



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Weston College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

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

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

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

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Construction](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

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

[Hairdressing and beauty therapy](#)

[Visual and performing arts and media](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Foundation - literacy and numeracy](#)

[Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

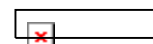
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

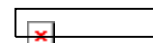
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

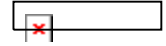


Name of college:	Weston College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Dr Paul Phillips
Address of college:	Knightstone Road Weston-super-Mare North Somerset BS23 2AL
Telephone number:	01934 411411
Fax number:	01934 411410
Chair of governors:	Charles Walker
Unique reference number:	130564
Name of reporting inspector:	Paul Fletcher
Dates of inspection:	21-25 February 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

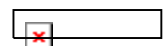


Weston College is a medium-sized general further education (FE) college in Weston-super-Mare, in the unitary authority of North Somerset within the West of England Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college occupies three main centres in Weston-super-Mare: Knightstone Road, Westcliff, and the Weston Sixth Form College. Provision is also available in the nearby town of Nailsea at an adult and community education centre. In addition, the college leases premises for a multi-skills centre on an industrial estate. The college also provides a wide range of community-based courses in five information and communications technology (ICT) centres and a range of community locations around North Somerset, as well as offering training on company premises. Since 2001, the college has worked closely with local secondary schools and created the family of schools to develop a strategy for providing a wider curriculum for students aged 14 to 19. The college has been successful in securing £18 million for new building works. The current sixth form college is to be replaced by a larger building designed to accommodate the sixth form, the art and design, and the music technology provision. This will consolidate all major activity on to two sites and provide a centre for higher education (HE) provision. The new sixth form academy is due to be completed by September 2006 and the remaining building by the middle of 2007. Much development has already taken place at Knightstone Road, and in September 2004 refurbished facilities for the teaching of hospitality and catering were opened.

According to the South West of England Regional Development Agency, the West of England has a strong regional economy with a diverse industrial base, forward-looking companies and a skilled and flexible workforce. Unemployment in the South West was 1.3% in November 2004, compared with a national average of 2.1%, and in the North Somerset area the unemployment rate was 0.9% for the same period. In the North Somerset area, 71% of those aged 16 and 62% of young people aged 17 are involved in some kind of education and training. In the West of England area as a whole, 74% of those aged 16 participate in post-16 education and 6% are on apprenticeship programmes. These figures are roughly similar to the national average. The minority ethnic representation of North Somerset, according to the 2001 census, was 1.4% compared with 2.3% for the South West and 9.1% nationally. In 2002/03, 2% of students were from minority ethnic groups and 60% of students were female.

The college offers courses in all of the 14 areas of learning. In 2003, there were 3,892 full-time equivalent students, of whom 65% were adults, enrolled on nearly 36,500 qualifications. Some 82% of all students attended part time and there is an extensive range of local adult learning programmes. The majority of students are on programmes in ICT, health and social care, visual and performing arts, foundation programmes and business. The greatest increase in enrolments has been on short courses and on level 2 programmes, especially for students aged 19 and over. The number of students enrolling on level 3 courses has declined overall, but has increased for those aged 16 to 18. The majority of students aged 16 to 18 come from the North Somerset area; about a third of all students aged 19 and over travel to the college from outside the area. There are currently 147 work-based learners. The college has a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for multi-skills and has submitted a second application for a joint CoVE in catering and hospitality. The college's mission statement promotes 'Quality Learning for Future Success'.

How effective is the college?



is good provision in six curriculum areas: science and mathematics, ICT, hospitality, catering, sport and leisure, hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual and performing arts and media, and humanities. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Work-based learning is satisfactory in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Education and training are unsatisfactory in construction. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- good resources in hospitality and catering and hairdressing and beauty therapy

- an extensive range of productive partnerships

- good support and effective tutorial arrangements for students

- the quality of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- the quality of teaching and learning

- effective role in the development of local 14 to 19 strategy

- the promotion of equality and diversity.

What should be improved

- retention rates for students aged 16 to 18

- the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons

- the achievement of work-based learning frameworks

- the consistency in the quality of resources and accommodation across curriculum areas

- the use of targets to raise students' achievement

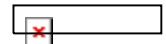
- the quality of many course reviews

- the extent of additional learning support for students

- the quality of provision in construction.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

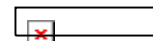


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses and much teaching is good. Progression rates to HE are high and students receive strong subject support. The management of the curriculum is good. However, there are few opportunities for students on the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) to take additional qualifications on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses.
Construction	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates on level 1 courses are high and the progression rate is high from full-time carpentry and brickwork level 1 courses to apprenticeships. Teaching in many lessons is unsatisfactory and students' progress is slow. Pass rates are low on electrical installation part 2 and on the national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 in trowel occupations. Overall resources in construction are poor.
Information and communications	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses, with much good teaching and good practical skills development. Subject tutorials are very good

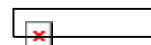
technology	for full-time students and there is good management of ICT in community locations. Retention rates are low on many courses. The self-assessment process is insufficiently thorough.
Hospitality, catering, sports and leisure	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses and teaching and learning are particularly good in sport and practical hospitality lessons. Resources are very good in hospitality. There are strong partnership links and curriculum management is good. Retention rates are low on many courses and the range of provision at level 3 for hospitality students is narrow.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . Pass rates are high in beauty therapy. Teaching and learning are good and resources are of a high standard in the training salons. Curriculum management is strong and pastoral support is effective. Additional learning support is unsatisfactory and there is a lack of co-ordination between college-based and work-based provision.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses and students' work is of a high standard. Teaching is good, but attention to individual needs is insufficient in a minority of lessons. Subject enrichment opportunities are good. There are very good technical resources for music and animation, but some unsatisfactory resources elsewhere in the curriculum area. Subject co-ordination between sites is insufficient.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses with good teaching and learning. The curriculum is well managed and support for students is good. There is insufficient use of ILT in lessons. The setting of targets and tracking of students' progress is underdeveloped.
Foundation - literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in lessons at levels 1 and 2, but there is much unsatisfactory teaching in entry level lessons where students generally make slow progress. Students develop their personal skills well and there is good support for students with dyslexia. Successful and innovative community partnerships have widened participation. The setting of targets fails to meet individual students' needs and attendance rates are low on many courses.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are very high and students develop their personal and vocational skills well. A high proportion of the teaching is very good or outstanding. Guidance and support for all students are particularly good, with excellent identification of individual needs using an extensive range of assessment techniques. Curriculum management is very good.

How well is the college led and managed?



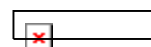
Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers have created a successful college. In recent years, enrolments have increased significantly and students' overall achievements have been well above the national average for general FE and tertiary colleges. Governance and financial management are good. Data are reliable. Equality and diversity are promoted well. Most curriculum areas are well managed. The self-assessment report largely reflects inspectors' judgements, although many course reviews pay too little attention to the quality of teaching and learning. The college has very strong external links. It plays a leading role in the development of 14 to 19 education in Weston-super-Mare.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



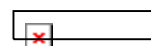
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. The college promotes educational inclusion of students aged 14 to 16 through very good links with local secondary schools. The college takes care to collect information on vulnerable students and liaises regularly with appropriate support agencies. Effective arrangements are in place to identify additional literacy, numeracy or language support needs. The college demonstrates its commitment to social inclusion through its good promotion of diversity and through the clear equality, diversity and impact measures that are set and monitored by a committee chaired by the principal. Most of the college accommodation provides good access for those with restricted mobility. Suitable adaptive technology is available to assist students with physical disabilities. The college has made satisfactory progress in response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). The college has updated policies and procedures and provided appropriate training. Enrolments from students representing minority ethnic groups are 1.3% higher than in the local representation of the black and minority ethnic groups in North Somerset. Participation of students with disabilities, ex-offenders, people from minority ethnic groups and those students who are under-represented on courses is actively encouraged and celebrated by the college. The college has been successful in widening participation by providing courses in a range of community locations including the probation service premises, prisons, in drug rehabilitation centres, and community centres.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are good. Close links with local secondary schools enable prospective students to make informed choices about their college course. The prospectuses for full time, part time and students with learning difficulties are attractive and provide clear information about the college and its courses. Good and impartial advice and guidance are available for students to discuss their goals and aspirations. Effective arrangements are in place to identify additional literacy, numeracy or language needs. However, the quality and extent of the support provided is not always satisfactory. Arrangements for monitoring the impact of support are underdeveloped. The pastoral support provided by subject teachers and tutors is effective. The tutorial support for full-time students is well organised and supported by a comprehensive scheme of work. Most students have targets set early in their course. Progress towards the achievement of these targets is usually monitored well. Students are aware of the progress they are making. Arrangements to provide students with advice and guidance about careers and HE are good. Students have good access to a range of counselling and welfare advice and support. The college has implemented good arrangements in response to child protection legislation.

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

- being treated as adults
- the good relationships with students, teachers and other staff
- the caring support from personal tutors
- the broad range of courses and enrichment activities
- the good range of facilities
- the high quality of teaching
- the level of responsiveness to the needs of adult students
- the good careers and HE advice.

What they feel could be improved

- travel arrangements for students living outside the town
- the car parking arrangements
- some poor accommodation
- the sports facilities
- the access to computers outside timetabled lessons

- more recycling of waste materials

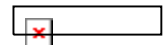
- the cost of food and supplies

- the number of timetable changes at the start of the year

- the speed with which marked work is returned

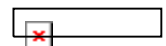
- the use of computers in lessons.

Other information

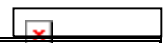


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



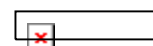
Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	66	29	5
19+ and WBL*	70	27	3

Learning 16-18	67	27	6
19+ and WBL*	73	22	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. Judgements on college achievements and standards for the period 2001/02 to 2002/03 are based on audited data produced by Ofsted, derived from data supplied by the college in its individual learner report. Judgements on achievements and standards for 2003/04 are based on data provided by the college at the time of the inspection.

