



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



St Vincent College

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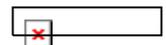
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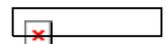
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Basic information about the college

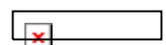


Name of college:	St Vincent
Type of college:	Sixth Form
Principal:	Lynn Lee
Address of college:	Mill Lane Gosport Hampshire PO12 4QA
Telephone number:	023 9258 8311
Fax number:	023 9251 1186
Chair of governors:	Roger Facer
Unique reference number:	130705
Name of reporting inspector:	Alan Marsh HMI
Dates of inspection:	January 31-February 4 2005

Part A: Summary

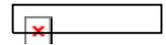


Information about the college



courses from pre-entry level to level 3, in 11 of the 14 Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas of learning, including vocational provision. The majority of courses offered are at level 3. The adult community is also served by the college, and approximately 25% of the college's full-time equivalent students are aged 19 and over. In 2003/04, there were 4,880 students at the college, of whom 72% were aged 19 or over, 66% were female, and 1% were of known minority ethnic origin. Of these students, 24% were enrolled on full-time courses, and the remaining 66% were part time. The college's mission is to be 'an open-access community sixth form college working in local partnerships to drive forward widening participation in education'.

How effective is the college?



The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- clear vision, mission and leadership

- much good and enthusiastic teaching

- shared staff ethos offering good educational opportunities to all

- diverse and accessible range of provision at all levels

- good academic and pastoral support for students

- very good specialist support for students with learning difficulties and /or disabilities

- excellent links with the community

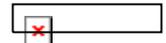
- imaginative strategies to raise students' achievement.

What should be improved

- pass rates on many advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses
- progress made by students relative to their prior attainment
- use of tutorials
- availability and use of information and learning technology (ILT)
- students' achievement of key skills.

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

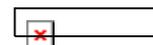


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for science is good . Pass rates are high on some general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, but very low on AS-level courses in mathematics and human biology, and on GCSE mathematics. There is much good teaching across all courses. The specialist accommodation for science is good, but there are insufficient facilities for ILT. Support for individual students is very good. Leadership and management are good.
Sports, leisure and travel	Good. Pass rates are high on advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) travel and tourism, and leisure and recreation double awards, but low on the single awards, and on AS-level and GCE A-level physical education. Teaching in sports is good. Students produce high- quality written work and demonstrate good practical and collaborative skills. Effective use is made of very good sports facilities. There is a good range of provision and progression routes for all students. Leadership and management are good.
Visual and performing arts	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for performing arts is good .

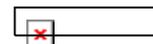
and media	Retention and pass rates are high on performing arts courses, but low on several visual arts and media courses. Teaching is good, especially in performing arts, but there is insufficient insistence on minimum classroom standards and punctuality in a minority of lessons. The range of provision is good. Students are very well supported.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high on most GCE A-level courses, but retention and pass rates are low on most AS-level courses. There is much good teaching, encouraging active learning by students. Learning resources are good and enable students to develop independent study skills. Assessment is well used. The curriculum is diverse and flexible.
English, communications and modern foreign languages	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for modern foreign languages is good. Pass rates are high on modern languages courses and GCE A-level English, but consistently low in GCSE English. There is much good teaching, producing enthusiasm for learning in students. Students are very well supported, both in and outside lessons. There is a lack of appropriate software to develop independent learning. Leadership and management are good.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. A clear vision and sense of purpose are communicated to all staff. There is a strong focus on monitoring and raising students' achievements. Governors and managers are agreed on the college's priorities and there is good strategic planning to promote these. The college has comprehensive quality assurance systems and a rigorous approach to addressing areas of concern. However, there has been slow progress in securing improvements in some areas, and the pass rates on many courses remain below national averages. The management of curriculum areas is good, based on effective teamwork and sharing of good practice, linked to the annual reviews and plans. Leaders and managers are committed to running an inclusive and equitable college, supporting all students and serving the particular needs of Gosport and Fareham. The college has very good links with its feeder schools and with the local community. Management information is reliable, and there is good financial management to ensure satisfactory value for money.

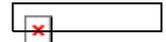
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. A high priority is given to the needs of those with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those from under-represented groups. The college has very effective links with local schools and a wide range of local community groups which has successfully widened participation by the community. The demographic composition of the college fully reflects the local population, and courses for adults and students at all educational levels feature prominently in the prospectus. The college has assessed its accommodation against the criteria of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and this has resulted in significant improvements to access with ramps, automatic doors and lifts. The college meets its statutory duties under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and has recently revised its equality of opportunity policy. There is a standing committee for equality and

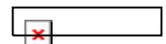
college effectively promotes attention to equality and diversity across most curriculum areas. Student admissions, progress, retention and pass rates are monitored according to gender, ethnicity and disability. However, this information has yet to be developed into plans of action. There is good integration of students with disabilities: in one dance performance lesson, a student with physical disabilities was fully integrated into the lesson and sensitively supported by other students. The college provides particularly good support for students with physical disabilities, which includes physiotherapy, treatment rooms and support for those with hearing impairment.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good. Students receive effective and impartial guidance that enables them to choose the course or programme that best suits them. Induction arrangements are thorough and enable students to settle into their programme quickly. Careers education and guidance are good. Attendance and punctuality are effectively monitored. However, students are not punctual to a significant minority of lessons. Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed. There is very good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The general support provided for students to help them succeed is comprehensive and thorough. Students receive good individual support from teachers and tutors. However, much of the tutorial time is not used effectively and there is no overall programme to guide and support tutors in their use of the time. Subject tutors provide good support and give freely of their time. There is good support for students at the personal level. The college actively promotes the welfare of vulnerable students through its arrangements for child protection.

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

- relaxed atmosphere that is conducive to learning

- friendly, approachable and supportive staff

- good teaching that encourages students to contribute

- encouragement of individuality

- wide choice of subjects

- regular and informative marking of work
- high-quality careers advice
- wide range of enrichment activities and visits
- good facilities for sports and music
- good learning resources centre
- good car parking facilities
- pleasant location.

What they feel could be improved

- group tutorials
- access to sports facilities outside lessons
- heating in the art block
- the range of after-college activities
- the size of the student study area

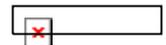
- the number of computers available for use by students

- the college's image in the local community

- the quality of food in the canteen

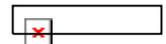
- transport links to the college.

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

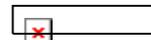


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	78	21	1
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0
Learning 16-18	64	33	3
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0

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).

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. St Vincent College is a sixth form college that operates an open-access policy. Students enjoy a high degree of choice, exercised under the aegis of thorough advice and guidance to ensure that they have a realistic prospect of success on their courses. Academic criteria for entry to level 3 courses are lower than for many sixth form colleges and school sixth forms, in accordance with the college's mission to drive forward widening educational participation in the area it serves. Overall, pass rates for the past three years, 2002 to 2004, have remained steady and below the national average for sixth form colleges. Over the same period, retention rates have risen slightly, and are at the national average.

2. In 2003, the achievements of students relative to their prior attainment at GCSE and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) declined from just below the national average to significantly below average, but in 2004 this figure rose; it remains below average. In 8 out of 10 GCE A-level and AVCE subjects in 2003, pass rates relative to students' prior attainment were below average, but in 2004 pass rates reached average levels. Some subjects, such as GCE A-level law and GCE A-level physical education were significantly below average in 2004, but others, such as GCE A-level music technology and GCE A-level religious studies, have sustained a trend of above-average relative results over the last three years. These results constitute successful results for GCE A-level students overall, and they make good progress in relation to their potential and their ultimate learning goals.

