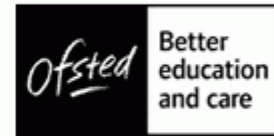




ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Totton College

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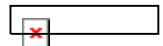
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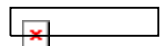
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Basic information about the college

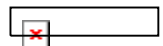


Name of college:	Totton
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Mark Bramwell
Address of college:	Calmore Road Totton Southampton SO40 3ZX
Telephone number:	02380 874874
Fax number:	02380 874879
Chair of governors:	Brian Baxendale
Unique reference number:	130699
Name of reporting inspector:	Alan Hinchliffe HMI
Dates of inspection:	7-11 March 2005

Part A: Summary



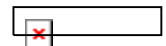
Information about the college



Totton is a sixth form college situated in the small town of Totton on the edge of the New Forest, around five miles to the west of Southampton. The socio-economic composition of the college's catchment area is mixed, with pockets of both affluence and deprivation. The college works in a competitive environment for post-16 education. The range of provision offered by the college is more diverse than in most sixth form colleges. In addition to its core sixth form work, the college offers a range of vocational courses, courses tailored to meet the needs of local business, and community-based courses aimed at widening participation and promoting inclusion. Nearly half of the college's students, as measured by full-time equivalence, are adults. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and are taking level 3 courses, although the proportion of full-time students on level 1 and level 2 courses is significantly larger than in most sixth form colleges. Each year the college enrolls 800 to 1,000 students aged 16 to 18, and over 100 adults, on full-time courses. There are around 5,000 part-time enrolments a year. Most of these are adults, many of whom are on short courses. The college has provision in all areas of learning, although in land-based studies, construction, engineering and retail it is very small. For sixth form students, the college offers a wide range of general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) subjects, advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses, vocational courses at levels 1 and level 2, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For adults, in addition to the provision within the college, there is an extensive amount of outreach and community work, mainly in information and communications technology (ICT), and literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The college is a partner in a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in applied ICT for business.

The college has a detailed mission statement, supported by a series of strategic aims. The vision of the college is to be an outstanding college which gives all students equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

How effective is the college?



Provision for students is good in science and mathematics, humanities, English, and literacy and numeracy. Provision in ICT and in visual and performing arts is satisfactory.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- good teaching in most curriculum areas

- very successful strategies for widening participation

- outstanding promotion of equality and diversity

- good student and management information systems

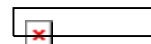
- productive partnerships with a range of external bodies
- good accommodation and resources for learning
- wide range of courses and good progression routes
- the ethos of the college in valuing individuals highly
- good support for students
- good leadership and management.

What should be improved

- the proportion of very good and outstanding teaching
- students' progress relative to their prior attainment at GCE A level
- the proportion of students achieving high grades at advanced level
- the development of students' key skills
- underdeveloped analysis of some aspects of the college's work.

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

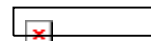
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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).

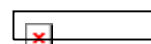
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. Students' achievements are very good on mathematics courses at levels 1 and 2. Pass rates are satisfactory or high on most advanced level courses, although students' achievements in biology are poor. Teaching and learning, and work produced by students, are good. Enrichment opportunities and progression routes for students are good, and the curriculum is well managed.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses, although pass rates are unsatisfactory on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) computing and on the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course for full-time students. Teachers make good use of ICT in lessons and share teaching resources well. However, students' progress is slow in too many lessons. Full-time vocational students have insufficient experience of current industrial practice.
Visual and performing arts	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on most courses, although the proportion of students achieving high grades is low. Retention rates are low on some courses. There is some very good teaching in performing arts, but in some lessons across the area as a whole students have too little work to do. Accommodation, resources and enrichment activities are excellent.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses and the access to higher education (HE) provision is very good. Retention rates are low in sociology and history. Most lessons are purposeful and stimulating, and the standard of students' work is high. There is insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning. Curriculum management is good.
English	Good. Students' achievements are very good on advanced-level courses. Although the pass rate is high in GCSE English, too many students fail to complete the course. Most teaching and learning is good or better, with some very good lessons. Academic support for students is good. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, and management of the curriculum is good.
Literacy and numeracy	Good. Students make good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Much teaching and learning is good. Partnerships are highly effective in meeting the needs of the community and attracting disadvantaged groups into learning, although there is insufficient specialist support in community provision. Curriculum management is good.

How well is the college led and managed?



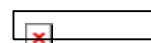
Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors have set a clear strategic direction which is well understood and supported fully by managers and staff. The college has made good progress in rectifying many of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Students' achievements are at, or above, the national averages for sixth form colleges. Governance is good. There has been sustained growth in student numbers and diversification of provision. Overall, quality assurance systems are effective in bringing about improvements, and the self-assessment report provides a generally accurate evaluation of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The management information systems are used particularly effectively to provide data for quality assurance and to monitor students' performance. The promotion of equal opportunities and diversity is good. The principal provides open and consultative leadership. Financial management is good. Whilst there is very little unsatisfactory teaching, the proportion of good or better lessons is below the national average for sixth form colleges.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



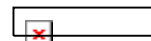
The college's response to education and social inclusion is outstanding. Strategies to widen participation and attract students traditionally under-represented in further education (FE) to the college have been very successful. A culture of inclusiveness exists throughout the college. The college has expanded its range of courses in order to serve the local community more effectively. The college fulfils its obligations under recent race relations and disability discrimination legislation. Staff and governors have received appropriate training and an equality and diversity and race equality policy is in place with an appropriate action plan. The college site is accessible for staff and students with restricted mobility. Members of staff who recruit and interview students have undergone training in disability and race awareness. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated and supported within the college. Partnerships with schools, businesses, community organisations and HE are particularly productive. Provision in literacy and numeracy is good.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are good. Students receive comprehensive and impartial advice from their initial contact with the college to the time they leave. The induction process is thorough and helps students settle in quickly. All students are assessed for literacy and numeracy needs and learning styles, and support is provided promptly. Most students identified as needing additional support benefit from extra help. However, the impact of some aspects of learning and student support is not adequately captured in evaluations. Adult students have good access to support and guidance and their own personal tutor. Tutors conduct regular individual tutorials with students. These are effective in reviewing students' progress against targets and action plans. Group tutorials are less productive. The college maintains good and regular communication with parents and carers. Students have good access to counselling and welfare services. Procedures for monitoring students' attendance are good. Students receive effective advice on employment opportunities, work experience, careers and HE.

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 like adults, and with courtesy and respect

- good pastoral support and individual attention from staff

- excellent childcare facilities

- help with HE applications and careers advice

- enthusiastic teachers

- information technology (IT) facilities

- strong subject support with drop-in clinics

- free sports facilities.

What they feel could be improved

- canteen food and facilities

- space for relaxation and socialising

- more car parking space

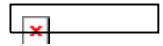
- transport arrangements

- some cold rooms

- toilet facilities

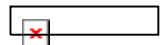
- publicity about opportunities available to adults.

