



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Taunton's College

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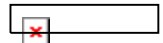
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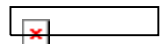
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Basic information about the college

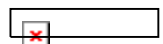


Name of college:	Taunton's College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Jenny Fitton
Address of college:	Hill Lane Southampton SO15 5RL
Telephone number:	023 8051 1811
Fax number:	023 8051 1911
Chair of governors:	Lewis Darbyshire
Unique reference number:	130737
Name of reporting inspector:	Kenneth L Jones HMI
Dates of inspection:	7-11 February 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



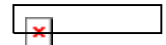
Taunton's college is a sixth form college serving students living in the west of Southampton. The

quartile of the most deprived areas of England. Some 13% of students travel to the college from the inner city area and 20% of students are from minority ethnic groups compared to 7.6%, predominantly Asian, for the city as a whole. Economic activity rates in Southampton are low, with 72.9% of the population aged 16 to 59 in employment compared to 80% for the South East as a whole.

The mission of the college is to raise standards and widen participation through high-quality education and training for young people and adults in Southampton. The proportion of school leavers in Southampton achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above is well below the national average and the rate of progression of young people aged 16 to education and training is also well below average. The college has sought to diversify its provision whilst retaining a sixth form college ethos.

During 2003/04, the college enrolled 1,249 students aged 16 to 18 and 1,353 adults on to various programmes. This equates to some 1,367 full-time equivalent students. Only 44 adults followed full-time courses. Some 70% of students aged 16 to 18 are on advanced level courses. The college offers programmes in 11 of the 14 areas of learning. The majority of students are enrolled on programmes in science and mathematics; business, administration and management; sports, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; humanities; English and modern foreign languages.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be good in four curriculum areas and satisfactory in one. Overall provision in the visual and performing arts is good and music was awarded a contributory grade of outstanding. The humanities area is satisfactory overall, but law, psychology and religious studies were awarded a contributory grade of good. Leadership and management and support for students are good. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- much good teaching and learning

- clear strategic direction

- effective governance

- effective communication and good teamwork

- range of provision

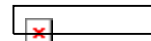
- good resources and an attractive environment for learning
- access for students with restricted mobility
- support provided for students
- promotion of educational and social inclusion
- progress made by students relative to their prior achievements
- rigorous course reviews that promote improvement.

What should be improved?

- pass rates on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses
- financial stability of the college
- clarity of targets included in students' individual learning plans
- accommodation for advice and guidance, social areas for students and library space
- grading of internal lesson observations
- students' achievements of key skills.

subjects and courses in the full report.

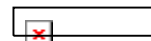
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

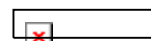
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. Pass rates are high on general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, but low in AS-level physics and chemistry. Teaching is mostly good, although some lessons in mathematics are unimaginative and there is insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT) by teachers in some lessons. Academic support for students is very good, as is teaching accommodation. The area is well led and managed.
Business and administration	Good. There is a wide range of provision, but insufficient links with industry to enrich students' experience. Students are well supported and many programmes have high pass rates. Much of the teaching is challenging and stimulating, but insufficient use is made of ILT in some lessons.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Contributory grade for music is outstanding . Teaching is mostly good, with particularly stimulating teaching and outstanding quality of performance in music. Pass rates are high on most courses, but low in art and design at AS level. Resources are good with excellent specialist accommodation and equipment for music. Art and design students are not sufficiently challenged and extended, and teaching periods are too short for students to develop their practical skills.
Humanities	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for law, psychology and religious studies is good . Teaching is purposeful and enjoyable in most lessons, although some teachers provide insufficient opportunities for students to develop their own ideas. Pass rates are high on most GCE A-level courses, but low at AS level. Resources are used effectively to promote learning and students are well supported and encouraged to achieve. Measures to improve learning and achievement are not co-ordinated well across the area.
English and foreign languages	Good. There are high pass rates in most subjects other than AS-level English. Retention rates are poor on a significant minority of courses. Teaching is good and ILT facilities are well used. Personal and academic support for students are very effective. There is a wide range of foreign language courses and the curriculum across the area is well managed.

How well is the college led and managed?



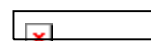
Leadership and management are good. The clear strategic direction set by senior managers and governors is fully supported by staff. Governors play an active part in the life of the college. Communication and teamwork are good. Managers place particular emphasis on developing partnerships with schools and other providers to improve participation in education and training. Social and educational inclusion are promoted well. The range of courses has been broadened to meet local needs and buildings provide very good access for those with restricted mobility. Self-evaluation and course reviews are rigorous and action plans promote improvement. Students' achievements have improved significantly over a three-year period, but not consistently across all curriculum areas and types of provision. Students are well supported and make good progress relative to their prior achievements. Accommodation has been improved since the last inspection. Income and expenditure are carefully monitored. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the provision of the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The curriculum has been broadened to meet the needs of the local community. The college promotes educational partnerships to widen participation and increase the proportion of students continuing in post-16 education in the area. Initial assessment is used effectively to assess and meet students additional support needs. Targeted financial support enables students to participate fully and successfully complete their studies. The college has an appropriate disability statement and policies for promoting race equality and equality of opportunity. It fulfils its obligations under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). College facilities are accessible to students with restricted mobility. Support for students has been effective in enabling students with physical disabilities and sensory impairments to participate fully in college life. Some 20% of college students come from minority ethnic groups, compared with 7.6% of the population of the local area. The recruitment and subsequent performance of diverse groups of students are closely monitored.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are good. Pre-entry guidance is comprehensive and impartial. Initial assessment is effective in identifying support needs and students receive support early in their course. Induction arrangements enable students to settle into their studies quickly. Students have access to a good range of additional support services, including learning support, financial assistance, careers and progression guidance and advice on personal issues. Teachers monitor academic progress regularly and there is effective communication between subject teachers and personal tutors. Management information is used well to monitor attendance and appropriate action is taken promptly. Parents and carers receive regular reports on performance and attendance. Students receive effective tutorial support in groups and individually. Tutors agree improvement targets with students and monitor progress regularly. Comprehensive advice is provided on careers and progression opportunities. Students are well supported when they apply for places in higher education (HE) institutions or for jobs.

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

- wide variety of courses

- friendly, welcoming atmosphere

- approachable and helpful staff

- being treated as adults and valued

- good teaching

- good resources

- good careers advice.

