



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Lowestoft College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

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

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

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

[Construction](#)

[Engineering, technology and manufacturing](#)

[Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel](#)

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

[Health, social care and public services](#)

[Foundation programmes - provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities](#)

[Foundation programmes - literacy and numeracy](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

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

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

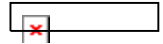
[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

[*numbers too low to provide a valid calculation](#)

[**data unavailable](#)

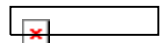
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

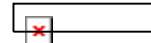


Name of college:	Lowestoft College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Gwen Parsons
Address of college:	St Peter's Street Lowestoft Suffolk NR32 2NB
Telephone number:	01502 583 521
Fax number:	01502 500 031
Chair of governors:	Robert Mee
Unique reference number:	130819
Name of reporting inspector:	Christine Dick HMI
Dates of inspection:	31 January-4 February 2005

Part A: Summary



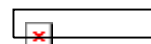
Information about the college



Lowestoft College is a medium-sized general further education (FE) college serving the district of Waveney in north-east Suffolk. The college also attracts significant numbers of students from Norfolk. Waveney has a population of around 115,000. Over half of all residents live in Lowestoft. In 2004, Waveney was ranked as the 113th most deprived district in the country. It is the most deprived district in Suffolk. Four Lowestoft wards are placed within the most deprived 10% of all wards in England. Attainment, at all key stages, is lower than that in the rest of Suffolk. Unemployment is relatively high. In May 2004, local unemployment was recorded as 3% against a regional average of 2%. In Lowestoft, the central wards of Kirkley and Harbour record unemployment rates of around 12%. Some 3% of the local population are from minority ethnic groups.

The college specialises in vocational education and training. Most courses are located on the main campus, close to the centre of Lowestoft. The main outreach centre is in Kirkley. The largest areas of provision include: construction; engineering; hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; health and social care and foundation programmes. Work-based learning is offered in construction, engineering, hairdressing, hospitality and catering and in oral health. Vocational courses are provided for increasing numbers of 14 to 16 year olds from local schools. Higher education (HE) courses are offered in collaboration with Anglia Polytechnic and East Anglia universities. A maritime and offshore centre attracts international students and a commercial centre for management runs courses for industry. In 2003/04, 1,079 students aged 16 to 18 and 2,402 adult students attended the college's FE courses. More than 75% of all enrolments are at levels 1 and 2. Around 73% of all full-time students are aged 16 to 18. The college's mission is to 'work in partnership to deliver high-quality teaching and learning opportunities to meet the needs of individuals and the economy within the area'.

How effective is the college?



Lowestoft College has made good progress since its last inspection by Ofsted, in February 2003, when it was judged inadequate. Teaching has improved. Overall retention and pass rates are at, or above, the national averages. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Of the eight curriculum areas inspected, three were judged by inspectors to be good and five were satisfactory. Provision is good in information and communications technology (ICT), hairdressing and beauty therapy, and hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, where a contributory grade of outstanding was awarded to travel and tourism. It is satisfactory in construction and in work-based learning in construction, in engineering and in work-based learning in engineering. Satisfactory grades were also awarded in health and social care, in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and in literacy and numeracy. The college is no longer inadequate. The main strengths and areas for improvement are set out below.

Key strengths

- strong leadership

- good achievement on level 1 courses

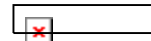
- productive and effective partnership working
- well-developed provision for 14 to 16 year olds
- caring and supportive ethos
- very effective monitoring of students' attendance
- inclusive approach to learning.

What should be improved

- pass and retention rates on some courses
- achievement of key skills qualifications
- timely completion of apprenticeship frameworks
- sharing of good practice in teaching and learning
- links between skills for life and key skills
- some unsatisfactory accommodation.

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

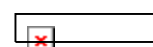


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Construction	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Teaching in brickwork is good, but planning for learning is poor across the area. Retention and pass rates are high on the intermediate construction award, but pass rates are low on electrical installation courses. Apprentices make slow progress towards completing their programmes. Links with local schools, the community and industry are good. Students' attendance at college is consistently high.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Pass and retention rates are high on national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 performing engineering operations and retention rates are very high on boat building courses. Students' work is of a high standard, particularly in boat building. Students are supported well by tutors and employers. Teaching is satisfactory although much is uninspiring and unimaginative. Course reviews and self-assessment are underdeveloped.
Information and communications technology	Good. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses and assessment practices are very effective. Innovative schemes enhance teaching and learning on full-time courses. Computer rooms have too few data projectors. Vocational students are not adequately prepared for employment and there is little sharing of good practice across the curriculum area.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good. Contributory grade for travel and tourism is outstanding . Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. The standard of students' work in travel and tourism is consistently high, and students in sport and recreation are mature and professional. Teaching is good and much is very good in travel and tourism. Overall curriculum management is good, but insufficient attention is paid to hygienic and safe practices in hospitality and catering.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses and retention rates are high in beauty therapy. In beauty therapy, teaching and curriculum management are good and students are supported well. Work experience arrangements for full-time students are inadequate. Recording of students' progress on full-time courses is very effective, but apprentices make slow progress towards achieving the NVQ.
Health, social care and public services	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) health and social care (double award) and on the NVQ level 3 early years course. Students are confident and articulate, and are supported well. Retention and pass rates on the national diploma course were very low in 2003/04. Students have insufficient access to information technology (IT) resources in lessons.
Foundation programmes - provision for students with	Satisfactory. Teaching on work-related courses is good and students demonstrate good skills especially in practical lessons. Some lessons

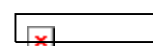
learning difficulties and/or disabilities	for students with severe learning difficulties fail to provide sufficient stimulation. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory and there is little use of IT in learning. Curriculum management is effective.
Foundation programmes - literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Retention rates on all courses are high, but key skills pass rates are low. Much teaching on discrete numeracy courses for 16 to 18 year olds is good and support for the most vulnerable students is very good. Planning to meet individual learning needs is insufficiently thorough and there is poor checking on learning in a number of lessons. Managers have yet to integrate key skills provision with the literacy and numeracy strategy.

How well is the college led and managed?



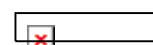
Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal and senior management team provide strong leadership. Governors are clear about the strategic direction of the college. They play an active role in monitoring quality and standards although the corporation committee structure has yet to be formalised. Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Teaching has improved. Overall retention and pass rates are at, or above, the national average for the sector. Key skills pass rates are low. Students' attendance is high. Curriculum management and the management of work-based learning have been strengthened. Achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is rising, but the progress of some learners is slow. Quality assurance procedures are now good although these have yet to be applied consistently. Attention to data management is underdeveloped in a few curriculum areas. The internal lesson observation scheme is effective, but the appraisal system lacks rigour. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Links with the community, business and schools are well established. Courses are offered from entry level to HE. Participation of those who are under-represented in learning is encouraged. Success is celebrated and individual projects are successful in widening participation. Retention and pass rates are high on courses at level 1. Literacy and numeracy provision is satisfactory. Systems to monitor and support vulnerable students are effective. The equal opportunities action plan is detailed. Policies and procedures have been updated. Satisfactory progress has been made in response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) legislation. Appropriate staff training is in place. Access to most areas is satisfactory for students with restricted mobility. Information is gathered on participation by ethnic group and gender, but the monitoring of group performance is not well developed.

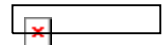
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good. Central services are well managed. Advice, guidance and induction to

courses at the most appropriate level. Initial assessment of support needs is comprehensive. Learning support is well organised and extensive. The high demand for specialist support, for example, with dyslexia, places considerable strain on the suitably qualified members of staff. Tutorials and the monitoring of students' progress have improved, but the quality of target setting remains uneven. The college library has a range of helpful information on careers. Arrangements for further guidance on careers are informal and lack central co-ordination. The college is active in securing the development of effective procedures for child protection. Senior managers and key staff have received training. Appropriate arrangements are in place to look after vulnerable young people. Links with external agencies are good. Attendance monitoring is rigorous and effective.

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

- approachable, supportive teachers

- opportunities to learn practical skills

- learning support assistants and canteen staff

- the friendly, mature atmosphere

- computing facilities and library space for quiet study.

