



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



## Reigate College

### CONTENTS

---

#### [Basic information about the college](#)

#### [Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

#### [Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

#### [Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Business](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

[Visual and performing arts and media](#)

[Humanities](#)

[English and modern foreign languages](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

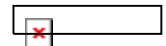
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

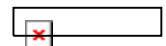
**Basic information about the college**



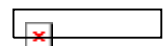
---

Name of college:	Reigate College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Paul Rispoli
Address of college:	Castlefield Road Reigate Surrey RH2 0SD
Telephone number:	01737 221118
Fax number:	01737 222657
Chair of governors:	Michael Ormerod
Unique reference number:	130829
Name of reporting inspector:	Bob Roberts HMI
Dates of inspection:	24-28 January 2005

**Part A: Summary**



**Information about the college**



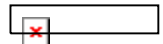
Reigate College was established in 1976. It occupies a single site close to the centre of the town of Reigate, in Surrey. As the only specialist sixth form college in south-east Surrey, the college caters predominantly for students aged 16 to 18 pursuing advanced level courses. Reigate is an area of low deprivation. Many students come from four local partnership schools. However, the majority, about 60%, come from further afield, notably Croydon. The college works in collaboration with East Surrey College, a college of further education (FE) in nearby Redhill.

The number of students attending the college has increased by about 17% since the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspection in February 2000. In 2003/04, the college enrolled 1,460 students, of whom 96% were full time. All, but 35 were aged 16 to 18. Most of the students over this age enrol on to advanced level courses. Almost 90% of students are from a white British heritage, with the remaining 10% being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

Most of the college's courses are at advanced level. Of these, most are advanced subsidiary-level (AS level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. The college offers an increasing number of advanced vocational courses. About 6% of the college's students study at intermediate level 2, the majority on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses. A relatively small number study general certificate of secondary education subjects (GCSEs).

There has been a major building programme since the last inspection. The college's mission statement is 'to provide quality education in a supportive community'.

### **How effective is the college?**



Inspectors judged the provision to be outstanding in business and in information and communications technology (ICT). Science and mathematics, English and modern foreign languages, and humanities, were judged to be good. Provision in visual and performing arts and media was judged to be good overall, with visual arts within this area outstanding.

#### ***Key strengths***

- the strong focus on achievement
  
- rising success rates
  
- inclusive and flexible curriculum
  
- good facilities
  
- good teaching

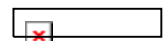
- good academic support
  
- very good guidance and support
  
- strong sense of community
  
- very good financial management.

**What should be improved**

- ineffective key skills practice
  
- the sharing of good practice.

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

**Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**

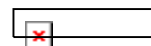


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates in mathematics and in chemistry are high and those in other areas are rising. Good resources and a variety of activities are used to enhance learning. The needs of all students are not fully met in a minority of lessons. Retention rates are low on AS-level science courses.
Business	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching and learning are very good. Physical resources are excellent and enhance learning. Pass rates on all courses are high. There is a good range of effective support for students.

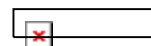
Information and communications technology	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass rates are high, with very good teaching and learning on all courses. The standard of students' work is high and students develop good practical skills. Excellent resources and well-designed specialist teaching rooms enhance learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Good.</b> The contributory grade for visual arts is <b>outstanding</b> . Pass rates are above the national averages in most subjects. The standard of work in visual arts is very good and students make good progress relative to prior attainment. In performing arts, progress relative to prior attainment is insufficient. Teachers provide effective support for students. Accommodation and resources are good for all subjects.
Humanities	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are consistently high on GCE A-level courses. There are low pass rates in AS-level philosophy and the retention rate is below the national average in AS-level law. Teaching and learning are very good. The humanities curriculum is enhanced by a wide ranging enrichment programme.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Many GCE A-level pass rates are very high. There is much good teaching and learning. Facilities in modern foreign languages are excellent. Insufficient attention is paid to developing students' critical skills.

#### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. A strong focus on achievement and systematic observation of lessons has led to improvements in success rates. There is a wide range of courses available at AS level and GCE A level, and the number of vocational courses has increased. Careful financial management has allowed investments in new buildings and resources. The number of students at the college has increased significantly. Senior managers convey a clear sense of purpose. Communications are good. However, not enough is done at middle management level to monitor and share practice across the college as a whole. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for monitoring the performance of students and staff. Swift and successful interventions take place if students or provision give cause for concern. Data on students' performance and achievement are used systematically in self-assessment, although the college is not always sufficiently critical of its own performance. Governors are effective in their role. The college provides good value for money.

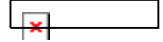
#### To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. Within its context and mission, the college's curriculum is flexible and inclusive. A broad range of level 3 provision meets the needs of students. The college provides a good range of courses at intermediate level which provide for approximately 6% of students. The college is oversubscribed and priority is given to students from the four partner schools who achieve the minimum entry criteria. Some 60% of students come from areas outside Reigate. About a quarter of current enrolments are eligible for educational maintenance allowances (EMAs). Limited action has been taken to target and recruit under-represented groups. Students benefit from a strong sense of community, although participation in work experience and the activities programme is low. Attendance is high. The college has made good progress towards compliance with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001

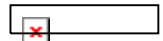
obligations under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000.

### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**



Support and guidance for students are very good. The college has good links with partner schools. Initial guidance is thorough and advice is readily accessible. The initial evaluation of support needs is very good. Induction arrangements are thorough. Expectations are clear. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Students benefit from a wide range of support services. Academic support is very good. The tutorial programme is comprehensive, though some group tutorials fail to interest students. Students are set grade targets for achievement; however, it is often not clear what measures they should take to reach them. Careers education and advice are very good. Guidance on progression to higher education (HE) or employment is very good. Use of the college's networked individualised learning plan system to monitor progress of supported students is not fully developed. The college has satisfactory arrangements for child protection. Students feel safe at the college.

### **Students' views of the college**



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

#### ***What students like about the college***

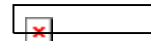
- the friendly, relaxed atmosphere
  
- supportive relationships between staff and students
  
- ICT facilities and the learning centres
  
- quality of classrooms
  
- wide choice of subjects
  
- sports and other enrichment opportunities

- support, including careers, HE advice, counselling and financial support
- team building and induction
- independence and being treated like adults
- feeling safe, with no bullying
- quality of food
- additional academic support through the access programme.

***What they feel could be improved***

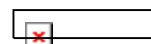
- the size of the refectory
- students' social areas
- car parking facilities
- travel costs to college
- spaces for group work
- tutorials.

## Other information




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

## Part B: The college as a whole



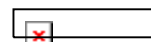
### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



Aspect & 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	81	19	0
Learning 16-18	77	23	0

*Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).*

## Achievement and standards



1. Overall judgements about achievements and standards for the years 2002 and 2003 are based on aggregate information in the college performance report produced by Ofsted. This is derived from data supplied by the college in its individualised learner record (ILR). Data for 2004 are derived from the college using its own software. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievements and standards of work on particular courses.

