



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Tower Hamlets College

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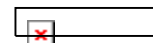
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Basic information about the college

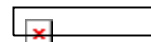


Name of college:	Tower Hamlets College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Judith Hinman
Address of college:	Poplar High Street London E14 0AF
Telephone number:	020 7510 7510
Fax number:	020 7538 9153
Chair of governors:	Rupert Middleton
Unique reference number:	130418
Name of reporting inspector:	David Martin
Dates of inspection:	31 January-4 February 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



Tower Hamlets College is a general further education (FE) college in the borough of Tower Hamlets in East London. There are three main centres. In addition, courses are offered in over 60 local community venues. The college is the main local provider of post-16 education and training, operating in a competitive market of neighbouring colleges, secondary schools, many with sixth forms, and of private and voluntary sector training organisations. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets also offers adult education programmes. Most of the college's students are drawn from Tower Hamlets or neighbouring London boroughs.

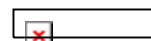
Tower Hamlets is a culturally and ethnically diverse area and is the fifth most densely populated borough in Britain, with the second largest rate of growth of all London boroughs. There is a significantly lower proportion of white residents compared to London East as a whole, and the ethnic profile is much more skewed towards the Asian, especially Bangladeshi, or Asian British communities. In 2002/03, 79% of the college's students were of minority ethnic origin, with 46% of all students from the Bangladeshi community.

Tower Hamlets is an area of both deprivation and affluence. It is one of the most deprived areas of the country. Every ward has at least one area that falls into the most deprived 10% of wards in England. However, the area continues to undergo rapid change, with the development of Canary Wharf and Docklands as a financial centre and the growth of professional occupations, particularly in large businesses.

The college offers substantial programmes in 10 of the 14 areas of learning. In 2003/04, there were 8,276 students, of whom nearly 80% were adults, enrolled for nearly 24,000 qualifications. Some 74% of all students attended part time. There is an extensive offer in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and literacy and numeracy, with 47% of total enrolments in these areas in 2003/04. The college is extensively involved in the local community and makes a major contribution to regeneration. Its Employment Solutions team is an integral part of the borough's access to employment strategy. The college, in partnership with Newham Community College, is designated as a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for business, financial and professional services and is also a partner with Greenwich Community College in a health and care CoVE. The college is significantly involved with a number of other national curriculum development initiatives, especially in the area of Skills for Life.

The college's mission - 'our aim for the college' - is 'removing barriers and raising achievement for everyone'.

How effective is the college?



Education and training are outstanding in literacy and numeracy and in mathematics. They are good in seven curriculum areas: sciences; business, management and professional studies; information and communications technology (ICT); health, social care and early years; visual and performing arts and media; humanities and ESOL. Provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

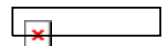
- outstanding leadership and management
- outstanding support for students
- outstanding educational and social inclusion, which successfully widens participation
- excellent educational, business and community partnerships
- the good provision in many curriculum areas
- the outstanding provision in literacy and numeracy and mathematics.

What should be improved

- the quality and use of individual learning plans
- students' sport and leisure facilities.

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



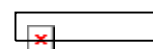
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
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Sciences and mathematics	Good. Contributory grade for mathematics is outstanding . Pass and retention rates are good and rising. Teaching and learning in mathematics are very good and often good in sciences. However, there is some less stimulating and engaging teaching. Students are well supported. Resources at Poplar are very good, especially in information technology (IT), but science accommodation at Arbour Square is inadequate. Leadership and management are good.
Business, management and professional studies	Good. Retention rates are high on many courses, with high pass rates in advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) accounts. Pass rates are poor on administration and accounting national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Students consistently achieve good personal and employment skills. Much teaching is good, supported by very good resources. Personal and subject support for students are good. The area is well managed.
Information and communications technology	Good. Pass rates are high on GCE courses, with improving retention rates and good progression. Pass rates are low on European computer driving licence (ECDL) and advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses, although retention rates are excellent. Students produce good work. Good practical teaching and learning exploit excellent IT resources, but links with IT-related employers are insufficient.
Hairdressing and beauty	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on beauty courses, but pass rates on hairdressing courses are often low. Well-motivated and independent students acquire satisfactory skills. Teaching and learning are good, but there are too few clients for students to work with. Tutorial support is good, but individual learning plans are used poorly.
Health, social care and early years	Good. Pass rates are often high, but completion of NVQs is slow, with low achievements. Most students make good progress and are well motivated. Teaching is good, with many and varied activities to stimulate students. Students are very well supported and rigorously assessed. Links with employers are good. Leadership and management are good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses, but are unsatisfactory on two national diplomas. Students attain a wide variety of skills, to good levels. Teaching is often good or better, with well qualified and experienced staff, using very good resources, especially for digital media. The provision is well managed, attracting students from a wide area because of its high reputation.
Humanities	Good. Retention rates are consistently good. Pass rates in most subjects are good or improving and there is excellent progression to higher education (HE) by access to HE students. Students develop good analytical skills. Teaching is of high quality, aided by good resources. The proportion of high grades at AS level and GCE A level is low. Curriculum management is good.
Literacy and numeracy	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are often high. Students make excellent progress. Teaching and learning are very good, with an accomplished team of exceptionally skilled and experienced teachers. Students benefit from particularly good support and good resources and accommodation. Leadership and management are outstanding, successfully delivering an impressively wide range of provision, with good progression routes.
English for speakers of other languages	Good. Pass rates on externally accredited courses are good. There is much good teaching, with the highly effective use of information and

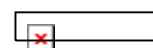
	learning technology (ILT), although in weaker lessons learning objectives are unclear. Target setting in some individual learning plans is inadequate. The strong team of experienced and committed staff deliver a wide range of innovative and responsive programmes, meeting many needs. Management is good.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Satisfactory. Teaching is lively and engaging, but pays insufficient attention to individual learning needs. There are inappropriate activities or teaching methods for less able students. Students' achievements and progress are generally satisfactory, but in catering they are outstanding. Effective use is made of good accommodation and resources.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and managers have created a vibrant and successful college that plays a major role in regenerating London's East End and improving the lives of local people. The college pursues its clear, concise and relevant mission very effectively. Curriculum management is good. The standard of teaching and the students' overall achievements are above the national average for general FE colleges. The college helps many local people improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills, prepare for employment or progress to HE. The college has excellent links with local schools, HE institutions, employers, community groups, business groups and welfare organisations. Quality assurance successfully improves the college's performance. Self-assessment provides an accurate picture of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Sustained good financial management has placed the college in a sound financial position. It provides good value for money. Data are reliable. Equality and diversity are promoted well.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