What they feel could be improved

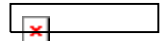
- accommodation that is drab and in need of updating

- availability of healthy eating options and the limited evening offer in the college canteen

- social space

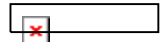
- o car parking for students
- o access to colour printers.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



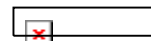
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	58	39	3
19+ and WBL*	54	33	13
Learning 16-18	65	32	3
19+ and WBL*	56	39	5

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. Overall retention rates rose between 2002/03 and 2003/04. The rise was most marked for students at level 1. Retention rates are now at, or above, the sector averages for all ages, at all levels, although the retention rates of adults on level 3 courses fell sharply between 2002/03 and 2003/04. Overall pass rates rose between 2001/02 and 2002/03, particularly at level 3. At this level, pass rates were judged to be low at the time of the previous inspection. College data for 2004 suggest improvements have been sustained. Students' attendance has improved significantly, to an average of 86%. At the time of inspection attendance, at 89%, was highest in the construction lessons observed. By comparison, the lowest figure, of 76%, was recorded in engineering. In work-based learning, most apprentices complete the full framework eventually although their progress is often slow.

2. In all curriculum areas, there are high pass and retention rates on individual courses. For example, in 2003/04, pass rates on the intermediate construction award were 20% above the national average. In engineering, retention rates are high on boat-building courses and pass rates are high on the NVQ level 2 performing engineering operations course. In ICT, beauty therapy and hospitality, sports, leisure and travel pass and retention rates are high on most courses. For example, in AVCE travel and tourism, all students who started the course were retained and passed their examinations in 2003/04. In the same year, 100% of general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate ICT students were retained and 96% of them completed their qualification successfully. AVCE ICT had pass and retention rates in excess of 90%. Retention rates on most beauty therapy courses are high. Some 90% of starters on the NVQ level 2 beauty therapy course were retained and 92% of those completing achieved the qualification, which is well above the national average for similar colleges. However, pass rates have declined in electrical installation and retention rates declined on hairdressing courses at levels 1 and 2 in the three years to 2004, although at the time of inspection, in-year retention rates were high. In health and social care, pass and retention rates on the national diploma in early years have declined and are now below the national averages.

16 to 18 year olds

3. At the time of inspection, around one third of students enrolled on FE courses were aged 16 to 18. Most of these follow programmes at levels 1 and 2. At level 1, pass rates improved by almost 10% in the three years to 2003 and, at 81%, were 8% above the national average. At the same level, the retention rate rose to around the national average. College data for 2003/04 indicate that this improvement has been sustained. At level 2, retention rates have remained close to the national average. In 2003, pass rates rose to 10% above the national average. This improvement has also been sustained in 2004. At level 3, in 2003, the retention rate declined to 60% and was significantly below the national average. College data for 2004 indicate that the retention rate has risen and is now similar to the national average for general FE colleges. Pass rates have also improved from significantly below to around the national average.

4. Around 146 work-based trainees are on apprenticeship schemes. Most trainees are on programmes in engineering and construction. Until very recently, work-based learners made slow progress in completing their apprenticeship frameworks. Under new management arrangements, work-based learning achievements are rising. The overall retention rate of trainees is satisfactory.

5. Key skills pass rates are low. In 2003/04, college data indicate a 5% improvement in key skills units achieved, with an overall pass rate of 38%. The college cites previous poor attendance at key skills external tests as a significant factor in underperformance. Strategies to address this have been successful. In January 2005, over 92% of eligible students took the national test. Trainees on apprenticeship schemes are now encouraged and supported to gain key skills qualifications much earlier in their programmes.

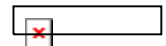
6. Many students make good progress and the work of most students is of at least a satisfactory standard. In 62% of lessons, students aged 16 to 18 were judged to have made good progress compared with that which might be expected at that point in their course. Students in brickwork,

hairdressing and beauty therapy, develop good practical skills. Professionalism and a mature approach are features of practical sports lessons. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities demonstrate independence in practical lessons. In health and social care, students are confident and articulate. In literacy lessons, students speak with confidence in a variety of situations. Students' work is often of a high standard in engineering, although the standard of some number and written work is low. In travel and tourism, work is of a consistently high standard. Young people aged 14 to 16 develop good vocational skills on college courses.

Adult learners

7. At the time of inspection, around 38% of students enrolled on college courses were adults. Most of these were studying at level 1. Pass and retention rates at this level are high. For example, in 2003, retention rates were around 7% higher than the national average for general FE colleges. At 85%, pass rates were in the top 15% of results for colleges of a similar type. At level 2, in the three years to 2003, retention rates declined, but remained slightly above the national average. In the same period, pass rates rose by around 20%, to more than 10% above the national average for colleges of a similar type. At level 3, the retention rate declined by around 9% in 2004. However, pass rates at level 3 rose by 10% in 2003. College data suggest a further 10% rise in pass rates at this level for 2004. Adult students typically make the progress expected of them.

Quality of education and training



8. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 105 lessons. The proportion of good or better teaching was slightly below the national average for general FE colleges inspected in the previous year. However, it was more than 12% higher than that recorded at the previous inspection and 28% higher for students aged 16 to 18. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced by around 5%. Inspectors judged that teaching was good or better in 56% of lessons, satisfactory in 37%, and less than satisfactory in 7%.

9. Teaching is best in travel and tourism lessons and in beauty therapy, where almost 80% of teaching was judged to be good or better. The proportion of good or better teaching in health and social care, at almost 73%, was also high. The most unsatisfactory teaching was observed in lessons for students with severe learning difficulties, and in hairdressing. In engineering and construction, the proportion of teaching judged to be good or better was below the national averages. Variations occur in the quality of teaching associated with the level of courses. Overall, 65% of level 3 lessons were judged to be good or better, compared with 60% of lessons at level 2. The proportion of good or better grades awarded was highest in lessons for students aged 16 to 18 and in those taught by full-time teachers. Some 64% of lessons taught by full-time teachers were judged to be good or better, compared with 57% of those taught by part-time employees.

10. In the most effective lessons teachers are good role models. They are enthusiastic and well prepared. They apply good specialist skills and knowledge to enrich and enliven learning. Teaching methods take account of individual learning needs. Activities are sufficiently varied to make demands upon students across the full range of abilities. Checks on learning are thorough and frequent. In travel and tourism, students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills. In sport, the development of students' confidence and maturity are a priority. In hospitality and catering, information and learning technology (ILT) is used extensively in teaching and learning. Conversely, teachers have yet to make full use of ILT in literacy and numeracy and in lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

11. Less effective lessons are characterised by poor planning and insufficient attention to setting clear and measurable learning outcomes. Knowledge and understanding are not checked. In these sessions, the most able students are not encouraged to achieve their full potential and slower students fall behind. In some construction lessons, too much time is spent copying from the

whiteboard. In engineering, teaching is often unimaginative. Students of literacy and numeracy are not set effective targets for learning.

12. Learning is mostly satisfactory or better. In around 62% of lessons observed inspectors judged learning to be good. The percentage of unsatisfactory learning in sessions involving adult students was 50% higher than that for 16 to 18 year olds. In a few lessons, for students with severe learning difficulties, a minority of teachers lack the relevant specialist skills to extend and develop learning. Too few commercial clients in practical sessions restricts learning for hairdressing students.

13. The college's key skills policy states students' entitlement. The management of key skills delivery and accreditation has been strengthened. Increased emphasis is placed on integrating key skills with vocational lessons and in supporting apprentices to achieve their key skills early. Full-time students have their key skills levels assessed at the start of their course. Specialists work with vocational curriculum teams although key skills have yet to be integrated effectively within all curriculum areas. Students in hairdressing and beauty therapy develop good key skills taught by vocational specialists, but key skills are not well integrated with vocational lessons in construction. Attendance at key skills sessions has improved and is now high.

14. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in their subjects. The college provides support for unqualified teachers to achieve a teaching qualification. The staff development focus on improving teaching and learning is effective. Senior managers monitor training needs against the college's internal teaching observation grades and plan a wide range of regular, in-house training events. Peer mentors support staff whose teaching has been judged as unsatisfactory.

15. Courses are offered at the main Lowestoft campus and a number of smaller community venues. Students with restricted mobility have appropriate access to most parts of the college. Teaching and practical accommodation is generally satisfactory although a number of areas are in need of updating. Some accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory. The recently opened off-site plumbing workshops are well equipped. The college has further plans to improve accommodation.