3. Attendance during the inspection was 79%, which is 8% below the average for sixth form colleges, but the inspection was conducted during a week in which the area had been badly affected by a viral infection, and inspectors verified college records that reveal that average attendance to date in 2004/05 is 88%, just above the national average for sixth form colleges. However, students are not punctual to a significant minority of lessons.

4. While the college is supportive of students acquiring key skills qualifications, pass rates for key skills are very low. In 2002/03, 1,130 students started a key skills qualification and only 72 achieved one, a pass rate of 6%. In 2004, the pass rate rose to 11%, but far fewer students took a key skills qualification. The college recognises this low level of achievement, and that many students have a poor commitment to key skills, regarding them as less relevant than their chosen subjects. To improve the participation, retention and pass rates for key skills in all curriculum areas, the college has revised its policy and arrangements. Level 1 key skills are now a central part of the core programmes of those students who enrol without them, or appropriate proxy qualifications. Students are making good progress and many have completed half of their portfolio work. A practical English course designed to develop key communications skills at level 2 is proving popular with students. Students are provided with the opportunity to work up to a level 3 qualification in key skills. Lessons in communications at level 3 are provided for students with GCSE grades C or above. The college has prepared teachers well for the new arrangements for the teaching and assessment of key skills. It is too early to judge the impact of the revised arrangements on key skills pass rates.

5. Students display strong motivation and a desire to succeed in their studies. Oral participation in lessons is good, and practical skills are of a high standard on those courses that require them. Nevertheless, the standard of students' work, when measured against that which might be expected for their stage of the course, is often no more than satisfactory. The proportion of lessons in which attainment is good or better is 17% below the national average, reflecting the college's open-access recruitment policy.

16 to 18 year olds

6. In 2003/04, 8% of students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on long courses at level 1. Pass rates for these students rose from 38% in 2003 (34 percentage points below the national average for that year) to 67%. In a number of modern foreign language national vocational qualification (NVQ) and Open College Network (OCN) qualifications, the pass rate was 100% in 2004. Retention rates at this level also rose, to 82%, which is satisfactory. These students develop good personal and learning skills which equip them to make progress.

7. In 2003/04, 25% of students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on long courses at level 2. Pass rates for these students have remained consistent for the last three years, at 80%. This was 6 percentage points below the national average in 2003. Over half of these students are enrolled on GCSE courses, and in 2003 pass rates for these students were 10 percentage points below the national average, at 82%. Current pass rates are high, for example, in GCSE Japanese, GCSE Spanish, GNVQ intermediate science, and Higher Sports Leaders Award (HSLA), but are low in GCSE English and GCSE mathematics. Retention rates for students studying at this level have risen consistently over the last three years to 82%, which is satisfactory.

8. In 2003/04, 65% of students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on long courses at level 3. A significant number of students enter college with poor independent learning ability, having achieved fewer high grades at GCSE than is the case in most sixth form colleges. They develop good study skills and mature as independent learners during their time at college, but for those on two-year courses (the large majority), these qualities are often not of apparent benefit until their second year. The college recognises this and does much to maximise students' opportunities to succeed during their second year. As a result, students' pass rates at GCE A level are significantly better than at AS level. Over the last two years to 2004, 94% of students on AS-level courses progressed to GCE A-level courses. In 2004, most students who wished to progress to further education (FE), higher education (HE) or employment did so. Pass rates for students on level 3 courses have remained consistent for the last three years, at 81%. This was 6 percentage points below the national average in 2003. For students on GCE A-level courses, the pass rate in 2003 was at the national average of 93%. Generally, a relatively small proportion of students achieves grades A and B at AS level and GCE A level, although the number of subjects in which they did rose in 2004. Pass rates are currently very high, for example, in GCE A-level media, AVCE performing arts, GCE A-level history, GCE A-level classical civilisation, GCE A-level chemistry, GCE A-level English literature and AS-level French (all 100%); they are low, for example, in AS-level law, AS-level sociology, AS-level media, AS-level art and AS-level human biology. The retention rate in 2002/03 for students at this level was 88%, consistent with the national average. It was at the same level in 2003/04.

9. Students studying at level 3 often take some time to develop the necessary study and expressive skills to enable them to achieve well, and such attributes as conceptual and abstract analysis, critical evaluation and intellectual confidence are significantly more evident in students in their second year at college. A significant minority of students at AS level do not express themselves well: they are reticent to formulate ideas and lack the confidence to express themselves in lessons; in modern foreign languages, they commit too many basic grammatical errors; in science and mathematics, they struggle with new concepts. By the time they are studying at GCE A level, students have developed much better levels of concentration and application, and they exhibit academic maturity in their capacity to learn from a variety of sources, including each other. They make good progress towards realising their potential. They enjoy exchanging ideas in humanities, science, film studies and English, and they explore practical possibilities in a creative, disciplined and technically proficient way in performing arts and sport. In science, students make good use of their experimental skills and pose interesting questions to their teachers. Theory and practice coalesce in sport. Listening and comprehension skills are good in modern foreign languages. Students use specialist subject terminology effectively. The better students thrive in collaborative settings, and their presentational skills are of a high order.

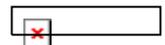
Adult learners

10. Just over half of the enrolments in 2003/04 were of students aged 19 and over. The vast majority of these were part time, on short courses, most of which were at level 1. In 2003, pass rates were at least seven percentage points below the national averages at all three levels, and in 2004 these rates rose only on short courses and on long courses at level 1. On short courses, which account for

over 80% of the enrolments of these students, the pass rate in 2004 was 59%, 27 percentage points below the national average. Retention rates for adult students are good, and have been consistently above average for the last three years to 2003/04 at all levels except level 3, where they are just below the average. The retention rate of the large numbers of adult students on short courses is very good, at 93%.

11. Many adult students who undertake courses at college have been away from education and training for many years, or are returning to learning after previous failure. They are well motivated, but lack basic study skills and self-esteem. These qualities develop well in lessons, and their capacity to work independently and in small groups grows quickly. They can question and answer clearly, and they take pleasure in applying their new knowledge. The standard of their work varies considerably across different courses. At level 1, personal confidence is often the key to the rapid acquisition of technical skills and the ability to apply what has been taught. Note-taking, and the systematic sifting and collation of evidence from basic investigations, are successfully developed. At level 3, adult students demonstrate good research skills. They respond enthusiastically to the collaborative nature of much of the work, engaging in productive dialogue with teachers and other students.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 78 lessons. They judged teaching to be good or better in 80% of lessons observed, satisfactory in 19% and less than satisfactory in just 1%. The percentages of lessons graded for learning as good or better, satisfactory and less than satisfactory were 67%, 31% and 2%, respectively. Teaching was found to be particularly good in English and modern foreign languages, sports, leisure and tourism, and humanities. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed, and have good subject knowledge. They are largely successful in motivating students to learn, and in nurturing in students their own independent study skills.