What they feel could be improved

- social space

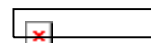
- car parking

- canteen prices

- sports facilities

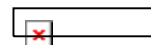
- space in the library
- key skills.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

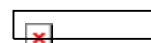


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	77	22	1
19+ and WBL*	50	50	0
Learning 16-18	78	19	3
19+ and WBL*	50	50	0

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



16 to 18 year olds

1. Most students who enrol at the college are aged 16 to 18. Overall retention rates for young people following foundation level programmes were well above the national average for sixth form colleges for the three years prior to the inspection. For intermediate programmes, mostly GCSE, general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and precursor programmes, retention rates have improved steadily since 2002 and were well above the national average in 2004. At advanced level, mostly AS-level and GCE A-level courses, retention rates have improved and were at the national average in 2004.

2. Pass rates overall on foundation level programmes have been consistently above average for the three years prior to the inspection. At intermediate level, overall pass rates have been consistently below average. However, for GCSE, GNVQ and precursor courses, which constitute the major programmes offered at this level, pass rates were high in 2004. The pass rate for GCSE English was very high and the rate for mathematics was at the national average. For GNVQ and precursor programmes, pass rates have been consistently good over a three-year period. The majority of students attending the college follow AS-level or GCE A-level courses. Overall pass rates for young people on advanced level programmes have been just below the national average for the three years prior to the inspection due to below average pass rates on AS-level programmes. Pass rates on GCE A-level programmes are consistently at the national average.

3. Of the students enrolling on GCE A-level programmes, some 15% do not have a C grade in GCSE mathematics and 4% do not have a C grade in English. The average GCSE point score of students enrolling on GCE A-level programmes is below the average for students enrolling at sixth form colleges nationally. In 2003/04, for example, 47% of students enrolling on AS-level courses had low entry qualifications compared to 27% nationally. Only 9% of students had high GCSE point scores, compared to 17% nationally. Differences are not as marked for GCE A-level programmes, but are still significant, with 35% of students having low point scores at entry to the college compared to 26% nationally. Similarly, only 11% of students had high point scores compared to 17% nationally.

4. On the basis of the progress students make relative to their GCSE point scores, the overall performance of AS-level students at the college has improved over a three-year period and was outstanding in 2004 when compared to that of sixth form college students nationally. The performance of students in AS-level English literature, drama, and French, for example, was outstanding over a three-year period, but was consistently weak in sociology. GCE A-level students do not make such impressive progress. This is because medium and high ability students at the college do not take as many subjects at GCE A level as students attending most other sixth form colleges. Their overall performance relative to their GCSE point scores is still good when compared to the progress students make nationally.

5. Although students perform well relative to their entry qualifications, the level of performance is not uniform across subjects. In 2004, students following 57% of the AS-level subjects offered by the college demonstrated better progress than predicted by their entry qualifications. Performance was in line or better than predicted for 76% of subjects. At GCE A level, 48% of subjects outperformed predictions, with 68% being at least in line with predictions.

6. The majority of students are well motivated and respond well to the high expectations of most teachers. Students receive much help and advice from their teachers, both during and outside lessons and many students produce work of a high quality. They are attentive in lessons and communicate effectively both verbally and in writing. Many students develop good study skills and examination techniques.

7. Science students relate theory to practical work well, develop good practical skills and use computers competently. In mathematics, students often offer creative solutions to problems. Essays and assignments completed by business and administration students demonstrate their ability to analyse information well, evaluate evidence and present arguments logically and coherently.

Standards of music performance are particularly high and music students demonstrate consistently high-level skills. Performance is also strong in drama and dance. The practical work produced in the visual arts is often good, but students do not always fully explore the potential of their ideas. Much of the written work produced by humanities students demonstrates their interest in their chosen subjects. Many students develop ideas and arguments well. Some students, however, particularly at AS level, have difficulty structuring answers and expressing their ideas. Students on English courses make perceptive comments about literature and respond appropriately to each other's ideas. Foreign language students speak with reasonable fluency relative to their level of study. The written work produced by English and languages students is of a suitable standard.

8. Many students pass key skills tests, but a very small proportion complete their portfolios and overall pass rates are low. Students do not value key skills as highly as the rest of their subjects and often fail to see their relevance. However, the college is successful in developing the literacy and numeracy skills of students who do not have level 2 qualifications in English or mathematics at the start of their course. The proportion of students without these qualifications is significantly reduced by the time they complete their main programme of study.

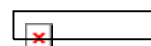
9. At 83%, attendance in lessons during the inspection was below the national average of 86% and the 89% attendance rate observed during the last inspection. College data indicate that average weekly attendance for the previous term was 89%. Attendance was lowest in science and mathematics at 76% and highest in the visual and performing arts at 91%. Students' punctuality was good. Over 90% of students completing courses in 2004 progressed to HE, training or employment, with 86% of HE applicants gaining university places.

Adult learners

10. About 17% of students who enrol on long courses are adults. Total adult enrolments are around 800, with similar proportions following courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Retention rates have been consistently at or above national averages, at all three levels, for the three years prior to the inspection other than for level 1 programmes in 2003. Pass rates were in line with the national average at level 2 in 2004, but well above at levels 1 and 3. In previous years, pass rates at levels 2 and 3 had been mostly below average. Some 900 students enrol on short courses, three times the numbers of young people and retention and pass rates are high.

11. Most adults enrolling on level 3 courses follow AS-level and GCE A-level programmes. They make good progress and retention and pass rates are at or above the national average. Some 40 adults follow national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 3. Retention rates are high, but pass rates are poor due to students' slowness in completing portfolios. Overall success rates on GCSE courses are satisfactory. Retention rates of students on other level 2 courses have been consistently good and pass rates have improved from well below to well above national averages over a three-year period.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded in 75 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 75% of these, satisfactory in 24% and less than satisfactory in only 1%. The proportion of good or better teaching is at the national average for sixth form colleges. Teaching was consistently good in all the curriculum areas inspected. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Learning was also good and the profile again reflected the national average. Of the lessons observed, 76% were good or better, 21% satisfactory and 3% less than satisfactory.

13. Most lessons are well planned and teachers are careful to accommodate students' different needs and learning styles. Across the areas inspected, most teaching is purposeful and teachers motivate their students well. They use a variety of methods to stimulate students' interest in their

work and are careful to check that all their students are learning. In business and administration, many lessons are lively, with a busy and productive atmosphere. Teaching is mostly purposeful and enjoyable in the humanities and resources are often used well to enliven lessons. Some of the teaching in the visual and performing arts is insufficiently challenging and teachers' expectations are too low. In mathematics, some of the teaching is unimaginative with lessons depending too much on teacher exposition. Students across the areas inspected contribute confidently to discussions and work well together in groups. Foreign languages students use their developing language skills well. There is a good balance of theory teaching and practical work in science and theory is related well to commercial practice in business and administration. Teaching is carefully related to examination requirements and teachers develop students' examination techniques well. Some teachers make good use of ILT in their teaching, but not consistently so across all areas. Students have good access to computers and the Internet and use them confidently.