16. Facilities for students are adequate, but the canteen is frequently overcrowded at peak times. The learning resource centre is well managed. Students appreciate the separate quiet study area. Students have satisfactory access to computers for private study, but the college intranet is not used extensively for the storage of relevant course materials. In health and social care, opportunities for research are restricted by the lack of computers in teaching areas. New fixed and portable ILT equipment is not utilised fully across the curriculum.

17. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Students' progress is monitored through individual tutorials and in termly reviews although the quality of feedback to students and target setting for improvement is variable. In travel, students receive extensive feedback on their assignments. By contrast, in engineering and construction, written feedback is often brief. Teachers in ICT and hairdressing and beauty therapy use assessment tracking to raise aspirations and increase motivation. Students have a good understanding of their progress and what they need to do to complete the course successfully. In work-based learning the lack of precise, short-term targets linked to the NVQ, delays the completion of apprenticeship frameworks. In ICT, assessors receive particularly effective written feedback from verifiers on how to improve the quality of their assessment practice.

18. Initial assessment of students' literacy and numeracy needs is thorough. Findings are recorded on individual learning plans, but the use of this information in planning teaching and learning is not well developed. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are invited to attend parents' evenings. They receive termly reports on their son's or daughter's progress. In consultation with schools, reports for 14 to 16 year olds have improved. A few employers lack information about the progress of their students on college courses.

19. Managers have assessed local education and training needs effectively. Vocational courses have been established as the centre of the college's offer. New programmes in renewable energies

and conservation are being developed. Gaps in provision in hairdressing, engineering and construction at level 3 have still to be addressed. Partnerships with local schools are good. The wide range of provision for 14 to 16 year olds offers good progression to full-time college courses. Community-based programmes support adults in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Links with employers are strong in many curriculum areas. Adult students appreciate the flexible attendance arrangements to meet their personal needs.

20. A variety of enrichment activities enhance learning, for example, scuba diving and rock wall climbing. The college's maritime pools are used for a number of courses and good use is made of the local community sports centre. Many programmes offer opportunities for students to gain additional qualifications. Sports students develop their coaching skills supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in practical sport. However, opportunities for work experience particularly in ICT and hairdressing are limited.

21. Support for students is good. Services are well managed. Induction to the college is well planned and students joining courses at different times of the year receive an induction. Initial assessment of the support needs of full-time and many part-time students, including school pupils on college courses, is effective. In 2003/04, of the 1,634 students who undertook initial assessment, over 500 were identified as in need of support. Some 410 of these took up the support offered.

22. Increased emphasis on specialist staff training is improving the college's capacity to meet a wide range of support needs although the high demand, for example, for dyslexia support, places considerable demands on the time of specialist staff members. A number of literacy and numeracy specialist teachers have yet to complete the skills for life training. Communications between support staff and teachers have improved. Students have a clear understanding of the relationship between the support offered and the successful completion of their course.

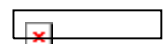
23. Students make good use of the range of support services available, including the college nursery, counselling, on-site health advice from the college nurse, and financial support. The college operates a 'zero tolerance' approach to harassment and bullying.

24. The quality of tutorial provision has improved. Good progress has been made in establishing a co-ordinated approach although application of standardised procedures is poor in a few curriculum areas. The auditing of tutorial files is thorough. Where a need for improvement has been identified, specialist tutors are providing support. The quality of tutorials observed during inspection ranged from good to satisfactory. Individual tutorials are generally effective.

25. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to meet statutory duties under the child protection legislation. External advice has been sought to ensure the adequacy of child protection procedures. Training for senior staff, student services and some teachers has been completed. Training for other staff and governors has yet to be scheduled although a leaflet to raise awareness of good practice has been widely circulated, including to employers and work experience providers. Links with the police child protection unit and external support services are good. The monitoring of students' attendance is thorough and highly effective.

26. In 2003/04, a few students were placed on courses at the wrong level. A revised 'recruitment with integrity' policy has been implemented in 2004/05. The college library has a useful range of electronic and paper-based information on careers. Connexions advisers based in the student services area provide careers advice. However, much of the guidance on specific careers is provided informally by teachers. Information on students' destinations is not analysed systematically at whole college level.

Leadership and management



27. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection and in improving unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Most retention and pass rates have risen, although in 2003/04, retention rates on some level 3 programmes declined. Key skills achievements remain low. Work-based learners often take too long to complete their qualifications. Overall students' attendance has risen substantially. Curriculum management has been strengthened. Accountabilities are clear. Comprehensive quality assurance procedures are in place. A number of these have yet to be implemented fully in all curriculum centres. The college has been successful in widening participation. Work in the local community of Waveney is particularly significant.

28. The principal and new management team provide strong leadership. Their commitment to raising standards is clearly expressed in the newly developed core values. These are communicated effectively and understood by governors and staff. The links between the strategic aims and the operational plans of each curriculum and business centre are established through 10 key targets. These targets are used effectively to monitor performance. Governors have a good range of skills and expertise. They are clear about the strategic direction of the college, understand their role and are committed to ensuring that the college achieves its mission. They participate in the validation of the self-assessment report and attend course review panels. However, the corporation does not yet have an effective committee structure to ensure adequate formal monitoring of college activities although action is proposed to address this. Governors' links to curriculum areas are underdeveloped.

29. Middle managers have participated in a management development programme, accredited to Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) standards. Most curriculum management is now satisfactory and some is good. In ICT, strategies to address weaknesses have been managed well. Low retention and pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course have been addressed by adopting a particularly effective target setting system, based on students' general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) scores at the start of their course. In construction, some poor management of course data has affected the accuracy of information on students' performance in wood occupations and bricklaying. The management of additional learning support is good. The management of key skills has improved and has been strengthened by additional teachers. However, this has yet to have significant impact on key skills achievement. Attendance during the inspection was 82%, which is above the national average for general FE colleges, and well above the figure recorded at the last inspection.

30. Quality assurance procedures have been revised and are now good. The post-inspection action plan is monitored on a monthly basis. The college's self-assessment report provides a sound framework for continuous improvement. Responsibilities and accountabilities for quality improvement are allocated clearly. Course reviews are carried out termly and monitored by the head of centre, the vice principal and the assistant principal. The quality of course reviews is variable. The most effective provide a realistic overview of the course and give a clear direction for improvement. A few are superficial and do not identify strengths beyond the expected norm, nor weaknesses that affect students' learning. In health and social care, detailed reviews highlight strengths and weaknesses with explicit and measurable action points. In engineering, some reviews lack evidence and clear plans for improvement. Managers recognise these differences and advanced lecturers, the head of centre and the vice principal are providing support for improvement.

31. Appropriate policies are in place for assessment and verification, monitoring of attendance and punctuality and tutorials. Managers pay considerable attention to improving teaching, learning, and students' performance. The internal lesson observation scheme, covering both full-time and part-time teachers, is good. In 2003/04, all teachers were observed and in the current year, by the end of January, 141 observations had already been undertaken. Immediate support is provided for teachers of lessons judged to be unsatisfactory. A termly standardisation meeting aims to improve the consistency of internal observation grades awarded. The grading profile of lessons observed during the inspection closely reflects the most recent cycle of college observations. There has been a marked increase in the number of lessons judged to be good or better.

32. The appraisal system lacks rigour. Appraisals consist of a personal development review for all

full-time staff and, on request, for part-time employees. Reviews take insufficient account of the outcome of internal lesson observations. The quality of review sessions is highly variable. Outcomes are not placed on individual personnel records although generic development needs inform the annual staff training plan. Over the past two years, this has focused on improving teaching and learning. The college supports all teachers to gain a teaching qualification. Some 46 teachers are currently on courses leading to qualifications.

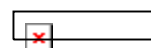
33. The management information system is reliable although updating of central data at curriculum level is inconsistent. The management information system manager provides regular and timely information about students to allow early action to improve retention and pass rates. Additional reports are produced on request although currently managers do not have immediate on-line access to information. Overall use of retention and pass rates data to raise standards is improving. Course teams and heads of centre assess their performance against national averages. Managers identify areas of provision that are above or below national averages and plan action to build on success and address weaknesses. Targets are set for each course and these are monitored throughout the year.

34. There is a strong commitment at all levels to widening participation and promoting learning. Partnership working is at the heart of the college's mission. Extensive links have been established with schools, employers and the community. For example, a partnership with Waveney high schools is broadening the vocational curriculum for pupils in years 10 and 11 and encouraging progression. The principal chairs the Local Strategic Partnership which seeks to deliver the Waveney community plan, including targets for lifelong learning.