13. In the better lessons, activities are carefully planned and teachers employ a range of methods to engage students. There are very good working relationships between teachers and students, and between students themselves, and the learning environment in lessons is purposeful. Teachers give generously of their time both in and out of lessons, and the thorough knowledge they have of their students as individuals enables them to give advice and support that takes account of students' different needs. A real appetite for learning is evident, especially in GCE A-level lessons. Students are encouraged to question and explore material and ideas, and work in pairs and in small groups is well used to encourage full, structured discussion.

14. In humanities, modern foreign languages, English and film studies teachers are particularly skilled at creating and managing active learning roles for students: role-play, presentations, debates and demonstrations are effectively used to encourage students to formulate their own critical ideas and cite appropriate evidence in support. They display an impressive capacity to articulate their complex original responses, for example, in a discussion about the moral destinies of characters in *The Duchess of Malfi*, or in a debate on the original banning of films directed by Ferrara. Other students have the confidence and maturity to challenge and argue in these open fora, which are sensitively managed by teachers to encourage full participation. In sports, mathematics, science and performing arts lessons, teachers integrate practice with theory in ways that illuminate their exposition for students who often struggle with abstract concepts. In some very good lessons, teachers exploit students' appetite for competitive play by constructing highly enjoyable games and quizzes to reinforce and exercise students' knowledge.

15. Weaker lessons lack planning and specific purpose. Activities to engage students in learning are not fully structured and teachers rely too much on the giving of information. A minority of students remain uninvolved in creative or practical work, and do not develop sufficiently independent learning

skills. In a few lessons in science and performing arts, the very small number in the class inhibits the dynamic exchange between students.

16. There is a satisfactory level of staffing with 77 full-time academic teachers, including managers, and 32 part-time teachers. The college employs a further 68 part-time adult education and basic skills tutors. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Of the mainstream staff, 91% hold a recognised teaching qualification and the remainder are working towards an appropriate qualification. Of part-time staff 94% hold a teaching qualification and a further 3% are working towards a qualification. An appropriate number of teachers are qualified as assessors or internal verifiers. The college has a good continuing professional development system that is strongly linked to the college training needs planning cycle, and participation is widespread. Teachers are actively encouraged to update their specialist skills and many do so. The college holds current accreditation as an Investor in People.

17. The college has made significant improvements to its accommodation since its foundation in 1987. The property strategy is good and maintains an effective balance between the conflicting needs of ongoing investment in the 19th century former Royal Navy buildings and the development of new and improved resources across the site. The estates department responds quickly and effectively to the needs of the curriculum areas. College accommodation across all curriculum areas is generally good and well maintained. Learning resources are good. The majority of classrooms are pleasant environments, well decorated and well furnished. Accommodation is very good in sciences with well-equipped laboratories. However, some lessons in humanities, media and mathematics take place in classrooms that are dull and poorly maintained, with low-quality whiteboards being used as screens for projected materials. There are good specialist resources in the art studios and workshops. There is a small theatre which, as well as being an important resource for performing arts, is also a much-valued facility for a number of community music and drama groups. Sporting and recreational facilities are very good with a well-equipped sports hall, indoor swimming pool, an all-weather pitch and social areas. The sports facilities in particular are well used by students, staff and the local community.

18. Assessment processes are good. All full-time students undergo diagnostic screening to identify learning difficulties and to determine the level of support needed. The screening also identifies preferred learning styles and this information is disseminated to curriculum areas. However, there is insufficient information provided by some local schools to the college, particularly for those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

19. Full-time students are set target grades based on their attainment at GCSE and they are used effectively by tutors and subject teachers to monitor and improve performance. Formal reviews of progress for full-time students occur once a term. They utilise target grades and include self-evaluation, but no record of the outcomes is provided for students, except when it culminates in the annual formal report. Personal tutors maintain good records of students' progress.

20. Homework is set regularly and marked thoroughly. Feedback is positive and provides clear guidance for students on how to improve their work. Individual learning plans are used effectively with students on pre-entry and entry level full-time courses to monitor and record students' progress. Assessment procedures meet examination board requirements and assignments are effectively linked to the final examination. Parents and carers are kept well informed through formal reports that are produced once a year and through parents' evenings. There are also effective informal communications that are used if a parent has a concern.

21. Students benefit from a very wide and diverse range of courses and programmes to meet their needs at all levels. The choice for students at level 3, in particular, is very extensive with over 50 subjects available in almost any combination. The college's very flexible approach to timetabling means that students are rarely unable to take the subject combination of their choice. Unusually for a sixth form college, the courses available give students at all levels and across all curriculum areas clear progression routes from pre-entry level through to level 3. There are good pathways available in academic and vocational areas, with imaginative combinations of various types of qualifications to provide programmes that meet the individual needs of students.

22. The college has very effective links with external partners to develop programmes for the local community. In particular, the links with three special schools enable students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to follow suitable programmes. The college has developed programmes to enhance learning opportunities for under-represented groups. It very successfully provides a number of outreach programmes in the community, particularly in local housing estates that are recognised as having significant levels of deprivation. These programmes are run in partnership with local community groups and are making a vital contribution towards the regeneration of Gosport, which is designated a Testbed Learning Community by the government.

23. The college offers provision for adults seeking to re-enter education with a pre-entry level 'Stepping Stones' programme. For students aged 16 to 18, pre-entry level 'Preparatory' and entry-level 'Bridging' courses are available. The college is part of an Increased Flexibility (IF) programme, and in particular has developed courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 in sport, critical thinking, care and modern foreign languages.

24. Students participate in a good range of enrichment activities and additional short course qualifications, enhancing personal development and employability. The college arranges a regular series of study visits that enable students to attend art exhibitions, theatre productions, concerts and a wide range of overseas trips to locations such as New York, Berlin and Rome. Students make extensive use of the good opportunities available to them to participate in sporting and leisure activities. Notable success has been enjoyed by sports teams and a large group who entered the national 'Rock Challenge' in 2004.

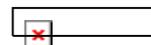
25. Support for students is good. Students receive effective and impartial guidance that enables them to choose appropriate courses. There are good links with local schools that include visits, taster sessions and open evenings. Adults enrolling on daytime and evening courses receive good advice and guidance. Induction arrangements are thorough and enable students to settle into their programme quickly. Careers education and guidance are good. The programme is well planned and communicated to students through tutorials and progress review days. Students receive comprehensive advice and guidance for progression to HE, training and employment. A wide range of events is provided, often with a specific focus. There is good support for both full-time and part-time adults from a dedicated team. There are effective links with Connexions staff who provide more intensive support for individual students. The 'Pathfinder' programme provides additional help for students who need more directed guidance.

26. Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed. Diagnostic screening identifies specific and general learning difficulties and nominates which learning styles might be most effective for each student. The provision for learning support is very good. Comprehensive specialist support is provided for students with learning difficulties. Adults, including those studying in outreach centres, have access to all the services that are available for students aged 16 to 18. There is particularly good provision for students who have restricted mobility that includes physiotherapy facilities and assistive technology for students with hearing impairments. There are discrete full-time courses for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties at pre-entry and entry level.

27. Students receive good personal support from teachers and tutors. All daytime students are allocated to a tutor who assumes overall responsibility for the student's welfare. There is a daily tutorial period which is used as a communication channel and as a mechanism to monitor students' progress. Attendance and punctuality are effectively monitored; absence and lateness are communicated to tutors and dealt with effectively in the daily tutorial time. However, much of this time is not used effectively and there is no overall programme to guide and support tutors in their use of the time. Subject teachers provide good learning support and give freely of their time. There is good support for personal issues from the student support officers, the welfare officer and other specialist services.