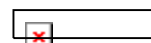
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. A wide range of programmes, effective marketing and very strong links with schools, employers and community groups widen the participation of school leavers and adults in learning. Excellent partnerships promote education to groups who are often excluded, for example, homeless people, refugees and people with mental health problems. The college has outstanding provision in literacy and numeracy and good provision in ESOL. These programmes are provided in numerous community venues across the borough. Good key skills provision and additional learning support help students to achieve their educational potential. Many options on the college's extensive enrichment programme, for example, multicultural events, promote social inclusion. Students are very well supported. Personal and welfare support are excellent, often making use of students to advise and mentor their peers. Equality and diversity are promoted well. A clear statement of college values emphasises respect for the differences between individuals. The college meets its obligations under race equality and disability legislation.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is outstanding. Management arrangements are robust and highly effective. A very wide range of advice, guidance and support is available. The student support board is particularly effective in sharing good practice and co-ordinating the support. Initial advice and guidance are good. A central advice centre is welcoming to all enquirers. Expert and very well-qualified staff use their knowledge particularly well to advise and guide students. Several staff lead local and national initiatives. Use of IT to manage information is very good. Initial assessment of students' additional support needs is thorough and the outcomes are used particularly well. Teachers receive good training in how to identify students' issues and barriers to progression. Tutorial arrangements, applying to all students, are comprehensive and highly effective. Tutorial support workers make timely interventions with students. Support is extended to the families of students. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Counselling and welfare services make particularly good use of local and national organisations. Resources for support are excellent. The college meets its obligations under 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

- the friendly, enthusiastic and inspiring teachers

- the support and tutorial staff

- the good welfare, personal and academic support

- the good availability of IT and learning centres

- the wide range of activities, outside of studies

- the way in which students are respected and cared for

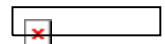
- the quality of teaching

- the wide range of opportunities for students.

What they feel could be improved

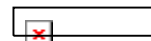
- sports, recreational and entertainment facilities
- information for part-time students
- the choice and price of food in the canteen
- the range of products in the shop
- the amount of money in the hardship fund
- accommodation at Bethnal Green
- a reduction in the waiting time for ESOL courses.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



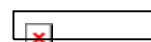
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	73	25	2
19+ and WBL*	67	28	5
Learning 16-18	72	26	2
19+ and WBL*	70	25	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 reports. Judgements on achievements and standards for 2003/04 are based on data provided by the college, not fully validated at the time of the inspection.

2. Students' success rates, based on pass rates and retention rates, have improved at all levels over the past three years and in 2003/04 the overall figures of 66% for students aged 16 to 18 and 72% for adults were well above the previous year's national averages for FE colleges. Almost all retention and pass rates have improved over this period for students of all ages. Progression within the college is good. Last year, 52% of entry level, 39% of level 1 and 33% of level 2 students moved on to further study at the college. The college analyses students' achievements by ethnicity, gender and disability. They have identified underachievement by white students as a matter for concern.

3. College data for the wide range of literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses show that students' achievements at entry and foundation levels are good for students of all ages. For example, overall pass rates in 2004 rose to 86% in literacy, 81% in numeracy and 83% in ESOL. Retention rates are around 85%. Progression is very good. Students develop confidence in their abilities and make good use of their well-developed skills in language and numeracy. Pass rates for students who receive additional learning support are above those for the rest of the cohort. Pass rates in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) English, at 61%, and mathematics, at 67% for grades A* to C are well above national averages for similar colleges. Success rates for the key skills of communications, application of number and ICT have improved. Some pass and retention rates are good, although the picture is mixed.

4. The proportion of lessons where students' attainment was judged by inspectors to be good or better was 64%, well above the national average of 54% for similar colleges; the proportion judged to be less than satisfactory was lower. Attendance has improved considerably since the inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in March 2000, when it was 65%. The overall level

of attendance observed by inspectors was 80%, just above the average figure for the sector. Attendance ranged from 74% in hairdressing and beauty to 85% in sciences and mathematics.

16 to 18 year olds

5. In 2003/04, approximately 20% of students were aged 16 to 18. Around 25% of their enrolments were on courses at level 2 and the rest were evenly spread between levels 1 and 3. Some 81% of this age group attended full-time courses. Retention rates at levels 1 and 2 have improved over a three-year period and in 2003/04 increased significantly to 83% and 80%, well above national averages for previous years. Retention rates at level 3 have declined over this period, but remain just above national figures. Pass rates for long courses have improved at all levels and last year exceeded the national average by 10 percentage points, at level 1, 11 points and level 2, and 8 percentage points at level 3. The retention rate for short courses in 2004 was high, at 92%, and the pass rate was just above the national average.

6. Students' achievements on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are good. Students' performance predicted from their GCSE results has improved rapidly in the past three years. It is now in line with predictions for AS-level subjects, but remains just below for GCE A level. The overall pass rate for GCE A level was 97% in 2004. College data show that 12 out of 21 subjects had a pass mark of 100%. The proportion of passes at high grades (A and B) rose to 25%. The average points score for each entry was 67.5 and the average points score for each student 199.2; the highest amongst inner-London colleges. Some 79% of the 466 students who applied to HE gained a place, five of them at the University of Cambridge.

7. Pass rates are good on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Pass and retention rates for GCSE courses have improved and are now well above national figures. Other than for NVQs, at levels 2 and 3, pass rates for vocational courses are above national averages. Retention rates are at or above national figures, except for NVQ level 1 and for vocational courses, such as national diplomas at level 3.

8. The standard of students' work is good. The achievements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in catering are outstanding. They prepare food to commercial standards and are commissioned to prepare buffets for prestigious events. Students in humanities have a good understanding of their subject, well-developed analytical skills and are willing to challenge established ideas. In mathematics, students demonstrate confidence and skill in using graphical calculators. Science students have good skills of observation and analysis. On visual and performing arts and media courses, students have confidence in their artistic and creative abilities and attain a wide variety of skills. In many areas, students develop a reflective approach to their work which helps them to improve. They are encouraged to become independent learners.

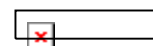
Adult learners

9. In 2004, around 57% of enrolments by adult students were on foundation programmes. Another 9% of the enrolments were on health and social care courses. Retention rates improved for all long courses and are above national averages. At level 1, the dramatic rise to 85% for long courses is 14 percentage points above the national average. Pass rates on long courses improved to around the national average at levels 2 and 3 and at level 1 to five percentage points above these figures. The overall success rate at level 1, for long courses, is 15 points above the national figure. Pass and retention rates for short courses are just above the national averages.

10. College data show that on the Skills for Life programmes in literacy and numeracy, the pass rates have risen by about 10% over the past three years. ESOL, and literacy and numeracy pass rates are high and further improved in 2004. More than half of adult students on Skills for Life programmes moved on to other courses in the college in 2004/05. Pass rates on the access to HE programme are around national averages, but progression to HE is excellent; all the students who applied in 2004 gained a place. Adult students' pass and retention rates on GCSE courses in 2004 were above national figures, but pass rates for NVQs at levels 2 and 3 remained low.