Other information

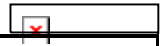


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

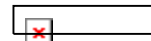


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	70	28	2
19+ and WBL*	62	35	3
Learning 16-18	72	26	2
19+ and WBL*	66	31	3

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 about students' achievements during the inspection were based on official data for 2000/01. Official data for 2002/03 were judged by both the college and the local LSC to be inaccurate. Inspectors agreed with them and therefore used college data, agreed by the local LSC, for both 2002/03 and 2003/04.
2. Overall, students' achievements are good and have improved steadily over the last three years. Pass and retention rates are above the national averages for sixth form colleges on most courses. Achievements for students of all ages are particularly good on level 1 courses, with both pass and retention rates being around 10% above the national averages in 2004. Adult students' achievements at levels 2 and 3 are also very good, with pass and retention rates significantly above national averages in 2004. Many adult students take short courses, most of which are not externally accredited. Pass rates on such courses have been consistently high over the last three years. For students aged 16 to 18 at levels two and three, the proportion of students who complete their courses successfully is broadly in line with national averages although, at level 2, the pass rate for students who are entered for qualifications has been below the national average in each of the last three years.
3. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 85%, which is close to the national average for sixth form colleges inspected during 2003/04. The college takes appropriate steps to monitor and improve students' attendance and punctuality.
4. The standard of students' work is high overall. Many adult students make particularly good progress in improving their basic skills, helping them to participate more fully in community and family life. Adult students on access to HE courses are prepared well for further study, successfully developing their knowledge, research skills, and capacity for independent study. On GCE A-level courses, most students make satisfactory progress. They acquire the underpinning knowledge and skills necessary for success. In humanities, students develop good skills of critical evaluation and can apply these skills accurately when analysing case studies. English literature students frequently show a sophisticated and articulate response to literary texts. In science and mathematics, students demonstrate a solid understanding of scientific concepts and mathematical notation, and can make good links between practical and theoretical work. Performing arts students frequently work to a high professional standard, and have a good understanding of the context of music and theatre. Although the work of visual arts students is sound, and there is evidence of some good experimentation, too much sketchbook work is underdeveloped. Adult students taking IT courses learn to become fluent in the use of common applications and use their knowledge in their everyday lives.

16 to 18 year olds

5. On advanced level courses, achievements of students aged 16 to 18 are broadly in line with national averages. On GCE A-level, AS-level and AVCE courses, most students are successful. Pass rates are 100% on many courses and only a small number of courses have pass rates below the national averages. However, in GCE A level and AS level, the proportion of students achieving high grades is low overall when compared to national averages. This is explained partly by the fact that students' overall prior attainment at GCSE level is significantly lower than that of most sixth form colleges. However, there are wide variations between curriculum areas. For example, in 2004, many students on AS-level English courses achieved high grades, but on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in visual arts and in ICT few students reach a grade A or B. Value added data show that, in comparison with their prior attainment, students make good progress at AS level and on advanced vocational courses. On full-time GCE A-level courses, however, students' progress is no better than satisfactory overall and, in some subjects, is weak.

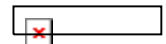
6. At level 2, students who take GCSE courses in mathematics, English, science, and art and design perform well. The proportion of students who achieve grades A* to C is significantly above national averages. Pass rates on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses are also very high. Students' achievements on other qualifications at level 2 are more mixed, with some low pass rates on courses in IT. At level 1, students taking free-standing mathematics qualifications, and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve high standards. Pass rates in key skills qualifications in application of number and in communications are low.

Adult learners

7. Most adult students study part time and take courses at levels 1 or 2, and short courses. At level 1, most qualifications are short qualifications and are either accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) or through a college certificate. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses, particularly on short qualifications. Students taking external qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ESOL are usually successful. Whether or not they achieve qualifications, many adult students benefit from improving their literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

8. Adult students taking GCSE mathematics and GCSE English do very well, with higher grade pass rates of 83% and 90% respectively in 2004. Pass rates are also very high on GCSEs in science and art and design. However, adult students taking GCSEs in modern foreign languages are less successful, with no students passing in French, Italian or Spanish in 2004. At level 3, the small number of adult students taking AS-level and GCE A-level courses achieve high pass rates overall. Students pursuing an alternative route to HE by taking access courses in humanities or life sciences are very successful.

Quality of education and training



9. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, although the standard of teaching and learning observed by inspectors was not as high as the average profile for sixth form colleges inspected in 2003/04. Inspectors observed 90 lessons. In 68% of these lessons teaching was good or better, in 30% it was satisfactory, and in 2% it was unsatisfactory. The proportion of good or better teaching is lower than in sixth form colleges generally, as is the proportion of very good or outstanding teaching. The grades that inspectors awarded for students' learning in lessons, and for their attainment, were very similar to the teaching grades. There are no significant differences between the quality of teaching and learning at different levels, nor for different age groups. There is no difference between the quality of lessons taught by full-time teachers and those taught by part-time teachers.

10. The best teaching is in humanities, English, and science and mathematics, with over three quarters of lessons being good or better in these areas. In literacy and numeracy, there is some outstanding teaching, but a third of the lessons observed were judged to be no better than satisfactory. In both ICT and visual and performing arts, the proportion of teaching that is good or better is significantly lower than the national averages for these areas. However, there is some very good and outstanding teaching in visual and performing arts.

11. Teachers prepare their lessons well, and put considerable thought into devising teaching strategies and materials to gain students' interest and enthusiasm. The best lessons proceed at a brisk pace, and are frequently characterised by a range of activities designed to ensure students maintain interest and concentration. In many lessons, specific attention is paid to providing learning activities and materials for students of different abilities. Teachers use questioning effectively as a means of checking students' understanding and assessing their progress. Teaching is successful in ensuring that students understand what they need to know, and the skills they must acquire, for externally examined qualifications.

12. In some curriculum areas, and particularly in humanities, students are encouraged to develop sound independent learning and research skills. Where this is the case, students show their ability to think for themselves and improve their skills of critical evaluation. In many subjects, the quality of handouts and learning materials are very high. Case studies and practical exercises are used effectively to help students to apply their theoretical knowledge. However, the potential of ILT to motivate students and help them to learn is underdeveloped in many curriculum areas. Where ILT is used effectively, for example, in some lessons in science and mathematics and ICT, it is successful in helping to maintain students' interest as well as improving their skills in using new technology.

13. In most of the satisfactory lessons, students do not learn as much as they could in the time available. The less effective lessons are characterised by a slower pace, little variety of activity, and overly-long explanations by teachers. Students are sometimes given tasks that are not sufficiently interesting for them to sustain concentration over long periods. In some lessons, although students are involved in discussion, teachers do not encourage students to develop answers to questions in sufficient detail. In a minority of lessons, particularly in visual and performing arts and in ICT, some students are not clear about what they should be working on when they have finished the set task. Although teachers try hard to cater for the needs of students of different abilities, evidence from both lesson observations and achievements data shows that more able students are not always given work that is sufficiently demanding.