14. Key skills development is integrated into all courses with some additional key skills lessons to help students to prepare for tests and complete portfolios. Criteria for key skills and assessment opportunities are not consistently included in schemes of work and lesson plans.

15. In some of the lessons judged to be satisfactory, teachers often fail to provide tasks and activities that are suitable for all the students, particularly the weaker ones. There are examples of too little use of ILT to stimulate and motivate students and unclear use of whiteboards or overhead projectors. Weaknesses also included some failure to include students in discussions and insufficient checks on students' learning.

16. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their specialist subject areas. Some 96% of full-time and 79% of part-time teachers have teaching qualifications and most of the remainder are undergoing training. Part-time teachers are well integrated into curriculum teams. Support staff and teachers work together well. A range of strategies have been developed for attracting staff to curriculum areas where there are teacher shortages. In basic skills, for example, the college provides extensive internal training and development opportunities because of difficulties encountered in attracting and appointing staff. Opportunities for personal and professional development are good, but improving standards of teaching and learning further is not being given a sufficiently high priority.

17. The library is well stocked with books, periodicals and electronic sources of information. There is also an open-access computer facility where students can work independently. Library and computing staff are well qualified, work well with curriculum teams and provide effective services for students. The college is well stocked with computers. The ratio of students to computers is 2.5:1 and there is one computer to each full-time equivalent teacher. Both teachers and students have good access to the Internet and the college intranet. The information and communications technology (ICT) strategy is not placing sufficient emphasis on the use of the technology by teachers during lessons.

18. Teaching accommodation is generally good and the college provides an attractive and accessible environment for learning. Common areas are enhanced by displays of students' work. All classrooms and facilities are accessible to students with restricted mobility. Sports facilities have been improved since the last inspection. Improvements include a new soccer pitch and hard court, resurfaced tennis courts and additional classrooms. Rooms are used efficiently, but overall occupancy rates are low mostly due to low rates of occupancy of some large spaces such as the sports hall and central hall. The college has developed a clear accommodation strategy and has identified the need to extend the refectory and library and to improve students' social and recreational facilities. Similarly, the accommodation strategy addresses the need to relocate student services as a central, integrated facility. The college has not been able to complete the implementation of its accommodation strategy due to the local LSC's review of college provision across Southampton.

19. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. All full-time students are assessed to identify their learning styles and additional support needs. Additional support is provided quickly and effectively. Teachers use an appropriate range of strategies to meet different learning needs.

20. Assessment is well planned and coursework deadlines are co-ordinated centrally. Teachers set and mark work regularly and students receive constructive feedback on their progress. However, feedback is not always sufficiently detailed or specific to guide improvement. Marking of set work is generally accurate and meets awarding body requirements.

21. Students have a clear understanding of their progress and the process for setting target grades. Subject tutors agree target grades with students and these are reviewed regularly against actual performance. Students' progress is monitored through regular tutorials. In some areas, the actions students need to take to improve their performance following reviews are not sufficiently explicit and lack clear timescales. The college has identified this as an area for further development. Parents and carers receive regular progress reports and parent consultation evenings are held each year.

22. Internal verification of students' coursework is rigorous for both vocational and academic programmes. Samples of students' work are marked by two or more teachers and grades moderated within teams to ensure consistency of assessment. Faculty leaders and course teams work together to resolve any issues raised by external moderators. Internal verifiers provide feedback to assessors, although this is sometimes more focused on students' work than the validity of assessment decisions.

23. The college offers a wide range of subjects at advanced level and an increasing range of vocational courses at levels 1 and 2. Progression routes are good. In 2004, 46% of students on courses at levels 1 and 2 progressed to a higher level. Detailed records of students' destinations are kept and the curriculum is reviewed regularly to meet the needs of the local community. The recently introduced sixth form academy supports more able students in raising aspirations and achievement. The college has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to developing effective partnerships with local schools, colleges and the local authority. The college management team works hard to increase post-16 participation levels in the city, which are currently below the national average. Over 100 students aged 14 to 16 take courses at the college through the 14 to 19 Pathfinder initiative and more than 400 take part in taster activities. College staff also teach additional courses in local schools, and the college is actively working with the Aim Higher initiative. Links with employers are very good in supporting the sports academy, but less well developed in other areas such as business.

24. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities with particularly strong provision in sport and music. One third of students participate regularly in activities. Themed weeks include activities related to human rights issues and health promotion.

25. The college provides good support and guidance for students. Pre-entry guidance is comprehensive and impartial. College staff organise a good range of events and activities, both at schools and in college, to guide students on to appropriate courses. The college has achieved the Matrix quality award for information and advice for adults. Professionally produced publicity materials contain clear information about courses and the range of support services available. Information is accessible to students and provided in different formats and languages.

26. All full-time students are assessed on entry to the college to determine their learning styles, levels of literacy and numeracy skills and additional support needs. Results are usually circulated quickly to teachers and the learning support team, and support is arranged promptly. Cross-college and subject inductions enable students to settle into college life quickly and confirm their choice of course. A student diary and handbook provides clear information about college life and the support available to them. Subject-specific handbooks give detailed information about the structure and content of courses.

27. Academic and personal support for students are effective. A good range of support services is available. These include counselling, finance, careers and progression and learning support. The college provides excellent support for students with physical disabilities and sensory impairment, and a good range of specialist equipment is available. At the time of inspection, 415 students were receiving financial support through the educational maintenance allowance and 31 students receive other learner support funds to support their studies. The college recently revised its child protection policy. The assistant principal with responsibility for student services co-ordinates actions and liaises

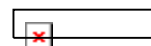
with external agencies and there are named staff to deputise, where necessary. All teaching and support staff and governors have been briefed about the requirements and guidelines have been provided.

28. Two thirds of full-time students who are identified as having specific learning support needs attend support sessions. Classroom assistants provide effective support to students on entry level courses and courses at levels 1 and 2. The college has identified the need to monitor the progress of students identified as having support needs, but who do not take up the support offered. The impact of learning and financial support on students' performance is not monitored sufficiently. There is insufficient tracking of the combined effectiveness of different programmes such as key skills and GCSE courses in raising the literacy and numeracy levels of individual students during their time at college.