2. The college's main curriculum provision is for full-time students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. The majority of these students are on courses leading to AS level and GCE A level chosen from a wide range. Around 360 students are studying level 3 vocational courses: there are four subjects offered at advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE), as well as the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma course in sports studies and the BTEC national certificate in performing arts. At level 2, four GNVQ intermediate courses are offered as well as four GCSEs. At the time of the inspection, there was one small project providing basic skills to adults.



## **16 to 18 year olds**

3. Overall students' achievements are good and are improving. Retention rates for level 3 qualifications have been slowly rising and are just below the national average for sixth form colleges. This trend holds true irrespective of qualification type. Level 2 retention rates for 2002/03 and 2003/04 have been above the national average, again irrespective of qualification type.

4. Pass rates are above national averages. Level 3 pass rates have risen significantly, from 76% in 2000/01 to 94% in 2003/04, which is 6% above the national average. Pass rates for AS levels and GCE A levels are both above the national averages. In 2003/04, the overall pass rate for GCE A level was 98%. Some 19 subjects out of the 35 offered at this level had pass rates of 100%. The overall pass rate for AS level was 92%, which is well above national average of 86%. Pass rates on AVCE and national diploma courses are substantially above national averages. In 2003/04, the proportion of high passes (A and B grades) obtained at level 3 was 39%, compared to a national average of 35%.

5. At level 2, pass rates have fluctuated over the last three years, but in 2003/04 the pass rate was 95%, significantly above the national average. GCSE high pass rates (A\* to C) have remained substantially above average over the last three years and in 2003/04 were 60% compared to a national average of 44%. Pass rates on the four GNVQ intermediate courses are outstanding: in 2003/04, the pass rate for these students was 100%, and the proportion of high-grade passes was over twice the national average, 65% as opposed to 31% nationally.

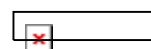
6. The college uses national systems to measure how well students perform in relation to their qualifications on entry. The data demonstrate that most students make the progress they should. The college's overall performance by these measures places it in the top 30% of sixth form colleges for AS-level performance and the top 40% for GCE A level.

7. Progression rates for students are good. Around 72% of the eligible advanced level students progressed to HE at the end of 2003/04 and around half of the level 2 students progress to level 3 courses at the college.

8. Although few students pursue the opportunities to complete key skills qualifications, those students that take key skills tests achieve high pass rates. The vast majority of the portfolios that are submitted also pass. The college provides timetabled lessons for those students who do not have a level 2 equivalent qualification in information technology (IT). In 2003/04, of the 344 who enrolled on this course, 70% completed it, but few (18%) went on to complete the full qualification by submitting a portfolio.

9. The quality of students' work is good overall. Inspectors judged that the standard of students' work was good or better in 74% of the lessons observed. Attainment is exceptionally high in business and in ICT where a significant majority of lessons were judged to be good or better. Students work well together and develop good oral communication skills; most have a well-organised approach to study and respond well to challenging tasks. When projects or assignments are drawn from the outside world, for example, assignments set within AS-level and GCE A-level computing, a high standard of work results. In the visual arts, students show confidence in a range of media and in music they perform to a high level. However, in a few subject areas, critical thinking and analytical skills are underdeveloped. Attendance is high, averaging 92% in the autumn term 2004, and above the national average (85% during 2002/03) for sixth form colleges.

## **Quality of education and training**



81% of these, and satisfactory in 19%. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. These figures are high compared to the averages for sixth form colleges during 2003/04 which were 76% good or better, with 22% satisfactory and 2% unsatisfactory. However, the percentage of teaching which was very good or outstanding, 30%, is lower than the average for sixth form colleges which is 35%.

11. Of the lessons observed, 10% were level 2 courses (GCSE subjects or GNVQ intermediate). Teaching in all these lessons was judged to be good or better. At level 3, the quality of teaching observed was better on the GCE A-level courses, at 87% good or better, compared to the AS-level courses, on which 64% was good or better.

12. The best lessons are very well planned. Lesson objectives are well defined. Planning often shows detailed knowledge of the students in the class, including their preferred learning styles and any learning difficulties or disabilities they may have. Clear explanations and instructions are given. Lessons often have a stimulating variety of activities and tasks, and information and learning technology (ILT) is integrated within the activities in ways that motivate students and enhance learning. For example, in a history lesson on poverty in 19th century Britain, whiteboard activity was interspersed with video and DVD clips from productions of Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Good ILT resources in modern languages enable students to work at their own pace whilst teachers monitor learning effectively. Teachers use classroom assistants well. Students work confidently and supportively together, especially when researching topics and making presentations to their peers. When tasks have real-world applications, such as when students in an AVCE business lesson were working on the development of front-end web sites for a local supermarket chain, progress is particularly good.

13. In the less effective lessons, planning is overambitious, not allowing sufficient time for tasks to be explored. In a few examples, whilst the plans suggest awareness of the individual needs of students, tasks make few demands on students and progress is slow, with all the students working on the same task for too long. In some IT workshop lessons, teachers do not always check learning sufficiently. In some subjects, such as English, teaching does not promote sufficient independence of thought. Feedback on progress in lessons is occasionally thin and some feedback on marked work is sparse. Teachers do not always plan their lessons so that students have enough opportunities to gather evidence for their key skills portfolios.

14. The college occupies a well-maintained and pleasant campus near the centre of Reigate. There are extensive lawns and gardens. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant and extensive improvements to the learning environment and campus. New buildings have been completed for performing arts and media, and for visual arts. In addition, the college benefits from a new sports pavilion and a new business centre completed in the summer of 2004. A new design and technology building will be completed in September 2005. Many areas of the college have been refurbished. These include areas for modern foreign languages, science, IT, English and independent learning. A small number of outdated mobile classrooms are still in use.

15. Facilities and resources for teaching are very good. The college's independent learning centres are well equipped and have good stocks of books and other learning materials. Students and staff have good access to modern computers and the college intranet. Students are able to use learning materials on the college's virtual learning environment, although materials for many courses are incomplete. All teaching areas are networked and have good ILT provision. Students benefit from the imaginative use of space in IT teaching areas that allow individual and group work. Teachers are well qualified and all either have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. Students and teachers benefit from effective technical support. Social facilities for students are cramped.

16. The college has made good progress towards full compliance with the requirements of the SENDA. Many access points have been modified to allow those with restricted mobility to enter the majority of the college's teaching and learning areas. A number of specially modified lifts and mobility aids have been installed and the college effectively promotes non-discriminatory practice.

17. Assessment practice overall is satisfactory, though inconsistent across subjects and departments. Assessment is fair and meets awarding body requirements. Initial assessment of literacy needs is good. Assignment briefs are usually comprehensive and accurately reflect course

requirements. The college does not have an overall marking or assessment policy. Instead, individual subject departments devise and implement their own. These are set out in course booklets and although many are comprehensive as well as helpful, some are vague and imprecise. Many course and curriculum teams share their best practice. However, assessment practice varies markedly between departments, subject areas, and in a few instances within individual courses. The standard of marking is inconsistent. In many cases, there is too little detail, insufficient guidance, and no indication of the grade at which a student is working and no advice on how to improve it. Students on more than one course may be subject to differing assessment, marking and homework policies.