28. The college actively promotes the welfare of vulnerable students through its arrangements for child protection and associated staff development. Students aged 16 to 18 successfully develop independent living skills and are well informed about appropriate progression routes into HE, training and employment. The child protection policy is in place and has been agreed by the governors. The college is well advanced in promoting and implementing other child protection requirements.

Leadership and management



29. Leadership and management are good. The college benefits from strong leadership by the principal and senior managers. Governors and managers share an appropriate mission statement for the college, expanded into five key aims which shape learning at the college. These are provision of accessible learning and recreational opportunities for the community; effective recruitment, guidance and support; excellence in performance; effective and efficient deployment of resources; and community partnerships. The college is accessible to students of a wide range of abilities, and has responded well to the diverse needs of the community. It works hard on its key objective to reach excellent achievement for students, and pass rates have improved in 2004; however, they remain below the national averages for sixth form colleges in many subjects.

30. Retention rates have been variable over the last three years, but have improved to at or near national averages, following a number of major initiatives since the last inspection to improve interview and enrolment procedures. There is evidence of improved in-year retention rates on courses in 2004/05.

31. Since the last inspection, the college has continued to be responsive to local needs, including those of employers. It has recruited well from the neighbouring secondary schools, diversified the curriculum, and extended lifelong learning for the community. It now offers outreach provision from a number of community venues in the more socially deprived wards of the borough. It has also introduced new level 1 courses and consolidated the range of level 2 courses for students aged 16 to 18.

32. The college management information system is reliable and accurate, having improved in the four years since the last inspection. Curriculum managers use data to inform their monitoring and planning, and detailed data are available for scrutiny by the corporation. The full board of the governing body is formally informed about students' academic achievements annually, and is briefed regularly about enrolment, retention rates and financial developments, to enable it to monitor the college's performance. It has successfully encouraged improvements in several curriculum areas through the work of the curriculum and quality committee, established since the last inspection.

33. The quality assurance framework is well established and includes annual self-assessment. The college has developed a quality assurance system managed by the vice-principal, leading to annual quality assurance reports and development plans for each curriculum area. The agreed action plans are scrutinised by the principal and the quality team. They also identify courses at risk and develop additional action plans for improvement. There is evidence of significant action by course leaders and curriculum managers in several curriculum areas to improve pass and retention rates.

34. The self-assessment reports are almost always accurate, logical and systematic in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although several had to be moderated to a more realistic grade by the validation panel. Subsequent annual development plans for curriculum areas provide realistic targets for improvements, which are monitored throughout the following year. Areas of poor performance have been subjected to additional curriculum reviews, resulting in very imaginative and detailed action plans to secure improvements. Psychology, information and communications technology (ICT) and health and social care have recently been reviewed in this way. In some subjects, however, poor pass rates below national averages have persisted for three years, and only began to show improvements in 2004. It is thus too early to assess fully the impact of some of these measures. The lesson observation programme is extensive and includes external validation, but the college's own grading profile in 2003/04 produced higher grades than those awarded by inspectors. The results of the lesson observations inform in-service training priorities throughout the college.

35. The new management structure, introduced in 2003, created more capacity in the senior management team, establishing posts to develop initiatives and monitor progress through the

appointment of three assistant principals. The principal leads the senior managers as a quality team, and chairs a standing committee for policy and resources, the purpose of which is to monitor finance, enrolments, class sizes, retention and pass rates, and other key performance indicators. The quality of leadership and management in curriculum areas is generally good. In the best cases, there is astute course management and reporting, with a strong team focus on quality data relating to teaching and learning, pass and retention rates. Curriculum planning is well developed and a good range of courses and accreditation opportunities is offered to students.

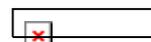
36. The college has developed an effective and valued staff appraisal system which, informed by the lesson observation programme, is a key means of identifying staff training needs. There is a well-resourced programme for staff development, which has addressed many important cross-college initiatives: for example, the development of a new tutorial system, and new strategies for inclusive teaching.

37. The college has very good links with many secondary schools in the vicinity, of which head teachers speak very highly. College staff attend school parents' evenings to talk with prospective students and their parents. The college also has effective links with the three special schools in the area, enabling students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to have access to the college's specialist provision. The college is also a member of a local IF partnership, providing courses for an increasing number of school pupils who wish to take a vocational or alternative course at Key Stage 4. The college has very good links with several community partnerships, including those for economic and strategic regeneration of the Gosport peninsula area. The borough has been designated a Testbed Learning Community by the government, and the college plays a vital role in the regeneration of the area.

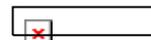
38. The college has recently revised and extended its equal opportunities policy and has a standing committee for equality and diversity, led by the principal. The committee has been active in promoting a wide range of good initiatives. It has thorough policies for equal opportunities and race equality, together with implementation plans, and staff have been appropriately trained in these. There is, however, no clear evidence that the corporation has approved the college action plan for the promotion of racial equality, or that it has plans to monitor this and report publicly on the results. These policies are supported by an innovative and topical range of initiatives, such as cross-college culture days and an event focusing on counteracting racism in football. They are also informed by focus groups for dealing with harassment and bullying, and other significant issues. A statement on disability describes support and resources for students with special needs. Good examples of attention to equality and diversity issues are widespread across most curricular areas. There is an active student council. The monitoring of students' retention and pass rates and progression by gender and minority ethnic background is undertaken, but this has yet to be developed into analysis or action plans.

39. The college has generally achieved its forecast units of funding over the last three years. Budgeting and financial management are prudent. The college has a sound financial status and the corporation has sufficient financial reserves to cover the estimated deficit that will arise this year, following a very late cut by the local LSC in the budget for adult education. There have been satisfactory improvements to resources since the last inspection, and there are no significant shortcomings in current resourcing. The college offers satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

The contributory grade for provision in science is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level chemistry and mathematics and GNVQ science

- good teaching which motivates students

- high-quality specialist accommodation in science

- very good individual support for students

- good curriculum leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level mathematics and human biology and GCSE mathematics courses

- insufficient facilities for ILT in some lessons

- numbers in some lessons too small for productive group work.

Scope of provision

40. The college offers a wide range of courses in science and mathematics. Biology, human biology, chemistry, physics and environmental science are all offered at AS level and GCE A level. Both mathematics and further mathematics can be studied at AS level and GCE A level, with options available in statistics and mechanics. Decision mathematics is offered at AS level and there are free-standing advanced units in algebraic techniques and statistics. There are GCSE courses in mathematics and biology and free-standing mathematics foundation units in data handling and money management. Vocational science courses are offered at intermediate GNVQ and AVCE. Evening courses in mathematics and biology are provided at the college main site and at an outreach centre. At the time of inspection, there were 399 full-time students enrolled on courses in

this area, of whom 332 were aged 16 to 18 and 67 were aged 19 and over.

Achievement and standards

41. Students' achievements are satisfactory. In most subjects, retention rates are near to national averages. Pass rates are close to national averages in most subjects. There are some improving trends in pass rates, with GNVQ intermediate science rising from 70% to 100% over the past three years to 2003/04, and GCE A-level chemistry reaching 100% in 2003/04. There are a number of courses with pass rates below national averages. In AS-level mathematics, the pass rate is 43%, compared with 75% nationally, and in GCE A-level biology and GCE A-level physics, the pass rates in 2003/04 were over 10% below national averages. Across the curriculum area as a whole, there are a number of courses on which students achieve lower grades than might be expected from their attainment at GCSE, and some, such as GCE A-level chemistry, AS-level physics and AS-level environmental sciences, where they achieve higher grades than might have been expected. Generally, students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses gain fewer passes at high grades A or B when compared with the national average for such achievement.