14. Teachers are appropriately qualified. All full-time teachers have teaching qualifications, as do over 80% of the adult education part-time teachers and those on fractional contracts. Staff development is good. A large number of support staff have gained qualifications in their areas of expertise. For example, many have passed the national vocational qualification (NVQ) in initial advice and guidance, and cleaning staff have all been given the opportunity to acquire an external qualification.

15. Accommodation and resources have improved significantly in recent years. In addition to the main campus, the college leases or owns a number of outreach centres. One of the outreach centres is the base for the CoVE in services to business. Other off-site centres, many in areas of social and economic deprivation, provide a variety of basic skills courses for students returning to learning. Nursery provision is provided both on the main site and at some outreach centres. An impressive off-site building for performing arts, which is also a theatre venue, has been acquired recently. A purpose-built block for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is to be started later this year.

16. Teaching rooms on all sites are well maintained and equipped. Students have access to well-equipped, modern sports facilities through local partnerships. However, there is a shortage of other recreational space for students. All maintenance, refurbishment and decorating is completed internally by college estates staff in consultation with teachers. The college has responded well to the needs of those with disabilities. Induction loops, Braille signage, automatic doors and other adaptations have made the main site and nearly all the outreach centres accessible to people with restricted mobility. There are no weatherproof canopies over external bridges between buildings or above main entrances to protect those waiting to enter.

17. ICT facilities at the college are good. Availability of computers is very good on the main site, although it is more limited at some of the outreach centres. There is good communication between staff and students via the e-mail system. The college has recently appointed an ILT champion and co-ordinator to encourage staff to use more IT in their teaching. The learning resources centre is well managed with a good range of up-to-date learning materials.

18. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Teachers are well informed about the needs and circumstances of the students they teach. They set regular homework and assignments; these are marked thoroughly and returned promptly. Feedback on assessment is constructive and helpful in guiding students on how to improve the standard of their work and performance. The college has a well-designed electronic system for recording students' performance which is used effectively to monitor and review students' progress. The information it provides enables tutors and teachers to intervene swiftly if students' work or attendance causes concern, and helps them to set targets for improvement. The system has been in use since September 2004 and

its impact on students' achievements is not yet measurable. However, data supplied by the college suggest that the system is effective in improving retention rates.

19. Internal verification and moderation of assessment are thorough. Where action points for improvement are identified, remedial action is taken. Initial assessment of students is thorough and carried out by trained and experienced staff. The results of initial assessments are generally used well to plan learning to meet individual needs. The college collates deadlines for coursework completion and prepares an annual plan to ensure that these deadlines do not clash with other activities within its enrichment programme. However, it has not analysed the setting of homework or prepared guidance for staff to help them to avoid burdening students with too much routine homework at one time.

20. The college has been particularly effective in widening participation in education and training. It promotes itself successfully in a competitive local environment. A wide selection of courses from pre-entry level to HE is offered, with flexible modes of attendance. Courses are taught in a variety of community locations. Childcare facilities are good and enable parents to participate in learning in the community provision. The college's partnerships with a wide variety of organisations are particularly successful in increasing participation and encouraging progression. For example, work with community organisations and the Probation Service helps to bring groups who are traditionally under-represented in education into learning. The college's partnership with the town council has resulted in the development of a teaching and community facility for performing arts. Links with local HE institutions are used well to enable progression beyond college and many students progress to local universities. The college communicates successfully with employers to provide training to meet their specific needs, particularly in business and IT through the CoVE. It has good links with local schools, which it uses well to develop provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 and to promote FE.

21. The college is responsive to the needs of the local community and local employers, and uses its partnerships to identify the need for new courses. It has sound systems for approving new courses, although submissions provide insufficient information on market research or the demand for those courses. Students take advantage of the range of enrichment activities that is available to develop a wider understanding of their subject areas and help improve their self-confidence and social skills. Data are gathered on partnerships, widening participation projects and enrichment, but not enough use is made to identify trends or inform strategic objectives.

22. Achievement rates for key skills qualifications are generally higher than national averages, but are still low. In many cases, less than one quarter of those who start a key skills course achieve the qualification. Some teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach and assess key skills, and do not do enough to guide students in gathering evidence during classroom activities and assignments. The college recognises these weaknesses and has provided development for staff.

23. Support and guidance for students are good. Students receive good initial advice on their choice of courses. Few students change their courses once they have started them. The induction process is thorough and helps students settle quickly into college life. The tutorial system is well managed. Individual tutorials are used effectively to support students and monitor their progress. However, group tutorials are less productive and are used largely to give information. An electronic recording system is used effectively by staff across the college to share information about students and to monitor their progress. Students' absences are followed up rigorously. Students' attendance and punctuality at lessons are good. Extensive childcare facilities, including a mobile crèche at outreach centres, are well used by students.

24. There are comprehensive initial assessment procedures and learning support systems in place. For full-time students, additional learning support needs are identified early through a computerised programme to measure students' levels of literacy and numeracy, and identify their learning styles and any specific learning difficulties, for example, dyslexia. Paper-based initial assessments for literacy and numeracy take place for part-time students and adults within the community. Students identified as needing support are offered it promptly, although in community provision there is insufficient specialist support for students with specific literacy needs. At the time of inspection, around 12% of full-time students were receiving additional learning support for numeracy, literacy or study skills, either through individual one-to-one help or through support in the classroom. Over 80%

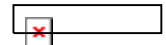
of students who are diagnosed as needing support take it up. Support sessions are well attended.

25. Tutors and ancillary staff provide good support to students on personal, social, financial and academic issues. Students have access to a counsellor and student welfare officer on the main site. Effective use is made of outside specialist agencies in many cases. Students who are particularly vulnerable are actively identified and supported. A support fund is used effectively to assist students with the cost of specialist equipment, transport and visits. Some aspects of the effectiveness of learning support and student services are not evaluated fully. For example, judgements about the effectiveness of study skills support, and of the impact of counselling services, are based on insufficient evidence.

26. Advice and information are readily available for all students on employment opportunities, interview techniques, work experience, and HE. Students' destinations are closely monitored and evaluated. Annual events are held to inform students about opportunities in FE, HE, employment and training. Individuals are given good advice on a range of specialist areas and a website has been established to respond rapidly to students' queries. Over 30% of students take up the opportunity of undertaking work experience. Students, staff and employers all give very positive feedback about these placements.

27. Communication between staff, students and parents is good, with a regular cycle of performance reports, parents' evenings, and individual interviews. Links with local schools are good, involving annual taster days and regular visits from liaison staff. Effective child protection procedures are in place with three managers taking responsibility as the named contacts. There has been staff development on the implications of these procedures for all teaching staff who have contact with students and more is planned for support staff.