29. Teachers monitor academic progress closely. Students at risk of failure are well supported through tutorials and drop-in and learning support workshops. Teachers and tutors provide students with considerable support and encouragement both during and outside formal lesson times. Attendance data are accessible through the central management information system and well used by teachers, personal tutors and senior managers in monitoring students. There is a clear disciplinary procedure for students aged 16 to 18.

30. Tutorials are well structured and effective. Tutors monitor students' progress against targets during review weeks each term. Some reviews do not specify sufficiently clear actions and timescales to help students to improve. Students receive good support from personal tutors, the careers guidance team and Connexions personal advisors to help them progress to HE or employment. Careers education is an integral part of the tutorial programme, and is facilitated by good resources.

Leadership and management



31. Leadership and management are good. The mission of the college clearly reflects governors' and senior managers' intentions for the institution to play a key role in raising achievement levels and widening participation in education and training in Southampton. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups attending the college is significantly higher than for the city as a whole. Managers place particular emphasis on developing effective working relationships with schools and on providing progression opportunities for pupils whose achievements at Key Stage 4 are below the average for sixth form colleges nationally. Partnership arrangements include some sharing of teaching staff to enhance schools' Year 11 curriculum and help prospective students to make appropriate choices at age 16. Students are well supported and the college makes good use of analyses of students' achievements relative to their qualifications on entry to improve the performance of individual students and the college overall.

32. Retention rates, at all levels, have improved steadily since 2002 and are well above the national average for sixth form colleges at levels 1 and 2 and are at the national average at level 3. Pass rates are also above the national average at level 1 and for GCSE and GNVQ programmes. Overall pass rates for young people following level 3 programmes have been just below the national average for sixth form colleges for the three years prior to the inspection. Below average pass rates on AS-level programmes reflect the attainment levels of students recruited to the college. On the basis of students' performance relative to their qualifications on entry, the college has been successful in achieving year-on-year improvement for the three years prior to the inspection with outstanding overall performance by AS-level students in 2004 and good performance by those following GCE A-level courses.

33. Communication within the college is good. Senior managers are approachable and consult staff regularly on matters of policy and practice. There is a comprehensive calendar of meetings at

different management levels and meetings and action points are mostly well recorded. Course teams are well led and managed and teachers, tutors and support staff work together effectively. They share a commitment to helping students maximise their potential. Management is good overall in four of the curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in the fifth. In the humanities, there is insufficient co-ordination of measures to bring about improvements in students' achievements at faculty level. Some curriculum managers have been slow to address weaknesses identified through self-assessment. Teaching time on AS-level courses was increased at the start of the year of the inspection and students provided with additional academic support as part of the strategy for improving students' performance on these courses.

34. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to the college which they use well to shape its educational character. Meetings of the corporation are well attended and members play an active part in the life of the college. Governors are well supported by the corporation clerk. There is a well planned cycle of meetings and governors receive well set out and informative reports. Governors and senior managers work together well in setting the strategic direction of the institution and make good use of twice yearly planning days for establishing clear strategic objectives and challenging targets for improving the performance of the college. The corporation and its committees carefully scrutinise academic and financial performance as well as progress in achieving strategic objectives.

35. Quality assurance procedures, based on annual self-assessment, are effective. Course reviews are mostly rigorous and action plans are leading to improvements. Targets are set for key indicators including enrolments, retention and pass rates and progress against students' prior achievements. Performance against action plans and targets is closely monitored by senior managers and governors. Teaching was judged to be good or better in 75% of lessons, which is similar to the national average for sixth form colleges. The level of unsatisfactory teaching is low at 1%. All teachers are observed annually and, although weaknesses in teaching and learning are identified, college observers do not place sufficient emphasis on the impact of teaching on students' learning when grading lessons and judged 90% of lessons to be good or better. The college has recognised this weakness through self-assessment and, at the time of the inspection, was planning to provide further training and development to ensure that teachers take full account of the wide ranges of ability and previous attainment in most teaching groups.

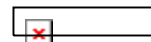
36. The college has clear policies for promoting equality and diversity and complies with the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and SENDA. All areas of the college are accessible to students with restricted mobility. The equal opportunities policy incorporates a race equality action plan. Appropriate training has been provided for governors and staff to support its implementation. Pass and retention rates are analysed by gender, ethnicity, post code and feeder school. Governors, managers and teachers receive useful monitoring reports to help identify areas for improvement. Most curriculum areas are improving the range of programmes offered at foundation and intermediate levels. Alternative progression opportunities to AS-level and GCE A-level courses are being developed. Measures to improve the performance of boys who had underachieved prior to enrolment at the college are having significant impact.

37. The college's finances are monitored closely by managers and governors who receive clear information about expenditure to date. Systems are in place for estimating the cost of individual courses, but not for identifying actual costs. From an improving financial position, the college was forecasting a deficit for the year of the inspection due to a decline in enrolments in 2003. Managers and governors have taken action to reduce expenditure and there has been some restructuring to reduce staff costs. Expenditure on pay as a percentage of income has been reduced, but is still high at 80%. Strategies for increasing enrolments are clear and the three-year financial forecast shows the college remaining solvent. Reserves from the sale of property are available to complete a capital programme to support growth strategies. On the basis of the overall financial position of the college, improvements in students' achievements and the progress they make relative to their prior achievements, the college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- good, enthusiastic teaching
- high-quality accommodation
- very good academic support for individual students
- good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level physics and chemistry courses
- some unimaginative teaching in mathematics
- insufficient use of ILT by teachers during lessons.

Scope of provision

38. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, electronics, physics, mathematics and further mathematics and statistics. Options in mathematics include mechanics, decision mathematics and statistics. Courses in the use of mathematics are only provided at AS level. Free-standing mathematics qualifications are available for students who are not ready for AS-level work. There are GCSE courses in science and mathematics including part-time GCSE courses

for adults. Free-standing mathematics qualifications are provided at foundation level to prepare students for GCSE courses. Some 700 students, mostly aged 16 to 18, enrol on full-time courses. There are 36 part-time, mostly adult, enrolments.

Achievements and standards

39. Retention rates on most AS-level and GCE A-level courses are at the national average for sixth form colleges. Pass rates for AS-level statistics are high, but pass rates for AS-level chemistry and physics are below the national average. At GCE A level, pass rates are consistently at or above national averages. Retention rates on free-standing mathematics units are at the national average, but pass rates are below. The intake of AS-level students has lower GCSE achievements than normally found in sixth form colleges. For most AS-level and GCE A-level courses, students achieve higher grades than predicted by their GCSE results. Retention rates on GCSE courses are in line with national averages for sixth form colleges. Pass rates for GCSE mathematics are at the low national average, but well above for GCSE science. Adults perform better on GCSE mathematics courses than students aged 16 to 18.

