-time teachers are at a lower standard than those taught by full-time teachers.

14. The planning of teaching and learning is satisfactory or better in most curriculum areas. The best lessons are well structured, with appropriate objectives made explicit to students. Assessment targets are clear. Where students on early years care courses are preparing for assignments, teachers break down the tasks into small steps, helping students to approach their goal with confidence and understanding. Well-chosen activities and tasks motivate students and engage their interest in much of the better teaching. In lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers build successfully on previous learning to develop and extend students' skills. In these lessons, effective teamwork between teachers and support tutors helps ensure appropriate attention to individuals' needs. In technical areas, teachers make good use of their industrial experience to give relevance and authority to their practical skills teaching. The good relationships teachers establish with students in most curriculum areas help foster students' self-esteem and promote learning.

15. In the worst lessons, planning for individual learning is poor. Teachers do not challenge the learning of more able students sufficiently or provide appropriate support to those of less ability. Teachers do not use questions effectively to check and develop students' understanding. In a few lessons, key skills are integrated successfully with subject teaching. In other lessons, little key skills learning takes place and attendance is sometimes poor. Work-based learners often start key skills very late in their programmes and their progress is slow. Teachers make little use of ILT to aid learning in most curriculum areas. Lesson plans and schemes often fail to identify its use as a learning resource. Where teachers use ILT, it is often dull and uninspiring. They rarely exploit the potential of the student intranet to provide suitable extension activities.

16. On-the-job training helps many work-based learners to develop appropriate practical skills. Training plans for engineering learners are often well structured. Planning of on-the-job training, particularly in construction, is poor and not integrated effectively with the off-the-job training provided in college.

17. Accommodation is clean and well maintained. The training facilities in construction, electrical installations, health and care provide a stimulating environment for students to develop their occupational skills. The first floor of Dovedale House and the sports complex are not accessible to wheelchair users. College managers have assessed the estate in relation to disability discrimination legislation and necessary works have been carried out or are in hand to make the buildings accessible. There are too few general-purpose classrooms large enough to accommodate the size of student groups.

18. The learning centres at each campus are spacious and well-managed. They contain a wide range of book, multi-media and information technology (IT) resources and house centres for providing individual support for students. There are sufficient computers for students and staff, but the distribution of workstations in construction and business restricts students' use of IT.

19. The college employs the equivalent of 327 full-time staff, of whom, 200 are teachers. About 80% of full-time and 65% of part-time teachers have, or are working towards, an appropriate teaching award. New procedures for annual staff appraisal, introduced in April 2004, have not yet been tested fully. All new staff are supported effectively by a well-structured induction programme and have a nominated mentor for guidance and support.

20. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Assessment is often well planned. Assessment practice in sport, leisure and tourism and for full-time engineering students is good. In most cases, work is well marked and teachers provide helpful feedback to students. Assessment of engineering and construction apprentices in the workplace is planned and managed

inadequately and fails to exploit the wide range of assessment opportunities. Arrangements for internal verification are at least satisfactory in all areas except construction.

21. Initial screening and assessment to identify students' additional support needs have improved since the last inspection. Nearly all full-time students and an increasing number of part-time adult students are screened. Course co-ordinators and tutors receive prompt notification of the outcomes of students' initial assessments. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are screened for their literacy and numeracy needs, but no further diagnostic assessment is undertaken.

22. Individual learning plans are used throughout the college. For sixth form centre students, individual learning plans form the focus of tutorials. In health and social care and in visual arts and media the plans are used to evaluate performance and set targets. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, individual learning plans are not used appropriately to set learning targets or long-term goals. In construction and engineering work-based learning, targets set and actions planned are imprecise.

23. A wide choice of courses and attendance modes is offered. The range of courses for full-time students has been expanded, especially at levels 1 and 2. An e-learning centre provides a friendly environment for adults seeking to develop their IT, literacy and numeracy skills.

24. The college has successfully extended access to the vocational curriculum through working in partnerships with local schools, colleges and other providers. About 200 year 10 and year 11 pupils from local schools follow vocational courses in construction, catering, health, social care, travel and tourism through the Increased Flexibility (IF) programme. The response to specific needs is good and includes a course for pupils at risk of leaving education and training. Good specialist equipment is available through the CoVE for students in electrical installations.

25. Local needs are researched well and publicity materials are sensitive to equality and diversity issues. A useful pamphlet provides information for parents and schools on the learning support available to students at the college. The wide range of enrichment activities broadens students' experience and enhances their employment prospects. However, participation in sports is low particularly by female students.

26. The college provides good information, advice and guidance. Specialist careers and guidance advisers work with students aged 16 to 18 and also adults. The Connexions personal adviser contributes effectively to the advice and guidance team.

27. Students' induction is often well organised and matched to their particular needs. The sixth form centre holds large group induction briefings followed by a continuing programme of induction during the early weeks of students' courses.

28. The provision of additional learning support is effective. Most students identified as needing additional support take advantage of the support offered. Learning support assistants make significant contributions in lessons. Their work is particularly well planned in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The links between screening, assessment and the provision of support are well managed. Detailed records of the students identified for support and those receiving it are maintained, monitored and updated. The college provides good support for increasing numbers of students with dyslexia.

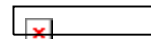
29. Students can obtain good welfare and housing advice. The college provides financial help for students experiencing hardship. Students are referred to external counsellors as the need arises. The college has a designated senior manager with responsibility for child protection issues and the college's response to child protection guidelines and legislation is good.

30. Tutorial support is often good. In the sixth form centre, a detailed tutorial handbook includes programme details and schemes of work. Tutorials in engineering are less effective. The college places considerable emphasis on the development of individual learning plans through tutorials. Progress reviews and action planning for work-based learners in engineering and construction are

poor.