42. The standards of students' work are generally satisfactory. AS-level students struggle at the beginning of their courses to acquire an adequate understanding of scientific and mathematical concepts, although the more able can do so and apply them to difficult problems. GCE A-level science students develop good practical and experimental skills and are confident with laboratory apparatus. AS-level chemistry students are able to carry out titrations and other operations with expertise. Students on GCE A-level mathematics courses have good algebraic skills and are quick to ask challenging questions of teachers. GCE A-level physics students can apply theoretical concepts to practical situations, such as the application of changes in flux to fairground rides, and the behaviour of electromagnetic fields to metal detectors. On GCSE mathematics courses, some students struggle with basic number concepts.

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	118	156	187
		% retention	70	74	88
		% pass rate	40	32	35
AS-level biology /human biology	3	No. of starts	55	88	73
		% retention	76	90	85
		% pass rate	52	63	66
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	106	88	77
		% retention	89	89	93
		% pass rate	57	46	43
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	44	42	44
		% retention	84	90	89
		% pass rate	92	92	85
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	42	43	28
		% retention	98	100	96
		% pass rate	100	98	96
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	34	28	22
		% retention	94	93	100
		% pass rate	97	96	100

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

Quality of education and training

43. There is much good teaching. Teachers are confident in their subject specialisms and work with enthusiasm and commitment. Students are highly motivated to learn, asking and answering questions with confidence. In both mathematics and science, lively expositions and skilful demonstrations help students to master difficult abstract concepts and encourage them to think creatively. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the tutor used ILT imaginatively to introduce the use of Prim's algorithm in networks problems. The students rapidly engaged in solving the related problems. In science lessons, practical work is effectively integrated with theory. In a biology lesson, students successfully extracted DNA from onions and the experimental method helped them to understand its relationship to chromosomes.

44. In a small proportion of lessons, insufficient attention is paid to different ability levels. There are extension activities for the more able students, but they frequently give more practise on a similar theme, and do not extend the students' experience.

45. Teachers are well qualified and appropriately experienced for the subjects they are teaching. Accommodation is very good in science. The laboratories are very well equipped and centrally located. Practical work is well supported by experienced technicians. Some mathematics rooms are inconveniently located and in need of refurbishment. Data projectors are available in all laboratories, but their use to display computer screens lacks the flexibility of interactive whiteboards, inhibiting students' potential involvement. Many rooms have stimulating wall displays. The learning resource centre offers a good range of textbooks and relevant periodicals, and adequate computers.

46. Students' progress is carefully assessed and monitored. All examination courses have regular half-term tests to check learning. These tests are thoroughly marked according to examination board criteria and teachers make helpful comments which make it clear to students what they have to do to improve. Students' examination coursework is well organised. Homework is given regularly and marked promptly.

47. Courses in science and mathematics are well matched to students' needs and abilities, and comprehensively cover the full range of course levels. Free-standing mathematics qualifications provide a stepping stone for students who want to progress in mathematics, but who are not yet ready for GCSE or AS-level study. In science, there is an access course for progression to HE. The most able students can enter for Advanced Extension Awards and national Olympiad competitions.

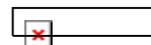
48. There are many opportunities for students to widen their experience of science and mathematics through enrichment activities: for example, by attending lectures at universities and visiting local industries. Students use the extensive college intranet to do independent study and are able to access it from home. On a minority of courses, the small number of students limits the exchange of ideas.

49. Students receive very good individual support from their teachers. Mathematics workshops and tutorials in science are highly valued by students. Achievement targets are set individually for students and progress towards them is carefully monitored during half-termly reviews.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are good. Course leaders set clear directions for staff and there is a clear recognition of the need to raise pass rates. The self-assessment report is constructively self-critical, and imaginative action plans have been initiated to address courses which are underperforming. There is a strong team ethos at subject team and departmental levels. Teams meet regularly and issues of teaching and learning are discussed at every meeting. There is a positive culture of sharing good practices and exchanging ideas. Staff development is given a high priority and there are good, supportive procedures for newly qualified teachers.

Sports, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates on AVCE travel and tourism and AVCE leisure and recreation (double awards)

- high quality of students' work

- good teaching on sports courses

- effective use of high-quality sports facilities

- good range of provision and progression routes.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level physical education in 2004, and AVCE travel and tourism and AVCE leisure and recreation (single awards) in 2003 and 2004

- poor achievement of target grades derived from prior attainment on a minority of courses.

Scope of provision

51. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses in sports, leisure and tourism from pre-foundation through to level 3. Courses include OCN foundation in sport and recreation, first diploma in sport, GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism, AVCE in travel and tourism, AVCE in leisure and recreation, Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate in sport, AS-level and GCE A-level physical education. A range of short courses, for example, the national pool lifeguard and first aid awards, enable students to acquire vocationally useful additional qualifications. At the time of inspection, there were 223 full-time students enrolled on courses in this area, all aged 16 to 18. There is no part-time provision.

Achievement and standards

52. Most retention and pass rates are at the national averages and some are significantly higher. Retention rates on GNVQ intermediate leisure and recreation and GCE A-level physical education were both at 100% for 2003/04. AVCE leisure and recreation and AVCE travel and tourism (double awards) have had pass rates of 100% for the last three years to 2004. However, in 2004, the pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level physical education fell well below the national average for the first time. Students on a minority of courses achieve lower grades than might be expected from their prior attainment at GCSE. Retention and pass rates on short sports coaching courses, which run with very large numbers, are good and consistently above national averages.

53. Most students produce good written work. Assignments and portfolios are well presented with good use of ICT. Portfolios contain a wide range of work which is appropriately detailed and vocationally relevant. Students on sports courses understand the link between theory and practice. They are confident and motivated. Sports students' practical skills are well developed, and they aspire to high standards of performance. In formal presentations, students demonstrate good skills of research, presentation and collaborative group work and are very enthusiastic about their studies. A number of current students have recently won county representative honours, and some have been awarded national honours, in a range of sports. The college celebrates this success and promotes aspiration through annual sports awards.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Community Sports Leader Award	1	No. of starts	71	49	65
		% retention	69	71	85
		% pass rate	98	100	69
AS-level physical education	3	No. of starts	50	34	50
		% retention	80	82	82
		% pass rate	88	89	78
AVCE leisure and recreation (single award)	3	No. of starts	15	16	15
		% retention	73	81	80
		% pass rate	91	62	75
AVCE travel and tourism (single award)	3	No. of starts	29	16	24
		% retention	82	94	83
		% pass rate	83	73	75
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	30	28	18
		% retention	57	93	100
		% pass rate	94	100	72

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

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching is good, particularly in sports lessons. In the most effective lessons, clear objectives are set and teachers use a variety of teaching methods to create lessons that are stimulating, challenging and often good fun. In an AS-level physical education lesson, the teacher used video clips skilfully to translate theory into practice and enable effective learning. Sharing of good practice and teaching materials are valued and encouraged. Teachers are enthusiastic, with a lively style of delivery and imaginative classroom strategies. For example, in another sports lesson, students took

part in a 60-second revision quiz in which they had to speak without deviation, hesitation or repetition. They had fun learning in this competitive way. Sports coaching lessons give students the opportunity to plan, teach and evaluate specific sports coaching sessions. The skills demonstrated by these students are of a high order and teachers manage the evaluation process sensitively. In vocational lessons, teachers effectively link theory to practice and encourage students to draw on examples from their own experience. They emphasise current professional practice, ensuring that students see the relevance of their learning to future employment.