40. Students are attentive in lessons, make good progress and develop good practical skills. During practical lessons, chemistry and biology students use laboratory equipment and instruments confidently. Physics and electronics students assemble apparatus deftly for investigations. Students relate theory to practical work well. Mathematics students carry out complex calculations competently and often offer creative solutions to problems. They analyse data well, have good mathematical modelling skills and are able to test ideas experimentally. Students in pre-GCSE lessons in finance can tabulate data and calculate interest on mortgages. GCSE students find difficulty with algebra and equations and are sometimes slow to recall basic concepts. Students use computers confidently and most communicate effectively both verbally and in writing. At 76%, attendance was well below the national average of 87%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	143	112	157
		% retention	81	77	82
		% pass rate	38	44	45
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	54	58	50
		% retention	93	83	96
		% pass rate	78	69	71
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	83	102	70
		% retention	82	89	93
		% pass rate	63	63	78
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	15	34	31
		% retention	100	88	97
		% pass rate	87	100	97
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	35	45	41
		% retention	97	96	93
		% pass rate	91	91	92
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	23	33	29
		% retention	100	94	100
		% pass rate	83	94	97

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

Quality of education and training

41. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and motivate their students well. Schemes of work are detailed and lessons are planned thoroughly. Good use is made of practical work in science to reinforce theory. Teachers are aware of students' different learning styles and abilities and accommodate different needs well. Science teachers use a range of activities to motivate and engage students. Group work is used well to challenge more able students whilst providing the less able with more time to complete their work. During a well-organised biology lesson, students used plates of starch agar to investigate the properties of the enzyme amylase. The teacher was careful to spend time with each of the students in the group to ensure they were learning. Some teachers make good use of computers to help students to understand abstract scientific concepts. In a chemistry lesson, for example, a computer simulation helped students to understand the movement of ions in half-cells during electrolysis. Students in a statistics lesson used a computer programme well to analyse bivariate data and calculate correlation coefficients.

42. Some of the teaching in mathematics is unimaginative, with too few opportunities for students to exchange ideas and clarify their understanding. In some lessons, students are given tasks which are too challenging for their prior knowledge and understanding. There is too much dependence on teacher exposition followed by students practising similar examples independently. Too little use is made of ILT to stimulate and motivate students.

43. Homework is set regularly and students' progress is monitored well through frequent tests. Work is marked thoroughly and returned promptly. Teachers provide detailed feedback with helpful comments to help students to improve the standard of their work. The performance of individual students is carefully monitored against target grades which are set according to prior attainment and ability.

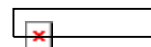
44. Academic and personal support for individual students are very good. Additional learning needs are assessed at enrolment and students' learning styles identified. Support is provided either through tutorials or during lessons. Regular lunchtime workshops, additional tutorials on specific topics and support from subject teachers help students who experience difficulties with their studies. Attendance is compulsory for students whose progress gives cause for concern. There is a good range of additional activities to broaden students' experience. These include visits to universities, field trips and involvement in national competitions.

45. Teachers are well qualified and committed to updating their skills through relevant staff development. Laboratories and teaching rooms are spacious, comfortable and well equipped. Displays and examples of students' work add interest to corridors and rooms. Students have good access to computers during lessons, but teachers do not have sufficient access to ILT equipment to enhance their teaching. Some rooms do not have data projectors and some overhead projectors give poor quality images.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good. Staff work together well as a team and are committed to raising achievement levels. Course teams meet frequently and the effectiveness of teaching and learning is discussed regularly. Weaknesses in teaching and learning are correctly identified through lesson observation, but the grades allocated are often too high. Courses reviews are self-critical and accurate. Managers set clear targets for improving pass, retention and attendance rates. There are strategies for improving students' achievements including the development of alternative provision and progression routes. Staff development is given a high priority and teachers are committed to sharing good practice. Managers and teachers encourage females and students from minority ethnic groups to follow courses in areas where they are currently underrepresented. Master classes in science are provided for pupils from local schools and science teachers contribute to the local 14 to 16 Pathfinder programme.

Business and administration



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many programmes

- much challenging and stimulating teaching

- wide range of provision

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT in some lessons

- limited links with industry.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a wide range of business programmes and provides some business administration courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 in a local school. Full-time vocational courses in business are available at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels as well as NVQ in business administration at levels 1 and 2. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are provided in accounting, business studies and economics. GCSE economics is offered at the college for a local school as part of partnership arrangements for improving opportunities for young people aged 14 to 16. Part-time students can study text and word processing during the day and accounting in the evening. Overall, some 415 full-time and 29 part-time students enrol on business courses, the majority of whom are aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were 99 students enrolled on AS-level programmes and 47 on GCE A-level courses.

Achievements and standards

48. Pass rates are high on most courses. Students following full-time, vocational business studies programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 achieved above average pass rates for the three years prior to inspection. Pass rates on word processing courses and in GCE A-level business studies and

economics are also good. In 2004, the pass rate in AS-level economics was below the national average. Across the area, many students achieve much better results than predicted by their prior attainment. Retention rates are mostly satisfactory, but rates declined in AS-level and GCE A-level accounting the year prior to the inspection.

49. Students produce work of a high standard. In lessons, many students present arguments confidently and use business-related materials well to support their view points. Students' written work is of a high standard. Portfolios are well organised and presented with appropriate use of sound vocational evidence. Essays and assignments show clear evidence of intellectual development; students demonstrate the ability to analyse information, evaluate evidence and present arguments logically and coherently. Attendance in the lessons observed was below average, at 80%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation in business	1	No. of starts	14	20	16
		% retention	93	95	88
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Certificate in word processing part 1 year 1	1	No. of starts	52	48	65
		% retention	85	88	85
		% pass rate	84	100	84
GNVQ intermediate in business	2	No. of starts	36	19	42
		% retention	86	95	88
		% pass rate	87	100	95
AVCE double award in business	3	No. of starts	31	30	11
		% retention	77	41	91
		% pass rate	92	96	100
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	31	74	60
		% retention	74	77	87
		% pass rate	74	60	87
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	21	39	38
		% retention	100	92	92
		% pass rate	96	92	94

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

Quality of education and training

50. Most teaching is good or better. During lessons, teachers take account of the needs of individual students and use a variety of methods to stimulate their interest and build their confidence. They plan and develop lessons logically, building on previously learned work. Lessons are often lively and have a busy, purposeful atmosphere. In some lessons, however, teachers make insufficient use of ILT. Teachers encourage students to participate and contribute to lessons and students support each other's learning well. In one vocational lesson, for example, students acted the part of the management team of a manufacturing company. Individual members of the team presented the marketing, finance, and human resource aspects of the company's strategic plan. Their performance was assessed by the rest of the group against agreed criteria. Classroom activities are closely aligned to examination requirements and teachers are skilled in developing students' examination

techniques. Teachers link business theory to commercial practice through the use of case studies, but make little reference to contemporary local and national business developments. Similarly, there are few references to teachers' and students' experience as employees or consumers.