2. In lessons, the level of students' work is generally good. In science and mathematics, ICT, hospitality, sports leisure and travel, humanities and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the proportion of lessons in which students' attainment is good or better is significantly above the national averages. Students demonstrate good levels of motivation in their lessons and rapidly acquire new skills which they use with confidence. However, students' work in theory lessons is generally at a lower standard than in practical lessons. In construction, students' attainment in practical lessons was judged to be below that appropriate for the level at which they were studying.

3. Overall, the attendance rate for students is similar to the national average for comparable colleges. In science and mathematics, humanities and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, attendance is high, almost 10 percentage points above the national average. In construction, and literacy and numeracy lessons, attendance is low.

4. In the following paragraphs, the college pass rates are compared with those of similar colleges nationally, general FE and tertiary colleges, using national averages for 2002/03.

16 to 18 year olds

5. Retention rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 have declined during the three years to 2003. At level 1, the retention rate has declined from significantly above the national average in 2001 to just above in 2003, placing the college in the middle 50%. At level 2, retention rates have declined from 14 percentage points above the national average in 2002 to just above the national average in 2003. Similarly, at level 3, retention rates have fallen from six percentage points above the national average in 2001 to the national average in 2003. College data for 2004 show that the retention rates at levels 1 and 2 have continued to fall by 10 percentage points for level 1 and by three percentage points at level 2. However, at level 3, college data show a slight improvement for 2004 with the retention rate rising by three percentage points. The retention rate of male students was significantly better than the national average at all levels. Retention rates on courses leading to NVQs, general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) subjects are similar to the national averages. Retention rates remain low in a number of AS-level subjects. Overall retention rates are low in ICT and hospitality, sport and leisure.

6. Pass rates have risen significantly at levels 1 and 3 in the three years to 2003. More specifically, at level 3, pass rates have risen from just above the national average in 2001 to 10 percentage points above in 2003, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges. At level 2, pass rates have been consistently above the national average and the college has been in the top 10% of

colleges in two out of the three years to 2003. College data for 2004 show that the pass rate at level 1 continues to rise and is 11 percentage points higher than in 2003. At levels 2 and 3 for 2004, the data show that the high pass rates have been maintained. In particular, pass rates on courses leading to NVQ and GNVQ qualifications at level 2 and AS levels are significantly above the national averages. In 2003, the pass rate on NVQ level 2 courses was 18 percentage points above the national average and at AS level, the pass rate was 15 percentage points above. Pass rates for GCE A levels have been close to the national average in two out of the three years to 2003. Pass rates are particularly high in science and mathematics, ICT, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, beauty therapy, visual and performing arts and media, humanities and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

7. Success rates, showing the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications compared with the number originally enrolled, have been consistently high at all levels in each of the three years to 2003, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges for level 2 courses and in the top 25% for levels 1 and 3. College data for 2004 show a similar trend at all levels. There is a slight rise at level 3 of three percentage points compared with 2003. At levels 1 and 2, there is a slight decline of four and two percentage points, respectively.

8. The college subscribes to an external independent analysis for evaluation of students' performance at AS level and GCE A level in relation to their prior attainment at the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). In general, students' performance at AS level and GCE A level in relation to their average point score at GCSE is satisfactory and students achieve the grades that would have been predicted from their GCSE scores.

9. For key skills, retention rates have risen in the three years to 2003, but for communication and information technology (IT) are around 10% below the national averages. For application of number, across all levels, the retention rate is similar to the national average. Pass rates have risen steadily over the same period and, although low, are mostly higher than the national average.

10. The proportion of work-based learners who achieve the full apprenticeship framework is low. Of the 67 apprentices who commenced foundation programmes in 2001/02, 31 reached the end of the programme and three are still in learning. Only 24% of starters achieved the full framework, but 42% achieved their target NVQ. In 2002/03, of 113 starters, 62 reached the end of the programme and 10 are still in learning. Approximately 28% of starters achieved the full framework, 38% achieved the target NVQ and 4% the technical certificate. Similarly, of the 37 apprentices who began advanced programmes in 2001/02, 12 reached the end of the programme and 1 is still in learning. Almost 22% achieved the full framework within the specified time, 21% subsequently completed and about 30% achieved their target NVQ. In 2002/03, there were 19 starters, of whom 5 reached the end of the programme and 5 are still in learning. Some 26% of starters achieved the full framework, 31% achieved the target NVQ and 15% the technical certificate.

Adult learners

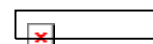
11. In the three years to 2003, retention rates at levels 1 and 2 have risen from just above the national average in 2001 to more than 10 percentage points above for level 1 in 2003 and 14 percentage points above for level 2, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges. At level 3, there has been a downward trend from 10 percentage points above in 2002 to just above the national average in 2003. College data for 2004 show a general downward trend at all levels and rates are now in line with the national averages for 2003. At levels 1 and 2, retention rates have fallen considerably by more than 10 percentage points and at level 3 the retention rate has declined a further three percentage points. The retention rate for female students was five percentage points above the national average at level 3.

12. Pass rates for adult students are high at levels 1, 2 and 3. Pass rates have risen in each of the three years to 2003 at all levels. At level 2, pass rates have risen from seven percentage points above the national average in 2002 to 12 points above in 2003, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges. College data for 2004 show that pass rates have continued to rise by about two percentage points at all levels. Pass rates are particularly high on courses leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Pass rates for AS levels have risen from four percentage points below the national average

in 2001 to 10 percentage points above in 2003. However, pass rates for adults on GCE A-level courses were six percentage points below the national average in 2003.

13. Success rates have been consistently high in each of the three years to 2003. At level 2, the success rate was 20 percentage points above the national average, a rise of six percentage points on the previous year, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges in two out of the three years to 2003. Success rates on short courses have risen significantly over the three-year period to 2003 from four percentage points below the national average in 2001 to 11 percentage points above, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges. College data for 2004 show that, although there has been a slight decline in overall success rates, they are still high. Success rates are particularly high for adult students on courses leading to GCSE qualifications. In 2003, the success rate was 12 percentage points above the national average. Success rates are, however, low for adult students on GCE A-level courses.

Quality of education and training



14. Inspectors graded teaching, learning and attainment in 155 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 67% of lessons, satisfactory in 28% and less than satisfactory in 5%. This is higher than the national average of 63% good or better lessons for general FE and tertiary colleges inspected in 2003/04. The grading for learning is similar, with 69% good or better, 25% satisfactory and 6% unsatisfactory. This is much higher than the national average of 61% good or better in 2003/04. At the time of the college's last inspection, undertaken by the Further Education Funding Council in 2000, 58% of the teaching was good or better, 33% satisfactory, and 9% unsatisfactory. Although not directly comparable, this represents an improvement in the standard of teaching since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are slightly better for adult groups than for students aged 16 to 18. In 70% of lessons for mainly adult groups, teaching was good or better compared with 66% for the 16 to 18 age group. In 73% of lessons for adults, learning was good or better, compared with 67% for students aged 16 to 18. Overall, students studying at levels 1 and 3 receive the best teaching with over 70% good or better. More specifically, at level 1 for students aged 16 to 18, 80% of the teaching is good or better. However, at level 2, adult students receive the best teaching with over 78% of lessons good or better. The least effective teaching and learning are at entry level. Of the lessons observed, only 48% were good or better. Adult students at this level receive the worst teaching, with almost 10% of lessons unsatisfactory.

15. Overall, the standard of teaching is good across the curriculum areas. In almost 70% of lessons observed in seven out of the nine curriculum areas inspected, teaching and learning were good or better. The most effective teaching and learning are in hospitality, hairdressing and beauty therapy, humanities, visual, performing arts and media and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The teaching and learning in theory and practical lessons are particularly good in hospitality and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Students on work-based learning programmes in hairdressing and beauty therapy receive very good teaching, with 100% of lessons good or better. The best teaching in visual, performing arts and media is where there is a mix of practical and theory. The best lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is where there is a variety of activities including whole class, group and individual work. Teaching is least effective in construction and some lessons are unsatisfactory. None of the construction lessons with a majority of adults is better than satisfactory and a significant proportion of lessons for students aged 16 to 18 are unsatisfactory. Practical lessons in construction are the least effective.

16. The development of students' key skills is mostly integrated with the curriculum, but there is a lack of consistency in the management of key skills across the college. In visual and performing arts and media, business studies and ICT, key skills are managed well and integrated with the curriculum, but in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, the development of students' key skills is less effective. The best examples of students' work in key skills are in hairdressing and beauty therapy. The teaching of key skills is mainly satisfactory. Much teaching of literacy, numeracy and ESOL is

satisfactory. The proportion of teaching that is good or better in this curriculum area is below the national average for colleges of a similar type.

17. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan thoroughly and prepare detailed schemes of work. They make very good use of a range of teaching styles and methods to meet individuals' learning needs and stimulate students at all levels of ability. Teachers explain learning tasks clearly and thoroughly and build on students' own ideas and experiences well. In these lessons, students develop good evaluative and analytical skills. Lessons include topical examples and encourage good discussion. Teachers assess students' learning through a range of activities including imaginative use of questioning, appropriate revision games, peer questioning and the regular setting of homework. There is much good integration of practical with theory in lessons. In the better lessons, teachers make very effective use of ILT to complement and extend learning.

18. In less successful lessons, the teaching is often unchallenging and uninspiring. The pace of learning is slow and targets set are undemanding. Lesson plans do not sufficiently identify individual students' needs. In these lessons, teaching styles are limited and do not meet the needs of all students. There is often an over-reliance on worksheets. Teachers do not always spend sufficient time with students who are having difficulties nor do they give sufficiently stimulating tasks to the more able. The teaching does not significantly build on previous learning. Inappropriate materials are often used. In a minority of lessons, teachers have low expectations of their students. Little use is made of ILT to enhance learning and the use of IT is mainly restricted to research and the production of assignments.

19. Teachers are well qualified and make good use of their experience. Resources are satisfactory in most curriculum areas and some areas have very good resources. Students in catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy develop their skills in kitchens, restaurants and salons that the college has refurbished to a very high commercial standard. However, in sport, and visual and performing arts and media, resources are unsatisfactory. Resources for electrical installation are poor. The ratio of students to computers has improved since the last inspection. However, students find it difficult to use computers outside lessons. In the sixth form college, there are too few computers in classrooms and a lack of specialist equipment in some areas.