31. Good arrangements are in place to record and monitor the attendance of students, although these are less effective in construction. Central to the college's arrangements to support students is the 'cause for concern' process. Triggered by 'at risk' indicators, this process involves student support assistants working closely with individual students. Students receive good pastoral and course-related support from teachers.

Leadership and management



32. Leadership and management at the college are satisfactory. Over the last three years, there have been significant changes within the college, including improvements in the management of corporation business, the appointment of the current principal, restructuring of middle management, a refocusing of college activities on the students' experience as well as carrying out a feasibility study for an ambitious building programme. The vision and mission of the college are understood by governors and staff and are actively promoted by senior and middle managers. The senior management team work well together and are respected by other college staff. Staff morale is high and communication within the college is good.

33. Since the last inspection, productive partnerships have developed with a range of organisations. The labour market information produced by Essex local LSC is valued and used effectively by the college to inform strategic planning. An annual planning day involving governors and senior staff focuses on a review of the mission, values and strategic aims. The three-year development plan is supported by a detailed property strategy. Annual operating statements for the college and individual departments are clearly linked to strategic aims and objectives. Teachers value their recent involvement in the process of development of department and faculty operating statements. However, operating statements and other action plans are not rigorous and contain insufficiently detailed quantitative and qualitative data on which to analyse and monitor success criteria. This was a weakness at the previous inspection.

34. Management at course level is satisfactory overall. It is good in health and social care. Management of work-based learning in construction and engineering is unsatisfactory. Middle and senior managers are aware of these issues and actions have been taken in an attempt to bring about improvements. These actions are slow in implementation and have yet to show a significant impact on the quality of education and training. Features of good management at course level include regular informative meetings with clear minutes, effective course organisation, effective teamwork and good support from heads of department and heads of faculty. Weaknesses in curriculum management include insufficiently focused action plans to achieve improvements in teaching and learning, inadequate focus in team meetings on teaching and learning and raising achievement, and insufficient sharing of good practice.

35. During the last two years, the principal has led significant change to improve the quality of all aspects of provision. His open and consultative style has improved communication and produced a culture of trust. This is reflected in the award of Investors in People Champion status. The faculty system has improved lines of communication. However, many initiatives are in the early stages of development and are not yet evaluated over time. The college has a thorough system for observing teaching and learning which is successful in identifying aspects of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. However, the systems in place have not yet brought about sufficient remedial actions. Outcomes from the recently established Quality Standards Committee have yet to impact significantly on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A new staff appraisal system is in place. It is anticipated that all staff will have been appraised by July 2005. Teacher involvement in the rigorous monitoring, review and evaluation of the curriculum as a basis for the effective development of the self-assessment report varies across the college. When completed, the self-assessment report is thoroughly scrutinised and challenged by a series of groups at college and

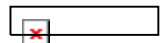
governor levels. In most curriculum areas, the self-assessment report is judged to be thorough. Inspectors agree with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the report. However, a few strengths are overstated and targets within the report lack rigour.

36. The college has a strong strategic commitment to widening participation and promoting equal opportunities. Working with a college of HE and a local school, the college leads a project to develop a centre in a rural area to develop training opportunities up to level 2 in construction, engineering and land-based industries. However, at course level, the reinforcement of equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity is insufficient. Duties under disability discrimination legislation and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 have been fulfilled by the college. Most members of staff have received awareness training in equality and diversity issues.

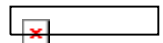
37. Governors have a strong commitment to the mission and values of the college. The professional skills of the board of governors have been extended and enhanced by recent appointments. An independent clerk has been appointed. Governors are active in challenging the principal, senior managers and other staff to promote improvements, particularly in relation to financial management. Agendas for the corporation and sub-committees are well organised. However, the issue identified in the previous inspection report that the corporation minutes did not provide evidence of rigorous debate of the items of business under consideration remains an area for improvement. This is acknowledged by the governors and the clerk.

38. Recent changes to the management information system have improved the responsiveness, reliability, accuracy and timeliness of reports. Governors and staff at all levels of the college are positive about the quality of reports they receive. The local LSC has assessed the college as financial category A. The college has run operating deficits in recent years. However, an operating surplus is anticipated in July 2005 as a result of improved financial target setting and an improved learner funding rate combined with a reduction in staffing costs. There is increasingly efficient utilisation of teaching staff and courses are delivered in a cost effective manner. The college maintains a culture of efficiency and cost effectiveness and provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Construction



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory (grade 4)

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on electrical installation and foundation courses

- wide range of specialist provision with good opportunities for progression

- good practical training facilities.

Weaknesses

- low completion rates of apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient use of ILT
- low attendance and poor timekeeping.

Scope of provision

39. The college provision is at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Courses are provided in carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, brickwork, electrical installation and professional building studies. The college has a CoVE in electrical installation in partnership with another college. Over 160 students follow courses at level 1, 320 at level 2 and 100 at level 3. Of these, 34 are apprentices and 46 are advanced apprentices following work-based learning programmes and employed by local companies. The college provides courses for 65 students aged 14 to 16 from 10 local schools.

Achievement and standards

40. Pass and retention rates on electrical installation and foundation construction courses are high. Retention and pass rates on two-year electrical installation courses at level 1 have been well above national averages for the last three years. Retention and pass rates on the national certificate in civil engineering programme are high. However, pass and retention rates on the NVQ wood occupations level 2 course and the AVCE single award in construction are low. Completion rates of apprenticeship frameworks are very low. Only 3 of 113 work-based learners completed the full framework within the proposed timescale. Pass rates for key skills and NVQs within the frameworks are low.