Leadership and management



28. Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors have set a clear strategic direction which is well understood and fully supported by managers and staff. Leadership is open and consultative. Students' achievements are at, or above, the national averages for sixth form colleges. Quality assurance systems are effective in most respects and the self-assessment report is largely accurate. Governance and financial management are good. There has been sustained growth in student numbers and successful diversification of provision. Management information systems are particularly effective. The recent realignment of management roles provides a coherent structure to support curriculum provision. Quality assurance systems have not been fully effective in bringing about improvements in teaching and learning and, whilst there is very little unsatisfactory teaching, the proportion of good or better lessons is below the national average for sixth form colleges.

29. Most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Self-assessment is now generally accurate and thorough, and focuses on students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. The average class size has been increased and room utilisation has improved. Weaknesses in governance and in the implementation and monitoring of the equal opportunities policy have been rectified. There have been significant improvements to accommodation and resources.

30. An extensive consultation exercise involving all staff and governors was held in 2003 to examine and refine the college's values and strategy. The college's mission seeks to retain the best features of a sixth form college whilst widening participation through recruiting under-represented groups and individuals who may experience barriers to learning. The five key strategic aims clearly support and promote the college's mission and are underpinned by detailed development plans. The college has met with considerable success in fulfilling its mission. It has widened participation effectively and established productive partnerships with a range of stakeholders including businesses, schools and

the wider community. Communication across the college is good. Staff briefings are useful and the intranet has comprehensive information, is up to date and well used.

31. The principal provides firm leadership based on open and consultative management. The leadership style in the college promotes effective teamwork and collaborative activities. An innovative secondment scheme to the executive team is available to staff, which has led to middle managers taking part in all aspects of senior management. Staff are valued and supported well by managers and colleagues. The recent restructuring of senior management roles and responsibilities provides a coherent and appropriate focus on the core business of teaching and learning and students' achievements. Good and comprehensive training in leadership and management is provided for all middle managers. Curriculum management is good in most areas, with effective formal and informal communications, accurate self-assessment reports, and appropriate staff training and development.

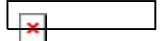
32. Overall, quality assurance is good and is effective in bringing about improvements to curriculum provision and college services. Self-assessment reports identify most weaknesses accurately and are supported by clear development plans with appropriate targets and milestones. Each self-assessment report is closely analysed and validated through a panel of senior managers, a teacher colleague and the principal. However, the grades awarded by the college for ICT and visual and performing arts were higher than those awarded by the inspectors. There is a comprehensive lesson observation scheme for all teachers. Lesson observation, appraisal and staff development are linked explicitly. Identified training needs are linked appropriately to development plans which support the strategic aims of the college. However, the lesson observation scheme has not been fully effective in bringing about improvements to teaching and learning. Observations do not distinguish between teaching and learning. There is insufficient emphasis on judging students' progress. Whilst some records of lesson observations are good, others are brief and do not adequately support the grades awarded. The grades awarded by the college far exceed those given by inspectors.

33. The quality and accessibility of management information is a particular strength. The college's system was designed in conjunction with curriculum managers and teachers, and reflects their needs. Staff and governors can access the system remotely and it is used effectively to monitor areas such as attendance, retention and achievement. It is particularly effective in monitoring students' progress. However, managers and staff have yet to use it fully to request reports to help them measure the progress and impact of strategies to widen participation and provide support for students.

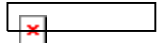
34. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Promotion of equal opportunities is good and strategies to widen participation are particularly successful. The college has responded appropriately to its statutory obligations. The race equality policy is supported by a clear action plan and all staff and governors have received training under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and disability discrimination legislation. Appropriate and successful action is being taken on issues such as the gender pay gap for business staff. Groups identified as underperforming have included males on vocational courses, where an action research project was undertaken. This led to improved performance and a clear action plan for further work.

35. Governance is good. Governors are fully supportive of the college's mission and role in the community. The governing body has a wide range of expertise and knowledge. It has been successful in recruiting members with particular areas of relevant experience including law, finance, HE, business and community interests. Governors are well informed about the performance of the college and monitor effectively the progress of areas causing concern. They have identified low attendance at some governors' meetings as a weakness and taken remedial action. Whilst attendance has improved, it remains low. Financial management is good. There has been sustained growth with the college meeting or exceeding its targets for recruitment for the last three years. Managers planning new courses are given particularly good support in course costing and possible sources of finance. On the basis of consistent growth and high pass and retention rates for students, the college is providing good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- students' very good progress on level 1 and level 2 mathematics courses

- high standards of students' work

- good teaching and learning

- wide range of courses providing good progression routes

- good enrichment activities

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- students' achievements in biology.

Scope of provision

36. A wide range of science and mathematics courses is offered from entry level to level 3. Entry level and foundation level courses are available in mathematics. AS-level and GCE A-level courses in a wide range of subjects are supplemented by GCSE courses in mathematics, science and human physiology. There is an access to HE course in life sciences. Mathematics and biology courses are offered in the evening. There are currently around 580 enrolments on science and mathematics courses, most of whom are full-time students aged 16 to 18. Adult students enrol in

significant numbers for the mathematics courses and the access course.

Achievement and standards

37. Students make very good progress at levels 1 and 2. Pass and retention rates are very high on basic numeracy courses. Pass rates in GCSE courses are significantly above the national averages. For example, the pass rate in GCSE science was 74% in 2004 compared to the national average of 48% and, in mathematics, it was 55% compared to a national average of 42%. Pass and retention rates on most AS-level and GCE A-level courses are at, or above, the national averages. However, in AS-level biology, the pass rate declined to 61% in 2004, compared with a national average of 80%. In biology as a whole, students do not achieve as well as predicted by their prior attainment and progression from AS level to GCE A2 is low. Overall, the proportion of students achieving high grades at advanced level is low. Most adult students on the access to life sciences course in 2004 completed the course successfully. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was high, at 91%.

38. Students' skills, knowledge and understanding are good. They work productively, calculate problems accurately and can explain their reasoning. Students use scientific vocabulary and mathematical notation well, and display a secure understanding of key concepts. For example, in an AS-level chemistry lesson, students were able to identify a good range of synthetic and naturally occurring polymers and their associated monomers. In an entry level mathematics lesson, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were able to draw bar charts and work out the median from a range of values. Science students work competently in practical lessons. They are able to manipulate apparatus and equipment effectively, interpret findings accurately and work with a good understanding of health and safety. Students' files are well organised.