18. The college has an internal verification system for vocational provision. The internal verifier role is clear and details are readily available to staff. Record keeping of assessment grades and marks, though largely paper based, are thorough. External verifiers' and moderators' reports are collected centrally and distributed to academic departments for attention.

19. The college offers a very good range of advanced level courses. In 2003/04, this included 41 AS levels, and 35 GCE A levels. The number of level 3 advanced vocational courses, offered in flexible combinations, has increased to 4 during 2003/04. The number of students taking level 3 vocational courses has more than doubled in 2 years to 362. Provision at level 2 is more limited. Four GNVQ intermediate courses are offered to full-time students as well as four GCSEs. There is at present no vocational course available within the sciences and mathematics area, and not all curriculum areas offer intermediate courses. There is a strong emphasis on personal and social development within the curriculum. Accredited short courses are provided for all students in money management and drugs education and an NCFE certificate in employment skills is targeted at particular students.

20. The college is committed to playing a role in the development of wider educational provision in the area. In 2003/04, besides a small number of adult students following IT courses, the college successfully managed its first group of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) adult students, recruited in conjunction with a local care home. A similar project is underway this year. The college is playing a leading role in the development of provision for young people aged 14 to 19 within the area. As part of the local Reigate and Redhill Increased Flexibility (IF) programme, the college offers vocational GCSEs for young people aged 14 to 16 in local schools in three subject areas. In recent years the college has provided access art and design courses for a local pupil referral unit.

21. The curriculum is enriched by frequent trips in this country and abroad, such as recent visits to the Yorkshire coast, Pompeii, Prague, New York, and Paris. Outside the classroom, an activities programme offers a wide variety of opportunities, although the number of students taking part is low. There is, however, a thriving Duke of Edinburgh Award programme, a Young Enterprise programme, and a Community Sports Leader Award scheme. Around 50 students undertook work experience placements during 2003/04, a small number overseas. An active students' union contributes to the community ethos of the college.

22. Arrangements for accrediting students' key skills are ineffective. The college policy is to provide opportunities for advanced level students to develop and accredit one skill through their subjects. However, students receive conflicting advice and inconsistent support. Students who compile portfolios usually pass, but few students do this and even fewer go on to complete the full award. Separate provision is made for those students who enter the college without a level 2 qualification in ICT. Of the 355 Year 12 students enrolled on this in September 2003, 214 (77%) passed the relevant test, but only 40 (19%) submitted a portfolio and achieved the full award.

23. Support and guidance for students are very good. Senior members of staff at the college are each responsible for liaison with a partner school. Transition support from school to college is good. A number of open evenings and taster days give students the opportunity to evaluate the courses available. Prospective students benefit from comprehensive pre-entry guidance and all applicants are interviewed. Opportunities occur later to review or change their choice.

24. All students have a comprehensive induction programme. Students are made aware of college policies for equality of opportunity, racism, and bullying. Expectations for punctuality, homework and conduct are made clear. Students are required to consent to these by a learning contract. All

students are evaluated for literacy and other support needs. In addition, all teachers set an initial evaluative piece of work. Detailed advice and guidance are available on a range of support issues including accommodation, benefits and financial support.

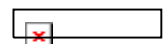
25. Weekly group tutorial sessions, involving all students, are well structured to a common yearly programme and include aspects of self-evaluation, target setting, application to HE, and careers education and advice. Many of these sessions are lively and interesting, but a few fail to interest students. The college has developed a virtual learning environment, through which students can access many subject-specific learning materials from any of the networked computers. The extent of this material varies greatly between subjects. In addition, the college has very recently introduced a well-designed networked system for use in the evaluation of progress, the individualised learning plan (ILP) system. Progress in individual subjects is monitored half termly. Details are recorded on the ILP system and are available to teachers, tutors, and other members of the college's staff. In the best examples, these records are detailed and complete with clear indications of the steps necessary to improve. Too often, however, they are incomplete or too brief. Students are not routinely given printed details of ILP targets or actions. Tutors review attendance and progress, and students are required to evaluate their own progress using tutorial handbooks. These evaluations often lack detail, or clear targets and actions, or are incomplete.

26. Learning support is very good. The college's learning support centre employs 15 well-qualified learning facilitators. Large numbers of students take advantage of this centre, individually or in groups. All intermediate level lessons have in-class learning support. However, the quality of written support materials is often poor. The college's virtual learning environment contains no specific materials to aid the development of students' study skills, literacy or numeracy. The use of the college's ILP system to monitor the progress of supported students and communicate with teachers is not well developed. Teachers provide good academic support, and are accessible to students. Lessons are extended weekly to enable teachers to help small groups or individuals with aspects of work. Revision courses are offered at appropriate times of the year.

27. The college has a very good careers centre. Resources are comprehensive, and students use specialist careers software. Advice and guidance are available on careers and university applications. Of those students eligible, 73% progressed to HE in 2003/04. The college works well with the local Connexions partnership. Links with other support organisations are good.

28. Record keeping is good, and is facilitated by the use of networked database systems. Teachers receive comprehensive details about the students they teach. These include support needs, predicted and present grades, preferred learning styles, attendance, and the outcomes of initial screening for literacy. The operational management of support is effective. The centre is able to demonstrate overall rises in the achievements of those students who receive support. The college has satisfactory child protection arrangements and good links with child protection agencies and social services. Recently appointed teachers undergo enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. Established teachers have undergone Department for Education and Skills checks, but these may be some years old. At the time of inspection, governors had not received training on child protection issues.

## **Leadership and management**



29. Leadership and management at the college are outstanding. Provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection, and changes have been managed very well. Success rates have improved, particularly at level 2. In 2001/02, success rates at level 2 were just below the national rate; in 2003/04 they were significantly above. At level 3, improvement has been from just below the national rate in 2000/01 to 5% above in 2003/04. Progress relative to prior attainment is good for those students at each end of the prior attainment spectrum; for the range of students in the middle

to students have increased to include more subjects at AS level and GCE A level, and more advanced vocational provision including courses in, for example, health and social care and travel and tourism. The number of students attending the college has increased significantly in recent years, largely through a rise in recruitment at level 3. The college's financial status has improved and it has been successful in carrying out five projects to refurbish or build new accommodation and improve resources.

30. The college uses observation of lessons to improve teaching practice. Effective support and guidance are given to teachers whose teaching is not good. At the previous inspection, undertaken by the FEFC in February 2000, 65% of teaching was good or better. At this current inspection, inspectors judged 81% of teaching to be good or better. This is close to the college's own estimate of the quality of its teaching and is above the national average for sixth form colleges (76% in 2003/04). However, the percentage of teaching judged very good or outstanding (30%) is below the sixth form college average. The college's teaching observation records place insufficient emphasis on the quality of learning taking place in lessons.