41. Students' work is satisfactory. Attainment in practical lessons is higher than in theory lessons. Students are competent and confident in the use of hand tools and employ safe-working practices. Teachers set and expect high industrial standards. Attendance is low and students are late to lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 236 electrical installation (part 1)	1	No. of starts	37	51	89
		% retention	57	57	73
		% pass rate	81	69	85
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	*	30	24
		% retention	*	10	38

		% pass rate	*	67	48
City and Guilds 2360-08 electrical installation (part 2)	2	No. of starts	26	33	56
		% retention	96	88	89
		% pass rate	28	48	4
BTEC national certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	28	34	25
		% retention	75	76	68
		% pass rate	52	100	53
BTEC national certificate in civil engineering	3	No. of starts	*	23	22
		% retention	*	87	91
		% pass rate	*	80	85
AVCE single award construction	3	No. of starts	17	28	17
		% retention	82	68	65
		% pass rate	86	53	91

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

42. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, the proportion of lessons awarded good or better grades is significantly below the national average. Lesson preparation and much classroom management are good. Students receive helpful individual attention in practical lessons. Health and safety practices are good. Appropriate safety equipment is provided and teachers and students give high priority to safe-working practices. In one practical lesson, students worked accurately and correctly calculated the line current and phase voltage for a star and delta configuration. In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge and skills to ensure that students work with purpose. Students are interested in their work, concentrate well and work independently. However, theory lessons are often dull and uninspiring. In the poorer lessons, teachers do not check that students are learning. ILT resources are not used appropriately to aid learning and students are not encouraged to use IT during lessons.

43. Facilities for practical training are good. The electrical installation facilities which form part of the college's CoVE are excellent. The practical training facilities for students following courses in other construction trades are good. Teachers are well qualified vocationally, but too few have an internal verifier qualification. Currently, less than half of the teachers hold level 4 teaching qualifications.

44. Teachers carefully track students' progress through their courses. Feedback on students' written work is detailed and constructive. Teachers assess students' practical work regularly. All students have an individual learning plan, but many are unaware of its existence or purpose. Teachers do not routinely set specific or measurable learning targets for students. The monitoring of work-based learners' progress is unsatisfactory. Links between on-site and off-site activity are ineffective. Progress reviews for work-based learners place insufficient emphasis on the development of vocational skills.

45. The college offers a wide range of specialist courses, particularly for craft students. Students have good opportunities to progress to higher levels of work, including in work-based learning. Employers of work-based learners receive regular information on their development through progress reviews and reports.

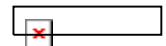
46. Students receive good individual support. Induction is effective and students value highly the good personal support they receive from their teachers. Relationships between staff and students

are good. Students receive good advice and guidance on course and career progression. Arrangements for additional learning support are satisfactory. Initial assessment of students' and work-based learners' language, literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Feedback on the results of assessments to tutors is timely and any additional support needs are clearly identified. The provision of additional support is effective.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Formal and informal communications between team members are good. Staff development for full-time teachers is effective and is linked to annual staff appraisal. Quality assurance of college-based provision is satisfactory. All teachers are involved fully in the self-assessment process. They have an understanding of key performance indicators and improvement targets. However, not all areas complete course reviews regularly. The self-assessment report is self-critical and identifies most of the weaknesses found at inspection. The management and monitoring of key skills provision are unsatisfactory. Procedures for ensuring the testing of portable electrical equipment are not systematic. Management of work-based learning is ineffective and actions to improve the low achievement rates of apprenticeship frameworks have been unsuccessful.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory (grade 4)

Strengths

- high attainment of practical skills

- high standards of engineering skills in the workplace

- good assessment practice on full-time programmes.

Weaknesses

- low completion rates and slow progress of work-based learners

- low pass rates on many courses.

Scope of provision

48. Over 500 students are enrolled on engineering programmes. Of these, 69 follow full-time courses leading to AVCEs in engineering and NVQs in performing engineering operations at levels 1 and 2. The college runs part-time programmes for 442 students. Day-release programmes include performing engineering operations at level 2, national certificates in mechanical and electrical engineering and intermediate certificates and advanced diplomas in engineering. There is an evening course for computer-aided design. Work-based apprenticeships exist in engineering production, maintenance, technical services, manufacturing engineering and electronics. There are 2 apprentices and 30 advanced apprentices. Short course provision for local industry includes training on abrasive wheels and a post-graduate course in applications of engineering technology. Eight pupils aged 14 to 16 attend a part-time programme offered to local schools.

Achievement and standards

49. Retention rates for work-based learners are satisfactory and rising. About two thirds of the advanced apprentices starting in 2001/02 are still in learning. Pass rates on engineering short courses are high. However, pass rates on many other courses are low. Completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks are low. Pass rates in key skills for work-based learners are very low. Most advanced apprentices have passed the appropriate technical certificate, but are making slow progress in both the key skills and NVQ components of the framework.

50. Mechanical engineering students and work-based learners develop good practical skills in college workshops and in the workplace. They produce engineering components which conform to technical specifications and meet industry standards. Students' use of machine and hand tools is good. Most students are confident in correct workshop practices and they make effective use of a project to develop a wide range of bench-fitting and machine skills. Students work independently on their project work.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ performing engineering operations	1	No. of starts	*	33	20
		% retention	*	64	65
		% pass rate	*	52	31
City and Guilds 4351-07 computer-aided draughting	2	No. of starts	53	62	34
		% retention	92	76	74
		% pass rate	78	55	68
Inspection and testing	2	No. of starts	37	42	60
		% retention	100	100	95
		% pass rate	73	74	70
AVCE manufacturing	3	No. of starts	*	19	15
		% retention	*	42	53
		% pass rate	*	25	75

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

51. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Practical teaching for mechanical engineering students is

good. Students work effectively to complete appropriate projects. Teachers ensure they use hand tools correctly and that they operate lathes and drilling machines confidently. Teachers provide good individual help in lessons. In computer-aided design lessons, students with different qualification aims work well independently at computer workstations. However, in level 3 theory lessons, the teaching does not make sufficient demands on students. Teachers do not provide enough activities to stimulate and interest students and fail to check students' learning and understanding. In many engineering lessons, teachers do not use ILT sufficiently. However, the use of ILT in mathematics and science lessons is satisfactory. Opportunities for work-based learners to develop high standards of engineering skills in the workplace are good. Well-qualified and experienced staff provide valuable technical support for apprentices.