55. In the less satisfactory lessons, teaching lacks pace and fails to stimulate students or engage their attention for the whole of the lesson.

56. There is a good range of high-quality sport facilities that are used very effectively. These include a swimming pool, an all-weather floodlit pitch and a well-equipped sports hall. An example of particularly effective use of these facilities is the large number of local school children who are taught in the swimming pool by college students, enabling them to gain qualifications. There are dedicated teaching rooms with ILT facilities, attractive wall displays and resources for travel and tourism. Good use is made of the learning resource centre. The majority of sports staff have a recognised specialist teaching qualification and are involved in national and local sports initiatives. Teachers make good use of professional development opportunities and some are external examination board moderators and/or specialist training tutors for national organisations.

57. The range of provision across course levels is extensive, and progression routes both within the curriculum area and in to HE and vocationally related employment are very good. Students have excellent opportunities to progress from pre-foundation level through to level 3 courses, and onwards, in specialist vocational qualifications.

58. There is a comprehensive enrichment programme providing opportunities for students to acquire additional qualifications, including sports coaching certificates. These include the sports academies, overseas trips and short courses, and these activities successfully broaden students' experience. There are fewer opportunities for travel and tourism students to acquire vocational skills and additional qualifications.

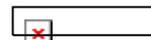
59. Assessment is good. It is accurate, fair and carried out regularly. Assessments are well designed and appropriate. Students' progress is well monitored and assignments are carefully marked and returned with constructive feedback, enabling students to improve their levels of attainment.

60. There is good pastoral and academic support for students, with effective diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs and styles. There is a well-organised system for supporting students who are causing concern, and this works well to identify and nurture such students. Course inductions are well planned and prepare students effectively for their programmes. Teachers are highly valued by students and are readily accessible to them.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are good. Communication across the curriculum area is effective. Teaching teams meet regularly and focus appropriately on curriculum issues to raise standards. Teachers work well within their teams and are encouraged to share good practice. The curriculum manager, supported by course leaders, has been particularly active in seeking and implementing a range of strategies to improve pass and retention rates: some less successful courses have been withdrawn and new courses introduced which better match the needs and interests of students, for example, the new national certificate in sport. It is too early to judge the success of these initiatives. The self-assessment report for the curriculum area is accurate. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

The contributory grade for provision in performing arts is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates in performing arts

- good standard of performance

- good teaching and learning in dance and film studies

- wide range of provision

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on several media and art courses

- lack of punctuality and poor attendance hindering learning in some small lessons

- insufficient insistence on minimum classroom standards in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers an extensive range of academic and vocational courses at levels 2 and 3. In visual arts, there are courses leading to GCSE, intermediate GNVQ, AVCE and national diploma qualifications. There are AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art and design and textiles. In media, there are GCSE photography and media courses, and AS-level and GCE A-level courses in film, photography and media. There are also City and Guilds courses in journalism and video. In performing arts, there are GCSE music and dance courses, and AS-level and GCE A-level courses in music, music technology, dance and combined performing arts. There are also level 2 courses in music technology and performing arts. In addition to the full-time provision, there are several adult education courses and an extensive enrichment programme. At the time of inspection, there were 913 students enrolled on courses in this area.

Achievement and standards

63. GCE A-level art and design retention and pass rates are around the national averages. Retention rates on the AVCE art and design course are high. The pass rate for GCE A-level textiles was 100% in 2004. Retention rates on most other art courses are below the national averages. There are high retention and pass rates on GCE A-level film studies and the City and Guilds journalism and video courses, but most other media-related subjects are below national averages. The pass rate for GCSE photography is low. Students' achievements are high in performing arts, where most retention and pass rates are at, or above, national averages. The proportion of students gaining high grades is particularly good in AS-level dance, textiles and music instrument technology, although they are low for GCE A-level media, film and music.

64. The standards of students' performance work are high in music, drama and dance. Students confidently acquire the necessary techniques that are fundamental to performance. They work well on small and large production projects and are able to analyse and develop their work independently. Attendance was slightly below the national average at the time of inspection. Lack of punctuality has an adverse effect on learning: in the smaller classes, late arrivals adversely affect group work and reduced the pace of lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art/fine arts	3	No. of starts	147	125	148
		% retention	78	88	75
		% pass rate	82	79	64
AS-level film/video	3	No. of starts	53	41	48
		% retention	75	85	75
		% pass rate	93	97	97
AS-level media	3	No. of starts	74	70	88
		% retention	81	90	85
		% pass rate	70	71	89
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	28	31	33
		% retention	93	97	82
		% pass rate	92	83	100
AS-level music instrument technology	3	No. of starts	*	38	31
		% retention	*	89	87
		% pass rate	*	97	96
AVCE performing arts (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	24	20
		% retention	*	83	100
		% pass rate	*	95	100

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

65. The majority of teaching is good or satisfactory. In dance, teachers are supportive, involved and

encouraging, but also quietly demanding and challenging. Students make good progress during the course of each lesson. During a rehearsal of *Moulin Rouge*, students demonstrated their understanding and application of performance skills and techniques. In a concert, music students played their own compositions with assurance. In film studies, students were required to actively note specific aspects of the film *A Hard Day's Night*, and report back to the rest of the class their observations, for discussion and analysis. In another lesson, students were able to discuss the arguments for and against the original banning of films directed by Abel Ferrara. They demonstrated perceptive appreciation of diverse film genres. In some lessons, the small number of students adversely affects the dynamic and interaction of classes. In a minority of lessons, teachers are insufficiently rigorous in ensuring that appropriate classroom standards are maintained. A minority of students remain uninvolved in some creative work and lack genuine interest in their learning.

66. Resources for learning are mostly good. Accommodation has been sympathetically adapted and converted from its original purpose into appropriate learning areas. The art rooms are spacious and enable students to work, where necessary, on large projects. Two-dimensional and three-dimensional facilities and equipment are available to support individual specialisms. Media classrooms are dull and poorly maintained, but essential equipment is readily available for teaching and learning and some interesting displays adorn the walls. Music technology utilises industrial-standard software. Performing arts students use a good theatre and dance studio, though the teaching space at Forton Hall is drab and unsympathetic. Teachers are well qualified. Students benefit from the professional expertise and knowledge of the borough's arts development officer, who is based at the college.

67. Assessment is satisfactory. External standards are mainly met, although some internal marking at intermediate level is too lenient. Where appropriate, assignments are vocationally relevant. However, there is insufficient internal verification to ensure that assessment standards across subjects are consistent. Students' work is marked and returned promptly. Feedback is generally detailed. Students can see how assessment decisions are made and what they need to do to improve their work.