31. Senior managers have a clear sense of purpose which they communicate effectively to staff, students and their parents. Their focus on a broad and balanced curriculum for students aged 16 to 19, greater inclusion, high standards in effort and performance, and the development of students' independence are well understood and shared by all. Managers' open and consultative management style is successful in keeping staff well informed and comfortable about raising matters of concern. The college has an effective annual operational plan which it uses well to develop and improve its provision. Departmental objectives link clearly to annual objectives for the college as a whole. Data are used very effectively within the self-assessment processes, but the college is insufficiently critical of its own practice and not enough consideration is given to developing trends and issues.

32. Management of the curriculum is good in all the areas inspected. Curriculum teams monitor students' attendance, punctuality and progress carefully, and take swift and appropriate action if students give cause for concern. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is very high. Senior managers take prompt action to improve provision in curriculum areas giving cause for concern. However, not enough is done at middle management level to monitor and share practice across the college as a whole. Good practice in one department is not always picked up and developed for use in other departments. For example, in ICT, managers identified that women were under-represented on ICT courses and have taken action to promote their courses to girls in local partner schools. However, targeting of under-represented groups has not taken place in other areas of the curriculum, such as performing arts, where there are imbalances. Some managers use data well to monitor students' performance and identify trends, but others do not. Policies on assessment and homework vary from one department to another and are not consistent across the college as a whole. Students are sometimes unclear about how well they have completed an assignment and what they need to do to improve. While the college has a policy of integrating key skills in its courses the achievements of the full qualification for the key skills of communication and IT are poor.

33. Students' views and other feedback are used to monitor provision and improve quality. Responses indicate generally high satisfaction with the service provided by the college.

34. Governance has improved since the previous inspection. There is a good mix of relevant skills among governors and good representation from a range of business interests, parents, students and members of staff. The corporation is well structured and administered, with a suitable range of sub-committees. The minutes are purposeful and relevant, although the decisions, expressed as intended actions and timescales, are not sufficiently clear. Governors are well informed, receiving sufficient data and analysis to contribute effectively to planning and monitoring the work of the college.

35. Implementation of the college's equality policy, disability statement and race relations policy is monitored carefully by an equality committee which meets and reports regularly. The college is making good progress in implementing its action plan to meet the requirements of the SENDA. It monitors retention and pass rates against gender and ethnicity and investigates any imbalances carefully to ensure no unfair discrimination takes place. It takes some good actions to raise students' awareness of equality and diversity, including an annual diversity day. Students are given very clear

information on their rights and responsibilities at college and swift action is taken when students fail to conform. However, not enough is done to improve students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the wider world. Although students' work is used well in displays on the college walls, few examples of this work celebrate diversity or different cultures.

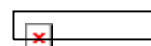
36. The college has particularly good links with its partner schools, whose students have a guaranteed place at the college provided they meet the required entry criteria. Links are made at governor level, and by individual teachers, some of whom teach on courses provided by the college at one of the partner schools. These links extend to a wide range of other schools and colleges in the region and they are effectively used to promote provision and research curriculum needs.

37. Staff development opportunities are good and appraisal is effective. The lesson observation process is used effectively to identify the needs of individual teachers and to set them targets for improvement. There is good support for staff to help them develop their teaching, subject knowledge and management skills. Good support and development are provided for newly qualified teachers, and unqualified teachers are helped to work towards appropriate teaching qualifications offered by local providers. In-service training days are well planned and focus most closely on improving teaching and learning.

38. Senior managers use information systems, internal and external data and benchmarks to analyse students' performance, identify trends and research improvements. At departmental and faculty level, these systems are particularly effective in providing six-weekly progress reports on individual students and in monitoring their attendance and punctuality.

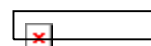
39. Finances are managed prudently. The college has successfully improved its financial position during the past four years, enabling it to carry out five capital building project and purchase resources to improve teaching facilities and accommodation. It has successfully generated a large reserve to help fund further building work. The college is in financial category A and has Trust in FE Pathfinder status. The college offers good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



---

### Science and mathematics



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

#### **Strengths**

- high pass rates relative to prior attainment in mathematics
- high pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level chemistry and GCE A-level physics
- interesting and stimulating activities in lessons

- good resources to support learning
- thorough and detailed assessment.

**Weaknesses**

- low retention rates in AS-level sciences
- teaching failing to meet the needs of individual students.

**Scope of provision**

40. The college offers a wide range of provision in science and mathematics at advanced level. This includes AS level and GCE A level in biology, chemistry, human biology, mathematics, further mathematics and physics. GCSE mathematics and biology are offered at intermediate level. The City and Guild numeracy stage 3 is offered to students with less than a D grade on entry. Almost all students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time.

**Achievement and standards**

41. Retention rates in GCSE mathematics and GCE A levels in both science and mathematics are high. However, in AS-level sciences, the retention rate is below the national average. Pass rates in mathematics are high. In AS-level mathematics, the pass rate is significantly above the national average. Pass rates in GCE A-level physical sciences are good, with AS-level and GCE A-level chemistry consistently above the national averages and GCE A-level physics above the national average in 2003/04. The pass rate in AS-level biology rose significantly in 2004 following three years of declining results. High-grade pass rates in GCSE mathematics are significantly above the national average. In November 2004, 77% of students improved their marks by at least one grade. The pass rate in the City and Guilds numeracy qualification has been very high for the last two years.

42. The standard of students' work is high and they produce neat, well-organised files with good use of colour and highlighting to show important points. Students have good study skills. They select information from written and graphical texts and use this in their work. There is some good collaborative learning with weaker students being paired with those who are more able. Weaker students are supported and the more able students explore their own understanding of complex concepts by putting these into easily understood language. Practical work is well organised and competently carried out. There is good regard for health and safety and students approach experimental work with confidence.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	183	143	154
		% retention	77	92	99

		% pass rate	54	47	54
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	114	113	125
		% retention	86	80	87
		% pass rate	78	66	92
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	53	55	75
		% retention	81	80	85
		% pass rate	93	93	89
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	121	148	170
		% retention	88	93	92
		% pass rate	82	87	90
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	57	57	58
		% retention	84	79	79
		% pass rate	73	80	80
GCE A2 biology	3	No. of starts	67	61	37
		% retention	99	97	97
		% pass rate	85	78	97
GCE A2 chemistry	3	No. of starts	37	34	27
		% retention	95	100	96
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A2 mathematics	3	No. of starts	65	81	98
		% retention	92	93	96
		% pass rate	95	96	100
GCE A2 physics	3	No. of starts	32	26	25
		% retention	97	96	100
		% pass rate	90	92	96

### ***Quality of education and training***

43. Most teaching in this area is good or better. Varied resources and activities maintain students' interest and support learning. The best lessons are characterised by dynamic teaching and imaginative activities. Examples include group work, paired work, interpreting data, using mini whiteboards to explore solutions, completing study booklets, heart dissection, matching exercises with equations, selecting earthquake data from the Internet, analysing data about DNA, planning students' own chemistry analysis and investigating the splitting of voltage by resistors.