52. Work-based assessors and teachers are suitably qualified and vocationally experienced. Most have a teaching qualification at level 3 and a few at level 4. However, the college has too few staff qualified to carry out internal verification in some areas. Physical resources for practical skills development in engineering are satisfactory. Equipment is of industry standard. One electronics workshop is well equipped with computer-based learning systems which are complemented by high-quality learning resources. The quality of handouts and paper-based learning materials is high.

53. Assessment practice on full-time programmes is good. Mathematics and science assignments for the AVCE in engineering are stimulating. They provide high levels of challenge and are of strong vocational relevance. Internal moderation of assessments is routine and thorough. Assessment decisions are consistently accurate. The planning and recording of internal verification are good. Internal verifiers give satisfactory feedback to assessors. Teachers monitor students' progress closely and maintain detailed individual records. However, assessment practice is weak on work-based learning programmes. Teachers do not record learners' progress effectively in reviews. In most reviews, the targets set for learners are not specific.

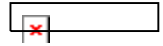
54. The range of courses provided meets the needs of industry and of the students. Courses are offered from level 1 to level 3. Work-based apprenticeships are provided in engineering production, maintenance, technical services, manufacturing and electronics. The college works with local employers to provide short courses to meet their requirements and with local schools to teach the practical element of the applied vocational GCSE in engineering technology. Employers are kept informed of work-based learners' progress and attendance at college, but links between on-the-job and off-the-job training are poor.

55. Arrangements to meet the literacy and numeracy support needs of students on level 1 performing engineering programmes are effective. Literacy and numeracy lessons are timetabled within the programme structure. Teamwork between teachers and support tutors is good. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. The support offered is vocationally relevant and effective. However, tutorial arrangements for national certificate students are unsatisfactory. Individual learning plans for students on a few programmes are poorly completed. Most employers work with the college to provide good support for their employees if they are making slow progress.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management of college-based engineering provision are satisfactory. Formal and informal communications between managers and staff are effective. Resource management is satisfactory. Managers take account of the outcomes of staff appraisals when planning training. Quality assurance of college-based programmes is satisfactory. Course reviews are regular and teachers use their findings to contribute effectively to the self-assessment process. The college's most recent self-assessment report identifies many of the weaknesses noted by inspectors. Internal verification is satisfactory. Planning of internal verification is good and assessors receive useful feedback from verifiers. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Despite improvements in progress for some work-based learners, the actions taken to improve completion rates of apprenticeship frameworks are insufficient.

Business, administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most full-time business courses
- extensive use of employer links
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on most professional courses
- unsatisfactory planning of individual learning
- much inappropriate accommodation.

Scope of provision

57. The college offers a range of business, administration, professional, management and accounting courses from levels 1 to 4 for full-time and part-time students. Programmes include full-time foundation and intermediate GNVQ and AVCE in business and national diploma in e-business. Part-time courses include shorthand, text and word processing, AS-level subjects in office studies, accounting and economics and NVQs in accounting. The school runs 25 full-time and 55 part-time courses. Nearly 300 full-time and about 500 part-time students are enrolled. Over one third of the full-time students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

58. Retention and pass rates on most full-time business courses are high. Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate business courses are well above the national averages. Pass rates are particularly high on the NVQ level 4 accounting course and the AS level in business, management and office studies. The retention rate on NVQ level 3 accounting is also high. However, pass rates on most professional courses are low. Retention and pass rates on the professional diploma in law are well below national averages. Pass rates on accounting NVQ levels 2 and 3 are also well below national averages and have declined over the last two years. Pass rates for key

skills are low.

59. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Teachers' feedback on assignments provides clear guidance for improvement. Students develop confidence and self-esteem. Level 1 students make good progress and learn new skills. Many students make effective presentations to their peers and local employers. Most students are punctual and attendance during inspection was just below the national average.

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	50	46	95
		% retention	94	91	76
		% pass rate	68	93	44
AS-level business, management and office studies	3	No. of starts	31	44	38
		% retention	90	84	84
		% pass rate	89	89	88
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	42	36	23
		% retention	79	81	87
		% pass rate	52	66	75
Conversion from AVCE single to double award business	3	No. of starts	22	18	19
		% retention	91	100	100
		% pass rate	100	94	95
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	99	115	90
		% retention	78	71	91
		% pass rate	44	61	28
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	82	78	29
		% retention	91	91	72
		% pass rate	13	58	86

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

Quality of education and training

60. Much teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use realistic examples to broaden students' experience. In the best lessons, teachers plan thoroughly and identify clear learning checks with links to key skills. Students undertake a range of activities at different levels. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods. Over half of the lessons observed were satisfactory. In the poorer lessons, learning is not tested. Planned activities and teaching methods do not meet the needs of all students nor provide for different levels of ability. Students are not motivated or actively involved in learning.

61. Much of the accommodation is inappropriate. Some classrooms are cramped and restrict teachers' ability to check individuals' learning. Many rooms are untidy and a few are particularly cold. Students have poor access to ICT facilities in classrooms and whiteboards and screens are not well maintained. Libraries at both main sites are well stocked, but are not always open at times when part-time students are in college. Many teachers have professional qualifications relating to their subject areas and most have teaching qualifications.

62. Assessment is satisfactory. All full-time students receive good initial assessment to determine literacy and numeracy needs. Part-time students are assessed effectively either at interview stage or when they begin their course. The assessment of students' work is frequent and students are aware of deadlines. Written feedback provides guidance to help students improve. Assessed work is moderated internally. In one course, no assessment has taken place since the beginning of the academic year and students are unaware of the standards they are achieving. Assignment briefs are not presented in a consistent format.