11. The standard of students' work is good. In business, students have good communication and presentation skills and well-developed vocational skills. They can speak confidently about current business practice and often demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding. In practical sessions, hairdressing and beauty therapy students organise and manage their own work stations effectively, with the minimum of supervision. Most students in health and social care make good progress, link practical experience to theory and improve their research, analysis and synthesis skills. Students' personal and social skills are also developed. In ICT, students on an Internet course for pensioners produce outstanding work.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching was graded in 210 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 70% of lessons, satisfactory in 27% and less than satisfactory in 3%. The percentage of lessons judged to be better than satisfactory is significantly higher than the national average for similar colleges, both for teaching and learning. It is also higher than at the time of the last inspection, conducted by the FEFC. Overall, teaching and learning were considered to be better than good in 32% and 29%, respectively, of the lessons observed, with just seven lessons judged to be less than satisfactory. For the college overall, there is little difference in the quality of teaching for students aged 16 to 18 and that for adults. However, in sciences and mathematics, health, social care and early years, humanities and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teaching for students aged 16 to 18 is better than for adults. In ICT, and in visual and performing arts and media, teaching and learning for adults are better than for students aged 16 to 18.

13. There are variations between curriculum areas, in the amounts of teaching and learning that are very good or excellent. ICT and health, social care and early years have no teaching that is excellent and small proportions that are very good. Business, management and professional studies, visual and performing arts and media, humanities and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have little teaching and learning that is excellent.

14. There are marked differences in the quality of teaching and learning between the various levels of courses. During the inspection, students on level 2 courses benefited from by far the largest amount of teaching that was better than satisfactory (84%). At levels 1 and 3, the amounts of teaching which were judged to be better than satisfactory were very similar, at 69% and 67%, respectively. The smallest amount of teaching which was better than satisfactory was at entry level, at 62%.

15. The large amount of good or better teaching is the product of careful planning, both before and during lessons. Teachers think carefully about the context of their schemes of work, overall examination objectives, the objectives of their students and of individual students' specific needs. In visual and performing arts and media, for example, teachers plan a wide variety of activities and provide learning opportunities that allow students to work to the best of their abilities. In health, social care and early years, good planning ensures that students' life and work experiences are fully used to illustrate theory and to motivate and engage them. Teachers are clear about what they want their students to achieve by the end of the lesson and they share their objectives with students, as in literacy and numeracy.

16. Teachers have high expectations of their students and use a range of challenging activities to motivate and inspire them. For example, the teaching for GCSE English is challenging and at times inspirational. In mathematics, teachers use very effectively the department for education and skills (DfES) standards' unit national pilot material in activity-based learning. This has a wide range of learning activities that challenge all students. As in health, social care and early years, teachers provide students with a non-threatening and supportive environment, in which students feel able to contribute without fear of failure. In the best lessons in ESOL, for example, students do most of the talking, with few interventions from teachers. Teachers often make good use of information learning

technologies (ILT), including use of interactive whiteboards. In ESOL, and literacy and numeracy, their use is particularly effective. In mathematics, there is exceptionally good use of IT.

17. Teaching is often lively and moves along at a good speed. It is supported by questioning techniques that require students to answer and which encourage them to think for themselves. In humanities, teachers make good use of group discussions to promote learning and to encourage and challenge students to think analytically. In business, management and professional studies, group work provides opportunities for peer support.

18. Teaching in practical lessons for visual and performing arts and media, ICT, and hairdressing and beauty is often good. For example, in visual and performing arts and media, students benefit from good evaluative individual feedback in practical workshop sessions. In ICT, there is good individual tuition in practical lessons, especially for adults attending the well-organised workshops.

19. Less successful lessons are insufficiently planned, with too little use of students' individual learning plans to inform teaching. This is most marked in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, where teachers make detailed preparations for lessons, but insufficiently relate them to students' individual learning needs. In weaker lessons, generally, teaching is dull and uninspiring and teachers do not encourage students to fully participate in discussions. Teachers sometimes answer their own questions, do not set clear learning targets and do not use the good ICT facilities to best effect.

20. Key skills provision across the college is well managed. Key policies and procedures provide a clear focus for managers and their staff. Teachers successfully integrate key skills with their students' main vocational programmes in most lessons. However, in hairdressing and beauty, opportunities to develop key skills in the context of students' vocational work are lost.

21. Buildings and accommodation are well decorated and maintained and there is some excellent new accommodation. Although access for those with restricted mobility is often very good, it is poor at the rented Bethnal Green centre. This site has a friendly atmosphere, but is in very poor decorative order. The college's disability action plan identifies work to the value of £415,000, in the current planned maintenance programme.

22. Specialist resources in most areas are good and of a professional or industrial standard. However, the accommodation for mathematics at Bethnal Green and the science accommodation at Arbour Square are poor. Some of the accommodation used for visual, performing arts and media is inadequate, and for hairdressing and beauty, uninspiring. Photographic equipment needs updating. Learning resource centres, with effective support staff, are well used and highly valued. They integrate key skills and IT workshop areas well.

23. Signage is very good. Reception areas are pleasant and welcoming. Employment Solutions have direct access from the street, removing barriers to potential enquirers. Security arrangements are very effective. Security staff are friendly and welcoming, but ensure a safe environment. Communal areas in main buildings are large, airy, well maintained and have a friendly atmosphere, integrating staff and students well. Childcare facilities are extensive. The college is working to establish a larger sports facility adjacent to the Poplar centre.

24. The ICT replacement policy has maintained up-to-date hardware and software. Students have good access to computers, the virtual learning environment, Internet and e-mail facilities. There has been a large investment in ILT equipment and training. Approximately 35% of classrooms have interactive whiteboards, over half have more than five personal computers and there is much use of laptop computers in the community.

25. Recruitment policies and a successful professional development programme have resulted in well-qualified and experienced staff. Over 95% of full-time teachers and those on substantial fractional contracts have appropriate teaching qualifications. A very small proportion of staff are paid hourly. Support staff are well integrated into college life and are highly valued.

26. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory overall. Initial assessment is good for full-time students and especially good on ESOL programmes. Initial assessment results are clearly recorded and used well to ensure students enrol on appropriate programmes and that they are appropriately supported during their studies.

27. Assessment is good in many areas, where it is rigorous and used very effectively to monitor students' progress. In a few areas, assessment is not used effectively to plan further learning. In provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is inadequate formal evidence of students' achievements.

28. Assignments are clear and appropriate. Marking is generally rigorous and feedback is clear and particularly good for adults. A minority of marking is perfunctory and lacks effective comment and feedback. A rigorous system of internal verification assures the quality of assessment and assignments and their relevance to the course and students.

29. The completion of individual learning plans often lacks rigour. Targets for improvement and action are unclear and there is little monitoring of their progress. In ICT, and visual and performing arts and media, plans are generally satisfactory, although a few are too vague and are not used to drive achievement. The college is addressing these weaknesses. In some areas, as in hairdressing and beauty, the recording of students' progress is weak.

30. Parents and guardians are well informed about students' progress, through termly informative reports and parents' evenings, with good use of the bilingual tutorial support workers.

31. A wide range of full-time and part-time programmes meet the needs of young people and adults. The level 3 offer is particularly extensive. Progression from one level to another within the college and for students going on to employment or HE courses elsewhere is very good. Marketing is effectively co-ordinated.

32. There are many productive links with schools. For example, college teachers deliver lessons in schools and primary schools work in partnership with the college to train parents through their community programmes. Links with secondary schools have resulted in an Increased Flexibility (IF) programme for pupils, aged 14 to 16, and a range of modules at levels 1 to 3.