44. In the least successful lessons, teachers do not cater for the needs of all students. The work is too easy for some students whilst others struggle to understand complex concepts. Students are passive receivers of information. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and convey this to the students. They explain terms clearly and relate these to the students' experience. Students receive good individual help.

45. Resources are good. Laboratories are well equipped, well maintained and allow for both experimental work and theory. Light projectors and interactive whiteboards are used to draw graphs in mathematics, demonstrate monohybrid inheritance in biology and present ideas for planning practical investigations in chemistry. Internet access in the physics laboratory allowed students to find data quickly on earthquakes, which they were then able to use in calculations. The virtual



learning environment resources for science and mathematics are currently being developed. There is a high level of technician support in sciences.

46. Teachers are well qualified. All hold relevant subject degrees and most have a teaching qualification. Many teachers have a higher degree. Technicians are well qualified. Teachers have all undertaken relevant professional development much of which has focused on raising students' achievements.

47. Assessment practices are good and students' progress is monitored effectively. There is extensive use of examination questions and marking criteria. Work is thoroughly and accurately marked. Students receive detailed feedback on what they need to do to improve. Students also receive verbal feedback on common problems. Weekly access sessions provide extra help for students with particular difficulties.

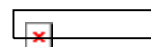
48. The range of provision is good and meets the needs of students intending to move on to HE or employment in the science and mathematics areas. Students on advanced courses can re-take GCSE mathematics or take the City and Guilds numeracy examination to give them a recognised qualification in mathematics. The majority of students progress to HE. There is a good range of enrichment activities including a week-long biology field trip, competitions and visits to places such as the Rutherford laboratory.

49. Students receive a high level of academic and personal support both within and outside lessons. Teachers have extensive and detailed knowledge of their students. Many teachers use their knowledge of students' preferred learning styles to devise lessons with a variety of activities and approaches. Students with particular difficulties are referred to the additional support centre. Work completed following help from the centre is of a high standard.

### ***Leadership and management***

50. Leadership and management are good. Teams hold regular meetings, which focus on the progress of students and raising their achievements. Strategies have been put in place to arrest the declining pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level biology and human biology and pass rates rose in 2004. The data systems and online registration are effective in allowing teachers quickly to identify students with problems.

## **Business**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on all courses
  
- wide range of effective support for students
  
- very good teaching and learning

- o excellent teaching accommodation
- o good ILT provision that enhances learning.

**Weaknesses**

- o very low retention rates on the AVCE double award.

**Scope of provision**

51. Most of the provision in the business area is at advanced level. Accounting, business studies and economics can be studied at AS level and business studies and economics at GCE A2. Students can take an AVCE course in business studies and intermediate GNVQ in business studies is offered at level 2. There are about 380 enrolments on business courses. Students are all full time and the vast majority are aged 16 to 18. Members of the college's staff also teach the vocational GCSE business in one of the partner schools.

**Achievement and standards**

52. The pass rates on all courses are high. For the last two years, all students who completed the GNVQ intermediate course achieved the qualification. Both the retention and pass rates on the AS-level and GCE A2 economics courses are high. At AS level, they are significantly above national average in 2004 and on the GCE A2 programme all the students who completed the course were successful. However, the percentage of students who achieved high-grade passes was below the national average. On the AS-level business studies course, the number achieving high grades was significantly above the national average. Retention rates have been below the national average on the AVCE business double award for the last two years and declined in 2004 on the AS-level accounting course. On other courses, retention rates are at or around the national averages. Students studying for the GCE A2 business studies qualification in 2003/04 made poor progress relative to their prior attainment at GCSE. Although very few students achieve formal key skills accreditation, broader key skills are being developed. Attendance during the inspection was high and the vast majority of students arrived promptly for lessons. Students work very effectively and collaboratively in the classroom.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	34	28	29
		% retention	79	100	86
		% pass rate	85	100	100
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	38	31	35
		% retention	84	87	77
		% pass rate	88	74	81
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	132	139	145

		% retention	88	87	93
		% pass rate	87	88	91
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	19	43	47
		% retention	100	81	96
		% pass rate	74	77	89
AVCE (double award) business	3	No. of starts	26	22	37
		% retention	69	50	51
		% pass rate	83	100	95
GCE A2 business studies	3	No. of starts	86	81	74
		% retention	93	99	99
		% pass rate	99	95	93

### **Quality of education and training**

53. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well planned and the lesson plans clearly indicate the differing needs of individual students. Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs and preferred learning styles of the students. Extension activities are provided for the more able students and teachers organise group work carefully. The lesson plans also indicate how ILT will be used. Students are given information about the aims and objectives of the lesson, helpful explanations and clear instructions. Teachers provide a range of activities to reinforce learning.

54. Students are well motivated and interested in their studies. They display good subject understanding and work well together. In one lesson, students studying for an AS level in business studies watched a brief video on Hertzberg's *Two Factor Theory of Motivation*. At the end of the video, they were able to relate Hertzberg's theory to that of Maslow and answer questions on the difference between movement and motivation.

55. Good use is made of ILT in lessons both by teachers and by students. In an AVCE business lesson, students were looking at the steps and resources required to set up a front-end website. They had to prepare advice for a supermarket chain on how they should set up a website for customers to order goods online. Students visited the websites of the supermarket's competitors to see how they had approached the problem. Classroom assistants work closely with teachers.

56. The teaching areas in the business centre are excellent. The classrooms are bright and airy and there is ample space for wall display. Rooms are well equipped with computers and data projectors. The layout allows for a teaching area in the centre of the room, but allows students to access the computers laid out around the room. Teachers are well qualified. They receive regular in-service training and display up-to-date knowledge of the business sector.

57. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. The department has an effective internal moderation system for the marking of homework. Assessment practices comply with awarding body requirements. Students' work is accurately marked and the feedback they are given is constructive.

58. The college works collaboratively with local providers and has developed a curriculum designed to meet local needs and complement what is being offered elsewhere.

59. There is a wide range of effective support for students. At induction, the college carries out an initial assessment which focuses on students' literacy skills. The students' GCSE points scores feed into the A-level Information System (ALIS) and influence the setting of minimum target grades. Tests to determine students' preferred learning styles are administered by tutors. The head of faculty liaises with support staff to arrange additional support. Two classroom assistants work with level 2 classes and with specific students in level 3 classes. There is timetabled access for individual

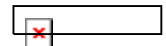
learning support.

60. The college has recently introduced computerised ILPs and teachers have been trained to use them. Targets for students are discussed at team meetings, but many of the targets shown on these ILPs are imprecise. Students' attendance and progress are carefully monitored. Students speak highly of the range of support available to them and appreciate the team building exercises provided at the start of their courses.