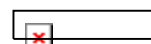
63. There are good links with employers. Students on vocational courses undertake work experience. In one business course, a steering group formed with employers from local industry provides an appropriate business context for students. Full-time students also gain from a range of trips to local and national companies. Students take part in the young enterprise scheme and benefit from organising and running a business. The range of courses provides good opportunities for students to progress on to higher levels in business and accounting. Provision at level 1 is limited.

64. Support for students is good. Specialist screening takes place to identify additional learning support needs. A comprehensive tutorial system supports students on full-time courses and helps them with their course of study and any personal issues. Career advice and additional tutorials are available outside normal hours to accommodate particular needs. Detailed records help the development of the individual learning plans which tutors update at least termly. These contain useful targets for improvement. Students on both full-time and part-time courses benefit from regular e-mail contact with teachers. However, the identification of additional learning support for part-time students is unsystematic.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams meet formally and effectively monitor individual students' performance and progress. Actions arising out of the meetings are minuted and reviewed through course action plans and tutorial records. Students take part in discussions at course meetings. Teachers monitor attendance closely, but the use of data for analysis and evaluation, and to plan for improvements is underdeveloped. Observations of teaching and learning are carried out at least annually and teachers value the feedback and guidance they receive. However, the college's lesson observation grades are considerably higher than those given during inspection. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Sport, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most vocational courses

- good development of work-related skills through enrichment

- good tutorial and personal support.

Weaknesses

- insufficient development of students' independent learning skills

- narrow range of courses

- insufficient sharing of good practice.

Scope of provision

66. The college provides level 2 and level 3 courses in sport, leisure and travel. Courses include GNVQ, AVCE, BTEC national and first diplomas, GCE and GCSE qualifications. Supplementary qualifications include sports coaching awards, community sport leaders' and higher sport leaders' awards and an additional certificate in travel. There are currently, 109 students enrolled, of whom 74 are participating in sport courses and 35 in leisure, tourism and travel. Of these, 102 students are aged 16 to 18 and 7 are aged over 19. Five students aged 14 to 16 attend the GCSE leisure and tourism course. Level 1 and part-time courses are not provided.

Achievement and standards

67. Retention and pass rates for most vocational courses are high. Retention rates have risen on most courses. Retention and pass rates are above national averages for GNVQ leisure and tourism, additional sport qualifications and the AVCE conversion double award for travel and tourism. However, retention and pass rates in AS-level sport studies are low. The development of students' key skills is insufficient and key skills pass rates are low.

68. Students' standards of work and levels of achievement are mainly high. Most students are motivated and enthusiastic about their work and they develop good practical and work-related skills. For example, travel students visit Disneyland Paris, English theme parks and Cyprus. This encourages a culture of teamwork and motivates students. However, female students' attainment of practical sports skills is low. For example, females on the BTEC first and national diploma courses have poor overall fitness and weak motor skills in badminton and basketball. Students' progression rates from leisure, travel and tourism courses to the advanced level travel course are high. Attendance is satisfactory and students are punctual to lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Community sports leaders' award	2	No. of starts	22	36	31
		% retention	100	86	94
		% pass rate	82	94	86
AS-level sports studies	3	No. of starts	16	17	*
		% retention	369	65	*
		% pass rate	64	73	*
AVCE conversion	3	No. of starts	*	24	15

double award travel and tourism		% retention	*	92	100
		% pass rate	*	100	93
AVCE travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	52	21	20
		% retention	79	76	85
		% pass rate	66	94	71
BTEC national diploma sport and exercise science	3	No. of starts	32	17	37
		% retention	59	53	76
		% pass rate	84	89	79

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

*** fewer than 15 students enrolled**

Quality of education and training

69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are characterised by thorough planning and structured teaching. In good sports lessons, students are encouraged to apply theoretical principles to practical activities. For example, in a BTEC national diploma lesson, students applied theories of nutritional requirements to a sports' performer and understood fully the role of complex carbohydrates as an energy source. Students are very enthusiastic when given the opportunity to be actively involved in learning. For example, in a practical fitness-testing lesson, students administered the tests themselves and they responded well to this task.

70. In the worst lessons, students show low levels of motivation. Too many activities fail to gain students' interest. Teaching in such lessons is uninspiring. Many students do not develop independent learning skills and just copy from the overhead projector. IT is insufficiently used for learning activities in sports courses. In travel courses, the Internet is used extensively as a research tool for completion of assignments.

71. Resources are satisfactory. Most teachers have high levels of knowledge and experience which they use to enhance teaching and learning. The sports hall is well equipped, but is not always available because of timetable clashes and its use for examinations. The fitness suite is well used, but mainly by male students. The squash courts are rarely used. Travel and tourism industry simulation facilities are insufficient on site, but good off-site facilities are used extensively.

72. Assessment practice is effective on all programmes. Assessment plans and criteria are clear and are shared with students. Students are fully aware of awarding body expectations and appreciate this approach. The internal verification procedure is strong on most programmes. Feedback on marked assignments is informative and is used effectively by students to improve their performance. The assignments set by teachers meet awarding body requirements. In some cases, assignments are also used to develop students' key skills.

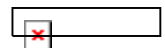
73. The provision of courses and programmes is unsatisfactory in this area. Level 1, part-time and evening courses are not available. The college recognises the restricted range of provision and has tried several strategies to run different courses without success. The opportunities for progression are good and additional qualifications are available in sport and leisure. Good work experience and visits put vocational skills into an industrial context.

74. Guidance and support are effective. Tutorial support is good and students' progress is regularly monitored and reviewed. Reporting to parents is comprehensive and is appreciated by parents and students. Personal support is particularly good and many students have been helped to continue on their courses. Students are willing to approach their teachers and tutors when they have difficulties and the support they receive helps build their self-confidence. Improved support for students who are often absent has raised attendance.

Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality assurance and the promotion of equal opportunities are satisfactory. Course teams meet regularly and courses are well co-ordinated. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The self-assessment process is rigorous and inspectors agree with most of the findings. The self-assessment targets are not sufficiently specific or measurable. The sharing of good practice is poor in this area. A minority of lessons contain a wide range of learning activities and strategies, but formal plans to share this good practice with other teachers are not in place. Quality assurance arrangements are understood by teachers and are implemented well. All teachers are observed teaching and opportunities exist for relevant staff development. Retention and pass rates are monitored effectively at all levels.

Health, care and public services



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most full-time courses

- much good teaching

- high levels of teamwork by public services students

- highly effective use of individual learning plans

- good planning and management of change.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on counselling and AVCE health and social care courses

- inappropriate use of accommodation.

Scope of provision

76. The area offers early years courses at levels 1 to 3 and NVQ qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Other full-time courses include public services at first and national diploma and certificate levels, AVCE health and care, and a first diploma in caring. Part-time students take NVQs in care and cleaning services, intermediate counselling certificates, safety compliance, care skills, care practices and effective personal development. A continuous programme of first aid courses is franchised through the Red Cross and, in the last year, over 700 students were enrolled on these courses. Nearly 1,300 part-time students are enrolled in the area and about 330 students attend on a full-time basis.

Achievement and standards

77. Pass rates are high on most full-time courses and part-time first aid courses. Pass rates are well above the national averages on all public services courses and are often at 100%. Pass rates on early years courses are also high. Pass rates on counselling and the AVCE single award in health and social care courses are low. The college recognises this and the provision is changing to meet students' needs. Retention rates are also high on most full-time courses and part-time first aid courses. Retention rates are above national averages on all public services courses and the diploma in childcare and education. However, retention rates are low on AVCE health and social care single award, counselling and NVQ level 3 in early years care and education.

78. Students on public services courses have very well-developed team building skills. They work collaboratively and effectively, and use a wide range of methods to support each other. They swiftly organise themselves into groups in lessons and spontaneously allocate tasks and responsibilities. On other courses, students also work well together and show respect for each other. Students develop good independent research skills. Students on level 2 early years courses gave a thorough evaluation of the practical activity they had devised to promote children's gross motor skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First aid at work certificate	1	No. of starts	980	642	774
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	97	99	99
BTEC first diploma in public services	2	No. of starts	30	15	25
		% retention	67	100	96
		% pass rate	95	100	100
BTEC national diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	22	23	25
		% retention	68	61	76
		% pass rate	93	100	95
BTEC diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	25	40	46
		% retention	88	80	78
		% pass rate	100	97	94
Certificate in counselling	3	No. of starts	26	20	*
		% retention	77	80	*
		% pass rate	100	81	*
NVQ early years care	3	No. of starts	15	18	21

and education	% retention	33	22	48
	% pass rate	80	100	90

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

*** fewer than 15 students enrolled**

Quality of education and training

79. Much teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, often with a wide range of lively and imaginative activities. Teachers have a good knowledge of individual students' needs and most incorporate strategies to meet them. The majority of lesson plans are very detailed and include clear checks on students' learning, but a few are brief. The most effective lessons use good motivational techniques and classroom organisation. For example, students in a foundation level lesson used group time to discuss how they felt after a paired communication exercise in which one person refused to listen to the other. From this, they learned how to articulate their own concerns. In a minority of lessons, undirected questions slow the pace and reduce the amount of learning.

80. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have good opportunities for vocational updating. They have a wide variety of occupational experience which they use to good effect. Accommodation is clean and maintained adequately. However, in a third of lessons, the room size is inappropriate for the group size. This hampers learning, limits the range of activities and reduces opportunities for checks on learning. The specialist learning centre helps students to improve their time management, research skills and completion of assignments. Teachers provide good assistance and students have immediate access to a wide range of resources.

81. Initial assessment covers students' abilities in key skills and literacy and numeracy. The results enable teachers to plan appropriately. Progress is monitored carefully and individual learning plans are amended to incorporate new targets arising from assessments. Homework is set regularly and marked quickly. Feedback sheets on assignments are comprehensive and give detailed advice to students on how to improve. Teachers plan assessments carefully to ensure students can manage their workload. Internal verification is rigorous and meets the requirements of the awarding bodies. NVQ assessors visit students in the workplace fortnightly.

82. The range of enrichment activities for full-time students is wide. It includes residential activities for team building and work experience, visiting speakers and external visits. Active involvement in local partnerships helps teachers to maintain their occupational expertise. The college is piloting an initiative aimed at raising the qualification levels of local employees to level 2. The range of programmes is wide and provides well for the local community's needs.

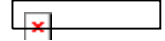
83. Support for both full-time and part-time students is good. Students' individual learning plans incorporate the results of initial literacy and numeracy screening, identified learning support needs, personal support needs and individual targets. Teachers use these very effectively to identify in-class support. Tutors transfer this information to group profiles. Subject teachers are well informed of students' individual needs. The tutorial system is well structured and has a strong careers education element for full-time students. Part-time students also receive regular and effective tutorial support.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are good. The management of change is highly effective. Strategic planning for change and development is good. For example, teachers have reorganised the curriculum to broaden provision and have replaced courses which no longer meet students' needs. A strong team works collaboratively to effect improvement and ensure the success and improved confidence of students. Teachers have a good understanding of the direction of the college. They are actively involved in the construction and monitoring of the self-assessment report. Course teams set targets for retention and pass rates, and monitor progress against them. The self-assessment report identifies weaknesses accurately, but overrates some strengths. Appraisal is linked well to

staff development, but does not include outcomes from lesson observations effectively. Promotion of equal opportunities and measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour are satisfactory.