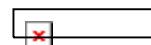
35. Appropriate policies comply with statutory requirements under disability discrimination legislation and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. College staff have received training in equality and diversity. There is a child protection policy with a nominated officer. Key members of staff have been trained in child protection and further training is planned. College accommodation is accessible to students with restricted mobility. There is an anti-bullying policy that is applied rigorously. Complaints are dealt with appropriately.

36. The management of work-based learning is now satisfactory. The newly appointed team has undertaken much remedial action. Apprenticeship framework achievement is rising. Some inconsistent practices remain across curriculum departments, for example, in providing feedback to employers on learners' progress. Some employers receive good feedback, but others have none. Achievement of core funding targets agreed with the local LSC, over the last three years, has been satisfactory. The financial health of the college and the management of resources have improved. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Construction



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory (grade 3)

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on the intermediate craft award

- high standards of practical work in bricklaying

- consistently high attendance

- good links with schools, the community and employers.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on electrical installation courses

- slow progress towards completion of apprenticeship frameworks

- poor planning for learning.

Scope of provision

37. The college provides a range of full-time and part-time courses in construction at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Craft qualifications are offered in bricklaying, painting and decorating, wood occupations, electrical installation and plumbing. The 332 students enrolled are distributed evenly between full-time and part-time courses. There are also five students on Jobcentre Plus programmes. Most of the 17 advanced apprentices and 51 apprentices attend college one day each week although some take block-release courses.

Achievement and standards

38. Overall pass and retention rates are satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on the intermediate construction award are high and well above the national average. In 2003/04, pass rates on this course were more than 20% above the national average. In the same year, pass rates were high on the foundation certificate in building craft occupations but, at 68%, the retention rate was below the national average for similar colleges. Pass rates on electrical installation courses have declined and are low. In work-based learning, most apprentices complete the full framework, but their progress is often much too slow.

39. Most students work well in practical lessons and produce good work. Practical work is of a particularly high standard in brickwork. Second year students take pride in their skills and work well together on large-scale projects. Students' attendance, at almost 90% in all lessons, is very high.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Foundation certificate in building craft occupations	1	No. of starts	*	**	25
		% retention	*	**	68
		% pass rate	*	**	100
Intermediate construction award	2	No. of starts	*	*	40
		% retention	*	*	70
		% pass rate	*	*	82
Certificate in electrical installation part 1	2	No. of starts	*	83	79
		% retention	*	83	73
		% pass rate	*	67	50
Certificate in electrical installation part 2	3	No. of starts	*	36	24
		% retention	*	97	83
		% pass rate	*	43	35

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

*course did not run

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

40. Teaching and learning are good in bricklaying, but most teaching is no better than satisfactory in other trades. Much planning for learning is poor. Schemes of work and lesson plans are produced to the college's standard format. Most are limited to lists of tasks or jobs and do not focus sufficiently on clear and measurable learning outcomes. Students are often unclear about learning objectives and teachers cannot routinely measure students' progress and attainment. In one poorly planned lesson, too much time was spent copying from the whiteboard and little learning took place. Schemes of work and lesson plans make little reference to key skills. Evidence produced for the vocational qualification is not linked nor cross-referenced to the key skills qualification. Some discrete key skills sessions are delivered and assessed without any reference to the vocational context.

41. ILT is used to good effect in a number of lessons. For example, in a lesson for work-based learners, ILT was used to support a variety of activities including an interactive quiz. Learners took part enthusiastically. In another lesson, an animated Powerpoint presentation was used effectively to demonstrate methods of brick bonding.

42. Resources are adequate for the range of programmes offered. Specialist equipment and materials to support learning are fit for their purpose. Practical workshops are well maintained and tidy although the layout of the painting and decorating workshop creates blind spots making it impossible for the tutor to observe all students. Work-based learners have access to good training resources in their workplaces.

43. Assessment of students' practical work is satisfactory overall, although written feedback to indicate where improvements might be made is often inadequate. Internal verification is satisfactory. On-the-job training for work-based learners is not linked appropriately to off-the-job training activities. Tracking and monitoring systems are not standardised across all construction areas. Work-based learners' progress reviews set imprecise targets which rarely focus on the achievement of elements of the programme. More formal 'case conference' meetings between all staff involved in work-based learning have been established recently, together with more detailed recording procedures. Employers are not always kept informed of learners' progress against their target qualification.

44. Links with the local community, industry and schools are good. Many school pupils progress from programmes for 14 to 16 year olds in college to full-time courses or work-based learning. A long-standing partnership with Suffolk Heritage gives full-time students access to genuine work experience under the supervision of a member of the college's staff. Many electrical installation employers are now able to track learners' progress on line.

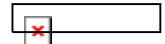
45. A good range of provision is in place in building crafts and services at level 2. A variety of modes of attendance cater for students' employment and personal circumstances. Few opportunities exist for unemployed building craft students to progress from level 2 to level 3, and there are currently no courses for building technicians.

46. Individual support for college and work-based learners is good. Most of the tutorials in construction are carried out by specialist tutors from outside the department. There is good communication between personal and vocational tutors. Clear records are kept. Some of the personal targets agreed in tutorials give clear short-term guidance to students with agreed target dates, but this is not consistent in all tutorials.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications across the department and with college managers are good. The course review process is understood and followed by staff. The percentage of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen although too little teaching is judged good or better. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most of the weaknesses of the curriculum area, but underestimates the significance of some.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory (grade 3)

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on NVQ performing engineering operations and very high retention rates on yacht and boat-building courses

- high standards of students' work

- good individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- much uninspiring and unimaginative teaching

- ineffective individual learning plans for apprentices

- lack of rigour in course reviews and self-assessment.

Scope of provision

48. Courses are offered in motor vehicle, yacht and boat building, engineering and welding. Most courses are available at levels 1 and 2. There are currently 377 students on engineering courses. Around 156 of these were aged 16 to 18 and the remainder are adults. Three-quarters of all students attend the college part time. Some 55 work-based learners follow apprenticeship schemes. Of these, 27 are on motor vehicle courses and the remainder are on engineering programmes. The college also offers provision in both motor vehicle and engineering for 14 to 16 year old school pupils.

Achievement and standards

49. Retention and pass rates overall are satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on NVQ level 2 performing engineering operations and retention rates are very high on boat-building courses. Retention rates on the level 2 progression award in motor vehicle servicing and repair, and on the certificate in welding and fabrication, have been below the national averages for the past two years. Pass rates on other courses are generally satisfactory.

50. Retention rates for work-based learners are satisfactory. Of the learners who started in 2001/02, 70% of advanced apprentices and 60% of apprentices were retained. Around 50% of advanced apprentices have completed the full framework. A further 25%, who are still working towards it, are making satisfactory progress. In the same period, 47% of apprentices completed their programme.

51. Students on the yacht and boat-building courses produce practical work of a high standard. Students on work-based learning demonstrate good fitting skills in their off-the-job training. At work, they make valuable contributions to their employers' businesses. The standard of technical drawings produced by many students in lessons is high. However, the standard of some learners' number and written work is very low. A few level 3 key skills assignments contained errors in calculating area, a lack of understanding of area and volume and poor grammar. These errors were not corrected during marking.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Progression award in motor vehicle servicing and repair	1	No. of starts	21	18	25
		% retention	62	61	76
		% pass rate	54	100	68
Awarding Body Consortium (ABC) certificate in welding and fabrication practice	1	No. of starts	22	*	26
		% retention	64	*	77
		% pass rate	79	*	60
Progression award in automotive vehicle servicing and repair	2	No. of starts	**	18	35
		% retention	**	61	63
		% pass rate	**	100	64

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

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

***course did not run*

Quality of education and training

52. The overall standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but much teaching is uninspiring and unimaginative. In the best lessons, teachers plan well and make good use of ILT. In these lessons, students undertake interesting and varied activities. In a motor vehicle lesson, students worked in groups to determine the gear ratios of motor vehicle gear boxes using cut-away models. They then applied this knowledge effectively in the calculation of ratios. In the poorest lessons some students take no part. Questioning by teachers is not directed towards individual students and fails to engage their interest or test their understanding.