33. An extensive network of partnerships meets community and employer needs. Key staff appointments develop the curriculum and promote workforce development. With the borough, the college is developing and co-ordinating foundation level work with adults. The college is becoming an important partner in the work of the borough's innovative 'Ideas Stores', with a dramatic increase in enrolments, book issues and the use of computers locally. Employers' needs are dealt with well through Employment Solutions. The college supported 2,500 job seekers in 2003/04, with around one third of them gaining employment. In addition, Employment Solutions runs customised recruitment programmes for many local employers.

34. A wide range of enrichment opportunities for students extends their learning opportunities and increases their confidence and personal development. In 2003/04, over 6,700 students participated in the enrichment programme. The lack of sufficient sport and leisure facilities is identified as a key weakness by the college and it is actively addressing the need.

35. The management of student support and guidance is excellent. Key aspects of support and guidance are directly managed by senior managers. Their involvement is very positive. The student support board is particularly effective in addressing issues, sharing good practice and ensuring that services are co-ordinated. The college has a strong ethos of continuous improvement and innovation in this area. For example, the introduction of peer mentoring and advice for students is very successful. Analysis of the effectiveness of support for students is good. Detailed statistics are used to inform management and make effective improvements. Students' feedback is particularly well used. There was, for example, a recent detailed survey of additional learning support.

36. Information, advice and guidance are of high quality. Accommodation and resources for this are

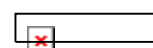
good. A newly opened advice centre, at the front of the Poplar site, is accessible and welcoming. It has good facilities, with a number of rooms available for individual interviews. Computer systems for advice and guidance are very up to date. Expert and very well-qualified staff use their knowledge of the college and of the local community particularly well to advise and guide students. Several staff take the lead in local and national initiatives. Good use is made of IT to record students' details and advice given.

37. The initial assessment of students' additional learning needs is particularly thorough. All students are assessed for their basic and key skill needs. Arrangements for initial assessment are often reviewed and changed to improve the students' experiences. For example, there was a recent decision to assess all full-time students for dyslexia support at the start of their courses, enabling speedier support. Assessment information is well recorded, readily available and used by teachers. Teachers receive good and regular training on how to identify a range of barriers to education and students' support needs.

38. Personal and welfare support address a very wide range of students' needs, carefully matched to particular circumstances, the context in which they live and work and the economic and social environment. All students have a personal tutor. Again, support through tutorials is proportionate to need. Tutorial support is highly effective. In 2003, tutorial support workers were introduced. Their work, with students and parents, is particularly effective. Most of them are former Tower Hamlets College students and are all bilingual and HE graduates. They are at the centre of the college's proactive approach, working with parents, to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality.

39. Counselling services are comprehensive. In this respect, and in others, links with external support agencies are particularly good and there is a seamless transition between college-based support and externally provided support. The college's extensive partnerships in the borough ensure that students benefit from a network of support. The college meets its obligations under child protection legislation. The child protection policy is incorporated within a comprehensive policy covering other categories of 'at risk' students. A designated senior member of staff is responsible for child protection issues and appropriate staff training has taken place. Policy review and implementation is the responsibility of a representative group of managers, teachers and support staff.

Leadership and management



40. Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and managers have created a vibrant and successful college that plays a major role in regenerating London's East End and improving the lives of local people. The college pursues its clear, concise and relevant mission very effectively. It is impressive that in 2004, in a borough with very high levels of deprivation, students' overall achievements were well above the national average for general FE colleges. Substantial investments in buildings, computers and equipment have created good social and work environments. Staff are rightly proud of their college. It is a rewarding and enjoyable place for staff to work and students to study.

41. The college is fully integrated into its local communities. Strong links with local schools, HE institutions, employers, community groups, business groups, social services and welfare organisations are used effectively to remove barriers and promote better education, training and support for students. The college has over 400 educational, business and community partnerships. For example, it works with local charities to raise the self-esteem and employment prospects of homeless people, with an HIV support group to provide personal development programmes for HIV sufferers and with a major local bank to help over 80 unemployed young people find work in the financial sector. One innovative project, called 'Changing Lives', has trained over 35 students to act as mentors to others in the college and the community who face difficult domestic violence, forced marriage and mental health issues.

42. The division of college programmes into three main areas reflects its students' different aims. The sixth form centre provides an identity for school leavers taking academic and vocational programmes. Its culture of high expectations has contributed to significant improvements in progression rates to HE. The adult learning directorate enrolls over 3,500 students each year, mainly on to ESOL, literacy, numeracy and IT programmes. These well-structured, well-managed and successful programmes enable the college to make a major contribution to the government's 'Skills for Life' agenda. The business and community development directorate successfully delivers a wide range of short courses, business and community projects, and employment services that help local people into sustainable employment.

43. Curriculum management is good. Despite some lack of clarity in the college's three year development plan, both the college operational plan and curriculum area plans appropriately focus on relevant college priorities and issues identified through self-assessment. Policies and procedure are consistently implemented across the college. High levels of accountability are achieved through bi-annual support and supervision meetings between managers and staff at all levels. In these meetings, planned actions are reviewed and performance is scrutinised. Staff are very well supported and managers act effectively to tackle poorly performing staff or courses. Communication within the college is good and staff morale is high. Most curriculum areas are well managed and none is unsatisfactory.

44. A comprehensive and effective quality assurance system includes, for example, lesson observation by peers and managers, useful student surveys, sound procedures for internal verification, quality audits of course management files, bi-annual curriculum area inspections and a thorough course review process which focuses on ways of improving teaching and students' achievements. Most staff are observed teaching at least once a year. The minimum requirement for a manager's observation is once every two years. In addition to staff appraisal through support and supervision meetings, managers value appraisal by their staff through a '360 degree' appraisal system. A wide range of staff development activities, many of which are directly related to teaching and supporting students, are appreciated by staff. Self-assessment reports for curriculum areas, support services and the whole college are well structured. They provide an accurate reflection of the college's strengths and weaknesses.

45. Equality and diversity are promoted well. The college meets its obligations under race equality legislation, disability and child protection legislation. The child protection policy is appropriately incorporated within a comprehensive policy covering other categories of at risk students, including students with mental health problems and those at risk from domestic violence or self-harm. A designated senior member of staff is responsible for child protection issues and appropriate staff training has taken place. Policy review and implementation is the responsibility of a representative group of managers, teachers and support staff. The college effectively monitors the ethnic profile of its staff and students. Around 80% of students and 39% of permanent staff are from minority ethnic groups, including 12% of managers. This compares with 50% of the local population. White students, particularly males, are under-represented in the college and their achievements are lower than that of other ethnic groups. Several curriculum areas' operational plans include actions to address this issue. A comprehensive equality and diversity annual report ensures that governors monitor this area of activity.

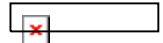
46. Governance is good. The board includes members with relevant business and education expertise, as well as three former students with successful careers in the public sector. Governors understand the issues facing the college. They are very well informed about the financial performance of the college. The system linking governors to curriculum areas is used effectively to ensure that the board understands curriculum issues and the college's academic performance.