Visual arts and media



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates

- high standards of practical work in GCE A-level media and GNVQ intermediate art and design

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning to meet the needs of all students

- poor specialist resources

- insufficient response to identified weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

85. Most of the provision is for full-time students. More than 170 students are full time and most are aged 16 to 18. Over 50 students attend on a part-time basis. Full-time courses include GNVQ intermediate art and design, AVCE art and design, foundation diploma in art and design and AVCE media. AS-level and GCE A-level subjects are offered in art and design, media and film studies. Part-time evening courses are run in interior design and soft furnishings. There is no provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools or at levels 1 and 2 in media.

Achievement and standards

86. Pass and retention rates are consistently high on most courses. The pass rates have been 100% in GNVQ intermediate art and design for the last two years and are 100% in foundation and AVCE art and design. Retention rates are low in AS-level and GCE A-level art and design. Pass rates are

low in AS-level art and AS-level media. Few students achieved high grades in AS-level and GCE A-level media in the last three years.

87. Standards of practical work are high in GCE A-level media and GNVQ intermediate art and design. For example, a project based on a visit to the Imperial War Museum enabled students to gather information by drawing and photography. They then combined the images with themes from war poetry. GNVQ intermediate students have well-developed personal and learning skills. Work by foundation diploma students is satisfactory. Observational and life drawing in portfolios are inadequate and sketchbooks are over reliant on copied images. However, drawings and pattern making developed on the computer are refreshingly vibrant and unusual with unexpected outcomes.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level film/video production	3	No. of starts	17	42	21
		% retention	94	76	81
		% pass rate	81	91	88
AS-level media	3	No. of starts	24	53	39
		% retention	88	77	85
		% pass rate	76	80	79
AVCE art and design	3	No. of starts	41	26	28
		% retention	83	77	89
		% pass rate	94	85	100
Conversion from AVCE to AVCE double award	3	No. of starts	22	32	16
		% retention	100	91	100
		% pass rate	95	97	100
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	17	15	26
		% retention	94	100	81
		% pass rate	88	93	86
BTEC diploma in foundation studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	24	22	17
		% retention	75	95	100
		% pass rate	89	90	100

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

Quality of education and training

88. Teaching is satisfactory. The best lessons make demands on students and encourage them to evaluate and analyse their work and extend their own creative practice. For example, before devising a five minute film, GCE A-level media students analysed a series of short films effectively and then described the plot to the rest of the group. In the best theory lessons, teaching encourages students to improve their analytical skills by careful questioning and sensitive discussions. In one film studies lesson on censorship, students were able to place a film from the 1930s into a contemporary context and compare the shock values of recently released films.

89. In the poorer lessons, teaching does not take account of students' individual needs. These lessons lack structure and purpose and do not encourage individuality. Teachers answer their own questions and do not check learning. In one drawing lesson, students did not correct proportion and perspective before moving on to more complex drawing tasks. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT

to develop students' learning.

90. Teachers are qualified practitioners with good subject knowledge. Most have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. The staff development programme helps teachers to develop their professional skills. Teachers in media use the college intranet for projects and handouts. There are links to specialist sites for research. The recent introduction of new technology to the media studios has widened the scope and raised the standard of students' work. However, the specialist resources are inadequate. The five media editing suites and the art and design suite equipped with computers are timetabled for lessons which limits students' access to independent learning. Interactive whiteboards are not available for media teaching. Students' progress in a radio scripting lesson was slow; 10 students waited to use the one computer. The library is closed when evening classes take place.

91. Assessment is thorough with comprehensive internal verification procedures. Students understand what they need to do to improve. Initial screening is comprehensive and teachers receive reports. However, they do not always use this information when planning lessons. Art and design students receive constructive assignment feedback. Most individual learning plans are effective and contain agreed realistic targets.

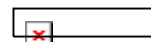
92. The range of courses is satisfactory. Internal progression is good from GNVQ intermediate art and design to AVCE art and design. External progression to HE in media and art and design is good. Students benefit from relevant visits to London.

93. Support for students is good. Support for dyslexic students takes place in the studios and in the learning support area. Induction is effective and second year students show first year students around the area. Individual learning plans are used appropriately in tutorials. Students reflect on their last project and set targets for their next one. Teachers advise students about the help available. They assist students to complete their plans with individual discussions. Support for progression to HE and employment is good.

Leadership and management

94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Two heads of school manage the area of visual arts, media and foundation. All members of staff contribute to the self-assessment reports which are accurate. External verifier and moderator reports are analysed and included in action plans. However, these plans are not monitored closely. Courses are well managed. Communications between curriculum teams are efficient. In art and design, the monitoring and recording of students' achievements are good. Course teams are small and effective. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Teachers receive insufficient support to improve their teaching. The inspection grades for teaching and learning closely match the college grades. However, the college has not addressed the weaknesses identified in its own observations. Staff development master classes have not focused on teachers identified as needing support to improve their teaching.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates

- particularly effective development of personal learning and skills
- wide range of teaching methods and learning activities
- highly effective additional learning support.

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- insufficient planning of adult progression.

Scope of provision

95. Nearly 30 students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on pre-entry and entry level full-time courses at the main site. Pre-entry level students work towards the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) certificate in life skills and literacy and numeracy qualifications. Entry level students work towards literacy and numeracy qualifications and externally accredited vocational or independence qualifications. About 50 adults follow part-time pre-entry independence courses based at either the main site or one of two community venues. Adult courses run for four hours each week. Link courses are provided for pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend local special schools.