20. Assessment practice is good in most areas. Assignments are generally well designed, with clear assessment criteria that reflect the requirements of the awarding body. In some areas, such as in the provision for students with disabilities and in sports and leisure, teachers develop assessment activities that meet a variety of students' needs. The college does not have an overall assessment strategy, although there are comprehensive procedures for compliance with the requirements of awarding bodies. The manager of quality assurance reviews all external verifiers' reports and monitors all action plans. However, this process does not identify specific cross-college improvements to assessment practice, nor link with staff development to raise teachers' expertise. Internal verification is particularly well organised and effective in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Students on hairdressing and beauty therapy work-based learning courses have a good understanding of the assessment requirements of their programme. In all curriculum areas, feedback to students on their completed assignments is good.

21. Tutors keep students aware of their progress. Regular reviews take place each half term with reports to parents, carers and employers as appropriate. Some part-time courses such as law, have established good links with employers to keep them informed of their employees' progress. However, such arrangements are not uniform across all courses. Parents' evenings are held twice yearly for most full-time courses. Students' progress reviews focus on progress towards individual targets. On some level 3 business courses, the use of targets to raise achievement is good. However, the college overall does not use targets effectively to raise individual standards of performance. For example, in humanities, students agree their targets late in the first term. In science and mathematics, tutors do not monitor students' progress against target grades. The recording of practical achievements in most vocational areas is good.

22. The college provides an extensive and responsive range of courses with good progression opportunities from levels 1 to 3 in most curriculum areas. Curriculum planning is comprehensive and takes into account the needs of employers, schools and the community. The college provides a wide

range of community-based ICT courses. The business development unit works closely with local industry to provide relevant training. The college works actively with employers to secure good work placements for work-based learners.

23. The college has developed strong partnerships that benefit students. For example, the collaboration with the probation service provides ex-offenders with a course to help them pass the theory part of the driving test which also includes support for literacy and numeracy. The college works effectively with most local secondary schools and is a key player in the development of the local strategy for pupils aged 14 to 19.

24. The college provides good enrichment opportunities including volunteering, a wide range of sports activities and subject-related activities. Students in visual and performing arts and media have many opportunities to perform publicly, and to visit theatres in many European cities. However, access to enrichment activities and specific courses is limited for some students. For example, some students at the sixth form and other centres cannot access the full range of activities, and timetable constraints prohibit AVCE students from taking advantage of the range of options in AS-level mathematics.

25. The college provides good advice and guidance to pupils in its local secondary schools about courses and opportunities at the college. A series of taster days enables most pupils to visit the college before making an application. Prospectuses are attractive and very informative and available in a number of formats.

26. Tutorial support for students is very good. Tutors meet regularly to develop the tutorial curriculum. The induction programme is effective in providing a comprehensive introduction to the college and informing students about assessment and other requirements of their course and their general rights and responsibilities. The individual learning needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are clearly identified. The pastoral support offered to students is extensive and is particularly good for full-time students in hairdressing and beauty therapy, humanities and science and mathematics. Students at the multi-skills centre, however, are not fully aware of the range of support offered throughout the college.

27. Personal support for students is good. The college has a well-publicised counselling service and arrangements are made for students to see other professional support services as appropriate. The college supports 314 students with educational maintenance awards. Support for students with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective and support for dyslexic students is particularly good. There is good liaison with social services and educational psychologists and an extensive range of resources to assist students with their learning. Specific assistive technology is bought when particular needs are identified.

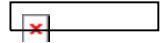
28. Careers guidance and advice for students progressing to HE is good. An extensive programme of visits to regional universities and the annual hosting of a HE fair help students to make informed choices.

29. All full-time students and students on substantial part-time courses are effectively screened for literacy, numeracy and language support needs at induction. Needs are usually met promptly in a way appropriate to the student and the course of study. However, the quality and extent of the support provided are not always satisfactory. On a small number of courses support is provided late, and on others support is not provided in lessons or at appropriate times. Only 12 of the 39 tutors have a level 4 qualification in literacy or numeracy. College data indicate that over 90% of those identified as needing support actually received it. The college monitors the impact of this support on students' progress. In 2003, the retention rate for those receiving support was higher than the rate for the whole college. The college does not compare the pass rate for those receiving support with those identified as needing support but not receiving it.

30. The college has implemented good arrangements for child protection. A designated senior member of staff has responsibility for child protection and liaison with the local social services and other agencies. The college has a detailed child protection policy and strategy which are

complemented by similar procedures to protect vulnerable adults. All members of the college's staff have been briefed about child protection issues and are aware of their duties. Members of the governing body have not received training about child protection issues.

Leadership and management



31. Leadership and management are good. In the last four years, leaders and managers have created a successful college. Students' overall achievements are well above the national averages for general FE colleges. However, retention rates are below the national averages on many level 3 courses. Enrolments have increased significantly, particularly in the college's sixth form centre. The college has met challenging enrolment targets, reduced its dependency on franchise provision and managed operations within its budget. A substantial building programme has been approved. In spring 2006, the construction of a new sixth form centre will begin.

32. The college has strong relations with schools and is a member of the Weston Federation of Schools. The college and most of the schools that comprise the federation believe that the good current collaboration will form the basis for stronger curriculum links in the future. The college has also taken the lead in supporting a second federation of seven North Somerset schools. Over 300 school pupils aged 14 to 16 regularly attend the college's Increased Flexibility (IF) programme. The college plans these programmes in conjunction with the schools. A high proportion of pupils who take part stay in education when they reach 16 years of age.

33. Strong links with employers, universities, community groups, social services and welfare organisations are used effectively to raise the profile of the college and remove barriers to participation in education. The college works with, for example, the youth service, the probation service, drug rehabilitation centres and mental health trusts. Links with the youth service have led to programmes for young workers to achieve appropriate vocational qualifications. Work with the probation service includes the provision of basic skills and driving test theory courses for young people on probation. Good links with employers include advisory groups for each faculty, the provision of basic skills courses for the employees of two local supermarkets and well-attended breakfast seminars. Over 150 employers, partners and associates of the college attended a recent breakfast seminar at which the college annual report was presented.

34. Strategic planning is good. Staff and governors are appropriately involved in setting strategic objectives. The resulting plan contains clear and relevant objectives, focused on improving retention and pass rates, meeting the needs of students who have not been successful at school, developing more effective partnerships and improving the college environment. Faculties' plans focus appropriately on strategic priorities and issues identified through self-assessment. High levels of accountability are achieved through regular meetings between managers and staff at all levels. Members of staff are well supported and managers act effectively to tackle poorly performing teachers or courses. Communication within the college is good and staff morale is high. The appointment of a member of staff to work closely with students who are 'at risk' of leaving their courses has contributed to improved retention rates. Most curriculum areas are well managed.

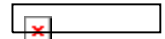
35. The quality assurance system is comprehensive and covers curriculum areas, support services and franchise partners. The self-assessment report accurately identifies the college's strengths and weaknesses. The college's judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, based on over 270 lesson observations, are similar to the judgements reached by inspectors. However, many course reviews are unsatisfactory. They fail to focus on improving teaching, learning and students' achievements and do not identify actions to address weaknesses. Annual staff appraisal is not sufficiently rigorous. In 2004, training and development needs identified through appraisal, were not always passed on to the staff development officer. Nevertheless, an appropriate range of staff development opportunities was provided.

36. A new management information system was installed in summer 2004. The move to the new system was well managed. Students' retention and pass rate data are reliable and external returns have been timely and accurate. The range of internal reports is satisfactory

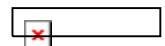
37. Equality and diversity are promoted well. The college meets its obligations under race equality legislation, disability and child protection legislation. There is a clear guide for students. Equality and diversity developments are well managed. An equality and diversity audit led to action plans which are implemented by working groups. The plans are monitored by the equality and diversity committee, which is chaired by the principal. Governors monitor most aspects of equality and diversity. The college monitors the ethnic profile of its staff and students. Around 2.5% of students and 3.0% of staff are from minority ethnic groups. This compares with 1.2% of the local population.

38. Governance is good. Members of the corporation have an appropriate range of business, financial and educational expertise. They are well informed about the financial performance of the college and about students' achievements. Governors understand the issues facing the college. Since 2001, sustained good financial management has placed the college in a sound financial position. Day-to-day financial management is very good. Budget holders receive regular income and expenditure reports and management accounts are clear. Detailed information about course income and expenditure contributes to curriculum planning decisions. The college has appropriate human resource policies and procedures. The college provides good value for money. However, a significant minority of teaching staff remain on conditions of service that give them less teaching and longer holidays than other staff. Class sizes and attendance rates are around the national averages.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- high progression rates from access to science course to HE

- much good teaching

- strong academic support for students

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- few opportunities for AVCE science students to take additional courses.

Scope of provision

39. The college offers a good range of science and mathematics courses at levels 2 and 3. At the time of the inspection, 203 students aged 16 to 18 and 119 adults were enrolled on these courses. Science courses are available at two centres. The sixth form college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science, mathematics and further mathematics together with GCSE mathematics. At the Knightstone centre, AVCE single and double award in science courses, access to science for adults, and GCSEs in mathematics and human physiology and health are offered during the day. Evening courses at Knightstone include GCSEs in mathematics, chemistry and human physiology and health together with AS-level courses in human biology and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

40. Pass rates on many courses are high. On the AVCE single award in science course, the pass rate has risen in each of the three years to 2004 and was 100% in 2004. The pass rate for GCE A-level physics has been 100% during the same period. Pass rates for adult students are particularly high in GCSE mathematics, exceeding the national average by almost 30 percentage points. Other courses with high pass rates are AS-level biology, AS-level environmental science, AS-level physics, GCE A-level biology, GCSE human physiology and health and GCSE mathematics. The proportion of students gaining higher grades at AS level and GCE A level is similar to the national average. The pass rate for AS-level human biology has declined in each of the three years to 2004 and is almost 20 percentage points below the national average. Most retention rates are close to the national averages. Students' performance at AS level and GCE A level in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE is similar to the national average.