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	36	47	41
		% retention	78	62	73
		% pass rate	32	52	57
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	248	207	208
		% retention	80	80	81
		% pass rate	40	48	55
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	28	17	19
		% retention	96	82	95
		% pass rate	74	64	89
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	59	41	59
		% retention	90	83	92
		% pass rate	72	91	61
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	34	21	27
		% retention	100	86	85
		% pass rate	79	89	87
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	58	53	41
		% retention	90	87	85
		% pass rate	92	74	80

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

Quality of education and training

39. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are planned carefully and include a variety of activities to stimulate students' interest. Teachers explain the aims of lessons, check that these are being met, and sum up what has been learnt. New ideas are clearly related to earlier learning. Teachers employ a suitable range of techniques, pitch the lessons at an appropriate level, and involve students in their learning. For example, in a GCE A2 physics lesson, students showed a high level of understanding when studying exponential decay. The lesson generated interest by using a very good variety of activities including gapped handouts, pair work, calculations, and Internet-based simulation. In a GCSE mathematics lesson, students learnt to recognise, interpret and solve simple inequalities through a discussion about speed limits and vehicle dimensions. ILT is used particularly well to make learning interesting, through interactive demonstrations and data exercises.

40. Effective use is made of experimental work to reinforce theory. For example, in a biology practical lesson, students fluently explained the effect of temperature changes on membrane permeability, and the impact of this on exchange of materials between the cell and its environment. A minority of less effective lessons are planned poorly and time is wasted on activities which do not have a clear purpose.

41. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach. Technical support is very good. Science laboratories are well appointed. The intranet is a source of good learning resources, especially in mathematics. The learning resource centre has a good stock of suitable, up-to-date textbooks.

42. Students' learning styles are assessed and taken into account in lesson planning. Assessment in lessons is effective. Questions are targeted skilfully to check students' understanding and identify where help is needed. Teachers set homework regularly and mark it carefully. Written feedback to students is constructive and useful. Students' progress is monitored effectively through regular reviews.

43. The range of courses in science and mathematics is good. Science students benefit from mathematics courses designed to meet their needs. For example, mathematics courses are provided for students of GCE A-level physics and chemistry, and for access to HE students. Many students from GCE A-level and access courses progress to degree programmes in medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, veterinary science, engineering, and mathematics.

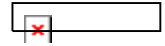
44. Students benefit from a good mix of enrichment activities. For example, chemistry students visit a local brewery, those in mathematics participate in a mathematics challenge competition at a local university, and biologists take part in the biology Olympiad. Links with schools and universities are very strong.

45. Teachers provide high levels of support within and outside lessons and help students to develop strategies to manage their learning. The tutorial system is effective. Individual learning goals are negotiated and progress towards them is monitored regularly. Students value the teaching and personal support they receive.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good. Lines of responsibility are clear and teachers take pride in their work. Teaching observations are thorough and lead to improvements in standards. Teachers participate in appropriate activities to update their subject knowledge. The self-assessment process is rigorous and identifies most strengths and weaknesses accurately. The action plan sets out realistic and measurable targets for improvement, and progress against actions is monitored regularly. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. Lesson plans include action to support students with physical and learning disabilities. Female students have been supported to participate in various engineering education schemes.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on many courses
- good use of ILT to support teaching and learning
- effective target setting and monitoring of progress for full-time students
- wide range of courses to meet the needs of the community
- good facilities for sharing learning resources.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level computing and ECDL courses for full-time students
- small proportion of high grades in advanced level courses
- slow progress of students in too many lessons
- insufficient work-related activities for full-time vocational students.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in ICT at levels ranging from basic introductory courses to HE programmes. Courses for full-time students include the GNVQ intermediate course in ICT, the City and Guilds diploma in ICT systems support, a computer maintenance and installation certificate, and the ECDL at level 2. Advanced courses include the

ECDL advanced, GCE A levels in ICT and computing, and applied GCE A-level courses in ICT. A range of part-time courses is offered including office software, e-mail, website development and digital imagery. The courses are available at various times of the day and evening and are held at the main campus and at several outreach centres. There are currently 203 students, mostly aged 16 to 18, enrolled on full-time courses and 948 students are enrolled on part-time courses. The college is part of a CoVE in ICT for business.

Achievement and standards

48. Retention and pass rates on many courses are high. Most students who start courses complete them. Pass rates on many courses are above the national averages. For example, in 2004, pass rates were 100% on the GNVQ intermediate, the GCE A levels in computing and IT, and the AVCE. However, pass rates on the ECDL course for full-time students and the AS-level computing courses have been consistently low for several years and, in 2004, they were significantly below the national averages. The proportion of students achieving high grades on AS-level and GCE A-level courses is small. Compared with their prior attainment, students do not achieve well on AS-level courses. However, the small number of students on AVCE courses achieve particularly well.

49. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory. Some students' portfolios are well presented and of high quality. Many students demonstrate good practical skills and use software fluently. Students in one lesson showed good skills in wire stripping and assembly of computer connectors. Adult students, often new to computing, acquire skills which they use at home, in the community and at work. Many older students are particularly proud of their progress. They use their skills to make posters for community groups, e-mail their relatives throughout the world, and tell of improved relationships with grandchildren.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) (short)	1	No. of starts	294	129	19
		% retention	93	89	95
		% pass rate	81	69	83
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	15	*	17
		% retention	87	*	100
		% pass rate	100	*	100
ECDL	2	No. of starts	32	107	86
		% retention	100	76	85
		% pass rate	59	62	42
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	22	20	27
		% retention	91	85	81
		% pass rate	65	71	50
AS-level IT	3	No. of starts	32	20	19
		% retention	88	95	95
		% pass rate	61	79	78
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	15	15	*
		% retention	100	93	*
		% pass rate	80	86	*

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

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

50. Overall, the standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned and contain a variety of activities to capture and maintain students' interest. Teachers use interactive whiteboards to good effect and students help in demonstrations to improve their familiarity with the software. Teachers use directed questions well to check students' understanding, and ensure that all students contribute to discussions and are productively engaged during practical sessions. In one lesson, students preparing documents for a project developed the ability to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative statements through games, quizzes and discussions. There are good facilities for sharing resources: most handouts are stored on the college's intranet, which is accessible to staff and students via the Internet.

51. In the weaker lessons, more able students are left with little to do while other students catch up. Extension tasks are often too easy and fail to develop students' skills. In too many lessons, students' progress is slow and they are not inspired to reach their full potential. A few demonstrations are planned poorly and are difficult for students to understand.

52. Accommodation and resources are very good. Each computer room has an interactive whiteboard and new software to demonstrate techniques on a network has just been installed at an outreach centre. Computers are generally of high quality. However, two rooms have workstations with insufficient memory, which makes them run unacceptably slow. The computer hardware laboratory is too small. It is equipped with 6 workstations, but is often used for lessons of more than 12 students. The library has a good stock of relevant and up-to-date books on computing, although there are too few computing journals. Technical support is satisfactory.

53. Students' work is marked quickly and thoroughly. Coursework is returned with constructive comments to help students to improve. Tutors review students' progress regularly and carefully, and targets are set to counteract problems and improve performance.

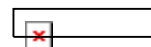
54. The needs of the community are served well by a wide range of provision. Good links with employers have been established. These are expanding through the activities of the college's CoVE in ICT for business. Full-time students on vocational courses have insufficient opportunity to experience current industrial practice and are not sufficiently prepared for the world of work. Too few occasions are provided for these students to broaden their experience, link their studies to current working practice and support their career aspirations.