47. Sustained good financial management has placed the college in a sound financial position. It has substantial reserves and no long-term debt. Major capital projects have been well managed. However, in 2003/04, the college fell marginally short of its enrolment targets and incurred a small revenue deficit. Projections for 2004/05 show a similar underachievement of enrolment targets. Day-to-day financial management is good. Budget holders receive regular income and expenditure reports and management accounts are good. Class sizes and attendance rates are around the national average. The college provides good value for money. The college also has a full range of

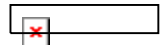
good human resource policies and procedures.

48. A good management information system meets the needs of managers and staff. Almost all staff have a computer on their desk. Staff can also access the clear and reliable reports on students' attendance, retention and pass rates and progression from home. The information system has the capacity to be used effectively for course level target setting. The recent appointment of staff, proficient in IT, as 'super-users', to help other staff develop their skills in using CIS is helping the target setting process.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Sciences and mathematics



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**
Contributory grade for mathematics is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- good and rising pass and retention rates

- very good teaching and learning in mathematics

- very good science and mathematics resources at the Poplar site

- very good support for students' learning

- good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- some less stimulating and engaging teaching in science

- inadequate accommodation for sciences at Arbour Square.

Scope of provision

49. Based at Poplar, the area offers courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Some 47 study the foundation general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in science, intermediate GNVQ science and the AVCE in science. The national certificate in applied science is studied by 25 students. AS-level and GCE A-level science courses in biology, chemistry, physics and science, have 112 students at AS level and 126 students at GCE A level. GCSE science has 13 students.

50. GCSE mathematics is offered during the day and in the evening at all main college sites. Evening attendance is mainly by adults, with 62 students. In the daytime, there are 156 students aged 16 to 18. Over 300 students from across the college study free-standing mathematics units as an additional element of their courses. AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics students study decision, statistics and mechanics units. Further mathematics and use of mathematics are also offered at AS level. At Arbour Square, the access to HE in science programme is studied by 16 students and 16 classroom assistants from local schools in the borough study GCSE mathematics.

Achievement and standards

51. Pass and retention rates for AS-level and GCE A-level biology, chemistry, and mathematics are good and improving. In 2004, the pass rate for GCE A-level mathematics was particularly high. The pass rate at grades A* to C in GCSE mathematics in 2004 is well above the national average for similar colleges. Retention rates on foundation GNVQ and intermediate GNVQ science programmes are improving, with all students completing the latter course in 2004. Retention rates in AVCE science have fallen and are now below national averages. Many students progress to HE.

52. Students' attainment is often good. For example, AS-level mathematics students show confidence in the use of graphical calculators in curve sketching and the numerical solution of equations. Foundation science students show good practical observation skills in measuring heights of rebound of balls. Advanced science students analyse the relationship between temperature and electrical resistance, using laptops to input and display data. GCSE mathematics students understand the need to indicate numbers in standard form and ably apply this to a range of everyday objects from the size of an atom to the size of universe. During the inspection, attendance was good in all lessons observed with an average of 85%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics (A* to C grades)	2	No. of starts	222	282	278
		% retention	81	73	79
		% pass rate	61	44	67
GNVQ intermediate science	2	No. of starts	18	20	15
		% retention	89	75	100
		% pass rate	56	67	80
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	75	72	53
		% retention	85	94	92
		% pass rate	39	62	83
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	81	75	68
		% retention	86	95	93
		% pass rate	27	63	79

GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	32	39	42
		% retention	97	95	100
		% pass rate	77	84	88
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	36	25	42
		% retention	89	92	95
		% pass rate	91	87	95

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

Quality of education and training

53. Teaching and learning in mathematics are very good. Teachers use very effective strategies in mathematics lessons, exploiting well the DfES standards unit national pilot material in activity-based learning. For example, in an advanced mathematics lesson, IT and standards unit materials and approaches were used very effectively to introduce the geometry of the circle. The active learning approach to teaching is transforming and revitalising learning. Lesson planning and schemes of work in science and mathematics are good, providing a sound basis for teaching and learning. In the best lessons, a wide range of learning activities challenge all students. Often, there is exceptional use of ICT in lessons. Students are well motivated and ask questions which display interest and understanding.

54. In science, teaching is good. Students remain committed and attentive, but weaker lessons lack stimulus, have little variety of activity and lack students' involvement. Student support is very good in lessons, with effective tracking of students' progress.

55. Teachers are well qualified. They participate in a wide range of relevant training and updating and feel well supported by the college. To help improve the quality of teaching and learning, a mathematics teacher trained as a staff peer mentor and has successfully introduced a programme of peer observations. Science has recently moved to new purpose-built accommodation at the Poplar site with six very well-resourced laboratories and two preparation areas. Laboratory support for practical work is well organised and provided by a team of well-qualified and experienced technicians. At Poplar, there is excellent ICT provision, including interactive whiteboards, laptop computers, data projectors and computers. However, science facilities at Arbour Square are poor. There are good library and learning centres at both sites, with good access for wheelchair users. The college intranet has a wide range of material accessible by students from college or home.

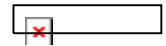
56. Support for students is very good. Robust initial assessment informs additional support needs. Students receive a high standard of support in their lessons and additional workshops provide effective drop-in support or tutor referral facility. Workshops are well attended and appreciated by students. Peer mentors and undergraduate students from the University of London support students' academic progress, acting as role models. Students receive good tutorial support. Personal tutors monitor progress and set realistic short-term targets through individual learning plans. Students' work is rigorously assessed with valuable detailed feedback, with suggestions for improvement. Marking and moderation of coursework are effective. Reports to parents give detailed assessment of progress towards targets. Tutorial support workers monitor students' attendance, which has improved.

57. A good range of courses is offered during the day, open to adults as well as to students aged 16 to 18. Mathematics units support key skills development and are offered to Year 10 and 11 school pupils as part of a 'gifted and talented' partnership. The introduction of AS-level use of mathematics has widened opportunities and increased enrolments. School links include college teachers teaching Key Stage 4 science within schools. There is a good range of enrichment activities available to all students, such as the science club and visiting speakers in mathematics.

Leadership and management

58. Work in the curriculum area is well led and managed, supported by regular and effective meetings. Quality assurance is effective in informing the area's self-assessment reports. They identify most weaknesses, show realistic targets for improvement and describe how issues are being addressed. Documentation is detailed and thorough. There is a good team spirit supported by adoption of open-plan staff rooms enabling the sharing of good practice. The move to the new science suite has been effectively carried out over a short time. Very good leadership in mathematics has successfully embedded the innovative activity-based approach in all programmes. Equal opportunities issues are actively addressed through appropriate support, for example, for ESOL students and those with non-traditional backgrounds.

Business, management and professional studies



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on many courses
- good attainment of personal and vocational skills
- high pass rates on GCE A-level and AS-level accounts courses
- much good teaching
- very good support for students
- well-managed curriculum.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in NVQ administration and accounting
- low retention rates on AVCE business and NVQ accounting courses

- o insufficient range of part-time courses in business and management.