53. Planning of many lessons is poor. Schemes of work are often just task lists with little attention to the content and outcomes of lessons. Few lesson plans adequately identify the learning outcomes and standards students should achieve. Insufficient attention is given to planning to meet the needs of students of different abilities. In practical lessons, tasks set for students do not increase in complexity. There is insufficient planning of apprentices' learning in the workplace. Individual learning plans for apprentices do not have clear targets.

54. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of students. In welding workshops, students have access to sufficient equipment and appropriate screens and extractors are in place. Motor vehicle workshops have adequate equipment, but the space around cars for students to work is sometimes restricted. Boat-building facilities are sufficient as are mechanical and electronic engineering areas. Most accommodation is adequate although there is poor access to some classrooms for wheelchair users. Work areas are well maintained with appropriate attention given to health and safety. Teachers are suitably qualified and most have good industrial experience.

55. Most work is assessed and marked appropriately. Assignments are returned in good time. However, written feedback does not give sufficient guidance to students on how to improve. Verbal feedback during lessons and following practical assessment is comprehensive. Work-based learners are assessed regularly in the workplace. Assessment is planned effectively and assessors respond to requests for additional assessment when appropriate activities occur in the workplace. Internal verification is satisfactory although there are insufficient standardisation meetings for some programmes.

56. The college has undertaken an evaluation of local and regional needs and is developing its curriculum response. Appropriate programmes are in place in motor vehicle and engineering at levels 1 and 2. A good range of boat-building courses and work-based learning opportunities is also available. A level 3 course in process maintenance is planned to start in September. A variety of programmes support 14 to 16 year olds from local schools in gaining engineering and motor vehicle qualifications.

57. Students receive good and effective support. All students have their literacy and numeracy needs tested when they start their course and additional support is provided where needed. All students have an individual tutorial every six weeks. Most tutors take time to find out how well students are performing in each aspect of their programme and agree appropriate targets for improvement. Teachers are aware of their students' needs and give good individual support during lessons. Apprentices are supported well by their employers. Apprentices' progress is reviewed regularly by the college. However, reviews sometimes fail to include all aspects of learners' performance and do not always involve employers.

Leadership and management

58. Overall management of the area is satisfactory. The centre has been reorganised since the last inspection and a new manager appointed. Staff performance is now appraised and a staff development programme has been implemented. Grades awarded through the college's teaching and learning observations generally agree with those of inspectors. Course reviews have been introduced, but a number of these lack rigour. The self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the key development issues for the area, but overstates the strengths. The self-assessment process did not involve all staff sufficiently. Data are now used in evaluating course performance, but there is a lack of confidence in its accuracy. An effective system is in place for monitoring and resolving the slow progress of work-based learners. Appropriate changes have been made to the structure of programmes in response to the last inspection report.

Information and communications technology

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most courses

- very good teaching and learning on full-time courses

- highly effective assessment practice

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient ILT resources

- poor preparation of vocational students for employment

- inadequate sharing of good practice across the area of learning.

Scope of provision

59. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in ICT ranging from basic introductory courses to HE programmes. Full-time provision includes the GNVQ intermediate course in ICT, AVCE ICT, and a foundation year leading to a degree course at the University of East Anglia.

60. Part-time students can follow courses using office software at entry level, and levels 1 and 2, or

more technical courses in computer maintenance and hardware, and ICT systems support, both at level 2. Most of these courses are available at various times of the day and evening and are held at the main campus or at a smaller outreach centre. There are currently 88 students, most of whom are aged 16 to 18, enrolled on full-time courses at levels 2 and 3, and 801 mainly adult students are enrolled on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

61. Retention and pass rates on the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course, European computer driving licence (ECDL), GNVQ intermediate ICT and the AVCE in ICT, have risen over the past two years and are now well above the national averages. For example, the GNVQ intermediate ICT course was more than 20% above the national average for both retention and pass rates in 2004. In that year, GNVQ intermediate students piloted a target-setting project to improve retention and pass rates. Results are very encouraging with 16% of the group exceeding their target grades and 56% achieving them. Attendance is very high and students are punctual.

62. Full-time students are very competent in using IT. They produce work which demonstrates a good understanding of their subject. Most are attentive and ready to answer questions and they participate effectively in group work and discussions. Students successfully demonstrate research and decision-making skills, computing techniques, knowledge of binary and hexadecimal number systems, websites and HTML, e-mailing, file management and critical evaluation. Part-time students on the computer maintenance course are able to identify and rectify faults on computer workstations. Adult students new to computing develop skills in office software to support them at work, in the home and in the community.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
CLAIT/New CLAIT short	1	No. of starts	139	249	97
		% retention	90	83	78
		% pass rate	87	82	70
CLAIT/New CLAIT 1 year	1	No. of starts	162	430	183
		% retention	84	85	89
		% pass rate	79	77	69
ECDL 1 year	2	No. of starts	46	52	16
		% retention	98	85	100
		% pass rate	93	93	81
GNVQ ICT	2	No. of starts	27	22	25
		% retention	74	68	100
		% pass rate	55	100	96
AVCE ICT (single award)	3	No. of starts	44	*	30
		% retention	89	*	93
		% pass rate	59	*	93
AVCE ICT (double award)	3	No. of starts	24	21	*
		% retention	88	90	*
		% pass rate	86	89	*

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

****fewer than 15 students enrolled***

Quality of education and training

63. Teaching and learning are very good on full-time courses and satisfactory on part-time courses. The better lessons contain a variety of activities to capture and maintain students' interest. Group work, pair work, class discussions and student-led activities are interspersed with individual practical exercises and the teacher's explanations and demonstrations. Good use is made of data projection equipment, where it is available, to illustrate techniques used in software packages. Lessons are planned well to include strategies to cater for students of differing abilities although schemes of work lack detail. Good use is made of specialist learning materials developed by the standards unit at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

64. Part-time CLAIT courses and City and Guilds 'E-qualifications' are run on a roll-on roll-off basis. Learning resources are very well organised and easily accessed by students. However, lessons lack variety. The students' focus on exam requirements inhibits exploration and development of new ideas.

65. Accommodation and resources for students are satisfactory. Teachers have access to good computing facilities for the preparation and marking of work. Several computer rooms are air conditioned, but others without this facility are sometimes uncomfortably hot. Too few computer rooms are equipped with data projection equipment. This prevents teachers from demonstrating features of graphical user interfaces and slows down learning. The college computer network is robust. Technical support is fast and efficient. The network is not accessible from the nearby outreach centre in Kirkley. The college library contains an appropriate range of books and magazines useful to ICT students.

66. Assessment practices are good. Marking on CLAIT courses is of a particularly high standard. All marked work is returned quickly and contains constructive comments to help students raise the standard of their work. Assignment schedules are planned carefully to regulate the students' workload. Tracking of students' progress is good. Internal verification practices are very good. A selection of marked work is checked by a team of internal verifiers and written advice is given to markers on how to improve the accuracy of their assessments.

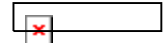
67. Market research has been undertaken to identify the interests and needs of employers and the local community. An analysis of this research has influenced the choice of courses offered. The range of courses for full-time students has been selected carefully. Students take part in a variety of enrichment activities although work experience is not arranged. Students complete their courses insufficiently prepared for employment.

68. Guidance and support for students are good. Students find the initial advice and guidance they receive helpful in selecting their course. Numeracy, literacy and other support needs are identified during induction and appropriate support offered. Students typically make good use of the support services available. Students are clear about where to go to get help on personal or financial matters.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management, in particular of full-time courses, are good. Strategies to improve the provision have been managed well. The internal lesson observation scheme is effective. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. Problems identified in lesson observations are followed up with coaching sessions. Regular meetings are held at departmental and course level. Time constrained targets are set to resolve issues and improve performance. ICT teachers are located in two departments. These teachers do not meet formally to share the good practice that exists in both teams. Most of the key strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are contained in the self-assessment report.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel



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

The contributory grade for travel and tourism is outstanding (grade 1)

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses

- consistently high standards of students' work in travel and tourism

- professional standards of students' work in practical sports lessons

- much very good teaching in travel and tourism

- very productive relationships with employers and the community

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning in a few lessons

- insufficient attention to developing hygienic and safe practices in hospitality and catering.