51. Teachers are well qualified with appropriate vocational experience and teaching qualifications. New teachers receive good support from more experienced colleagues. Staff benefit from regular development activities including ILT training and attend updating conferences arranged by awarding bodies. Few teachers have had recent commercial experience in their specialist areas and there are no strategies in place to update their experience. Classrooms are clean, pleasant and fit for purpose. The library is appropriately stocked with books and other resources and library staff provide good service. Use of the intranet is being developed, but its potential is not yet being fully exploited to support learning.

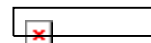
52. Arrangements for assessing students' work are good. Students are made aware of assessment requirements at the start of their programme. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for managing their own work and for meeting assessment deadlines. During most lessons, teachers check students' understanding carefully. In a minority of lessons, limited questioning and insufficient involvement of the teacher with students during small group exercises result in insufficient checks on learning. Written work is returned promptly and students value the detailed and constructive feedback provided by teachers. Students are set individual achievement targets and their performance is closely monitored by teachers who keep detailed records of their progress. The performance of students against their personal targets is formally reviewed each term. Students' work is internally verified and moderated, but schedules of meetings are not always published and findings are not systematically recorded by course teams.

53. Support for students is good. Initial advice and guidance are effective in placing students on appropriate courses. Students' learning styles and support needs are assessed on entry and additional support provided. Learning support provided during lessons is effective. Personal tutors provide good direction and encouragement and teachers provide good support both formally and informally outside lesson times.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well together and course teams are well led. Students' performance and progress are carefully monitored and course reviews are self-critical. Records of course team meetings vary in quality and action points are not sufficiently detailed. Although lessons are observed systematically, there is insufficient sharing of the outcomes across the curriculum area to support improvement. Equality and diversity are promoted well and the area is successful in attracting students from different minority ethnic backgrounds.

Visual and performing arts



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

Contributory grade for music is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- outstanding quality of music performance

- mostly good teaching with particularly stimulating teaching in music

- very high pass rates on most courses

- good resources with excellent specialist music accommodation and equipment.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level art and design

- insufficient challenge to extend all students in art and design

- timetable limits opportunities to extend practical skills development.

Scope of provision

55. The college provides AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art and design, photography, textiles, film studies, media studies, dance, drama and theatre studies, music, music technology. Art critical studies can only be studied at AS level. A Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national award in music practice was offered for the first time in September 2004. Overall, some 400 students aged 16 to 18 study visual and performing arts courses. The largest numbers follow performing arts courses. There are 93 students on dance and drama courses and 157 on courses in music.

Achievement and standards

56. Pass rates are consistently high on most courses. In AS-level textiles, critical studies and photography all students who completed their courses in 2004 passed. Similarly, in GCE A-level textiles, photography, drama and dance pass rates were 100%. Pass rates on music courses have been consistently high for the three years prior to inspection. In AS-level art and design, pass rates have been significantly below national averages for three consecutive years. Students on many courses achieve a higher proportion of high grades than the national average. This is the case in AS-level music, music technology and art and design and in GCE A-level art and design, drama and theatre studies and dance.

57. Students make very good progress relative to their prior attainment in AS-level textiles, critical studies, drama and theatre studies and music. Standards of music performance are particularly high. Music students demonstrate consistently high-level skills. They play and sing with technical accuracy and physical control. Performance work is also strong in drama and dance. Publicly performed pieces are often thought provoking, intelligent and sophisticated in concept and presentation. Students' practical work in the visual arts is often good, but students do not always fully explore the potential of their ideas. Sketchbooks and workbooks in art and photography do not have sufficient breadth of research, experimentation and development of ideas. Students' attendance and punctuality are good, with attendance at 91% at the time of inspection.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art and design	3	No. of starts	52	38	41
		% retention	85	87	95
		% pass rate	70	67	74
AS-level drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	41	36	44
		% retention	85	83	84
		% pass rate	100	97	95
AS-level music	3	No. of starts	35	37	32
		% retention	97	95	97
		% pass rate	94	94	97
AS-level dance	3	No. of starts	20	19	18
		% retention	75	74	89
		% pass rate	80	100	94
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	13	22	18
		% retention	100	86	100
		% pass rate	92	95	94
GCE A-level drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	11	28	19
		% retention	91	96	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level music	3	No. of starts	13	29	26
		% retention	100	97	96
		% pass rate	100	96	96

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

Quality of education and training

58. Most teaching in visual and performing arts is good or better. The majority of lessons are well planned and managed effectively. Students are set clear personal goals and targets and their individual learning needs are well met. Teachers use a variety of methods to stimulate and motivate students. Activities are suitably demanding and set at an appropriate level. In one lesson, for example, drama students considered theatrical interpretation from a new perspective when they were asked to stage still, sculptural tableau which encapsulated the theme of the play. Teaching of theory and practical skills is well balanced. This was particularly well demonstrated in a music lesson where each student played or sang their examination piece accompanied by the teacher on the piano. The rest of the class followed the musical score. The teacher explained the examination assessment criteria and the class as a whole marked the performance. Due to the structure of the timetable, some lessons are too short to extend the development of students' practical skills.

59. Some teaching in art and photography is insufficiently challenging. Teachers' and students' expectations are too low. Teaching fails to extend students' design skills sufficiently and the pace of learning is slow. In AS-level art and design, teachers do not make sufficient use of differentiated tasks to help less able students to make appropriate progress.

60. Accommodation and equipment are good. Specialist music resources are excellent. Art and photography facilities are light clean and well appointed. Art and design has a conveniently located, dedicated library. There is a good drama studio, equipped with high-quality audiovisual equipment.

Students have excellent access to dedicated ICT facilities in music and art and design. Practical space for dance rehearsals is limited and there are no mirrors or barres for dance. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. Staff development supports improvements in teaching and learning. Access to accommodation for students with limited mobility is excellent, with automatic doors and ramps at all entrances and exits.

61. Assessment is well structured and supports learning well. Teachers use target and performance grades effectively to monitor students' progress and help them to improve the standards of their work. Parents and carers receive progress reports twice a year. Feedback following assessment and related action plans are sometimes insufficiently detailed to help students to improve their performance.