Achievement and standards

96. Retention and pass rates are high. Achievements of external qualifications in literacy, numeracy, work and life skills are good. Most students make good progress relative to their prior attainment and potential. They achieve the learning targets set out in their individual learning plans. Students develop their personal and learning skills particularly well. Students' behaviour, teamwork, co-operation, self-confidence and independent learning are very good. Students produce high standards of work. On accredited programmes, students' portfolios of evidence are well organised. Students attain well in lessons. In a lesson on the environment, students showed a good understanding of recycling waste and produced clear visual displays. In a numeracy lesson, students understood time and the calendar well. The standards of students' ICT skills are high. Students attend well and are punctual.

A sample of retention and pass rates in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Towards independence	entry	No. of starts	12	55	60
		% retention	92	98	87

		% pass rate	100	100	98
Certificate in adult literacy	entry	No. of starts	*	14	15
		% retention	*	93	93
		% pass rate	*	77	93
Certificate in adult numeracy	entry	No. of starts	*	14	14
		% retention	*	93	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Skills for working life	entry	No. of starts	*	9	8
		% retention	*	89	100
		% pass rate	*	88	100

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

* **course not offered**

Quality of education and training

97. Lessons contain a wide range of teaching methods and learning activities. Skilled and knowledgeable tutors teach and support individual students well. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned and have appropriate cross-references to the national core curricula. Team teaching between tutors and support tutors is very effective. Teachers manage learning and students' behaviour well. They use an appropriate range of teaching methods to engage and motivate students and develop their knowledge and skills. Students are attentive and work hard. They demonstrate confidence and good communication skills. In a pre-entry programme, the teacher made good use of a game to encourage students to identify their personal preferences of working. Students gained a better understanding of suitable future employment. In some lessons, teachers do not plan sufficiently to meet the needs of individual students.

98. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation at the main college site is good. Rooms are clean and well furnished. Dedicated rooms contain very good displays of students' work which celebrate their achievements. Rooms in the community venues are sometimes unsuitable. Students make good use of ICT in lessons. However, the number of classrooms equipped with ICT is insufficient to meet learning needs fully. Paper-based learning resources are satisfactory and are cross-referenced to the national core curricula. Teachers are well qualified. Many hold additional specialist qualifications in working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

99. The use of individual learning plans is ineffective. Tutors rarely use such plans well to set clear targets for students and to measure small, but important steps in their progress. Course tutors do not use the plans to draw together the progress students make in all their lessons. The college makes good use of initial assessment to identify students' literacy and numeracy levels. However, it does not routinely follow this with formal diagnostic assessment to identify students' specific needs and to set targets. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Parents and carers receive regular feedback on students' progress.

100. Planning for the progression of adult students is poor. The pre-entry programme for adults provides a range of progression routes to other modules at the same level. However, progression routes to entry level or vocational courses are not identified clearly. The long-term goals of adult students are insufficiently identified. Students receive a detailed interview on joining the college, but this does not adequately identify all their learning needs and goals. The college provides comprehensive course information for students, their carers, parents, and schools.

101. Identification of individuals' support needs is good. Course team leaders write clear detailed profiles of each student and routinely provide these to the relevant subject tutors. Pastoral support is

good. Members of staff manage students' attendance effectively. Additional learning support teachers are highly effective. They make a significant contribution to the management of students and learning. Support staff work well with individual students. They prompt and aid students sensitively and reinforce teachers' advice when needed. They give effective support to students who have poor attention skills and help them to concentrate on tasks. Personal and pastoral support are good.

Leadership and management

102. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Roles of members of staff and management structures are well defined and the responsibilities of programme managers, course team leaders and tutors are clear. Formal and informal communications between managers, tutors and support staff are good. Target setting and action planning for improvement are satisfactory, although many members of staff are not sufficiently aware of targets. The promotion of equality of opportunity in lessons is satisfactory. Curriculum development is effective for students aged 16 to 18, but it does not meet the needs of adult students. The lesson observation grades awarded by inspectors are lower than those given by the college's observers. Managers routinely monitor the quality of individual learning plans and reviews of learning, but do not systematically record any action which follows. Course reviews and subsequent action planning are satisfactory. Staff development is satisfactory. Most tutors have received training in the use of national core or pre-entry curriculum. Internal verification of accredited and non-accredited programmes is satisfactory. The area's self-assessment report is appropriately self-critical. It identifies most of the weaknesses found at inspection.

Part D: College data

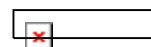
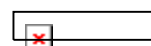


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	16	35
2	26	26
3	56	20
4/5	0	6
Other	2	13
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total



	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	228	648	10
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	219	197	5
Engineering, technology and manufacture	202	413	7
Business administration, management and professional	397	1,000	16
Information and communication technology	211	340	6
Retailing, customer service and transportation	22	4	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	262	415	8
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	350	2,623	33
Visual and performing arts and media	230	126	4
Humanities	250	165	5
English, languages and communication	173	148	3
Foundation programmes	95	148	3
Total	2,639	6,227	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	242	140	256	390	330	1,032
	Retention rate %	67	85	73	56	21	74
	National average %	75	76	76	70	71	71
	Pass rate %	69	54	62	68	56	83
	National average %	67	69	73	68	70	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,012	996	949	847	825	1,972
	Retention rate %	75	76	74	66	64	62

	National average %	70	71	71	68	68	67
	Pass rate %	68	76	78	67	70	88
	National average %	68	70	73	67	71	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,679	1,465	1,445	896	895	1,031
	Retention rate %	72	78	76	67	68	65
	National average %	70	77	77	68	70	69
	Pass rate %	70	70	72	61	65	72
	National average %	75	77	80	68	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	19	*	*	336	387	356
	Retention rate %	74	*	*	68	64	54
	National average %	73	**	**	67	68	69
	Pass rate %	43	*	*	44	25	50
	National average %	54	**	**	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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

**data unavailable.

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	44	49	7	45
Level 2 (intermediate)	52	36	12	25
Level 1 (foundation)	67	33	0	6
Other sessions	58	32	10	19
Totals	51	41	8	95

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