Scope of provision

70. The department offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in hospitality, travel, sport and uniformed services. These include a one year full-time introductory diploma in travel and tourism at level 1, cabin crew operations at level 2, and the AVCE single and double awards in travel and tourism. The Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC) primary certificate, Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) resort representatives and air fares and ticketing are available

as part-time evening courses. In catering, full-time students study food hygiene and NVQ levels 1 and 2 in food preparation and cooking and food and drink service over two years. NVQs in food preparation and cooking are offered part time at levels 1 to 3. Short courses include food hygiene and the national licensee certificate. In sports, full-time level 1 and 2 progression awards are offered. Full-time students can take a range of additional qualifications, including languages. A small number of work-based learners are on apprenticeship schemes in hospitality and catering.

Achievement and standards

71. Retention and pass rates on most courses are high. For example, on the certificate in travel course, the pass rate has been over 90% for the last two years, 29% above the national average. In 2003/04, 100% of students were retained on the AVCE travel and tourism course and all achieved the qualification. Retention and pass rates are also high on the progression awards at levels 1 and 2 in sport and leisure. In catering, pass rates for NVQs at levels 1 and 2 have remained at 90% or above over the two years to 2004, well above the national average.

72. Students typically make very good progress. They take pride in their achievements. Travel and tourism students produce work of a consistently high standard. Assignments demonstrate well-developed skills of research and analysis. Students express their findings clearly. Very good use is made of the Internet to find up-to-date travel information. Work is presented neatly, using a variety of IT applications. In 2004, the college was awarded the ABTAC prize for best centre results nationally.

73. In sport and leisure, students show outstanding maturity and professionalism in their approach to study. In a practical lifeguard lesson, students listened intently to the teacher and followed instructions carefully. They demonstrated well-developed skills in performing surface dives and simulated tow and secure techniques. School pupils on a catering course in college are well motivated and have made good progress in achieving NVQ level 1 food preparation units.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	*	38	36
		% retention	*	84	83
		% pass rate	*	100	93
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	33	35	27
		% retention	91	83	93
		% pass rate	63	90	92
Certificate in travel (travel agency)	2	No. of starts	31	21	44
		% retention	68	71	89
		% pass rate	95	93	92
Intermediate certificate in retail travel operations	2	No. of starts	34	19	17
		% retention	76	79	94
		% pass rate	69	73	100
British institute of inn-keeping national licensees certificate	3	No. of starts	112	102	90
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	72	75	84

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

74. There is much good teaching and some outstanding teaching in travel and tourism. Lessons are prepared carefully and taught with energy and enthusiasm. Students are encouraged to develop skills for independent learning. Attention is given to developing intellectual skills such as analysis and evaluation. Travel and tourism teachers have relevant industry backgrounds. They enliven lessons with examples from the workplace. In sport and leisure, the emphasis on developing students' maturity and self-confidence is very effective. Teachers provide very good role models and foster a culture of courtesy and mutual respect.

75. Insufficient planning hinders learning in a few lessons. Schemes of work lack detail and are often just lists of topics to be taught in date order. In the poorer lessons, little attention is given to matching teaching and learning to the needs of individuals or groups of students. In one lesson, a support assistant did not allow a student adequate opportunity to complete work independently. In some hospitality and catering practical sessions, insufficient attention is given to developing safe and hygienic working methods. For example, in one food preparation practical lesson, the need for thorough and frequent hand washing was not reinforced sufficiently.

76. IT is used extensively in teaching and learning. In catering, tutors have set up a very helpful information gateway. Catering practical areas are adequate with commercial standard equipment and machinery. However, some items are old and in need of replacement. A planetary mixing machine cannot be used as it is not fitted with safety guards.

77. In sport and recreation, good use is made of the adjacent civic sports centre. Facilities include a sports hall, swimming pool, climbing wall and two outdoor all-weather pitches. A fitness room is equipped with resistance and cardiovascular equipment, for testing and analysing fitness levels. Students also have access to county council sailing and canoeing facilities

78. Assessment and internal verification are rigorous and reliable. Feedback on assignments is extensive; particularly in travel, where the detailed comments on marked work help students to make good progress.

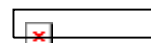
79. The local and county councils recruit lifeguards and sports assistants from the college's sport and leisure programmes. Sports students work with school children in providing swimming and sports clubs during holiday periods. Many 14 to 16 year olds taking NVQ units progress to full-time catering courses at the college.

80. Support for students is good. A former student had gained the skills and qualifications to make a successful career in the sports industry despite earlier exclusion from school.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are good. The college's strategic aims are widely understood. Communication between managers and teachers is good. Clear and demanding targets are set and monitored closely. Staff development is clearly linked to strategic aims and has focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are supported well by the centre manager. Course reviews and evaluations thoroughly analyse attendance, retention and pass rates. Areas for improvement are addressed through the centre's self-assessment and action plan.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses and high retention rates on beauty therapy courses
- much good teaching in beauty therapy
- highly effective tracking of students' progress on college-based courses
- good learning support
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low achievement of NVQs in the workplace
- insufficient planned work experience for full-time students.

Scope of provision

82. The centre offers full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty and other related therapies. There are currently 127 students aged 16 to 18 and 206 adults; 23 students are male. Courses include hairdressing at levels 1 and 2, beauty therapy at levels 1 to 3 and a diploma in holistic therapy. The college offers a range of part-time provision including body massage, reflexology and aromatherapy. Some 18 apprentices attend college weekly in their first year and monthly in their second year. A course for 14 to 16 year olds has attracted 41 pupils from local schools who attend college one day each week to complete hairdressing or beauty therapy qualifications at level 1.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates are high on most courses. Pass rates on hairdressing and beauty therapy NVQs at level 2 have been well above the national averages for the last three years. Many courses such as the diplomas in reflexology, sports massage and holistic therapy have had 100% pass rates. All students who completed the new level 1 beauty therapy course in 2004 gained the qualification.

84. Retention rates on most beauty therapy courses are high. The body massage certificate and the diploma in aromatherapy have maintained high retention rates over the last three years. Retention rates on the NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1 and 2 declined in 2003/04 to around the national averages. Current retention rates for these courses are high.

85. Students use IT effectively to produce portfolios to a high standard. Practical work is often good. A beauty therapy student has earned a place to represent the United Kingdom in an international competition in Helsinki in 2005. Achievements of apprenticeship frameworks are low. Of those apprentices starting in 2001/02, only 25% have completed the framework.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ hairdressing 1 year	1	No. of starts	27	30	47
		% retention	59	90	74
		% pass rate	88	85	97
NVQ hairdressing 1 year	2	No. of starts	16	21	14
		% retention	50	90	71
		% pass rate	100	95	90
NVQ beauty therapy 1 year	2	No. of starts	29	26	29
		% retention	72	73	90
		% pass rate	76	100	92
NVQ beauty therapy 1 year	3	No. of starts	19	*	15
		% retention	84	*	93
		% pass rate	100	*	79
Body massage certificate 1 year	3	No. of starts	26	30	32
		% retention	92	93	84
		% pass rate	100	96	96
Diploma in holistic therapies 1 year	3	No. of starts	16	18	14
		% retention	100	100	86
		% pass rate	94	100	100

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

****fewer than 15 students enrolled***

Quality of education and training

86. Teaching in beauty therapy is particularly good. Most practical lessons have a sense of purpose. Good feedback from the teacher leads to clear improvements in students' skills and understanding. In a theory session, a game was used to gain students' interest and explain difficult concepts. In another, students shared their experiences and learnt from each other. A data projector and a skeleton model were used to extend knowledge and understanding in the follow up to a demonstration on massage technique. In the best hair and beauty practical sessions, students work confidently and professionally on a range of different clients. They develop good communication and practical skills using different tools and equipment. However, there are often too few commercial clients. In one hairdressing lesson, students paid insufficient attention to the sterilisation of tools.

87. Key skills are taught well by vocational teachers. Students enjoy their key skills lessons and understand their relevance to vocational studies. In one beauty therapy session, students were preparing leaflets to advertise for clients. Others were developing a presentation to use as part of their NVQ assignment work. Key skills portfolios are of a high standard.

88. Specialist accommodation is generally satisfactory. A new hairdressing salon was opened in 2003/04. Some salons are outdated and in need of refurbishment. In one beauty room the floor covering is inadequate. Considerable investment has been made in electrical equipment for beauty therapy and one beauty therapy room has been refurbished to a high standard. The learning centre stocks an appropriate range of texts and journals for students' use. New teachers appointed to the area bring recent industrial experience to the classroom and are working towards teaching qualifications.