Scope of provision

59. The college offers full-time programmes for students aged 16 to 18 from entry level to level 3, including the GNVQ foundation and intermediate, AVCE business, and GCE A levels in business and accounting. Part-time management and professional courses include NVQ accounts at levels 2, 3 and 4 and accounting with computers. A modular access to HE programme in business is delivered at Arbour Square. The certificate for financial advisers at level 3 is delivered by Employment Solutions. The college was awarded CoVE development status for financial and business services, in partnership with another local college, in April 2004. The CoVE has the two key aims of working with employers to provide employment progression in the financial services sector and of providing support for local small to medium sized enterprises to help them to become more sustainable as employers. At the time of inspection, there were 382 full-time students and 223 part-time students.

Achievement and standards

60. Retention rates are high on many courses. In the three years prior to inspection, retention rates improved year on year in GNVQ intermediate programmes from 77% to 86% and in AS-level accounting from 76% to 96%. Retention rates are consistently high for GCE A-level accounting, and the certificate in office practice achieved 100% in its first year of delivery. However, the AVCE in business and the NVQ accounting programmes at levels 2 and 3 are below national averages. Pass rates for GCE A-level and AS-level accounting programmes are high. In two out of the three previous years, students on both programmes have achieved a 100% pass rate. In contrast, pass rates for NVQ students in administration and accounting at levels 2 and 3 are low. For example, the pass rate of 50% in NVQ level 2 accounting, in 2004, is significantly below the national average. At level 3 NVQ administration, no student achieved the qualification in 2004. A significant part of this programme was delivered on employers' premises and students may still complete their portfolios and achieve the award.

61. Students achieve good personal and vocational skills. High levels of attainment are evident in many lessons and in students' portfolios of work and their written tasks. They develop strong employment skills and are confident users of IT. Students develop good communication and presentation skills and are able to talk confidently about current business practices.

62. Average attendance during the inspection, at 81%, is above the national average of 77%. Students are punctual and lateness is quietly and effectively challenged. There are clear procedures in place for attendance and punctuality which are understood by students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, management and professional studies, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation business	1	No. of starts	44	36	38
		% retention	64	78	74
		% pass rate	96	75	79
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	24	27	22
		% retention	83	70	64
		% pass rate	55	53	50
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	57	60	51

business		% retention	77	80	86
		% pass rate	66	69	55
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	66	62	60
		% retention	77	61	48
		% pass rate	39	92	96
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	21	17	22
		% retention	76	76	86
		% pass rate	100	100	89
NVQ administration	3	No. of starts	28	17	*
		% retention	75	94	*
		% pass rate	0	38	*

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

63. Much teaching is good or very good. Teachers have high expectations of students and in most lessons students are challenged and stretched. Teaching moves along at a good pace and questioning techniques require students to answer and encourage students to think for themselves. Group work provides opportunities for peer support and, at times, peer assessment. For intermediate and advanced courses, teachers plan lessons and assignments to develop students' independent research skills. Lesson plans, schemes of work and resources are satisfactory. The learning resource centre is well equipped and ILT is used effectively in lessons. In one lesson, whole class teaching was in an unsuitable computer room.

64. Teachers are well qualified and all but one is teacher trained. Four teachers have recent industry experience. All staff regularly attend relevant training events and feed back to their colleagues. All teaching rooms are clean and well furnished with a good range of audio-visual facilities. Students' work is often displayed on the walls. Most rooms are light and airy and seating is effectively planned to support teachers' feedback to individual students. One basement room is hot and airless and does not promote effective learning.

65. Initial assessment of students' additional learning needs is satisfactory and tutors use the results to establish individual learning plans with appropriate individual targets. These are updated at least six times during the year, and once each term the review incorporates feedback from subject teachers. Students' work is assessed regularly and feedback is constructive. Assessment schedules are pre-planned, but there is evidence of some bunching which was recognised as a weakness at the last inspection.

66. The range of provision for full-time students is satisfactory, with good internal progression opportunities from levels 1 to 3. However, the range of part-time business and management courses is insufficient. There is an expectation that the recently awarded CoVE may help fill this gap. The CoVE is managed through the college's Employment Solutions which works closely with other parts of the college and partner organisations. It has already started to provide demand-led short courses, for example, the certificate for financial advisers, and will diversify to provide further professional qualifications over the next year.

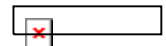
67. Students have very good personal and subject support. All full-time students have well-managed and programmed group tutorials. Tutor support workers visit every lesson to check on and follow-up absences and punctuality. Parents are increasingly involved through parents' meetings where a bilingual tutor support worker translates. These are well attended, after an initial slow start. Tutors

often contact parents rather than waiting until a crisis develops. Learning support is offered through course workshops, to which students can be referred, or to which they can self-refer. Learning mentors effectively helped students in a skills for business lesson. Course timetables now allow more learning support to be included as a routine element of courses.

Leadership and management

68. Managers have a clear understanding of the college's vision, and how to contribute to this. They put the needs of students first, and are dedicated to ensuring their achievement and attainment. The availability of high-quality learning resources for students is seen as fundamental to this. Managers make use of modern management methods, including target setting and ongoing review, and are positive and constructive in their management style and approach. Data and information are used to inform the policy and decision-making process. Clear strategies have been put in place to improve retention rates. Internal communications are good. Staff regularly discuss students' progress and share good practice. Equality and diversity are actively promoted as part of curriculum and tutorial provision. Any oppressive behaviour is promptly dealt with. Internal verification has been less than satisfactory in the past, particularly for accounting students, but it now meets minimum standards. Self-assessment is honest and realistic and recognises the strengths and weaknesses that inspectors found.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE courses

- improving retention rates on most courses

- very good students' progress

- good teaching and learning in practical lessons

- excellent ICT resources.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on ECDL and AVCE courses

- o insufficient links with ICT-related employers.

Scope of provision

69. The computing programme area runs courses for full-time students from level 1 to level 3, including GNVQ, AVCE, GCE and GCSE courses. Part-time ICT courses for adults, such as computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and the ECDL are managed by the business studies programme area. Access to HE courses are separately managed. There are 492 students undertaking ICT courses. Of these, 268 are full-time students, almost all being students aged 16 to 18, and 201 adult part-time students, with a small number of part-time students aged 16 to 18. The college has 10 work-based ICT learners. Employment Solutions run short modular CLAIT courses.

Achievement and standards

70. Pass rates are high on GCE courses. In the past three years, these have risen from 83% to 97% on the AS-level courses and from 87% to 100%, over the last two years, on GCE A-level courses. Retention rates on many courses have significantly improved over the past three years. The overall retention rate on all computing courses has increased from 78% in 2002, to 87% in 2004. There are low pass rates on both the ECDL and AVCE IT courses, although retention rates are excellent. The ECDL is now run as a modular programme and the programme manager has devised a strategy for improving pass rates on the AVCE single award.