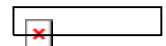
62. Music students participate in a wide variety of college ensembles and regularly perform both regionally and nationally. Opportunities for students to improve their key skills are identified in lesson plans and key skills are developed effectively where they form an integral part of students' assignments.

63. Academic and personal support for students are good. Initial advice and guidance are effective in placing students on the right courses. Induction is thorough. Students do not always take up the additional learning support offered following initial assessment.

Leadership and Management

64. Leadership and management are good. Course teams work together well. They identify strengths and weaknesses accurately through course reviews. Curriculum managers understand their roles well and evaluate provision critically to secure improvement. Lessons are observed regularly, but grading is overgenerous. Management at the faculty level does not provide a sufficiently clear strategic steer to bring about improvement consistently across the area. The study of different cultures and ethnic diversity forms part of the curriculum.

Humanities



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

Contributory grade for law, psychology and religious studies is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses

- purposeful and enjoyable teaching in most lessons

- effective use of good resources to promote learning

- very effective support and encouragement for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on most AS-level courses
- insufficient opportunities for students to develop their own ideas in some lessons
- ineffective co-ordination of measures to improve learning and achievement.

Scope of provision

65. The college provides AS-level and GCE A-level courses in classical civilisation, geography, history, law, psychology, religious studies and sociology. Government and politics and critical thinking can only be followed at AS level. Psychology and law are offered to part-time students during the evening at AS level and GCE A level. GCSE social science is the only subject offered at intermediate level. Overall, some 830 students aged 16 to 18 and 50 adults enrol on humanities courses. The largest numbers are on law, psychology and sociology courses with well over 100 students following each subject. Enrolments are lowest in religious studies, classical civilisation, geography, and government and politics.

Achievements and standards

66. Pass rates on most GCE A-level courses are high. In psychology, law and religious studies, all students completing courses in 2004 passed. Sociology had a 98% pass rate in the same year. Pass rates for GCE A-level geography, however, have been lower than the national average for the three years prior to the inspection. With the exception of religious studies, AS-level students do not achieve as well overall. Pass rates in AS-level classical civilisation, law, government and politics, and sociology have been consistently below those achieved on average nationally in sixth form colleges. Other subjects have experienced years between 2002 and 2004 when pass rates have fallen significantly below national averages. Many classical civilisation, critical thinking, government and politics, and sociology AS-level students achieved grades below those predicted by their GCSE pass rates. In other subjects and in many GCE A-level subjects, students achieve higher grades than predicted by their GCSE results.

67. During lessons, many students are able to make confident and well informed contributions to discussions and group work. These abilities are more apparent at GCE A-level than at AS level where some students take longer than average to adapt to the standards of work required. Much of the written work produced by students shows their genuine interest in their chosen subjects and demonstrates that they are able to develop ideas and organise information. Some students, however, particularly at AS level, have difficulty structuring answers and expressing their ideas. Attendance during the inspection was satisfactory, at 85%. Very few lessons are disrupted or delayed by students arriving late.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level classical civilisation	3	No. of starts	22	40	25
		% retention	86	95	88

		% pass rate	79	74	68
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	38	34	20
		% retention	82	852	95
		% pass rate	94	68	95
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	97	117	99
		% retention	89	81	84
		% pass rate	74	69	89
AS-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	16	18	26
		% retention	88	78	81
		% pass rate	79	100	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	49	48	58
		% retention	100	90	100
		% pass rate	94	98	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	41	30	33
		% retention	100	97	97
		% pass rate	98	93	94
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	22	48	45
		% retention	100	87	96
		% pass rate	95	88	98

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

Quality of education and training

68. Most teaching in humanities is good or better. The majority of lessons are well planned, teaching is purposeful and students enjoy their work. Teachers provide students with good opportunities to develop ideas and their understanding of different topics through working on their own or in groups. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that students work at levels that match their strengths and abilities. In a GCE A-level religious studies lesson, students worked in pairs to evaluate different views of the afterlife and the effects of these views on our beliefs and values. Using resources, which had been carefully prepared by the teacher, students made impressive presentations, which provoked lively responses. Resources are often used well to enliven lessons. In a GCE A-level psychology lesson, for example, a short video extract was used to introduce the topic of perception by demonstrating how the brain can distort or misinterpret visual images. In less successful lessons, teachers do not spend sufficient time checking that all students are learning and provide some students with insufficient opportunities to develop their ideas. Students' contributions to lessons are sometimes restricted to isolated responses by the more dominant members of groups with little involvement of the less confident. Some of the tasks set fail to challenge and motivate students of different abilities.

69. Teaching rooms are well furnished and equipped and relevant displays enhance learning. Most rooms are used exclusively or for teaching one or two subjects. Teachers and students have good access to computers and there is some good use of the Internet to promote learning, but not consistently so across all subjects. There is a well-chosen stock of books in the library and a good range of video tapes. In many lessons, learning is enhanced through the use of well-prepared worksheets and topic guides. In AS-level critical thinking, for example, a comprehensive study pack is used to help students to develop the techniques used in advancing an argument or a point of view.

70. Students' work is assessed carefully, although marking in some subjects is not sufficiently

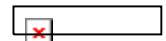
critical, leading to some overly generous grading. Most teachers provide helpful written feedback with constructive suggestions for improvement. However, the marking of some AS-level students' work does not indicate clearly enough how particularly weaker students can achieve the necessary standard. Subject teachers and tutors support their students very effectively. They are well aware of the extra help and encouragement that individual students' need, particularly in adjusting to the standards required at AS level. Target grades are set for each student based on their previous achievement and progress towards these grades is carefully monitored. Twice-yearly reviews help students to evaluate their progress and agree targets for improvement. These targets are not always precise and clear enough to help particularly weaker students, who need to work to shorter-term goals.

71. Students benefit from a good range of enrichment activities, which support and broaden their learning. Geography students, for example, have attended conferences at Bournemouth University and classical civilisation students have attended performances of Greek plays in London.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers and teachers are committed to serving students well and courses are well managed. Course teams work together well to develop resources and improve students' achievements. Annual course reviews are thorough and appropriately self-critical. Curriculum managers prepare and implement action plans carefully in response to weaknesses identified in individual course reviews. However, courses in the humanities are located in three faculties and the extent to which common issues are addressed across the programme area is limited. There is insufficient analysis of the reasons for some courses being more successful than others and there is limited sharing of good practice across the area. Lessons are observed systematically, but grading is overgenerous. Observation is not used effectively to address weaknesses in teaching and learning across the humanities.