89. Assessment practice is good. Clear feedback helps students to know how to improve their performance. A simple yet effective tracking system is in place using wall charts to plan assessments. College-based students know how they are progressing. In the workplace, 10 salon-based assessors have been trained by the college to assess apprentices' skills. However, progress reviews are poor and lack clear assessment targets. Learners progress too slowly and many have not completed basic units of the NVQ by their second year. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements.

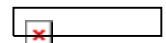
90. Students participate in a wide range of trips and visits to shows, competitions and trade fairs. Routine access to work placement is inadequate for full-time students. Some students arrange their own work placements or work part time in local salons, but teachers do not monitor their progress or assess their skills in the workplace.

91. Initial assessment is thorough and students are on courses at the right level. Additional support needs are diagnosed and more than 80% of students take up the support that is offered. Teachers work closely with support staff, many of whom are qualified hairdressers or beauty therapists. Students make good progress with the support they receive. All level 1 hairdressing students are screened routinely for colour blindness using an online test. Tutorials are of a high standard and help students to develop good social and personal skills.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership and management are good. Data management and quality assurance are effective at all levels. Pass and retention rates remain high. There are clear lines of communication within the team. Roles and responsibilities are well defined. Teachers are involved in the self-assessment process. Course reviews are evaluative. Managers and teachers work together to set and monitor targets for improvement. An effective mentoring scheme provides support for new teachers in the team.

Health, social care and public services



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on AVCE (double award) health and social care and NVQ level 3 early years courses

- confident and articulate students

- good support for students
- rigorous assessment practice.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on the national diploma early years course
- insufficient access to IT resources in care and early years teaching rooms
- inappropriate placement of students on some courses.

Scope of provision

93. Full-time and part-time courses are offered at levels 1 to 4, including NVQs at level 2 and level 3 in early years care and education, and in care. At level 3, the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma is available in care and in early years. A national diploma in early years, and the AVCE in health and social care, are also offered. Other courses include Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) qualifications for teaching assistants, foundation childcare and short courses in counselling.

Achievement and standards

94. Pass rates on the AVCE health and social care (double award) have been 100% for the three years to 2004. Pass rates on the NVQ level 3 in early years were also 100% in 2003/04. Pass rates have declined on foundation courses in care and childcare. Pass and retention rates on the national diploma early years course are now well below the national averages. Some students have been placed on inappropriate courses. Currently, retention rates on most courses are high. Standards of students' work are high.

95. Students express themselves confidently and articulately in lessons. In discussions, they demonstrate a sound depth of understanding and knowledge of the care and early years sectors. They develop good personal and learning skills. In a childcare lesson, level 1 students were able to communicate information on factors affecting behaviour with confidence and use complex terminology with accuracy.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Foundation care and childcare	1	No. of starts	16	*	15
		% retention	75	*	80
		% pass rate	92	*	83

North Anglia Open College Network (NAOCN) childcare and care	2	No. of starts	28	43	**
		% retention	75	77	**
		% pass rate	95	82	**
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	16	24	26
		% retention	88	79	50
		% pass rate	79	89	77

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

***fewer than 15 students enrolled**

****course did not run**

Quality of education and training

96. Much teaching is good or better. Lesson planning is good. Learning outcomes clearly state what students are expected to learn. Many lesson plans make reference to other units and key skills. Appropriate attention is given to the different needs and abilities of students. Teachers use a variety of activities and methods to sustain interest and motivation. Lessons are generally well managed and structured. Teachers teach with enthusiasm and some with a passion, which energises the whole group. In a lesson on behaviour modification with foundation care and childcare students, the teacher had 'trained' the group to respond to the blow of a whistle. They all stopped work and rubbed their heads and wiggled their ears, then returned to work without a glance. In another lesson, an adult NVQ student presented information on the use of maggots in the treatment of pressure sores. This promoted a lively, but focused discussion and the sharing of experiences on how pressure sore treatment can be managed in the workplace.

97. In the least effective lessons, teachers make insufficient checks on students' understanding. A few students are allowed to dominate question and answer sessions. In one lesson, where level 3 students were presenting information to their peers, the teacher failed to correct spelling mistakes as students used the whiteboard to illustrate key points. In another, timings were not allocated to small group tasks and some students lost momentum and did not work to their full potential.

98. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory, but often drab. Displays provide stimulation and an opportunity to celebrate students' work. Lack of computers in teaching areas limits opportunities for in-class research and to use software applicable to care and early years environments. A data projector was used well for Powerpoint presentations to demonstrate the renal system and the treatment of pressure sores.

99. Assessment practice on all courses has improved and is now good. As a consequence, students know what they need to do to improve their grades. They typically make good progress. Most teachers have assessors' qualifications. Assessors and verifiers meet regularly to share good practice. Employers and parents are kept informed of students' progress.

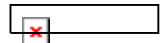
100. The range of provision offers progression through levels 1 to 4. Teachers have revised the curriculum to ensure that courses available reflect the needs of students more closely. Links with the community and the care sector are good. Work placements are appropriate. A range of enrichment activities provides opportunities for students to extend their skills. These include introduction to sign language, aromatherapy, basic food hygiene and first aid.

101. Support and guidance for students are good. Procedures for the selection and monitoring of full-time students have been strengthened. Pre-course assessments ensure additional learning support is in place at the start of the autumn term. The learning support assistants who work in the curriculum area have early years or care experience. They provide good classroom support. Tutorial support is effective.

Leadership and management

102. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers are involved in course reviews and in the development of the self-assessment report. Weaknesses in performance and actions for improvement are identified. However, the area has experienced some difficulty in responding to awarding body changes to outcomes and standards. A revised curriculum offer has resulted in a lack of data to make clear judgements on trends in retention and pass rates. Communication within the centre is good. External links and collaboration with other colleges have led to the sharing of good practice.

Foundation programmes - provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- confident and independent work by students in practical lessons

- much good teaching on work-related courses

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient stimulation in lessons for students with severe learning difficulties

- insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning

- some unsatisfactory accommodation.

Scope of provision

103. Courses are offered at pre-entry and entry level for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at the main college site and at two day centres. There are currently 116 students enrolled; of whom 68 attend full-time courses at the main Lowestoft campus. A further 50 study part time and of these, 36 attend off-site provision.

104. Some 24 full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and 44 are adults. Entry level courses include

pre-vocational and preparation for work. At pre-entry level, the provision includes pathways skills for learning and the part-time course 'moving on making choices'.

105. Accreditation schemes include Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) records of achievement and accreditation of life and living, Mencap essential skills, ABC certificate in life skills and skills for working life, as well as the entry level certificate in food studies. Students may take additional qualifications in spoken English, first aid and health and safety.

Achievement and standards

106. Students develop good practical skills. Individual targets for learning are set every six weeks. Achievement of these targets is satisfactory, with average achievement by typical groups at around 52%. Students gain confidence and independence through active learning in sport, cookery, first aid, health and safety and gardening. For example, in a sports lesson, students learned correct technical vocabulary and worked well together in pairs, groups and teams. Retention rates, at 97%, in 2003/04, are high. Progression by students is satisfactory. Of those who completed courses in 2004, 77% progressed to another course at college, a further 8% went on to education or training elsewhere and 4% gained employment.

Quality of education and training

107. There is much good teaching for students on work-related courses. In the best lessons, students achieve demanding, but realistic targets and are supported well by learning support assistants. Lively and enthusiastic teaching sets high expectations. These lessons are brisk and purposeful with a variety of activities leading to different learning outcomes. In a health and safety lesson, students used excellent real life resources including notices, safety equipment, electric and hand tools, a fire extinguisher and step ladder to develop skills, knowledge and confidence. In a horticulture lesson, adult students were fascinated by detailed observation of seeds using hand-held magnifiers. Some teaching for students with severe learning difficulties does not stimulate them. Plans loosely list activities without specified learning outcomes and work is repeated from week to week. Teachers' use of students' learning goals is inconsistent. The best lessons have detailed plans to meet the needs of individual students and closely monitor achievements. A few teachers prepare too few activities to occupy students during lessons. They fail to provide sufficient challenge or stimulation and leave support assistants to supervise students. In these lessons students' progress is unsatisfactory.