71. Students produce good work. Assignments and projects are well presented and contain well-prepared diverse information. Students collect and effectively analyse the data and information, frequently using the Internet. This good standard of work equally applies to part-time adult students. Students take a wide range of additional qualifications. The current AVCE course has over 30 students taking GCE A-level or AS-level courses in a wide range of subjects from sociology to film studies. There is good progression from one course to others at a higher level. Progression from GNVQ foundation to intermediate and from intermediate to AVCE is particularly good. In 2004, over 80% of students successfully completing AVCE courses progressed to HE. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	36	40	57
		% retention	67	80	72
		% pass rate	63	69	85
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	63	56	58
		% retention	79	80	83
		% pass rate	66	62	83
ECDL	2	No. of starts	56	188	19
		% retention	96	78	100
		% pass rate	31	79	47
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	56	60	36
		% retention	84	82	92

		% pass rate	83	88	97
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	26	35	34
		% retention	88	97	100
		% pass rate	87	100	100
AVCE IT	3	No. of starts	*	41	55
		% retention	*	100	91
		% pass rate	*	59	60

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

72. Teaching and learning are often good. One-to-one instruction in practical lessons is particularly good. Teachers' have good knowledge of computers and extensive practical ICT skills. In lessons, students work well and independently. A high standard of handouts, exercises and manuals assist good teaching and learning. Teachers consistently give clear and concise explanations and brief students well. They take great care to adapt the support they give to match individual needs. In workshops, there is particularly good coaching. Teachers successfully check the level of learning by carefully and systematically observing students carrying out a task. In many lessons, everyday objects and imagery are used very effectively to explain complex concepts.

73. Students are encouraged to contribute and to stretch their technical knowledge during practical lessons and workshops. Many adult students start the courses as complete beginners and some still do not have access to the Internet except at the college. One adult student, who was completely terrified of computers when she started the course, has recently purchased some web design software which she plans to install and use. Students are encouraged to present and discuss their work during lessons. In weaker formal lessons, teachers do not encourage students to fully participate in discussions. Teachers sometimes answer their own questions, do not set clear learning targets and do not use the good ICT facilities to best effect.

74. ICT resources are excellent. Modern and plentiful computer hardware, with flat screens, is installed with up-to-date software. Peripherals, such as printers, are easily available. Equipment is well maintained and faults are corrected quickly. Furniture meets current industry standard. All ICT rooms have good visual equipment. Data projectors and interactive whiteboards are used to good effect. Students with restricted mobility benefit from a good range of specialist equipment. Accommodation is good, but some rooms are too small and some can be too hot.

75. Assessment of students' work is rigorous. Initial assessment for full-time students is effective. Individual learning plans are not always developed and used to good effect, although they are supplemented by additional and well-designed student reports, providing more detailed information and targets for achievement. Most full-time students receive regular homework with good written feedback, but written feedback in lessons is insufficient. Portfolio check sheets provide adequate means for feedback and specify progress on coursework.

76. Links with IT-related industries, to develop staff knowledge and students' awareness of current practice, are insufficient. Whilst there are strong and growing links between Employment Solutions and the local business community, this has not increased direct employer liaison with the curriculum area. For example, there is no formal industry advisory committee or forum. Staff are not routinely seconded to the industry for updating experience. Although some students have obtained short work placements, there is no overall strategy for ensuring suitable work experience with IT employers. While some part-teachers are from industry, managers and specialists from the industry are not regularly invited to the college to talk to students.

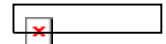
77. Support for students is satisfactory. The tutorial support worker system works well and provides

effective checks in lessons for absentees. Support workers frequently hold effective meetings with parents to discuss students' problems. Students needing subject-specific help receive good guidance from the learning centre. Part-time students do not always get the same opportunities as full-time students. They are not consistently informed about the library, the woman's common room, taster sessions and private study areas.

Leadership and management

78. The area is effectively managed. Internal communications are good and good practice is effectively shared. Staff meetings are held regularly. Well-structured staff appraisals are in place. Teachers are encouraged to attend courses to extend their technical expertise. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily promoted and monitored. Resources are efficiently deployed to maximise opportunities for learning. The quality of provision is appropriately monitored. Staff actively seek to improve their own performance. Courses are satisfactorily reviewed. The self-assessment report is accurate for the most part, although the lack of employer links is not mentioned.

Hairdressing and beauty



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on beauty courses

- well-motivated and independent students

- good teaching

- good tutorial programme.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on hairdressing programmes

- insufficient opportunities for students to work with clients

- inadequate target setting in individual learning plans

- little occupational relevance in key skills teaching.

Scope of provision

79. The college offers a range of courses leading to NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1 and 2, and at beauty therapy levels 2 and 3. There are also hairdressing level 1, hairdressing level 2 and beauty therapy level 1 courses for ESOL students, meeting the needs of the local community. The range of complementary therapy and related courses includes sports massage, reflexology, aromatherapy and Indian head massage. Part-time and evening courses in manicure and cosmetic make-up are also available. The hairdressing and beauty provision is located at Poplar. There are 94 students studying hairdressing and 184 studying beauty therapy and related subjects. Of these, there are 51 students aged 16 to 18 and 74 adults on full-time courses. Of the 151 part-time students, 92% are adults.

Achievement and standards

80. Retention and pass rates on beauty courses are high, especially for the full-time NVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3. Pass rates are consistently significantly above national averages. At level 3, all students completed their course and obtained the NVQ. Pass rates for cosmetic make-up students are also consistently high. In contrast to the good performance on beauty therapy courses, hairdressing pass rates are low. The level 1 hairdressing pass rate is significantly below national average. In 2004, the retention rate on level 2 hairdressing was well above the national average, but the pass rate declined from the previous year and was significantly below national average.

81. Most students are self-motivated and have a keen interest in their subjects. They develop their personal and social skills effectively. They present a professional image and display maturity in the quality of their discussions about their work. The standard of students' work is often good. In practical sessions, they organise and manage their own work stations effectively, with the minimum of supervision. Most students develop appropriate practical skills and complete their tasks on time. During the inspection, the average attendance for the groups observed was 74%, which reflects the sector average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	51	50	35
		% retention	65	66	66
		% pass rate	3	73	57
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	22	52	20
		% retention	55	27	85
		% pass rate	0	57	47
NVQ beauty	2	No. of starts	19	22	21
		% retention	68	68	81
		% pass rate	100	93	100
Cosmetic make-up	2	No. of starts	25	34	32
		% retention	68	62	72
		% pass rate	88	81	91

Certificate in manicure	2	No. of starts	34	31	30
		% retention	76	71	73
		% pass rate	92	73	68

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

Quality of education and training

82. Teaching is good, both for beauty therapy and for hairdressing. In most lessons, it is better than satisfactory. Teaching is interesting and lively. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm and extensive knowledge to students. For example, in an outstanding beauty therapy lesson on the endocrine system, the infectious enthusiasm of the teacher immediately gained the interest of the students. This was skilfully exploited and built on, through good planning, with a sequence of presentation and activities, including use of the Internet for individual research and use of interactive whiteboards. Students' learning and understanding is continuously confirmed during lessons. Teachers give individual support and guidance to ensure that students' learning is reinforced and to help them overcome temporary barriers to their learning. Lessons are well planned, challenging, and often linked to professional practice. Schemes of work and lesson plans follow a common framework and aims and objectives are stated clearly. Teachers work well as part of a team. All are specialist in different aspects of the provision.