41. The progression rate of students to HE is high. About 70% of students aged 16 to 18 who completed a GCE A level in science or mathematics in 2004 progressed to HE and almost 90% of the students who finished the access to science course gained university places. However, the progression rate from AS-level science and mathematics courses into the corresponding GCE A-level subject is low in some subjects. Class sizes are low in many of these subjects.

42. Students are motivated and rapidly make the transition from study at GCSE level to the additional demands of their higher-level courses. Students on the access to science course demonstrate good study skills. Attendance rates are high and students are punctual. Students' attainment in 75% of lessons observed was good or better.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	*	50	40
		% retention	*	70	68
		% pass rate	*	66	59

GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	109	101	126
		% retention	85	73	71
		% pass rate	51	58	54
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	10	13	15
		% retention	60	85	73
		% pass rate	100	91	73
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	**	28	24
		% retention	**	68	83
		% pass rate	**	79	65
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	28	32	33
		% retention	75	59	73
		% pass rate	67	53	42

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

* course did not run

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

43. The standard of teaching is high. Teachers are confident and enthusiastic. Teachers and students have high expectations and they work productively in partnership. Many lessons have a good variety of learning activities which interest and challenge students. In an AS-level chemistry lesson, students' understanding was checked effectively by probing questions. Students were articulate, confident and made good use of technical terms. In a biology lesson, students were engaged in completing a circus of activities investigating transpiration by leaves using a variety of approaches. Students worked effectively and briskly in groups. They investigated volume loss and weight loss, did microscopy work and went on to improve their data analysis skills through a computer-based activity. Many teachers make good use of IT in their teaching. For example, a biology lesson was enriched by projecting electron microscope images from the internet. In an AS-level mathematics lesson, the results of algebraic operations were checked using algebraic software.

44. In a minority of lessons, there is little variety of activity for students. Questioning is not skilled, with the teacher often accepting superficial answers and failing to probe. Analyses of the preferred learning styles of students are ignored in planning activities.

45. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They provide strong academic support to their students. Homework is set on a regular basis and, in some subjects, lists of current and previous homework together with their deadlines are displayed on the base-room notice board. Homework is marked carefully and, in some subjects, a detailed feedback sheet clearly indicates how work could be improved. Students are appreciative of the help that they receive from their teachers who regularly support students outside timetabled lessons. Regular weekly lunchtime workshops are provided on an informal basis in physics. Timetabled workshops for AVCE students provide additional help and practical experience for students. These workshops have been successful in helping students to complete assignments and to succeed on their courses.

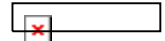
46. The AVCE science students have few opportunities to study additional qualifications. The AVCE students and GCE A-level students study at different centres and current timetabling arrangements do not permit students to choose any AS-level subjects offered at the other centre. Similarly, GCE A-level students cannot access many of the recreational activities that take place at the other centre.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is well managed. The two centres have previously operated independently, but there is now a strong focus on uniting the science and mathematics provision. The curriculum area has implemented common procedures for tutorial work and for dealing with absence. There are now whole team meetings wherever possible, and meetings take place at both centres. Some teachers work at both centres. The observation of teaching and learning is now more rigorous and thorough. In 2003, 100% of the lessons observed were graded good or better; in 2004, only 58% of lessons observed were graded good or better.

48. Curriculum and faculty self-assessment reports are rigorous, evaluative and lead to comprehensive action plans and substantial improvements. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and contribute through their own course reviews.

Construction



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 1 courses in 2004

- high progression rates from full-time carpentry and brickwork level 1 courses into apprenticeships.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on electrical installation part 2 and NVQ level 2 trowel occupations

- slow progress of most students

- uninspiring teaching in many lessons

- poor facilities for students.

Scope of provision

49. The college offers courses in wood occupations, bricklaying and electrical installation at levels 1

to 3. All lessons take place at a multi-skills centre on an industrial estate. Short updating courses are available in electrical installation, and health and safety. At the time of the inspection, 176 students were enrolled on construction courses, including 51 full-time and 125 part-time students. About one third of the students are aged 16 to 18. The college provides sub-contracted training and assessment for three national training providers. Some 40 pupils aged 14 to 16, from 9 local schools attend courses in construction training. The college has funding to develop a CoVE in multi-skills.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates were high on level 1 courses in 2004. Pass rates rose significantly on the NVQ level 1 course in trowel trades to 100% in 2004. On the NVQ in wood occupations and the City and Guilds electrical installation, pass rates were 80%, almost 15 percentage points above the national average. Pass rates on the electrical installation part 2 and NVQ level 2 in trowel occupations were almost 20 percentage points below the national averages in 2003 and 2004, respectively. Retention rates for most courses are satisfactory, but show a general downward trend.

51. Progression rates from full-time level 1 courses in brickwork and carpentry and joinery into apprenticeships are high. Of the 59 students who started in 2003/04, 36 joined apprenticeship programmes.

52. Most students make slow progress in lessons. Full-time level 1 students in brickwork, and carpentry and joinery have made no significant progress with their NVQ portfolios. Third-year electrical installation students are substantially behind schedule. Students' attainment is less than satisfactory. Students' work in practical lessons is often below the standard for the level of the course.

53. The standard of students' written work is generally satisfactory. Students are punctual but attendance rates are almost five percentage points below the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ trowel trades	1	No. of starts	7	17	23
		% retention	86	88	78
		% pass rate	0	0	100
NVQ wood occupations	1	No. of starts	30	34	20
		% retention	83	82	75
		% pass rate	76	64	80
City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation (theory) 2 years	1	No. of starts	10	19	26
		% retention	70	74	58
		% pass rate	57	93	80
2360-07 Part 2 electrical installation 1 year	3	No. of starts	12	5	12
		% retention	83	100	100
		% pass rate	70	20	42

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

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching in many lessons is uninspiring and makes few demands on students. Lessons lack a sense of purpose and targets set are insufficiently demanding. Lessons which are teacher led fail to

engage students. Teachers use a limited range of teaching styles and make little use of ICT. Most teaching fails to meet to the individual learning needs of all students.

55. Most teachers have appropriate occupational experience. Many have, or are working towards, teaching and assessor qualifications. Industrial updating for established teachers is inadequate.

56. Workshops, classrooms and facilities for students are poor. Workshops lack sufficient space for the number of students carrying out practical activities. Several classrooms are cramped and poorly equipped. Library resources and students' access to IT facilities at the centre are inadequate. The centre has recently established a small library at the back of a classroom and equipped another classroom with computers. Students cannot use these facilities when classrooms are in use by other students. The range and number of books is small. Students' amenities, storage space, canteen and leisure facilities are also poor. The college has recognised these weaknesses in its self-assessment report. The college has recently provided heating in the workshops and classrooms and replaced woodworking machinery to comply with health and safety regulations. The supply of materials, tools and equipment is adequate.

57. Students understand assessment requirements and the roles of assessors and verifiers. However, assessment of NVQ students in the workplace is insufficient. Students find it difficult to collect evidence from the workplace without the guidance of an assessor. Progress in compiling portfolios is slow. No formal arrangements are in place to provide full-time students with work experience.

58. Reviews of students' progress are generally satisfactory. Those in brickwork are concise and contain clear measurable targets to which tutors refer in subsequent reviews. Tutors make good use of wallcharts in the workshops to show clearly what students have achieved and what they have still to complete. Tutors regularly update these charts and use a colour-coding system to grade the standard of work. Students receive adequate written feedback on assessed work. However, individual learning plans do not contain adequate milestones against which students can measure their progress effectively.

59. The range of courses is generally satisfactory. There is no full-time provision in electrical installation, and there are few evening only courses. School-link programmes respond well to the needs of pupils and are well co-ordinated. Few construction students take part in college enrichment activities.

60. Students receive satisfactory initial guidance before they start their courses. They are well-informed about the content and demands of their courses. Induction arrangements are satisfactory. All full-time and many part-time students receive an initial assessment to identify additional support needs. However, this initial assessment does not always take place at the start of the course. Few construction students have been identified as needing additional support for numeracy or literacy. Students occasionally receive support in lessons, but more often they have to leave their theory lessons to receive their additional support.

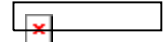
Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements and internal verification are satisfactory. Teachers are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Course reviews are not sufficiently evaluative and there is little use of data to monitor the performance of courses. The self-assessment report was insufficiently self-critical and failed to identify a number of weaknesses. Attention to health and safety is insufficient. Mezzanine work areas lack adequate guards and rails to prevent objects falling on students working in the workshop spaces below. Materials and students' work are poorly stacked.

62. The college has received funding since June 2004 to develop a CoVE in construction. It is making satisfactory progress in achieving its targets in the first year of its business plan. The annual operating plan is detailed and contains specific and measurable targets for each of the objectives. An advisory board meets regularly. The centre is able to use the range of vocational courses already

available in construction up to level 3. Additional courses are planned, but have yet to start. Modules are being developed to meet the needs of local employers. There are clear progression opportunities to level 3 in the college. There has been investment in industry-standard woodworking machinery. The college is in the process of commissioning professional advisors for the relocation of the existing construction centre to the college main site. A full-time centre manager and a part-time CoVE manager have been appointed very recently.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- good development of students' practical skills

- much good teaching

- very good individual subject tutorials for full-time students

- good management of ICT in community locations.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most courses

- lack of rigour in the self-assessment process.

Scope of provision

63. The college offers a range of courses in ICT with opportunities for students to progress from entry level to level 3 and to HE at the college. Full-time provision includes a GNVQ foundation course with a mix of business and IT units, a level 2 IT practitioners' diploma, a first diploma for IT practitioners, a national diploma for IT practitioners and AS-level and GCE A-level ICT and computing. Adult students study a variety of programmes in the college's flexible learning centre. In

community locations, adult students study courses from introductory level and can progress to levels 1 and 2 in the certificate and diploma for IT users. At the time of inspection, there were 2,000 adult students and 173 students aged 16 to 18. The college has five IT centres in the Weston-super-Mare area and a dedicated centre in the neighbouring town of Nailsea. The college also uses a range of community locations to deliver IT courses to adults.