### ***Leadership and management***

61. The business area is well managed. Course and departmental teams meet regularly. There are clear agendas and the minutes record that staff review issues relating to individual students. Action points are usually specific. Communication within the department is good. Most business teachers are based in the same area and share information and resources. Teachers are involved in the production of course level self-assessment reports. The self-assessment report produced by the department was accurate and identified most of the strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection. The data available for the monitoring of students' performance by ethnicity, gender and disability are not used at faculty level. However, any concerns are raised by senior management and drawn to the faculty's attention.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- very high pass rates
  
- very high standard of students' work
  
- very good teaching and learning
  
- excellent resources including bespoke and well-designed ICT teaching rooms.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient constructive feedback on some students' assignments.

#### ***Scope of provision***

62. The college offers full-time AS-level and GCE A-level courses in computing and ICT for students aged 16 to 18. In addition, the college introduced an AVCE in information and communication in September 2003. There is no intermediate course. At the time of inspection, there were 251 first-year and 132 second-year students. Student numbers have increased by 50% over the last three years.

### **Achievement and standards**

63. Pass rates for AS levels and GCE A levels in computing and on ICT courses are high and above national averages in all cases. The proportion of students achieving high grades in these qualifications was significantly above national averages in 2003/04. Students' achievements relative to their prior attainment on AS-level courses is good. The college has recently started to offer the AVCE in IT and the initial results show retention rates in line with national averages and pass rates which are well above. Students are punctual and the average rate of attendance in lessons during the inspection was high, at 91%. Students produce work of a high standard and take great care with homework and assignment work. All students demonstrate good practical knowledge and skills. They are encouraged to devise useful projects for local businesses. For example, one student had contacted a camping site and had gained their support in designing a database to manage bookings. Another student had designed a database to test chemical concentrations in a local hospital's boiler system.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level computing 1 year	3	No. of starts	74	70	71
		% retention	93	83	92
		% pass rate	88	84	97
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	141	131	91
		% retention	88	84	77
		% pass rate	87	94	87
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	37	49	39
		% retention	95	90	90
		% pass rate	91	98	91
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	84	73	76
		% retention	94	92	89
		% pass rate	95	99	96

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

### **Quality of education and training**

64. A high proportion of teaching is good or better and all lessons are at least satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to meet the needs of students of all abilities. In ICT, teachers produce good teaching and learning resources that are available online. Students take part in lessons with enthusiasm and talk confidently about ICT. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching methods to maintain interest and motivation. For example, in one lesson, the teacher gave a powerpoint presentation to introduce databases, followed by an online quiz to gauge understanding and a practical workshop for students to apply what they had learned. When teaching the whole class, teachers give good presentations and question students effectively to ensure understanding of the work. In workshop sessions, some teachers fail to check progress on a regular basis. The virtual learning environment is used frequently in lessons and students appreciate being

able to access assignments, presentation and notes from it.

65. Resources are excellent. Hardware and software are of up-to-date industry standard. The network is robust. Students have good access to computers in and outside of lessons. All classrooms are equipped with projectors or interactive whiteboards. A number of ICT rooms are specifically designed to make teaching more effective. In one room, the floor is tiered so that the teacher can view all the monitors from the front of the class and ensure that all students are working on the set task. In another, there is a discrete teaching area away from the computers so that students are not tempted to continue working during whole class teaching. Most staff are experienced and well qualified, but some lack recent occupational experience.

66. Students are given good advice on assessment. Regular sampling of work by teachers ensures they are meeting examination requirements. The progress of students is carefully monitored and reviewed against target grades. Students are clear about how much progress they have made on the course and what extra work is needed to meet their target grade. On AVCE courses, some assignments set by teachers lack imagination. Marked work is returned quickly, but the feedback given to students is sometimes very brief and does not always contain constructive suggestions for improvement.

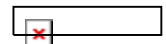
67. The AVCE is available as a 3, 6 and 12 unit course which creates good opportunities to combine vocational ICT with other courses. When circumstances change, students find it easy to transfer between the courses and continue with their study. The college offers all students work experience, but few ICT students take it up. The department uses external speakers and off-site visits to show students real-life applications and career possibilities. For example, the department has arranged a visit to European theme park to see how a large organisation benefits from and utilises ICT.

68. Working relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students speak well of the high levels of support provided by the ICT staff. Teachers give freely of their time outside lessons. Teachers are committed to ensuring the success of their students and are responsive to the needs of students with learning difficulties. For example, notes are prepared in fonts and colours which dyslexic students find easier to read. Good procedures are in place to monitor students' progress and improve performance.

### ***Leadership and management***

69. Leadership and management in the curriculum area are good. Members of the team work well together and meet regularly on an informal and formal basis to discuss students' progress. There are good communications within the department. One member of staff gives talks to local schools to improve the representation of females on ICT courses. There is little sharing of best practice with other curriculum areas. Good use is made of management information to monitor and improve students' performance.

### **Visual and performing arts and media**



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

Provision in the visual arts is **outstanding (grade 1)**

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates

- high number of high-grade passes on many courses
- good progress relative to prior attainment in visual arts
- high standard of students' work in visual arts and music
- effective support meeting the needs of individual students in visual arts and media
- good accommodation and resources that support learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient progress relative to prior attainment in performing arts subjects
- inconsistencies in assessment practices.

### ***Scope of provision***

70. The college offers a comprehensive range of academic programmes in art, design, photography, media, dance, music, drama and performing arts at level 3 that recruit well. There is one level 2 vocational course in art and design and one at level 3 in performing arts. This vocational provision is increasing each year. There are currently over 950 students enrolled; almost all of these are aged 16 to 18. Media studies, art and film studies are the most popular courses.

### ***Achievement and standards***

71. Retention and pass rates are high. There are no courses with pass or retention rates that are below the national averages. Pass rates are above the national average in most subjects. The number of students passing their course with high grades is well above average in GNVQ intermediate art and design, AS-level art, AS-level drama, AS-level music technology and GCE A-level film. Retention rates for AS-level music technology and pass rates for AS-level dance have both risen in the last two years and are now at the national averages. Progress relative to prior attainment has been good for AS level and GCE A level in photography and AS-level art and design for the last three years. However, over the last three years, progress has been insufficient in AS-level and GCE A-level performance studies, AS-level dance and GCE A-level drama and theatre studies. Students produce a high standard of work across the visual arts and in music. GCE A-level photography students produce well-researched portfolios which include comprehensive self-evaluations and experimentation. Art students work confidently in a range of media and scales. One student is producing a large, metal sculpture; another, inspired by a display in the classroom mounted by the teacher, is producing an excellent large-scale painting of female figures; another has

made small clay tiles to include in a beautifully crafted mosaic of the world. GCE A-level performing arts students sing confidently and music students sing and perform complex pieces well. Attendance is high.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
GNVQ intermediate in art and design	2	No. of starts	16	19	14
		% retention	100	79	86
		% pass rate	81	100	100
AS-level dance	3	No. of starts	29	22	19
		% retention	86	77	89
		% pass rate	72	76	88
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	151	171	170
		% retention	89	96	88
		% pass rate	97	99	99
AS-level music technology	3	No. of starts	18	16	22
		% retention	72	81	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	88	109	120
		% retention	92	94	93
		% pass rate	100	98	100
GCE A-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	32	41	38
		% retention	97	95	89
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