55. Support for students is good. Additional learning support needs are identified through the initial assessment process. In the classroom, teachers and learning support assistants give good individual support to full-time students. However, too few learning support assistants are available for part-time students. While students value the advice given in individual tutorials, group tutorials are not used effectively to extend learning.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. ICT courses are delivered by three different departments. Teaching and learning resources are shared effectively. The self-assessment report identifies accurately almost all the strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection. However, it is not sufficiently critical of the quality of teaching and learning. All full-time and part-time teachers have at least one lesson observed annually. These internal observations have not identified the slow progress of students that was found during the inspection. Strategies have been put into place to address most of the weaknesses identified and there are early signs of improvement. The CoVE is managed effectively and quality assurance processes have been put in place to address weaknesses in performance.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- good teaching on performing arts courses

- very good accommodation and resources

- good curriculum enrichment.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate on some courses

- standards of students' achievements compared to their prior attainment

- small proportion of high grade passes

- slow pace of learning in too many lessons.

Scope of provision

57. The college offers a broad range of courses in visual and performing arts, mostly at level 3. GCE A levels are available in art and design, graphics, photography, textiles, dance, music technology, drama and performance studies, together with a national diploma in popular music, a foundation diploma in art and design, and an AVCE in art and design. At level 2, there are GCSE courses in art and design and photography, and a GNVQ in art and design. There is a part-time adult professional studies course and evening classes in art. There are currently 208 full-time and 98 part-time students in visual arts, and 175 full-time students in performing arts.

Achievement and standards

58. Pass rates are high on most courses. For example, in 2004, pass rates on all GCE A2 courses, except for photography, were 100% and pass rates were above 90% on most AS-level courses. Most students entered for GCSE examinations achieve high grades and the pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was 100% in 2004. However, retention rates on advanced level art and design courses have been significantly below national averages in each of the last two years. Analysis of students' achievements in comparison to their prior attainment shows that many students are failing to achieve their expected grades. The proportion of students achieving high grades at advanced level is, overall, significantly below the national average for the last three years.

59. Students' work is generally of a high quality. In drama, development and characterisation work are effective, and students work to high professional standards in dance and music. For example, in a music lesson, students demonstrated a very good knowledge of a wide variety of musical pieces which they were able to identify and evaluate using appropriate professional language. In a computer graphics lesson, adult students demonstrated skills to a professional standard in preparation for employment. In visual arts, students' practical work has a strong emphasis on experimentation, with techniques and materials in both two-dimensions and three-dimensions. However, students' sketchbooks are over-reliant on secondary images, and there is insufficient use of their own drawing to explore and develop ideas.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	14	12	15
		% retention	93	75	93
		% pass rate	85	89	100
AS-level art and design	3	No. of starts	100	122	155
		% retention	81	71	78
		% pass rate	91	94	94
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	39	45	51
		% retention	95	87	92
		% pass rate	97	97	96
AS-level dance	3	No. of starts	14	12	20
		% retention	79	83	85
		% pass rate	64	100	94

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

Quality of education and training

60. The quality of teaching and learning is mixed, with some very good teaching in performing arts lessons, but also too many lessons in both visual and performing arts in which students work at a slow pace. In the best lessons, teaching is well planned and lively, and questioning is used effectively to check students' understanding. Students are articulate and develop good evaluative skills through self-assessment and peer assessment. In a very good drama lesson, students improved their individual characterisations through careful consideration of the period in which the play was set and the style of the author. Key skills are integrated well with the curriculum. For example, in a GNVQ intermediate art and design lesson, students were gaining computing skills whilst presenting work for the historical and critical unit of the qualification.

61. In too many lessons, teaching makes insufficient demands on students and does not inspire

them. In such lessons, the aims are unclear and students are not sure what they are meant to learn. For example, in one art lesson, most students were not given clear objectives and worked independently on projects that could have been pursued outside the classroom. In a minority of lessons, students are passive and the work they are set is too easy for them.

62. The accommodation for performing arts in the off-site performance venue is excellent and there is very good accommodation generally on the main site. The music technology suite has practise rooms and a recording studio. However, as a result of inadequate sound proofing, two groups are unable to practise at the same time. The photography studio is well equipped. There are very good dance studios both in college and off site. Teachers are well qualified and some are practising artists.

63. Assessment is thorough and feedback to students contains clear guidance on how to improve. Staff make good use of data to monitor students' progress against individual targets. Students' progress is monitored carefully at tutorials.

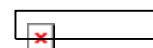
64. Enrichment opportunities are very good. Weekly drop-in music performances and art and performance lessons are open to all students at the college. Students work on joint projects with local primary and secondary schools. In art, students have live briefs organised through local companies. Students perform publicly at a variety of events, including the Totton drama festival and the Nuffield theatre. To celebrate the opening of the new performance venue, teachers and students wrote and performed a play that related to the history of the building. Students on all courses take part in educational visits to galleries and theatres; visits are linked well to assignments and projects.

65. Initial assessment is good and results are used effectively in planning teaching. Tutors are supportive and are aware of the individual needs of students. Students with additional needs receive good in-class support. Tutors provide encouraging and informative careers advice to students.

Leadership and management

66. Curriculum management is satisfactory. There are separate managers for visual and performing arts. Teachers receive good support and are consulted frequently. Lesson observations are clearly linked to staff appraisal and staff development, although the grades awarded to lessons by the college are significantly higher overall than those awarded at inspection. Significant improvements in accommodation for dance, drama and music have provided a professional theatre environment. There is a lack of sharing of good practice in lesson planning and assessment. The self-assessment report accurately identifies some weaknesses in retention and pass rates, but strategies to improve students' achievements are not always identified.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- high standards of students' work

- purposeful and stimulating lessons

- very good access to HE provision

- good curriculum enrichment.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates in sociology and history

- insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

67. AS-level and GCE A-level are offered in psychology, sociology, history, law, geography, and religious studies. An AS level in government and politics is taken by a small number of students. Many advanced level students are entered for an AS level in general studies, taken over two years. At level 2, GCSE subjects are available in citizenship and psychology. A range of flexible full-time and part-time access to HE courses is provided for adult students, with childcare support available. Around 700 students are enrolled, most of whom are studying full-time AS-level and GCE A-level courses.

Achievement and standards

68. Pass rates are high on most courses. All students who have completed the one-year access to HE course over the last three years have been successful. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are high although, in 2004, the pass rate in psychology declined to below the national average. On most AS-level courses, pass rates are above the national averages. In AS-level history, the pass rate has been 100% in two of the last three years. Retention rates on the AS-level in history and sociology are below the national averages and have declined over the last three years. On most courses, students make good progress when their results are compared with their prior attainment.