108. Access to appropriate resources, including ILT, is mostly satisfactory. Equipment, such as laptops and an electronic handset system which allows students to answer multiple choice questions projected on screen, are available although insufficient use is made of this technology in lessons. In two literacy lessons, no dictionary was available. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory. In the base area, interconnecting rooms lack corridor access to the kitchen, a room is shared by two classes and a classroom door has no catch. At an off-site centre a room has no door. These factors lead to interruptions which disrupt learning. A computer classroom has no extraction system and becomes stuffy and overheated. Facilities at the outreach IT training centre and in newer buildings on the main campus are good. Students have access to good facilities at a local sports centre. Teachers are adequately qualified although a few lack the skills to teach students with severe learning difficulties.

109. Assessment and monitoring of progress are effective. Initial assessment is detailed, but has not been completed for one course for students with severe learning difficulties. Individual goals for most students are reviewed every six weeks. Students are very aware of their learning targets and sometimes suggest new targets for themselves. They are proud of the progress they make.

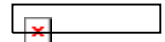
110. The range of courses offered is good and includes appropriate accreditation. Collaboration in local networks of providers for people with disabilities has extended provision although some newly developed courses have not achieved consistent standards and do not meet fully the needs of less able students.

111. Overall guidance and support are satisfactory. Support assistants have good skills and provide sensitive support with learning and personal issues. They are well linked to groups and individual students. Individual needs are diagnosed appropriately. Regular individual tutorials monitor students' progress effectively. Students are confident and value the support they receive.

Leadership and management

112. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are good. Recent substantial improvements have been made, but these have not yet taken effect. The self-assessment report is detailed and largely accurate, but fails to identify some poor teaching. Considerable work on lesson observations and training to improve teaching and learning has been undertaken. New and well-designed procedures for planning and recording individuals' progress are in place.

Foundation programmes - literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on all courses

- very effective promotion of equal opportunities in communication skills lessons

- much good numeracy teaching on discrete courses for students aged 16 to 18

- very good support for the most vulnerable students

- good management of learning support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on key skills qualifications

- insufficient planning to meet the learning needs of all students

- inadequate checking of learning in lessons

- insufficiently developed links between skills for life and key skills.

Scope of provision

113. The provision includes literacy, numeracy, additional learning support and key skills up to level 2. All full-time courses for young people include at least one key skill at levels 1 or 2. Additional numeracy and literacy support is available for all students, including the few clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes. Some 60 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have literacy and numeracy integrated with their courses. Around 400 students are receiving specialist literacy and numeracy support.

114. Evening courses are offered in the skills for life centre and at a smaller site in Lowestoft. Other courses are run for offenders at the nearby probation office.

Achievement and standards

115. Overall, achievement of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Retention rates are very high. However, there is wide variation in pass rates. On one literacy course, for example, 42 of the 48 students passed the national level 1 test, yet on a similar course, with the same target qualification, only 2 students were entered for the national test. Achievements of full key skills qualifications were low in 2003/04, although 75% of students stayed on the programme and either presented a satisfactory portfolio or passed the national test.

116. Last year, only a third of the skills for life students who started discrete entry level 3 courses, achieved the literacy qualification within a year. Many are on target to reach the required standard in 2005. Most have made satisfactory progress in numeracy, but a number have made slow progress in reading and writing. Progress in oral skills is good. Those who formerly were extremely reticent to voice opinions, now speak confidently in a variety of group situations.

Quality of education and training

117. Most teaching is satisfactory. Some is very good. The better lessons are well planned and teachers use a good mix of whole-class and individual or small group teaching. Much numeracy teaching is good. In one very good lesson, following some whole-class teaching, students learnt simple percentages, others calculated areas of rectangles, while two others measured items of furniture in the area outside the classroom using a carpenter's tape measure. Learning was directed to each student's capabilities. In the best lessons, teachers explain the standards they expect and what students need to do to improve.

118. In most lessons, and in particular in communications, good reference is made to an aspect of equal opportunities, for example, protection from bullying, or treating other people with appropriate respect. Teachers often draw students' attention to posters displayed in the classrooms, for instance, about dyslexia or the college's strong anti-bullying stance. The discrete skills for life students learn acceptable standards of behaviour quickly, and how they should treat others and should expect to be treated.

119. In the less effective lessons, teachers plan the activities, but often they do not plan what they expect students to learn. In these lessons, individual learning plans are not used effectively. Teachers do not always remind students of their individual learning targets. Some teachers introduce new concepts, explain things too quickly or use unfamiliar terminology, without realising

that many of the students do not understand. They do not check students' understanding nor ask them to demonstrate their understanding.

120. The college has continued to extend training for teachers and to build capacity, although around a quarter of teachers are still developing the specialist skills needed. Four teachers have completed the level 4 subject specialist training and a mentoring system is in place for those who have yet to complete.

121. Most classrooms are spacious and adequately furnished. Some are equipped with computers linked to the Internet. Discrete skills for life students do not use computers often enough to aid their literacy or numeracy. The skills for life learning centre is well equipped, well furnished, and stocked with a good range of suitable learning materials, mainly paper-based. It is an environment conducive to individual and group learning. In contrast, the Prince's Trust courses, though effective in developing skills, are run in a cold, dingy room in a dilapidated, pre-fabricated building on the car park. Few students on these courses progress to FE.

122. There is a sound model of initial assessment of students' literacy, numeracy, learning styles, previous qualifications and experience and, where relevant, personal and domestic circumstances. In some cases, however, this information is not used to plan specific learning targets. When giving feedback to students, orally in lessons and in written comments on students' work, some teachers overuse the word 'good', without further explanation of what was good about their work and how any further improvements could be made. The assessment and internal verification of key skills have improved and are now satisfactory.

123. Programmes and courses generally meet the needs and interests of students. There is a good progression route for students from local pupil referral units, and for students with moderate learning or educational behavioural difficulties, from specialist and mainstream schools. There are close links with vocational departments and many students progress to a vocational course.

124. Students are well supported across the college. Retention rates are high. Teachers support the most vulnerable students particularly well. They know about any specialist conditions students may have, for example, Aspergers, and they know about their home circumstances. Students trust and confide in their teachers, and tend to stay on their courses. Diagnosis of dyslexia has improved although increasing demand places a strain on the available time of specialist staff.

Leadership and management

125. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. Learning support is very well managed. Learning support assistants are prominent throughout the college. They and the many new trainee teachers have a good induction and training. Staff training is now extensive and appropriate. Since the last inspection, managers have invested in learning materials and established a good learning resource centre. More part-time courses are now available for adults, including offenders on probation. Links between key skills teaching and other literacy and numeracy teaching are not well developed. The skills for life self-assessment does not encompass key skills. Managers do not yet analyse data sufficiently to help them to make improvements in courses with low achievement.

Part D: College data

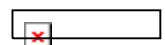
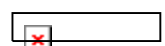


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	39	49
2	35	20
3	26	28
4/5	0	1
Other	0	2
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	55	198	6
Land-based provision	26	15	1
Construction	80	118	5
Engineering, technology and manufacture	183	202	9
Business administration, management and professional	123	334	10
Information and communication technology	131	841	22
Retailing, customer service and transportation	20	71	2
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	345	200	13
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	100	150	6
Health, social care and public services	348	159	12
Visual and performing arts and media	29	89	3
Humanities	21	78	2
English, languages and communication	42	97	3
Foundation programmes	95	173	6
Total	1,598	2,725	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	616	800	681	717	727	973
	Retention rate %	84	71	74	82	71	78
	National average %	75	76	76	70	71	71
	Pass rate %	62	62	81	64	78	85
	National average %	67	69	73	68	70	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	728	1,139	800	969	925	753
	Retention rate %	79	76	73	79	76	71
	National average %	70	71	71	68	68	67
	Pass rate %	58	73	83	64	73	84
	National average %	68	70	73	67	71	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	571	420	381	795	780	733
	Retention rate %	70	75	60	77	77	78
	National average %	70	77	77	68	70	69
	Pass rate %	63	65	76	66	66	76
	National average %	75	77	80	68	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	106	85	49
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	22	94	82
	National average %	**	**	**	67	68	69
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	91	15	78
	National average %	**	**	**	54	54	58

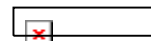
Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

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

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

****numbers too low to provide a valid calculation***



****data unavailable**

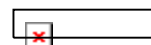
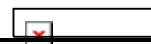


Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level



Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	65	30	5	20
Level 2 (intermediate)	60	35	5	40
Level 1 (foundation)	43	48	9	21
Other sessions	54	38	8	24
Totals	56	37	7	105

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