***Quality of education and training***

72. Much teaching and learning is good. Teachers review students' progress regularly and provide very good advice on how to improve their work. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers use a range of teaching methods to engage students' interest. A topic in film studies on the origin of the studio system was brought to life by the teacher through an effective combination of imaginative handouts, role play, archive film clips and group discussions. Homework is set regularly and helps students to make progress through their course. Students work confidently together and learn from each other. In a lesson on *The Beggars' Opera*, a group of students had difficulty working out how to stage the songs in their extract. They sought advice from other students and watched their presentations. They were able to explain how they could incorporate other students' ideas into their work. Students are proud of their work. Photography and art students enjoy explaining how they assemble their sketchbooks. One art student provided an excellent explanation of how Japanese art influenced 19th century Western art and, in turn, her own work. In most AS-level subjects, some of the tasks make few demands on students. In some cases, teachers let students spend too long on tasks and insufficient progress is made.

73. Teachers and technicians are well qualified. Resources are very good and are used effectively. Performing arts and music rooms are large with good lighting rigs and sound systems. Computers are available in media theory rooms and students use them well. In a media theory lesson on critical evaluation, a discussion took place about how students had represented 'enigma' in a practical film



project on gangsters some weeks previously. They were able to access their films on the computers quickly in order to remind themselves. Students have good access to appropriate resources outside lessons. Excellent course handbooks are produced for students studying visual arts and film studies.

74. Assessment practice is inconsistent. Feedback on AS-level media and AS-level music assignments is brief and does not provide sufficient advice on how students might improve their performance. Students are not adequately informed of how their work will be assessed. Teachers in media and performing arts use a range of grading schemes to assess students' work which is confusing for students. However, students in film studies are given constructive feedback that indicates areas for improvement. Feedback from some teachers in art, music and performing arts evaluates students' work effectively and indicates how students can improve.

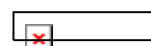
75. There are many enrichment activities arranged for students and funding is available to support those who cannot afford to pay. Many students benefit from their participation in art activities outside college. Music is promoted enthusiastically by the teachers. Students receive free instrumental tuition in addition to their lessons. The music team arrange excellent opportunities for them to perform in local music venues alongside professional musicians.

76. Support for students is good. Teachers provide effective advice and guidance to students during lessons. Students know how they are progressing and what examination grade they should be aiming to achieve. Technicians provide good support for teachers and students. Students with additional learning needs in GNVQ art and design are well supported.

### ***Leadership and management***

77. The management of the arts is divided among three departments. Each of these departments is managed effectively with small, cohesive teams working closely together to meet the needs of students. In all departments, time is allocated on staff development days for staff to share good practice. There are, however, no college policies on matters such as assessment and homework. Individual departments have introduced policies which often differ from those of another department. Effective action has been taken to address the low retention rate for AS-level music technology and the low pass rate for AS-level dance.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
  
- very good teaching and learning
  
- effective support for students

- o extensive enrichment opportunities to enhance students' learning.

**Weaknesses**

- o low retention rates in AS-level law
- o low pass rates in AS-level philosophy
- o inconsistent assessment practice.

**Scope of provision**

78. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in classical civilisation, geography, government and politics, history, law, philosophy, general studies, psychology and sociology as well as AS level in archaeology and citizenship. At the time of inspection, there were 968 enrolments with all but 5 students aged 16 to 18. Numbers are high in psychology and sociology, with 257 and 194 enrolments, respectively.

**Achievement and standards**

79. Pass rates are high on GCE A-level courses with many achieving 100% pass rates in 2003/04. Pass rates in law at AS level and GCE A2 are very high though the retention rate is consistently below the national average. Results are low in AS-level philosophy and have been declining over the past three years. In geography and sociology, students' achievements relative to their prior attainment are good. The proportion of high-grade passes obtained in law was well above the national average at AS level and GCE A level in 2004, but is below average in most other subjects. Attendance was very high during the inspection and students were punctual. The standard of students' work is very high. Written assignments are generally of high quality and students' oral responses during lessons are perceptive and thoughtful. Presentations by students demonstrate insight and endeavour. For example, students in a classical civilisation lesson gave good presentations following investigation and analysis from different source materials of Roman building techniques and the construction of the Pantheon. Higher-level thinking skills were developed in a government and politics lesson when students studied strands of Conservatism and identified and explained the key differences between them.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	79	63	77
		% retention	86	90	91
		% pass rate	93	86	97
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	37	44	46
		% retention	70	77	74

		% pass rate	100	97	100
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	76	84	89
		% retention	97	93	87
		% pass rate	91	94	87
GCE A-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	12	15	29
		% retention	100	100	93
		% pass rate	100	100	96
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	39	48	62
		% retention	97	90	94
		% pass rate	100	100	95
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	47	62	69
		% retention	96	92	91
		% pass rate	100	96	100

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

### **Quality of education and training**

80. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use a range of techniques that interest and stimulate the students. Discussion and debate are used to facilitate students' learning and students feel confident to explore issues and test theories. ICT is integral to many lessons and was used innovatively in a history lesson to illustrate poverty in Dickens's London through photographs and a DVD of *Oliver Twist*. In an archaeology lesson, information concerning the cult of Mithras was provided through different media so that students' interest was stimulated and maintained. The Internet is used in lessons to support and facilitate learning with data and photographic material. Numerous prompts to use websites to support learning are made, particularly in government and politics, geography and psychology. Group and pair work are used to encourage learning. Lesson plans are thorough and give opportunities for students with different learning styles to gain maximum benefit from the session.

81. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. There are good opportunities for staff development. Some rooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards which are used extensively within the lessons. Resource material available to students is comprehensive and is supplemented by detailed course handbooks.

82. There are inconsistencies in assessment practice. Marking of students' work is thorough, but the feedback to students is inconsistent in quality, ranging from detailed and helpful guidelines and thorough analysis of an assignment to more cursory comment. Reporting to parents on progress is regular, giving an indication of current performance in relation to a grade target. Guidance on how to improve is limited.

83. The curriculum enrichment programme is extensive and teachers are innovative in seeking ways to broaden the experience of students. Trips abroad to Berlin and Pompeii as well as visits to places of interest such as Roman villas, Parliament, the courts and subject based conferences invigorate learning.

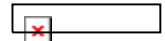
84. Support for students is very good and is valued by students. Support is available from subject staff, tutors, learning support and study centre personnel. The access system is valued by students and provides regular and helpful subject support. The initial screening process is well organised and identifies individual support needs. Information is communicated efficiently to key staff, and students are assisted according to individual need. The independent learning centre has satisfactory stocks of books for all humanities subjects. However, borrowing records indicate low usage in most areas

except law.