69. The standard of students' work is high. Students make reasoned conclusions and critically evaluate case studies. They debate ideas and present practical group work tasks demonstrating both critical and creative thinking. Most students develop very good learning skills and take responsibility for their own learning. Adult students are particularly adept at researching and presenting findings, and at contributing to challenging classroom discussions and debates. A large proportion of humanities students progress to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	31	45	53

		% retention	68	62	68
		% pass rate	62	75	58
AS-level general studies	3	No. of starts	180	223	156
		% retention	72	82	77
		% pass rate	62	63	73
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	90	84	107
		% retention	79	87	87
		% pass rate	90	88	97
AS-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	16	*	22
		% retention	81	*	86
		% pass rate	100	*	95
Access to HE (1 year)	3	No. of starts	15	32	30
		% retention	80	72	87
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	30	34	25
		% retention	93	97	88
		% pass rate	96	94	100

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

70. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are purposeful, challenge students to learn and encourage them to take responsibility for researching and analysing material collaboratively or independently. Lessons include a significant amount of purposeful activity for students. For example, in a very good law lesson on restraint of trade, the different needs and abilities of students were taken into account through carefully planned group work. Students developed good skills of critical evaluation in analysing franchise provisions and restrictions contained in a contract of employment. In a religious studies lesson on Buddhism, students carried out effective research and analysis of a 'mark of existence', and organised and presented findings to a high standard. Particularly good use is made of handouts. For example, very good templates are provided with brief comments on underpinning concepts and space for students to develop their own detailed notes. In a small number of lessons, the timing of tasks and activities is inappropriate, with too little time for students to explore issues fully. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and students lose concentration.

71. There is insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning. Access to IT in classrooms is limited, the intranet is underdeveloped, and interactive technology is rarely used in teaching. As a consequence, students do not benefit sufficiently from the wide range of resources in humanities available through new technology.

72. Teachers are well qualified. Most teachers have second degrees and some have substantial examination experience working as examiners for awarding bodies. Staff development is well planned and effective. For example, all humanities teachers have had recent training on meeting the needs of students in classroom teaching and learning. Learning resources, such as workbooks and case studies, are good. The library contains a good stock of up-to-date books, journals, newspapers, videos and CD ROMs. Students work in pleasant classroom environments with very good wall displays of students' work and topical humanities issues.

73. Assignments and homework are marked and returned promptly. Constructive feedback is given to help students to improve the standard of their work. Students' progress and attendance are effectively monitored and reviewed in tutorials. Close contact with parents is maintained where a student is identified as underachieving or behind with work. Students' work demonstrates a clear understanding of awarding body requirements.

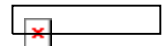
74. Students benefit from a very good range of enrichment activities. A good variety of trips, visiting speakers and conferences helps to motivate students. For example, history students visited Krakow, Auschwitz and Berlin; law students visit the crown court and attend a three-day residential summer school for potential law graduates; and politics students hosted a debate between the local member of parliament and parliamentary candidates.

75. Students receive good support. Individual learning needs are diagnosed accurately and students have access to effective additional support throughout their course. Students value the personal and academic support they receive from staff. Productive links have been established with local HE institutions to help students to make informed choices on university applications.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are good. Both formal and informal communications are effective. Staff meetings are held regularly and subsequent action is monitored carefully. Good use is made of data to assess students' progress and encourage them to improve. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. Teaching materials reflect social and cultural diversity, and the range of courses meets individual and community needs. The self-assessment report identifies key weaknesses and appropriate action is being taken to address them.

English



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates

- very good progress made by students

- much good teaching and learning

- good participation of students in a range of enrichment activities

- good academic support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in GCSE English

- a narrow range of teaching strategies in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

77. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in English language, English literature, and a combined course in English language and literature. All students taking these courses are aged 16 to 18. GCSE English is taken by a large number of students, of whom around a fifth are adults studying part time. There are currently over 300 enrolments in English, of which around half are on the GCSE course.

Achievement and standards

78. Students' achievements are very good. Pass rates in all subjects are very high. For example, in 2004, in all but one of the advanced level subjects, all students entered for the examination passed and, in the remaining subject, only one student failed. Retention rates are high. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B at AS level was high in 2004. However, the proportion of students achieving high grades in GCE A-level English literature has declined over the last three years, and was very low in 2004. In comparison with their prior attainment, students achieve good grades in all subjects except GCE A-level English literature. In GCSE English, the pass rate at grades A* to C in 2004 was 76%, significantly higher than the national average of 56%. However, too many students have failed to complete the GCSE course in each of the last three years. Many students who take English GCE A levels progress into HE.

79. Most students produce good work that is appropriate for the level of their course. At GCE A level, the best coursework shows originality, independent thought and high levels of accuracy. Students respond perceptively to literary texts, showing awareness of background and context. They are able to identify literary and linguistic techniques and explain how these contribute to meaning. Students studying at GCSE show good speaking, listening and writing skills, and develop sound examination techniques. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	140	166	166
		% retention	72	74	72
		% pass rate	40	57	76
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	34	35	37
		% retention	94	94	86
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	54	42	29
		% retention	87	81	90
		% pass rate	98	88	100

GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	23	27	33
		% retention	100	100	94
		% pass rate	96	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	15	39	20
		% retention	93	90	90
		% pass rate	100	94	94

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

Quality of education and training

80. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are thoroughly planned and well structured, and students make good progress. Most students are enthusiastic about their courses and value the individual attention they receive. The best lessons gain students' interest and extend their knowledge. Students sustain concentration and their contributions to lessons show deeper understanding. For example, in one AS-level language and literature lesson, students worked together to create collages expressing the emotional content of poems by 19th century women poets. This enjoyable activity led the students into a probing and astute discussion of social context. In many lessons, all students take an active part and they are encouraged to develop habits of detailed study and independent thought. For example, in an outstanding GCSE lesson, students preparing for an assignment on persuasive writing debated the balance of legal arguments they had just heard from viewing an episode of a popular television series. In many lessons, students are encouraged to add depth to their thoughts and work. For example, literature students' writing on *The Miller's Tale* and *Enduring Love* showed impressive awareness of ethical and social context, and subtlety in the presentation of character.

81. In a minority of lessons, there is too much reliance on whole-class discussion dominated by the teacher, and teaching techniques are narrow and limited. In some GCSE lessons, students lose concentration. There is insufficient use of ILT as a means of providing a wider variety of learning strategies. Although students have good access to IT resources outside the classroom, little progress has been made in developing the use of ILT in teaching and learning.

82. Students' work is marked accurately and thoroughly and they receive good oral and written feedback to help them to improve. Information from initial assessment is used effectively to cater for students' individual learning styles in lessons, although teachers have insufficient information on students' individual needs in English. Students' progress is monitored carefully. GCE A-level students are set clear targets, and regular reviews of students' progress towards targets are carried out by both teachers and tutors.