Achievement and standards

64. The pass rates for computing and IT courses are consistently high. The pass rate for the certificate for IT users is 30 percentage points above the national average, and 27 percentage points above for the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course. All students passed AS-level ICT and the diploma for IT practitioners in 2004. However, retention rates are low on most courses. The retention rates of levels 1 and 2 part-time IT courses for adults have declined, and were 14 percentage points below the national average in 2004. In the same period, retention rates on AS-level ICT declined to 20% below the national average. College data for 2004/05 indicate that the retention rates on some courses has risen by 10 percentage points compared with the same period in 2003/04.

65. Students work diligently in lessons and develop good practical skills in the use of application software. Many progress on to more advanced courses. Adult students quickly progress from introductory courses and achieve a number of IT qualifications. Many demonstrate high levels of confidence in manipulating web pages. Students on IT maintenance courses demonstrate high standards of technical competence. They have established, and now maintain the training network and are very skilful in the identification of potential solutions to IT problems that users encounter.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Certificate for IT users (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	413	261
		% retention	*	67	49
		% pass rate	*	91	92
City and Guilds 4248 Start IT (Short)	1	No. of starts	*	299	1,502
		% retention	*	72	70
		% pass rate	*	95	91
New CLAIT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	175	125
		% retention	*	89	67
		% pass rate	*	52	69
Diploma for IT practitioners (systems support)	2	No. of starts	*	24	22
		% retention	*	88	73
		% pass rate	*	33	100
ECDL (1 year)	2	No. of starts	82	279	413
		% retention	77	84	52
		% pass rate	81	90	96
National diploma IT practitioners	3	No. of starts	43	33	33
		% retention	72	67	73
		% pass rate	94	95	96

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

** course did not run*

Quality of education and training

66. Much teaching is good. A high proportion of lessons are good or better. In the better lessons, teachers use a variety of activities and students enjoy their learning. Activities and work are at an appropriate level and meet the needs of individuals. Teachers draw upon their recent industrial experience to illustrate their lessons. In a computer maintenance lesson, students were presented with typical technical support problems such as users having difficulty printing documents and had to identify appropriate questions that technicians would need to ask to establish the cause of the problem. In another lesson, students worked in pairs to draw dataflow diagrams and the whole group combined all the diagrams together on to an interactive whiteboard. Conflicting dataflows were discussed and agreed. The resulting overall dataflow diagram was printed for students' reports. In the less effective lessons, teachers talk for too long and fail to provide adequate interest for students. Individual learning needs are not met. Often, there is little checking of learning, students follow the teachers' instructions and are not encouraged to work independently. These lessons progress at the speed of the less able students.

67. Teachers have sound technical knowledge and many are able to draw on their recent industrial experience. Most teachers are appropriately qualified. Teaching and learning are supported by a variety of appropriate computing resources. Course booklets are well-constructed and supplemented by interactive electronic resources. Accommodation is well-maintained and spacious and a number of rooms have air conditioning. Most computer classrooms have multimedia projectors and some have interactive whiteboards. The library provides access to an appropriate range of ICT books and magazines, although some of the texts are out of date. A variety of adaptive technologies is available to assist students with visual and mobility difficulties.

68. Assessment is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the awarding body. Full-time students are assessed at the start of their course for particular learning needs and appropriate support is put in place. The vocational courses have well-constructed assignments with clear assessment criteria. Students are aware of the progress they make and understand what they need to do to achieve a particular grade. Written feedback is detailed and gives guidance to students on making improvements. Adults studying at IT centres are offered an opportunity to undertake a literacy and numeracy assessment, and help is made available if required. Students' progress is monitored effectively in IT centres and teachers provide good support.

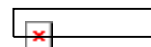
69. The college offers a broad range of courses for full-time students from entry level to HE. Students on the full-time foundation course study IT and business before deciding which subject to specialise in the following year. Full-time students do not have work experience arranged for them, but a few students undertake visits to extend their experience of the commercial use of IT.

70. Individual subject tutorials are very supportive and well directed. Tutors agree measurable targets for full-time students based on grades predicted on their prior attainment at GCSE. Students take an active part in discussions at the tutorial. Each student completes a pre-tutorial questionnaire and uses this as a basis for negotiation to amend target grades. Progress is monitored well in IT community locations. However, the records of students' reviews are too brief, focusing on tasks rather than learning. Induction is satisfactory for both full-time and part-time students.

Leadership and management

71. Management of the area is satisfactory. The IT centres are particularly well managed. There are good records of students' progress and students know what is expected of them. The course review and self-assessment process lacks rigour and fails to identify significant weaknesses. Course reviews form the basis for the self-assessment development plan. Action points identified in the development plan are inadequate to bring about improvement. For example, the plan does not contain actions to address low retention rates. Teachers are insufficiently involved in the monitoring of the quality of provision in ICT.

Hospitality, catering, sports and leisure



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- particularly good teaching and learning in sport and practical hospitality lessons
- very good resources in hospitality
- productive partnership links
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on many courses
- narrow range of provision at level 3 for hospitality students.

Scope of provision

72. The college offers courses in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel. A range of full-time courses is offered, including the national diploma in hospitality supervision, food preparation and cooking and food service, at levels 1 and 2, the national diploma in sport and exercise science, and AS-level and GCE A-level physical education. Part-time courses are available in food preparation and cooking, national licensees' certificate, travel agency and air fares and ticketing. At the time of inspection, there were 205 full-time and 38 part-time students. Of these, 76 were enrolled on hospitality and catering courses and 167 were enrolled on sport, travel and tourism courses. Adult students account for two thirds of enrolments in this curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

73. Pass rates are high on most courses. On the first diploma and national diploma sports courses, pass rates have been above the national averages in the two years to 2004. Pass rates for AS-level and GCE A-level sport and physical education courses were 100% in 2003 and 2004 and 100% for the diploma in travel operations and the NVQ level 2 in catering and hospitality in 2004. High numbers of students achieve additional qualifications in foundation food hygiene and national licensees' certificates with retention and pass rates above national averages over the last three years.

74. Many courses have low retention rates. On the first diploma and national diploma sports courses, retention rates are almost 15 percentage points below the national average. In AS-level sport and physical education, the retention rate was below the national average in 2004. The retention rate is low on the international tourism diploma course and very low on the diploma in travel operations. On the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism, the retention rate has declined by almost 20 percentage points to just below the national average. Retention and pass rates for key skills are low.

75. Attainment in most lessons is high. In practical lessons in hospitality and catering, students demonstrate good skills in setting up the restaurant for service and in preparing dishes to a high standard. First-year students prepared a chicken for sauté demonstrating very good skills and used particularly effective silver service skills in the restaurant. However, second-year students, whilst demonstrating very good food preparation and cooking skills, display a lower level of attainment in food service.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	1	No. of starts	27	23	41
		% retention	70	61	76
		% pass rate	84	93	94
GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	33	15	15
		% retention	94	80	73
		% pass rate	90	83	91
First diploma in sport	2	No. of starts	**	16	19
		% retention	**	69	58
		% pass rate	**	91	100
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	2	No. of starts	15	27	*
		% retention	73	78	*
		% pass rate	73	90	*
National diploma in travel and tourism/AVCE	3	No. of starts	39	23	26
		% retention	82	61	65
		% pass rate	88	100	76
National diploma science/sport and exercise science	3	No. of starts	26	30	31
		% retention	69	87	58
		% pass rate	83	92	100

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

* course did not run

***fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

76. Teaching and learning in sport and practical hospitality lessons are particularly good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly using detailed schemes of work. They explain learning tasks clearly to students and use effective teaching methods. Teachers make good use of students' own experiences. In a lesson on high performance sports clothing, students used knowledge about their own sports to develop better understanding of the need for appropriate clothing and protection. Teachers use topical material well to engage students' interest. In one lesson, students used Internet resources to research the London Olympic bid. In a travel and tourism lesson, effective use was made of students' local knowledge to draw comparisons between Weston-super-Mare and the Gambia as part of a tourism development module. Teachers use the training kitchen and restaurant facilities effectively to provide students with a wide range of learning tasks and opportunities to gain the occupational skills needed by industry and for the successful completion of their qualifications. There are good work placements for students in hospitality, sport and travel and tourism establishments.

77. Resources are very good in hospitality. The hospitality and catering areas have been extensively refurbished. Facilities for practical lessons are particularly good and enable students to prepare, cook and serve food and drinks to customers. Students develop their occupational skills well. Theory rooms within hospitality, catering, leisure and tourism are of a high standard and equipped with computers, data projectors and in some cases interactive white boards. There is a well-equipped dedicated computer room. Teachers are mostly well qualified with a range of industrial experience. In sport, there are few health and fitness facilities and some equipment that does not meet current industry standards. For example, there is no cardio-vascular equipment for students to use. The sports hall lacks modern sports technology. Students have to use community-based facilities in order to complete some aspects of their qualifications. Sports students lack dedicated access to computer facilities.

78. All students have an initial assessment when they start their courses. Tutors use results from initial assessment effectively to identify additional support needs. Assessment and monitoring of students' work is efficient and well planned. Most feedback from tutors to students is good with clear detailed comments. Students in practical sessions receive immediate feedback to help them improve their skills. There are regular, scheduled meetings to discuss and moderate assessment practice. Staff and students understand the assessment and verification arrangements.

79. There is a wide range of effective partnerships. The college has good links with local employers including hotels, restaurants, leisure and sports facilities and the international airport nearby. Students in hospitality and travel and tourism undertake foreign trips, including exchanges with other European colleges. Sports students use high-quality venues including the local football, golf and rugby clubs. Students can take part in external competitions in their chosen sport as well as use sports equipment that is not available at the college. However, there is a narrow range of progression opportunities for hospitality and catering students who have completed their NVQ level 2 to progress on to level 3. The college has a national diploma at level 3, but this is unsuitable for many of the students who want to develop their craft skills further.