### ***Leadership and management***

85. Leadership and management are good. Faculty line management is established through three different heads. The management of individual subjects is effective. Minutes of meetings are thorough and communication is good. Sharing of good practice is undertaken through development days. Course reviews are detailed and are built into a cycle of quality improvement that is part of the self-assessment process and subsequent strategic and operational planning. Targets for teachers are built into the process and linked to performance management.

### **English and modern foreign languages**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on many courses
  
- much good teaching and learning
  
- excellent resources to enhance students' learning in modern foreign languages
  
- effective support for students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- poor progress relative to prior attainment in AS-level and GCE A-level English literature
  
- insufficient attention paid to the development of critical thinking skills.

#### ***Scope of provision***

86. The college offers English literature, and English language and literature, at AS level and GCE A level, and GCSE English. French, German and Spanish are offered at AS level and GCE A level. Spanish courses accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3 as well as GCSE. There were 675 enrolments in this area at the time of the inspection. The majority

(521) were studying English.

### **Achievement and standards**

87. Pass rates in English, French, German and Spanish at GCE A level were high in 2003/04 and have been consistently high in GCE A-level English over the last three years. Pass rates in English literature at AS level are low and declining. GCSE English pass rates at A\* to C are excellent when compared to national averages. Progress relative to prior attainment is poor in AS-level and GCE A-level English literature and in AS-level French and German. In 2003/04 progress relative to prior attainment was good in AS-level Spanish examinations and AS-level English language and literature. Retention rates in English and modern foreign languages are close to national averages. The proportion of high grades obtained in AS-level English language and literature has increased, and was significantly better than the national average in 2003/04.

88. The standard of students' work is largely good. Students are attentive during lessons, particularly on the advanced level courses, and respond well to the challenges of practical tasks. Students retaking GCSE English respond less well. Oral work in English is good, with some sensitive, extended responses in AS-level and GCE A-level literature lessons. Students show a developing knowledge of appropriate terms for analysing the language of literature.

Essays in English literature show good personal response to the texts. However, students make little use of literary criticism to support their own interpretations, mainly relying on those of their teachers and peers. Marked work in English language and literature shows a good grasp of themes and an increasing use of linguistic terminology.

89. In French, German and Spanish classes, students work purposefully. They enjoy using the Divace software to practise listening and grammar through interactive programmes. Levels of comprehension are good. In lessons which develop speaking and listening, there is generally a satisfactory or better response for this stage in the course. Standards of grammar and levels of accuracy in AS-level lessons are satisfactory. Attendance is very high and students are punctual. During the period of the inspection, attendance was 90%.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
GCSE English language grades A* to C	2	No. of starts	89	87	83
		% retention	76	75	72
		% pass rate	41	54	75
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	98	87	112
		% retention	93	87	88
		% pass rate	92	95	96
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	150	145	151
		% retention	92	89	87
		% pass rate	96	95	86
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	29	32	49
		% retention	76	78	86
		% pass rate	100	88	83
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	80	68	55
		% retention	96	97	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100

GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	102	105	104
		% retention	100	97	97
		% pass rate	99	100	98

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

### **Quality of education and training**

90. Teaching and learning are good. English lessons are often planned imaginatively. Learning is best when teachers use group work to allow students to share and test ideas, and there are clear benefits for students' enjoyment, confidence and articulacy. In one AS-level English literature lesson, students analysing *Little Red-Cap* by Carol Ann Duffy, worked with real excitement and enthusiasm teasing out the meaning of some images. Teachers plan lessons to appeal to a range of different learning styles. In one lesson introducing *Murmuring Judges* by David Hare, a powerpoint presentation used images which helped to present Hare's intentions. Lessons plans make clear the support to be given to particular students and this support is effective. The skills of critical thinking to promote independence of thought are insufficiently developed. In modern foreign languages, there is some excellent use of ILT to enhance students' learning. Students make good use of the college's virtual learning environment to develop their grammatical skills.

91. Teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. They are regularly updated in their knowledge and skills by attending subject-specialist meetings, and pass on their learning to other staff and to students. The facilities for the study of languages are excellent: there is a spacious teaching room and a specialised language laboratory. All the English rooms have access to a computer and data projector which are frequently used to provide visual images, or to display a text which can be 'annotated' as students contribute ideas.

92. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Assessment is accurate, and teachers make useful recommendations for improvement. In English, each piece of work has a cover sheet which shows the examination's assessment objectives against which they have been marked and a grid to give a visual indication of how effectively they have achieved the criteria. There is an indication of whether a student needs to follow up the piece of work by a discussion with the tutor.

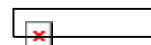
93. Students are supported effectively in their academic work, whether by the teachers or by the foreign language assistants. There is access time built into the timetable so that students can regularly discuss issues or ask for help, but most teachers are prepared to discuss students' work with them at other times. Students appreciate the review days as a way of gaining a clearer picture of their progress. Reviews do not always have specific targets for students to work towards.

94. The range of provision is adequate. The range of modern foreign languages offered is satisfactory, but there are no opportunities to study emerging languages such as Japanese or Russian, nor French and German other than at AS level and GCE A level. The college has supported small numbers of students wishing to study other languages elsewhere. Key skills communication at level 3 is not sufficiently well signposted in English lessons at present.

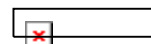
### **Leadership and management**

95. The leadership and management of both curriculum areas are good. Since September 2004, new approaches have been introduced in English to the way subjects are taught to address some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. In literature, 'experts' have been set up to lead the development of schemes of work for the rest of the team. There has been a greater emphasis on making sure that students know the assessment objectives of the courses they are taking, and can use literary and linguistic terminology more confidently. Changes in teaching methods to exploit new technology have also occurred recently in languages. Both areas have a strong team ethos, and teachers share good practice through regular formal meetings.

## Part D: College data



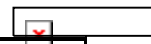
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	1	18
2	10	2
3	89	53
4/5	0	0
Other	0	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2005

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	878	5	15
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	111	2	2
Business administration, management and professional	476	2	8
Information and communication technology	374	10	7
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	373	1	7
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	81	0	1
Visual and performing arts and media	946	6	17

Humanities	1,754	9	31
English, languages and communication	662	1	12
Foundation programmes	5	0	0
Unknown AOL	0	13	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,660</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2005

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
		<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	395	485	484	2
	Retention rate %	83	77	86	50	100	n/a
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	87	87	83	100	0	n/a
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	4,561	4,708	4,756	9	29	21
	Retention rate %	86	88	89	56	79	81
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	76	85	91	100	91	100
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

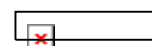
Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000 to 2002: College ISR

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





Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	78	21	0	89
Level 2 (intermediate)	100	0	0	9
Level 1 (foundation)	0	0	0	0
Other sessions	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>98</b>

© Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced verbatim without adaptation, and the source and date of publication are stated.  
 Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