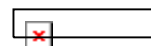
83. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects. English is taught in pleasant classrooms with attractive displays and posters. Learning materials, including handouts prepared by teachers, are very good. Students take part in a good range of enrichment activities to support their studies in English. A lively college magazine is produced, and there are regular theatre trips and visits to conferences and places of interest. Attention is paid to equal opportunities and diversity in the curriculum through choice of materials and the encouragement of respect for the views and needs of others.

84. Teachers give very good individual attention and support to students both in lessons and outside lessons. Students are confident that they can approach teachers for help as part of the tutorial system or on an individual basis. The process for monitoring students' attendance is rigorous and supportive. Tutors follow up absences effectively. Students are well supported and have confidence in the pastoral systems.

Leadership and management

85. Curriculum management is good. Managers focus on improving students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. There are thorough course reviews, leading to clear planning to bring about improvements. Staff development is linked effectively to appraisal and lesson observation. Administration is efficient. There is much useful informal communication between staff in addition to formal meetings. Strategies to ensure that good practice in GCSE English teaching is shared are insufficiently developed.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- very good progress made by students

- much good teaching and learning

- strong and effective partnerships within the community

- good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT to develop literacy and numeracy skills

- insufficient support in the community for students with specific literacy difficulties.

Scope of provision

86. Courses for adults in literacy and numeracy are offered in a variety of venues including college outreach centres, local primary schools, church halls, an army camp, and with the probation service. There are currently 310 students enrolled on courses at these centres. Most students are part time and many students are taking national qualifications. There are over 100 full-time students aged 16 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students attend literacy and numeracy lessons at the main college site as a core component of their learning programme. In addition, there are currently 149 students across the college who receive additional literacy and numeracy support in the college's study skills centre.

Achievement and standards

87. Students make very good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Students produce a consistently high standard of work appropriate for the level they are studying. There are several examples of students progressing from entry level to level 2 within one year. Students' achievements are good. Increasing numbers of students achieve national qualifications. In 2004, of the 56 students studying at level 1 or 2, 39 passed the national test. In the current year, 50 out of 57 students have already passed these tests.

88. Students demonstrate skills that have a positive impact on their everyday lives. For example, students studying numeracy at level 1 show the ability to use scales to devise recipes for their families. Parents and carers attending a family literacy lesson used linguistic features and terminology with confidence in analysing poetry, and go on to use these skills to help their children with English homework. Students studying at entry level and pre-entry level can evaluate their experiences and give and follow instructions accurately. Progression rates for students on literacy and numeracy courses are very high. Many students move successfully on to other courses in FE and HE. Others use their new skills and confidence to enter employment or obtain a better job.

Quality of education and training

89. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers structure learning activities carefully and use a variety of learning resources and activities effectively and imaginatively. For example, in one literacy lesson students developed an understanding of adjectives through tasting different foods. They composed sentences describing different flavours, which enriched both their discussions and their written work. Teachers emphasise the importance of learning how to learn, and develop students' ability to reflect upon and evaluate their own learning. For example, in one lesson students discussed different strategies for learning spellings; in another, they used their individual learning plans to evaluate their progress.

90. Teachers use diagnostic information about learning styles to involve students and make learning effective. In one outstanding learning support lesson, a student who started with no understanding of basic algebra gained confidence in using and simplifying algebraic expressions by highlighting key terms and manipulating colour coded cards in a carefully planned and structured way. In weaker lessons, students make slower progress. Learning is not sufficiently relevant to their goals or interests. Teachers make insufficient use of IT as a vehicle both for developing students' skills and as a context in which to use their skills.

91. Resources are satisfactory. Too few teachers have specialist literacy or numeracy qualifications, but they are well supported through regional and national training, and through sharing good practice within the college. Accommodation is generally pleasant, but some rooms are cramped and not well ventilated. Good learning resources are available and are well used in lessons.

92. Assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment is effective in identifying the learning needs of students. Individual learning plans are used to set appropriate targets and these are reviewed regularly with students to chart progress and reassess goals. However, targets on a minority of individual learning plans do not always take account of individuals' goals and interests.

93. There are strong partnerships with a range of organisations and within the local community. These are highly effective in widening participation to students who have not engaged in formal learning for a long time and in meeting the needs of disadvantaged students. Such partnerships include work with the probation service, schools, and community groups based in neighbourhoods of high social and economic deprivation.

94. Learning support is effective in helping students to succeed on their courses. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively to support students in lessons. However, there is insufficient specialist assessment and support for students with dyslexia and other specific literacy needs in community provision. Teachers lack the confidence to identify specific learning difficulties and have insufficient knowledge of strategies to support students with persistent literacy difficulties. The

identified needs of some students for specialist support are not currently being met and there are no procedures in place to review the impact of support on students' learning.

95. Crèche facilities in the community are very good and enable many parents to attend lessons. Teachers in the community give helpful advice and guidance on opportunities for progression.

Leadership and management

96. Leadership and management are good. Managers are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and to improving the essential skills levels of the local population and students within the college. Quality assurance systems are robust. The self-assessment report is analytical and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the provision accurately. Internal lesson observations are used to identify areas for development in teaching and learning. Communication is good and members of staff are supported well by managers. Good practice is shared effectively across the area. Action has been taken to address weaknesses in the use of ILT and additional support in the community, but it is too early to have had an impact. Equal opportunities and a good culture of inclusiveness are actively promoted. Students with learning difficulties are very much part of college life and culture.

Part D: College data

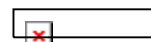
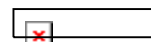


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

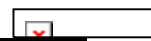
Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	21	62
2	27	30
3	51	7
4/5	0	0
Other	1	1
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	598	416	9
Land-based provision	14	19	0



Construction	3	6	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	64	43	1
Business administration, management and professional	234	838	9
Information and communication technology	427	2,382	24
Retailing, customer service and transportation	11	61	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	435	537	8
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	224	369	5
Health, social care and public services	248	313	5
Visual and performing arts and media	499	358	7
Humanities	858	106	8
English, languages and communication	347	613	8
Foundation programmes	206	1,358	14
Total	4,168	7,419	100*

Source: provided by the college in 2004
* figures are rounded and do not total 100

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003*	2001	2002	2003*
1	Starters excluding transfers	261	264	394	533	632	762
	Retention rate %	75	87	86	80	81	88
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	64	71	48	69	79	62
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	612	1,012	1,003	562	636	898
	Retention rate %	76	83	74	72	81	66
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	82	76	79	74	78	72

	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,771	1,767	1,878	465	422	440
	Retention rate %	81	86	85	68	66	64
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	79	85	87	71	76	80
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges). Where applicable, the national rates used in the table are for GFE colleges which are grouped in the LSC benchmarking data as colleges with a high widening participation factor.

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2001 to 2003: 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 for 2003 are not agreed by the college or the local Learning and Skills Council, and are being reviewed.

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)	70	28	2	47
Level 2 (intermediate)	65	35	0	20
Level 1 (foundation)	62	33	5	21
Other sessions	100	0	0	2
Totals	68	30	2	90

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