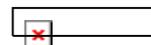
68. The range of courses is good. All subjects are offered at levels 2 and 3. Students have a choice of vocational or academic pathways or a combination of the two. Good use is made of the various courses and qualifications available and students are able to tailor their individual programmes to suit their interests. There are good enrichment opportunities for all students with regular visits to galleries, theatres and concerts. Art and design students visit New York as part of their studies. Performing arts students have many performance opportunities. Students from throughout the college take part in the competitive national 'Rock Challenge' for devised music and dance performances, and achieve some success.

69. Support for students is very good. Students appreciate the efforts made on their behalf and value the specialist support that is available to address specific learning needs. Teachers and the central learning support unit communicate effectively to monitor the impact of the support provided. There are no barriers to the inclusion and participation of students with disabilities. Adult students feel well supported.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject, course and faculty teams meet regularly and communication is good between members of the faculty despite the disparate geographical location of each specialist area. There is much goodwill and mutual support between staff. As part of the initiative to share good practice, the faculty has developed and implemented a system for teachers to observe each other which staff feel is beneficial to their own professional development. Teachers are formally observed, though the proportion of good teaching recorded is higher than that observed during the inspection. Quality assurance measures and the self-assessment process are not consistently implemented. Some self-assessment is thorough and inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified, but in a minority of subjects the self-assessment was insufficiently thorough.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses

- good teaching

- good resources for learning

- good use of assessment

- diverse and flexible curriculum offer.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most AS-level courses

- low pass rates on most AS-level courses.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers a very wide range of humanities subjects. The most popular are psychology, law, sociology, history and philosophy. Law, sociology and psychology are taught at GCSE as well as AS level and GCE A level. Archaeology, history, government and politics, classical civilisation, religious studies, philosophy, and geography are all taught at both AS level and GCE A level. Critical thinking and general studies are taught at AS level. A modular access to HE programme is available to adult students, and a small evening-class programme gives adult students the choice of AS-level law and psychology and GCE A-level archaeology. At the time of inspection, there were 1,072 students enrolled on courses in this area, of whom 986 were aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

72. There are low retention and pass rates on most AS-level courses. In each of the three largest subjects, psychology, sociology and law, the retention rate was below the national average and declined in 2003/04. However, retention rates are improving in most AS-level subjects. There are low pass rates on AS-level courses, with most subjects being below the national averages; however, AS levels in history, geography and classical civilisation were all at or above national averages in 2004.

73. The retention rate is high in most subjects taught at GCE A level. The pass rate at GCE A level is very high in the majority of subjects, and in 2004 it was 100% in history, religious studies, philosophy, geography, classical civilisation, sociology and government and politics. The retention and pass rates of adult students are high.

74. Students are well motivated and attend lessons eager to learn. They develop good oral skills and are encouraged to use them extensively. They give confident presentations, often of new material they have researched and are teaching to the rest of the class. Their personal and study skills develop well under teaching methods designed to encourage independent working. Students' written work is weaker in their first year of study. By the second year, when they are taking GCE A levels, students demonstrate mature progress, producing work which is fluent and evaluative. Adult students make good progress and produce work of high quality.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	31	35	19
		% retention	48	63	79
		% pass rate	100	86	87
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	70	46	82
		% retention	84	83	79
		% pass rate	56	63	71
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	50	32	39
		% retention	80	81	87
		% pass rate	93	88	88
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	133	134	179
		% retention	72	87	80
		% pass rate	76	73	80
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	101	80	86
		% retention	76	84	76
		% pass rate	73	78	80
GCE A-level classical civilisation	3	No. of starts	26	33	33
		% retention	88	85	94
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	38	37	36
		% retention	92	95	92
		% pass rate	94	97	100
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	43	54	61
		% retention	100	96	93

		% pass rate	98	92	95
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Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

75. There is much good teaching in humanities. Most lessons are well planned and time is used profitably. Teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging, and this infuses students with an appetite for learning. In a classical civilisation lesson evaluating Homer's description of Achilles' shield, the teacher embraced students' oral comments with such verve that all were eager to contribute to the discussion. Teachers give students very active roles and responsibilities in lessons. In a GCSE psychology lesson, the teacher used tableaux of students in ambiguous poses to provide a stimulating introduction to the topic of visual perception. Students are given considerable time and encouragement in lessons to learn from one another. In a GCE A-level history lesson, students had researched different aspects of the Russian revolution and gave thorough presentations to the rest of the class; they had also prepared summary handouts for their fellow students. Teachers and students enjoy the process of learning, and make original, but pertinent connections between examples and ideas. For example, in a philosophy lesson, the students had to identify a virtuous person and argue what defined their virtue. Choices ranged from Martin Luther and Mother Theresa to The Hulk and Mr Incredible; there was much amusement, and the philosophical logic deployed in arguing each case was impressive. Teachers know their students' capacities and potential, and make skilful use of question and answer sessions in lessons to encourage and extend the abilities of all.

76. Less successful lessons lack clear and concrete objectives. The sequence of activities is not well structured and the roles of teacher and students are not always clear.

77. There are good resources for learning and these are well used both in and out of lessons. Classrooms are generally spacious, and decorated with stimulating subject materials and displays produced by students. The learning resource centre is well stocked and managed by helpful staff who work closely with teachers and students in identifying and buying materials for use. Students make profitable use of the good supply of computers. Some rooms have low-quality whiteboards which are also used unsatisfactorily as projection screens. Staff are well qualified. There is a wide range of staff development opportunities which teachers make good use of, sharing their experiences and knowledge with colleagues.

78. Assessment is good. Students are carefully assessed at interview to identify their support needs; at the beginning of their courses, they are further assessed to identify their preferred learning styles and skills gaps. Assessment on courses is well thought out. Teachers in the cultural studies department use a formative assessment strategy in which students are not given grades, but are encouraged to read the detailed comments on their work and respond to specific targets for improvement. Students' work is marked carefully and returned promptly. Students in most subjects are encouraged to provide an evaluative comment on their own work when they submit it.

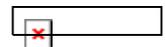
79. There is a wide choice of subjects available in humanities, and they are offered in a flexible way. For students aged 16 to 18, the college makes strenuous and well-appreciated efforts to ensure they can study the subject and in the combination they want. This extends to allowing students to take AS levels in their second year and to take GCE A levels in a third year, if that is in their best interests. The college constructs each student's programme through individual negotiation. Adult students have a good choice of OCN and GCE subjects, offered at times that fit in with childcare and work responsibilities.

80. There are good arrangements for individual learning support. Assistance is available as and when students need it. Students have access to good subject support based upon target setting which is regular and clear. Personal tutorial support in subjects is good, but the daily 20-minute pastoral tutorial provision is not an efficient use of students' time. Arrangements for advice and guidance for students' personal problems are comprehensive and much appreciated by them.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Management of the progress of students is good, with thorough monitoring of students' learning aims and progress to ensure students are gaining benefit from their time at the college. Managers involve their staff in collaborative working; there are regular meetings and clear responsibilities and actions. Close co-operation between teachers is evident in the sharing of good practice between subject groups in departments, although this is less developed between staff in different faculties. Some weaknesses which are identified in team minutes and other documents are not dealt with effectively. The observation of teachers by heads of department is thorough, but the grades given are inflated. Equality and diversity are given very serious consideration by staff in humanities. They are a central part of schemes of work, and positive representations of women and minority groups are given in teaching and on displays in classrooms.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Contributory grade for modern foreign languages is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- very high pass rates on GCE A-level foreign languages and GCSE Japanese

- high pass rates on GCE A-level English literature and English language and literature

- much good teaching

- wide range of courses

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most English courses and AS-level French

- very low pass rates on GCSE English

- o insufficient use of ILT for learning.