English and foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in most subjects

- much good teaching

- good and well-used facilities for ILT

- wide range of foreign language courses

- very good personal and academic support for students

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level English courses
- poor retention rates on a significant minority of courses.

Scope of provision

73. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in English language, English literature, English language and literature, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Urdu, and Punjabi at AS level and GCE A levels. Many of the courses are provided during the evening specifically for adults. GCSE courses are available in English, Italian, German, Spanish and Latin as well as introductory courses at lower levels. Numbers of students following GCSE English are high. Some 490 students, mostly aged 16 to 18, enrol on full-time courses and 170 adults attend evening classes. Approximately 230 students follow foreign language courses, a third of whom enrol on GCSE, AS-level or GCE A-level programmes.

Achievement and standards

74. Pass rates in foreign languages are high. In 2004, all the students retained on AS-level German and GCE A-level courses in French, German and Spanish passed. Pass rates are also high on GCE A-level English literature and English language and literature courses. Pass rates on AS-level English courses are below average and many students enrolling on these courses have GCSE point scores below the average for sixth form colleges nationally. Students on GCSE English courses were particularly successful in 2004 when pass rates were 30 percentage points above the national average for sixth form colleges. There was some poor retention rates in 2004 on AS-level courses in English literature, French, German and Spanish. This was mostly due to adults withdrawing from evening classes. Retention rates for the period September 2004 to January 2005 indicate improvement. Retention rates for GCE A-level courses and GCSE English are good.

75. The proportions of A to B grades in AS-level English language and AS-level English language and literature are low. There are good proportions of high grades in AS-level French and German and in GCE A-level French and Spanish. In 2004, students on AS-level and GCE A-level German and Spanish and AS-level French and English literature courses achieved very well in comparison with their GCSE grades. In AS-level and GCE A-level English language and literature and AS-level English language, the grades gained by many students were below those predicted by their GCSE results.

76. The standard of students' work in lessons is good. Students work well together in groups to complete tasks. They can express their ideas in appropriately formal language and use technical terms accurately. In English, they are able to make perceptive and mature comments about literature and can discuss and respond appropriately to each other's ideas. Foreign language students speak with reasonable fluency relative to their level of study. French students were impressive in their ability to use their language skills to debate the rights and wrongs of capital punishment. In their written work, foreign language students have appropriate levels of grammatical accuracy. Written work in English is generally of the required standard and students are developing sound skills of analysis and interpretation. Attendance in lessons was just below the average for the area, at 82%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) Spanish for beginners	1	No. of starts	48	59	24
		% retention	69	61	83
		% pass rate	85	100	85
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	122	119	151
		% retention	70	81	86
		% pass rate	70	64	84
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	73	64	52
		% retention	85	89	88
		% pass rate	95	95	85
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	74	101	87
		% retention	88	86	83
		% pass rate	92	89	83
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	51	49	31
		% retention	82	86	74
		% pass rate	88	81	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	22	43	36
		% retention	100	98	94
		% pass rate	95	100	91
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	32	50	43
		% retention	100	94	98
		% pass rate	97	96	95

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

Quality of education and training

77. There is much good teaching. The best lessons progress at a brisk pace and teachers provide a variety of activities that students enjoy. Group work, discussions and debates are used well to encourage students to participate in lessons. In the most inspiring lessons, teachers compel the attention of students by the intensity and vigour of their performance, using the full repertoire of voice and facial expression to bring a character to life or to explain a grammatical point. Teachers use the target language effectively during foreign language lessons and constantly check that students are learning. Students use computers well during lessons to practise grammar points and develop their vocabulary or complete coursework.

78. Resources and accommodation are mostly good and teachers are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic. Television and video facilities are accessible to students and well used. Teachers have developed substantial banks of resource materials such as guidance booklets for the different English courses. The library book stock for English literature students is dated and there are insufficient books for English language students.

79. Assignments are carefully marked with explicit reference to published assessment objectives. Written feedback on essays is detailed and helps students to improve the standard of their work. Some of the feedback on marked work is superficial and fails to clarify how the work can be

improved. There are, however, often references to the need for one-to-one discussions during which more detailed help is provided. Students' progress is mostly well monitored by teachers and personal tutors. Foreign languages teachers keep detailed records of students' needs, skills and progress. In English, there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of the monitoring of students' progress. Comments included in students' records vary in detail and usefulness and are sometimes bland and general.

80. Support and guidance are good. Teachers give their time generously to provide informal support to students on personal and academic issues. Students appreciate the friendly relationships with staff. Formal college systems are effective. Additional learning needs are identified quickly following enrolment and students' attendance is carefully monitored. Additional workshops help individual students and additional support is provided for students who are a cause for concern. Friendly relationships with staff enable students to feel well supported at the college.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are good. Course teams are well led and managed and teamwork is effective. Induction of new staff is good, and teachers receive much informal support within teams. Staff share ideas, materials and expertise. Self-assessment is rigorous and weaknesses in provision are accurately identified. Appropriate action is taken to bring about improvement. Weekly subject support workshops have been introduced. At the time of the inspection, bridging courses were being introduced to help weaker students to progress from GCSE to AS-level courses. Teachers observe each other informally and are observed as part of routine college procedures. The grades allocated by the college are broadly in line with the inspection grades.

Part D: College data

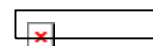
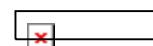


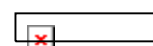
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	4	60
2	25	21
3	70	18
4/5	0	0
Other	1	1
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2004/05



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	649	77	14
Engineering, technology and manufacture	73	2	1
Business administration, management and professional	408	67	9
Information and communication technology	172	159	7
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	335	297	13
Health, social care and public services	109	79	4
Visual and performing arts and media	574	151	14
Humanities	812	50	18
English, languages and communication	491	219	14
Foundation programmes	130	181	6
Total	3,753	1,282	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	153	141	120	219	168	194
	Retention rate %	76	82	88	72	72	64
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	66	86	79	54	85	86
	National average %	67	75	72	68	72	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	478	664	636	183	199	268
	Retention rate %	80	79	81	73	80	77
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	81	61	79	65	55	64
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74

3	Starters excluding transfers	2,323	2,755	3,225	266	248	363
	Retention rate %	87	87	84	77	75	78
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	83	83	83	63	67	64
	National average %	86	87	88	67	71	77

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000/2001 to 2002/03: College ISR.

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	80	18	2	56
Level 2 (intermediate)	67	33	0	12
Level 1 (foundation)	20	80	0	5
Other sessions	100	0	0	2
Totals	75	24	1	75

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