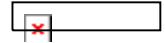
80. Students appreciate the support they receive from staff. In hospitality, students have a weekly tutorial where they plan effectively for assessments and map their practical achievements into their diaries. All students have individual tutorials on a rota basis, where they have the opportunity to speak confidentially about their programme and personal problems. In sport, travel and tourism, students value the effective personal support provided by tutors. All students know where they can access further support, advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

81. Management of the curriculum is good. Both strategic and operational management are strong. There is a culture of continuous improvement. The self-assessment report matched closely many of

the key strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. Action plans are in place to improve retention rates. Targets are set and reinforced at both curriculum and course level. The faculty head holds regular meetings from course level through to faculty level.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates in beauty therapy

- good teaching and learning

- high quality resources

- effective support for students

- strong curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory additional learning support

- lack of co-ordination between college-based and work-based provision.

Scope of provision

82. The college offers courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy for students aged 16 to 18 and adults. Full-time courses include NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1 and 2, beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3 and holistic therapies at level 3. Hairdressing, beauty therapy, holistic and complementary therapies are available as part-time study in the day or evening. The college also offers a national diploma in beauty sciences. Enrolments include 193 beauty therapy students, 139 hairdressing

students and 56 students on combined hairdressing and beauty courses. In beauty therapy, 59% of students are aged 19 and over. In hairdressing, 83% of students are aged 16 to 18. The college offers work-based learning and in hairdressing has 14 advanced apprentices, 53 foundation apprentices, and 1 student on the NVQ level 2 course. There are six beauty therapy students on work-based programmes.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates are high on beauty therapy courses. Pass rates for NVQ level 2 beauty and Indian head massage have been 10 percentage points or more above the national averages over three years to 2004, with 100% pass rates in 2003/04 and 2001/02, respectively. Retention rates for hairdressing and beauty therapy are close to the national averages and are rising. For 2005, overall in-year retention rates on courses for students aged 16 to 18 is 72%, and for adult students is 93% or higher, with hair and media makeup at 100%. The pass rate for hairdressing at level 1 has declined in each of the three years to 2004 and was nine percentage points below the national average in 2004.

84. The overall achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is 37%. The pass rate over the three years to 2004 for foundation apprenticeships is 33% and 40% for advanced apprenticeships. Retention rates have declined over the past three years. College data for in-year retention rates for 2004/05 show that 100% of the advanced apprentices and 69% of foundation apprentices have been retained.

85. Students' written work is of a very high standard. Assignments show attention to detail and thorough subject knowledge. Students have good practical skills and carry out a wide range of colour application techniques including re-growth, foiling, full head and random highlight application within a commercially acceptable time. A level 3 beauty student who gained a top place in the National FE Skills Olympics will represent the college and the United Kingdom in the finals in Helsinki.

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	No. of starts	52	73	61
		% retention	75	79	75
		% pass rate	97	81	78
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	*	54	42
		% retention	*	61	78
		% pass rate	*	88	72
Beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	54	51	37
		% retention	80	84	73
		% pass rate	98	98	100
Beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	18	27	10
		% retention	78	78	90
		% pass rate	100	95	78
Diploma in Indian head massage	3	No. of starts	18	27	47
		% retention	78	78	87
		% pass rate	100	95	93

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

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

86. Teaching and learning are good. The majority of the teaching is good or better. The integration of theory with practical training is good and teachers use frequent and focused questioning to extend students' knowledge. Teachers make very good use of their commercial experience in lessons to maintain students' interest. The Internet is used for research in lessons and key skills teaching is vocationally relevant. In a beauty therapy lesson, students produced good spreadsheets to demonstrate their knowledge of business finance. Teachers ensure that measurements of volume and multiplication tasks are related to the products that students use. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of visual and written materials to engage students. Teachers adapt their lessons well to meet the needs of students with dyslexia and use a range of teaching methods to include each student's different learning style. Students have a good understanding of the requirements of their courses and enjoy the work they do.

87. The quality of resources for hairdressing and beauty therapy is high. The college salons are spacious and well resourced and beauty therapy has well-equipped, self-contained cubicles. The library stock is satisfactory. Work-based salons are of a good professional standard with commercial products for salon use and to retail. Displays of certificates of achievement and training are placed on salon walls with some salons competing in national hairdressing competitions successfully. Some salons have well-equipped designated training areas for theory lessons.

88. Assessment is satisfactory with examples of constructive and detailed feedback to students. Procedures for practical assessments are clear and students have good opportunities to work on suitable clients to cover the level and range of assessment. Assessments are frequent and planned between student and assessor, with specific areas of performance targeted. Assessors remain unobtrusive, giving appropriate feedback detailing strengths and any further actions. The outcomes of assessments are accurately recorded in the students' portfolios. Internal verification systems are adequate, and there is a sufficient number of assessors and internal verifiers.

89. The hairdressing and beauty therapy curriculum meets the needs and interests of students. Almost 80% of the pupils from a 14 to 16 school-link course are now undertaking a level 2 full-time course. Work-based students achieve a variety of manufacturers' diploma courses.

90. Support for students is effective. Tutors give high priority to personal needs and career aspirations. Tutors monitor attendance and punctuality rigorously. In work-based learning, employers, students and tutors take part in monthly progress reviews and produce appropriately targeted action plans. Students show good awareness of individuals' rights and have respect for each other.

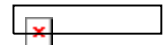
91. Additional learning support is unsatisfactory. Text in learning materials is too small to read. Much of this material has been poorly copied and does not fully meet the literacy and numeracy requirements of all students or recognise different learning styles. Materials have not been adapted to meet the needs of students with dyslexia. Initial screening shows a high number of students are at entry level 3 or lower on joining the course. Students are offered additional support, but many choose not to attend. For example, in one group of full-time students, six had been identified as needing additional support, but only two were attending regularly. Much of the support is provided by hairdressing and beauty teachers who have not received training in literacy and numeracy support.

Leadership and management

92. Curriculum management is strong. Staff attendance at meetings is high. All new staff receive a thorough induction and good use is made of 'staff tutorials' to provide individual guidance and support. Teachers undertake relevant annual professional updating. The self-assessment report is accurate and the action plan, which is updated regularly, is used to plan curriculum development. Tutors receive regular feedback from students through termly questionnaires. The results of these surveys are used in developing the self-assessment action plan.

93. The business development unit manages work-based learning in hairdressing. There is poor co-ordination at an operational level between college-based and work-based courses. There are inconsistencies in internal verification and in the provision of additional support. Salon-based trainers and assessors do not receive details of college-based staff development sessions that they could attend. Each area holds separate assessment standardisation meetings with their own tutors and assessors and there is limited sharing of good practice between the two departments and some duplication of activity. Each department holds employer consultative meetings, often with the same employers attending each meeting.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses
- high standard of students' work on most courses
- good teaching in many lessons
- very good technical resources for music and animation
- good subject enrichment opportunities
- very good subject support for all students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs in some lessons
- unsatisfactory resources at some centres

- o insufficient subject co-ordination.

Scope of provision

94. The college offers courses in visual and performing arts and media at three centres. Arts and media courses include the national diploma in graphic design, the first diploma in design, the certificate and diploma in foundation studies, AS-level art and design, AS-level and GCE A-level photography, AS-level and GCE A-level art and AS-level and GCE A-level media. Performing arts courses include the first and national diplomas in performing arts, the national diploma in music practice, the national diploma in music technology and AS-level and GCE A-level drama. There are also some part-time day and evening courses. Enrolments include 117 students on AS-level courses, 63 on GCE A-level courses, 34 on first diploma courses and 172 on national diploma courses. Some 158 students are enrolled on foundation studies courses. Almost three quarters of enrolments are adult students.

Achievement and standards

95. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. Pass rates have been 100% in the three years to 2004 in foundation art and design, GCE A-level art and GCE A-level media. In the two years to 2004, pass rates were 100% in City and Guilds photography 9231 and AS-level art. Similarly, pass rates were 100% in 2004 in AS-level media, the first diploma in design and the national diploma in performing arts. A large proportion of students gain higher grades on the first diploma in design, on AS-level media, AS-level art, AS-level dance and the national diploma in music technology and the national diploma in graphic design. Retention rates are particularly high on the foundation art and design, the national diplomas in art and design and music technology and courses. The retention rate on GCE A-level media has been 100% in each of the three years to 2004.

96. Standards of work are high on most courses. Ceramic work is ambitious with ideas clearly developed through drawing in sketchbooks. In drama, students explore the use of masks in performance work through improvisation. There are regular life-drawing lessons that encourage students to use a variety of media and extend their skills. However, observational drawing is not used to develop ideas in sketchbooks at the Westcliff centre. Sketchbooks are colourful and textural, but over reliant on copied images and lack understanding of design development. Attainment levels of drawing, research and evaluation skills are lower at the Westcliff centre.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate art and design / first diploma in design	2	No. of starts	35	27	15
		% retention	74	74	80
		% pass rate	100	80	100
National diploma in foundation studies in art and design (1 year)	3	No. of starts	93	78	122
		% retention	94	99	93
		% pass rate	100	100	99
BTEC national diploma in drama/ performing arts	3	No. of starts	31	26	28
		% retention	45	58	89
		% pass rate	100	93	100
BTEC national diploma	3	No. of starts	47	42	38

in music technology		% retention	57	50	58
		% pass rate	85	81	95
AS-level art	3	No. of starts	52	60	50
		% retention	94	65	92
		% pass rate	98	100	100
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	21	19	16
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

97. Teaching is good in many lessons. In the better lessons, teachers plan for individual students' needs. In a first diploma in music technology lesson, the learning of technical terms was re-inforced with visual images. Teaching promotes equality of opportunity. For example, in a graphic design lesson, students designed an advertising campaign that challenged gender and sexuality stereotypes in recruitment for the armed forces, health care and education. There is good use of IT in music, animation and foundation contextual studies. However, the teaching in other areas makes infrequent use of IT. Attention to individual needs in some lessons is insufficient. Much of the teaching in these lessons fails to make sufficient demands on students and does not inspire the more able.