Scope of provision

82. The curriculum area mainly serves the needs of full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are six AS-level and GCE A-level English courses. Those students seeking to progress towards a GCSE qualification take a practical English level 2 course, while others wishing to improve their grade follow an English GCSE course. Students of modern foreign languages can choose from four AS-level subjects, three GCE A-levels and three GCSE courses. Several languages can also be studied for an NVQ qualification. The adult education provision is limited in English, but OCN courses are expanding in foreign languages with a choice of five languages at a variety of levels. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,098 students enrolled on courses in this area, of whom 794 were aged 16 to 18 and 304 were adults.

Achievement and standards

83. Students' achievements are satisfactory in English. Pass rates have been low in GCSE English for the past three years and below national averages in AS-level and GCE A-level English language. GCE A-level English literature has consistently exceeded national averages in the last three years to 2003/04. The proportion of passes at grades A and B has improved to the national average. The pass rate for English language and literature has surpassed national averages in two of the last three years. Retention rates are below national averages on most English courses. Students' achievements in modern foreign languages are good and often very good. In 2004, students achieved 100% pass rates in GCE A-level French and German, in AS-level French, German, Spanish and Italian and in 4 NVQ and 15 OCN units. However, retention rates are below the national average in AS-level French and Italian and on the majority of courses for adults. Many modern foreign languages students and students of GCE A-level English literature achieve higher grades than would be expected based on their performance at GCSE. Students of English language, however, fell substantially below their predicted grades based on GCSE performance in 2003; they improved to average levels of achievement by these measures in 2004.

84. The standard of students' work in English is satisfactory. Most students acquire the specialist terminology their discipline demands and are learning to use it to good purpose. Work in pairs and small groups enables many to develop good oral and presentational skills and they work well independently and in collaboration with others. A significant minority do not express themselves well. Some are reticent to formulate their ideas voluntarily and need drawing out. More able students are capable of sensitive and detailed analysis and often make astute and perceptive comments. The standard of students' work in modern foreign languages is good. Teachers make full use in lessons of the language being taught, and students' listening and comprehension skills are well developed. Students on higher-level courses speak the foreign language with some fluency on a variety of contemporary topics, but commit too many grammatical errors. Written work is of an appropriate standard, but also tends to contain avoidable errors. Pronunciation is good, but intonation could be improved, particularly in French.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	197	151	142
		% retention	65	77	75
		% pass rate	40	39	34
AS-level English	3	No. of starts	50	37	43

language		% retention	72	86	86
		% pass rate	81	81	92
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	27	22	16
		% retention	78	91	88
		% pass rate	100	90	93
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	17	13	22
		% retention	100	87	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	38	33	40
		% retention	100	100	90
		% pass rate	100	100	98
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	25	20	20
		% retention	80	85	70
		% pass rate	80	76	100

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

Quality of education and training

85. Most teaching is good or very good. Students find their lessons enjoyable and interesting and are encouraged to become fully involved. In the best lessons, teachers know their students well and are thus able to employ a wide variety of tasks and activities to meet the learning needs of students of all abilities. They use work in pairs and small groups effectively to monitor students' progress so that they can provide good support and guidance, where appropriate. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and be self-reliant in their studies. For example, in an English literature lesson, students worked well together to analyse poems by Blake against the historical context of romanticism. In another example, students spoke with fluency as they gave prepared presentations in German on various aspects of European unification. Many students are confident speakers and enjoy testing their analyses and opinions in an open forum. In a lesson on *The Duchess of Malfi*, students conducted a vigorous and highly articulate debate on the ultimate destinations of the souls of the protagonists, exercising comprehensive knowledge of the characters' actions, motivations and utterances as they prosecuted and defended their moral theses. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of the differing abilities of the students in the class.

86. Resources are satisfactory. Access to ILT provision is often problematic and the number of computers in classrooms is small. The foreign language laboratory is operational, but old, and the sound quality is poor. The English section of the college intranet is not fully developed and both subject areas lack the necessary software to support the development of independent learning. The siting of rooms contributes significantly to the formal and informal dissemination of ideas, information and good practice. Excellent, colourful and informative wall displays create subject identities that are valued by students. Teachers are suitably qualified. Foreign language assistants play an important role in the development of students' oral skills and in providing additional support in workshops.

87. Assessment is good. Oral feedback in lessons is usually clear and helpful. Written feedback is detailed and students know what they need to do to improve their work. In English, comments are usefully linked to examination assessment objectives. In foreign languages, the cover sheet for assignments contains a detailed checklist of language features against which the work is marked. Coursework is assessed and moderated internally to the approved standard.

88. The good range of courses offered is responsive to local needs. Key skills are a central part of

schemes of work. There is a varied enrichment programme which includes study trips abroad, theatre visits and literary clubs at lunchtime. Links with local schools are strong and a series of imaginative activities have been organised to raise the profile of modern languages.

89. Support for students is very good. Teachers ensure that the support they offer meets the needs of individual students. Students can book subject tutorials at short notice and pastoral help is also readily available. A few students feel that targets based on GCSE averages can be relatively easy to attain, but they receive every assistance from staff when striving to surpass them. Subject support is additionally available in workshops.

Leadership and management

90. Leadership and management are good. Both heads of department are recent appointments. Early signs indicate that planning, organisation and strategic thinking are sound. They are focusing sharply on raising standards. A strong team spirit is evident and teachers have clearly designated responsibilities. The sharing of resources and of good practice is commonplace. The best interests of every individual student are safeguarded, and equality and diversity are wholly embraced and celebrated. Quality assurance procedures have been tightened to good effect and inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment reports. Changes made to improve standards are beginning to take effect.

Part D: College data

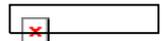
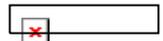


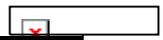
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	8	61
2	25	9
3	65	5
4/5	0	0
Other	2	25
Total	100	100

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	720	235	9

Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	11	0	0
Engineering, technical and manufacturing	73	0	1
Business, administration, management and professional	224	372	6
Information and communications technology	654	941	16
Retailing, customer service and transportation	7	1	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and tourism	284	146	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	247	122	4
Visual and performing arts and media	759	1,955	27
Humanities	1,019	135	11
English, languages and communications	810	522	13
Foundation programmes	68	798	9
Programmes unassigned to area of learning	25	1	0
Total	4,901	5,228	100

Source: provided by the college in 2005

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
		1	Starters excluding transfers	246	174	221	473
	Retention rate %	76	78	82	79	81	75
	National average %	75	83	*	72	73	*
	Pass rate %	63	38	67	63	62	67
	National average %	75	72	*	73	75	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	728	641	717	405	396	293
	Retention rate %	70	75	82	71	82	77

	National average %	81	81	*	70	69	*
	Pass rate %	80	80	79	62	67	62
	National average %	84	86	*	70	74	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,854	2,719	2,811	401	357	266
	Retention rate %	85	85	87	74	80	68
	National average %	89	90	*	72	73	*
	Pass rate %	81	82	81	55	69	68
	National average %	87	88	*	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 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR.

* national averages not yet available

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	85	15	0	54
Level 2 (intermediate)	65	30	5	20
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	3
Other sessions	0	100	0	1
Totals	80	19	1	78

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