98. Technical resources are very good for music and animation with access to industry standard equipment at the college and at an external professional studio. The performance students use a commercial theatre. Teachers are well qualified and most have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Staff development is used effectively to improve specialist knowledge, but there are few opportunities to share good practice.

99. Resources are unsatisfactory at some centres. Many classrooms at the Westcliff centre are in a poor decorative state, cramped and inappropriate for many of the activities. The shape of one room makes it difficult for group discussions. The dance floor at the Knightstone centre is unsuitable for some activities and is dirty. There is insufficient access to drinking water for performance students. Access is poor for students with restricted mobility at Westcliff and the school of art at the Knightstone centre.

100. Assessment is satisfactory. Students in performing arts receive clear feedback with guidance on how to make improvements. In performing arts and music, students record their assessment on video to aid the internal verification process. Quality assurance procedures for internal verification are consistent and give clear feedback to assessors. However, formative assessment is insufficient in some lessons. In a dance lesson, repeated mistakes made by some students performing a leaping exercise were not corrected by the teacher.

101. Subject enrichment is good in visual and performing arts. Students take additional qualifications and take part in visits that extend their experience and complement their main area of study. In visual arts, students use residential visits to research ideas for studio work. Performing arts students have regular visits to theatres and take part in professional performances. Art students have regular external projects and visits to museums and galleries.

102. Subject support is very good for full-time and part-time students. Students appreciate the time that staff dedicate to them outside lessons to discuss work or to rehearse performances. Tutors contact students promptly if they do not notify absence. Tutorials are regular and focus on targets set at previous progress reviews. The level of support for adult students is high. The careful and sensitive monitoring of adults' progress has helped many to remain on their courses.

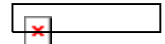
103. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Support lessons are available to help students with their projects and assignments, but do not provide a planned learning programme for them to improve their literacy and numeracy. Learning support is not provided in lessons. In one art lesson, which required students to write a project proposal, the teacher was unable to help with the literacy support that some students required.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership and management are good. The head of creative arts leads a team of curriculum managers across two centres and works closely with a manager in the sixth form college. Teachers contribute to the strategic planning process and attend a variety of staff development days. There is a culture of continuous improvement. However, subject co-ordination is poor. Teachers who teach the same subjects do not regularly meet or share resources. Communication between curriculum managers is unsatisfactory. Music and drama teachers from the sixth form college do not meet regularly with subject teachers at the college.

105. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical. The internal lesson observation profile is overgenerous. There is no formal strategy to share good teaching practice between course teams or to improve identified weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- good teaching and learning

- good support for students

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of target setting and tracking of students' progress

- insufficient use of ILT in lessons.

Scope of provision

106. GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level humanities subjects are delivered at Knightstone Road and Weston Sixth Form College. Some 31 students aged 16 to 18 at the sixth form college are enrolled to GCSEs in archaeology and psychology, 161 are enrolled to AS-level critical thinking, geography, government and politics, history, law, psychology and religious studies and 56 students are enrolled to GCE A-level geography, government and politics, history, law, psychology, religious studies and sociology.

107. The Knightstone centre provides a full-time course in access to HE for adult students with 46 enrolments, and a part-time course over 2 years with 10 enrolments. There are 141 adult students enrolled to part-time courses at GCSE, AS level and GCE A level in archaeology, history, law, psychology and sociology.

Achievement and standards

108. Pass rates are high on many courses. Pass rates for GCSE archaeology, law, psychology and sociology have been very high in two out of the three years to 2004. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in these subjects is significantly higher than the national averages. At AS level, the pass rates in sociology, law, religious studies, government and politics and critical thinking have been above the national averages in at least two out of the three years to 2004. In AS-level sociology, the pass rate was 10 percentage points above the national average in 2004 and 100% in 2003. At GCE A level, pass rates in sociology, religious studies and archaeology were all 100% in 2004. The proportion of students gaining higher grades at AS level and GCE A level is higher than the national average in many subjects. Most retention rates are close to national averages. However, there was a significant decline in retention rates in 2004 in GCSE law, archaeology, sociology and psychology, AS-level and GCE A-level law. In GCSE psychology, the retention rate fell from 26 percentage points above the national average in 2002 to 20 percentage points below in 2004. Pass and retention rates are satisfactory on the access to HE course.

109. Overall, students perform in accordance with their attainment at GCSE. Data show that over the three years to 2004, students performed slightly better than predicted by their prior attainment at GCSE for GCE A-level psychology, religious studies and history and AS-level psychology, government and politics and critical thinking.

110. Students work well in lessons and contribute to a high level of discussion, often challenging each other. The standard of students' written work is very high in AS-level psychology, access to HE, GCSE and AS-level archaeology. In all subjects students' confidence and knowledge are extended and there is a strong focus on developing evaluative and analytical skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	44	40	45
		% retention	86	65	49
		% pass rate	68	96	95
AS-level archaeology	3	No. of starts	*	27	18
		% retention	*	89	89
		% pass rate	*	96	75
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	57	47	50
		% retention	91	70	68

		% pass rate	50	76	79
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	25	15	19
		% retention	92	60	89
		% pass rate	61	100	88
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	52	40	36
		% retention	85	88	81
		% pass rate	86	89	90
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	56	50	47
		% retention	88	78	70
		% pass rate	69	82	88

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

111. Much of the teaching is good or better and some is inspirational. Teachers are knowledgeable and develop very good relationships with their students. Many organise lessons with clear objectives that enable students to learn in a stimulating and often innovative way. In an AS-level archaeology lesson, students simulated the setting of the sun to understand the location of ritual monuments in the Neolithic Age. Good use is made of additional high-quality learning resources produced by staff in archaeology and psychology to supplement the textbook and library provision. Some lessons make few demands on students. The teaching does not gain students' interest or significantly build on their previous learning. Teachers do not always spend sufficient time with students who have difficulties and give insufficiently stimulating tasks to the more able.

112. Most teachers are well qualified and have a relevant degree and teaching qualification. Teachers and students take pride in displaying work and creating a stimulating and attractive learning environment in classrooms and learning resource centres.

113. There is insufficient use of ILT in lessons. Teachers do not use ILT to provide greater variety in teaching, to promote further research skills, as an alternative source for information or for students' presentations. However, there are a few lessons where ILT is used effectively. In an AS-level psychology lesson, students investigated the topic of stress using the Internet. The students completed an Internet-based survey to discover their personality type.

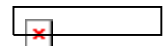
114. The setting of targets for students and the tracking of students' progress is underdeveloped. Although tutors review students' progress regularly, they do not use target grades in a systematic way to monitor, track and improve students' performance. Subject teachers set target grades based on the standard achieved in work set at the beginning of the course. The target grades from the analysis of students' potential in relation to their attainment at GCSE are not available to students until they are half way through their courses. Students who need extra support can and do receive help outside lessons. Assessment of students' work is good and most teachers regularly set and mark homework that is returned carefully annotated with supportive and constructive feedback.

115. Support for students is good and teachers give generously of their time outside the classroom. Students speak highly of the support and guidance they receive. Tutorials are well organised and effective in providing students with good subject and personal support. The advice and guidance given by tutors, teachers and careers staff help students to make well-considered decisions about HE. Tutors monitor attendance carefully and take prompt action on non-authorised absences.

Leadership and management

116. Curriculum management is good. There is a clear vision and commitment to the process of continuous improvement. The self-assessment report provides an accurate appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the area, and there are detailed actions points for improvements in the faculty's strategic plan. Over the last year, there has been a strong focus on improving the communication between the two centres and sharing good practice between subject teachers. The emphasis has been on standardising course reviews, harmonising the support for students and developing a common culture and ethos. Some problems still exist over staffing and subject co-ordination at both sites and this has had an effect on retention rates in a small number of lessons. Teachers pay attention to issues of equality and diversity and are well aware of individual students' needs.

Foundation - literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- good development of students' personal skills

- good teaching and learning on courses at levels 1 and 2

- innovative community developments and partnerships to widen participation

- good support for students with dyslexia.

Weaknesses

- low attendance on many courses

- slow progress in entry level literacy lessons

- dull and uninspiring teaching in entry level lessons

- inadequate target setting for individual students' needs.

Scope of provision

117. The college offers literacy, numeracy and courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry level 1 to level 2 mostly during the daytime, with some evening provision. Most lessons are discrete. The college also offers courses in community locations and the workplace. At the time of inspection, 209 students were undertaking literacy or numeracy courses in the college, 95 were in community locations and 22 were in the workplace. About 378 students were enrolled on ESOL courses in the college and in community locations. Additionally, the college supports 615 students in literacy, numeracy and language skills on academic and vocational courses through the learning development team. Almost 97% of enrolments are from students aged 19 and over. Of the current enrolments, 59% are female and 11% of all enrolments represent students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

118. Most students at entry level 3 work towards city and guilds qualifications in basic literacy or numeracy. Those at levels 1 and 2 work towards national tests in literacy and numeracy. Students who are not ready for certification work towards the goals negotiated on their individual learning plans.

Achievement and standards

119. Students develop good personal skills. They are highly motivated and enjoy their lessons. Many students have improved their confidence and social skills. Many progress to other courses and make use of the literacy and numeracy workshops to support their studies; some have enrolled on IT courses and a few have progressed to AS-level courses.

120. The proportion of students entering for examinations is low. The college introduced national tests in 2003/04. In 2004, only 47 students took level 1 or 2 tests in literacy or numeracy. Of these, only five students took the national test for numeracy at levels 1 or 2; and 16 took the national literacy test at level 2. The pass rate has risen in the two years to 2004 on the entry level course in basic numeracy from 30 percentage points below the national average in 2003 to 14 percentage points above the national average in 2004. The retention rate on this course has been close to the national average of 85%. The pass rate on the entry level course in basic literacy was 100% in 2004. However, the retention rate on this course is low. In 2004, the retention rate was 35 percentage points below the national average.

121. Attendance rates are low on many courses. The attendance rate at lessons observed was 12 percentage points below the national average. Some students are late to lessons.

122. Students make slow progress in entry level literacy and ESOL lessons. Attainment is unsatisfactory in almost one fifth of lessons at this level. Some tutors have low expectations of their students. Many students are not aware of their learning goals.

A sample of retention and pass rates in foundation - literacy and numeracy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Basic numeracy	entry	No. of starts	*	50	50
		% retention	*	82	86
		% pass rate	*	44	88
Basic literacy	entry	No. of starts	*	51	50
		% retention	*	88	47
		% pass rate	*	90	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

123. Teaching and learning are good in lessons at levels 1 and 2. Teachers prepare lessons well. They use a range of methods, resources and activities to stimulate students. In one lesson, students were asked to write their favourite word on individual whiteboards and they engaged in a lively discussion about their choices. In a level 2 key skills communication lesson, students successfully used strategies for developing convincing arguments with the use of rhetoric and sarcasm.

124. In the least effective lessons, teaching is dull and uninspiring. Teaching does not gain students' interest or encourage them to take an active part in the lesson. Progress is often slow. Teachers rely heavily on worksheets to provide different levels of work for students. Questioning fails to provoke responses from students and ILT is only used as a word processing tool. In ESOL lessons, students have few opportunities to practise their verbal skills to develop fluency. They have difficulty in using the learning materials effectively.

125. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation on the main college site is spacious and includes areas with computers and good access to a range of ILT equipment. In community locations, the standard of accommodation varies.

126. The college has established innovative community partnerships to widen participation. The college works closely with local agencies to develop community provision. Groups have been successfully established in drug rehabilitation centres, mental health community centres, local learning centres and large employers. A community officer works well with community groups to identify potential opportunities for new students.

127. The initial assessment process is satisfactory. Induction involves an informal discussion in the college cafe, a tour of the facilities and a short literacy and numeracy assessment. All full-time students at the college undertake an assessment in literacy and numeracy at the start of their programmes. They are referred to the learning development team for further support as appropriate. However, the initial assessment is not wholly taken into account in developing students' individual learning plans.

128. Target setting for individual students is inadequate. Many targets do not fully identify the range and level of skills that students need to develop. Targets for the development of students' personal and learning skills are not routinely recorded and many targets are imprecise. Students receive little evaluative feedback on their progress and are not always encouraged to develop personal evaluation skills.

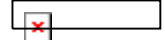
129. Support for students with dyslexia is good. Specialist tutors work effectively with students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties and use a range of methods to develop skills. Support tutors work closely with teachers to plan and deliver lessons which take into account the individual needs of students with dyslexia. Examples include the adaptation of handouts and the use of different assessment methods.

Leadership and management

130. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college appointed a new curriculum manager for essential skills and learning development in September 2004. The restructuring of the department has provided clearer direction. Strategies to widen participation have been successful. The department has not fully implemented initiatives for the provision of accreditation for all students. Many teachers do not understand the accreditation policy. Few opportunities exist to share good teaching practice. There is no formal system for the induction and mentoring of new teachers. The staff appraisal process identifies developmental opportunities for staff, but actions for

improvement are not followed-up. The quality of students' individual learning plans is not monitored and the self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- very high retention and pass rates

- highly effective use of a range of teaching styles to meet individual students' needs

- very good identification of individual students' needs

- particularly good guidance and support for all students

- very effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation for a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

131. At the time of the inspection, 100 full-time and 193 part-time students were enrolled on courses leading to qualifications from entry level to level 1. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Each student has a set of courses making up an individual programme of study for example the ASDAN awards, accredited life skills and Edexcel personal presentation skills. Many students follow the integrated studies programme, containing six individual courses. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties follow the extension studies course, which combines a core programme and vocational modules, allowing progression to further college courses. Many students have profound multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including mental health difficulties. Some students have mild learning difficulties combined with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Achievement and standards

132. Retention and pass rates are very high. In 2004, four of the integrated studies courses had

100% retention and pass rates. Five of the six courses had retention rates significantly above the national averages. On the part-time integrated studies course, the retention rate was more than 10 percentage points above the national average with a pass rate of 100%. On extension studies, the retention rate was 95%, and the pass rate was 100%. For the GNVQ foundation health and social care and foundation ICT courses, retention and pass rates were significantly above the national averages, with pass rates on both courses of 100%.

133. Students' portfolios contain work of a consistent high standard. There is very good development of personal, social and learning skills on many courses especially within the extension studies provision. The work of students in catering is of a high standard. Students have won regional training awards and have represented the college at national training awards. One drama student has performed on stage in a commercial theatre. Others have progressed to higher-level courses in the college and to HE. College destination data show that many gain employment. Attainment was very good or outstanding in many of the lessons graded good or better. Students contribute well to discussions orally and make good use of signing or communication through support workers in the case of speech or hearing difficulty.

Quality of education and training

134. Much of the teaching was very good and some was outstanding. Teachers use a highly effective range of teaching styles to meet individual students' needs. In the very good lessons, teachers prepare well and structure their teaching using a variety of learning activities. In most lessons, tasks are broken into small sequential stages allowing students to succeed at each stage. Some of the best teaching and learning is in drama lessons. In these lessons, all students played an active part and produced excellent interpretations of different emotions. At the end of these lessons, students were able to give constructive criticism to their peers. In many practical lessons, tutors give concise instructions and demonstrations are clear and effective. Teachers make good use of photographs to enable students with oral communication difficulties to make informed choices and as a prompt to recall skills learnt. ILT is used to facilitate learning and engage students' attention. In a minority of lessons, the teaching is uninspiring and does not challenge students sufficiently.

135. The teaching accommodation is unsuitable for a minority of lessons. Some classrooms are in a poor decorative state and some are cluttered with students' personal belongings. Often tutors have inadequate time to prepare the layout of classrooms to meet the needs of the students. The art room used by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is small with little space to display students' artwork. Students regularly use the specialist facilities of the college.

136. There is very good identification of individual students' needs. Teachers use a comprehensive range of assessments. The use of professional counsellors, educational psychologists and speech therapists is extensive in identifying needs and devising individual strategies to support students. Initial assessments and extensive interviews are used in creating students' profiles and identifying their targets. The emotional and behavioural progress of each student is comprehensively assessed, especially on the extension studies course. Concerns about behaviour or attendance are resolved swiftly through tutorials. Students in integrated studies have very good assessments sheets, which help them to understand the requirements of their course. However, the setting and monitoring of short-term targets for individual students are sometimes unsatisfactory.

137. The college is very responsive to the needs of the community. Courses are planned to meet students' aspirations. The work placement programme is comprehensive and planned carefully to meet the needs of students and employers. Extension studies and GNVQ foundation courses enable students to progress to further courses in the college and elsewhere. Students from the extension studies course have gained GCSEs and then joined BTEC first diploma courses as well as courses at level 3.

138. Guidance and support are particularly good. Students receive very strong support from a highly specialised team of support workers. Initial guidance and assessments to plan individual programmes are thorough. Extension studies students have an induction involving a residential activity to assess their needs and design their individual programmes. The tutorial system is highly effective with good monitoring and action planning. Full-time students have thorough weekly

tutorials. Part-time students on integrated studies have three tutorials a year at their place of residence to involve key workers, carers and parents. All students have comprehensive individual learning programmes containing assessments in personal, social and basic skills. There is accessible course information for integrated and extension studies that uses both text and symbols. Effective service level agreements are in place with many support agencies.

Leadership and management

139. Curriculum management is very effective. The department is well managed and there is clear direction. The department head and curriculum mangers, with support from teachers, have established very clear strategic aims to raise standards of provision, students' pass and retention rates, and to provide a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the individual student and the local community. Staff development ensures that tutors receive continuous training in complex needs. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The division's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Targets have been set for recruitment on courses where there is a specific gender bias to encourage greater participation of under-represented groups. Good quality assurance procedures are in place, focusing clearly on achievement and learning. Effective use is made of frequently collected students' views to improve provision. The self-assessment process is thorough and supported by a detailed action plan. Strengths and weaknesses have been identified and closely match those identified during the inspection.

Part D: College data

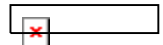
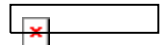


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	36	63
2	30	20
3	19	6
4/5	0	1
Other	15	10
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	816	424	4



Land-based provision	120	128	1
Construction	268	371	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	84	68	0
Business administration, management and professional	349	1,987	8
Information and communication technology	735	6,850	23
Retailing, customer service and transportation	20	401	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	768	1,552	7
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	503	432	3
Health, social care and public services	983	6,439	23
Visual and performing arts and media	773	2,208	9
Humanities	332	354	2
English, languages and communication	639	1,304	6
Foundation programmes	932	2,707	11
Total	7,322	25,225	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004*	2002	2003	2004*
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,702	1,507	1,072	4,327	4,162	4,846
	Retention rate %	83	80	70	70	80	71
	National average %	76	76	76	71	71	71
	Pass rate %	80	82	93	82	85	89
	National average %	69	73	73	70	77	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,082	926	692	1,705	2,015	2,448
	Retention rate %	85	75	72	80	81	69
	National average %	71	71	71	68	67	67
	Pass rate %	82	85	87	77	85	88

	National average %	70	73	73	71	73	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,306	1,198	1,254	1,241	1,403	1,114
	Retention rate %	82	78	81	80	72	69
	National average %	77	77	77	70	69	69
	Pass rate %	83	90	89	74	80	81
	National average %	77	80	80	71	74	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	**	**	**	61	82	*
	Retention rate %	**	**	**	74	84	*
	National average %	***	***	***	68	69	n/a
	Pass rate %	**	**	**	53	58	*
	National average %	***	***	***	54	58	n/a

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 2000/01 to 2002/03: College ISR

** data supplied by the college (not validated)*

*** 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)	71	26	3	73
Level 2 (intermediate)	64	29	7	42
Level 1 (foundation)	74	22	4	23
Other sessions	47	47	6	17
Totals	67	28	5	155

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