83. Students have insufficient opportunities to work with clients in practical lessons. Beauty students often work on each other and hairdressing students have to work on head forms for a large part of their lesson when waiting for clients. The college is well aware of this hindrance to teaching and learning and has made efforts to concentrate the availability of clients during certain parts of the week, but this leaves students without clients at other times.

84. Key skills teaching is generic and lacks occupational relevance. This applies equally to communication and IT. The evident skills and practical experience of teachers are not exploited. It is difficult for students to relate to the subject matter and they often show lack of interest and attend poorly in key skills lessons.

85. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The reception area and one of the hairdressing salons has recently been modernised to good standards. However, the two beauty salons and one hairdressing salon are in need of refurbishment. The hairdressing and beauty sections are well resourced. There is a good range of professional products and up-to-date equipment. Students are enthusiastic about the use and promotion of the college's own product brands.

86. Students' achievement and progress are recorded and monitored regularly using standard forms. Assessments are appropriate and well spaced throughout the year. There is good internal verification with comprehensive tracking systems. However, too many individual learning plans lack rigour. Target setting is loose, with progress targets that are too broad and sometimes not time bound. Recorded actions for students to address are insufficiently clear and manageable and do not sufficiently help to drive learning forward.

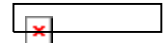
87. A good tutorial programme, effectively managed, supports students. All full-time students have access to both group and individual tutorials. A standardised scheme of work guides personal tutors. They use standardised tutorial lesson plans. The area has developed a student-centred tutorial learner pack. This enables students to recognise and understand their own preferred learning style. Students feel well-supported by their tutors and speak highly of them. Students also recognise and value the support of support staff.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are sound. A good team spirit is shared across the department. Staff understand management responsibilities. The tutor team leader effectively monitors students'

retention rates and professional dress code. The head of programme chairs weekly meetings. These are recorded formally, but actions are not always followed through. Informal meetings are also held weekly with each of the team leaders. There is an appropriate focus on quality and quality improvement. Retention and pass rate targets are monitored and matched against national averages. Self-assessment is inclusive. Effective course review contributes to judgements. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Equality of opportunity is valued and is nurtured and clearly considered in all areas of the curriculum.

Health, social care and early years



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on pre-school practice, childcare, counselling and youth work courses

- good teaching

- rigorous assessment

- innovative response to employer and community needs

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- slow completion of NVQ qualifications

- insufficient challenge in lessons for more able students.

Scope of provision

89. There is a wide range of courses, from entry level to level 4. These include NVQ awards and certificate and diploma qualifications in childcare and education. Part-time counselling courses are offered from levels 1 to 3. Health care courses are offered at levels 2 and 3. The college's full CoVE

status has enabled it to promote new work force development provision, including the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in health and social care, certificate in community mental health care and the certificate in working with people who have learning difficulties. The community development programme offers a range of programmes in community work, volunteering and youth work. At the time of inspection, there were 114 full-time students and 321 part-time students. Of the full-time students, 83 are aged 16 to 18. There is day and evening part-time provision and provision for flexible learning.

Achievement and standards

90. Pass rates on childcare and early years, pre-school, counselling and youth worker courses are often high. Pass rates on youth work courses over the last three years range between 88% and 100% and pre-school practice pass rates for 2004 were 100%. High grades on the diploma in counselling, award in caring for children and levels 1 and 2 childcare courses were well above the national averages. Retention rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 are good for students aged 16 to 18 and at the time of inspection the in-year retention on over half of these courses was 100%.

91. Students are slow in completing NVQ qualifications. Poor pass rates relate to courses and periods for which the college shared responsibilities with another training provider. Lack of assessment opportunities impacted adversely on the chance to achieve and completion dates were greatly delayed. Those students still on the programme are effectively supported to achieve.

92. In lessons, most students make good progress, link practical experience to theory and improve their research, analysis and synthesis skills. Students are well motivated and eager to respond to challenges offered. They work well, using computers for their individual research. Students' personal and social skills are also suitably developed. Students whose first language is not English are effectively helped to improve their knowledge of vocabulary, listening and speaking skills. The courses introduced as part of the CoVE are new, but students' work in lessons demonstrates a good standard of vocational knowledge and key skills. Students' attendance is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and early years, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Award in caring for children	1	No. of starts	35	34	31
		% retention	71	82	68
		% pass rate	68	93	95
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	30	21	27
		% retention	77	90	89
		% pass rate	48	100	83
Certificate in pre-school practice	2	No. of starts	**	19	27
		% retention	**	95	81
		% pass rate	**	89	100
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	18	18	**
		% retention	94	61	**
		% pass rate	65	100	**
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	22	33	30
		% retention	18	39	50
		% pass rate	25	38	33
Diploma in counselling	3	No. of starts	19	*	17

skills	% retention	100	*	100
	% pass rate	95	*	76

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

* course did not run

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

93. Most teaching is good or better. All teaching is well planned, has clear aims that are shared with the students and, in many cases, a range of activities to stimulate their interest. In a lively key skills lesson, the teacher used a photograph of children in her family to stimulate interest and discussion and to encourage students to write about what the children might be doing or thinking. In most lessons, teachers use students' own experiences from their work or work placements to support their teaching and to illustrate theory. Teachers with current vocational expertise and knowledge use it effectively to make the lessons more relevant.

94. Particularly effective lessons provide a safe and supportive learning environment in which students are able to experiment with ideas and opinions without fear of failure. For example, in a lesson on child abuse, the teacher was particularly challenging in testing students' perceptions and attitudes to the topic and, because students felt empowered rather than intimidated, they spoke strongly and with conviction. Students successfully develop their key skills in the context of their vocational work.

95. In less successful lessons, there is insufficient challenge for the more able or experienced students. Too often the basic requirements for success are accepted without providing opportunities for higher-level responses. There is limited use of ILT in lessons, both by teachers and students, reducing opportunities to extend students' learning. There is good support from teachers for students with specific learning needs

96. Teachers are well qualified and many have current industrial experience. On the community programmes, they are current practitioners. Access and take-up for staff development are good. Computer facilities within the curriculum area are excellent. However, the use of the learning centre as a thoroughfare to other classrooms is often disruptive for students and staff working in it.

97. Specialist classrooms provide a suitable ethos for learning with plentiful displays of students' work and subject-related material. They are well equipped with interactive whiteboards. Accommodation and resources for childcare at Bethnal Green are very limited and significantly poorer than those at Poplar. Money allocated to the CoVE has been effectively spent in the provision of improved accommodation and resources.

98. Assessment of students' work is rigorous. Internal verification is thorough and guides the assessor in improving practice. Course units, key skills and enrichment activities contribute well to integrated assessments. Students find this holistic approach helpful, supportive and it makes good use of their time. Work is mostly thoroughly marked and feedback is constructive and informative. A clearly set out assessment timetable for students aged 16 to 18 makes students' workloads manageable. Homework clubs and workshops keep students on course if they fall behind with assessments.

99. Very effective partnerships with community organisations result in courses which have widened participation in education and training very effectively. Bespoke courses have been written and successfully piloted with a national awarding body. A lack of opportunities for progression in health and social care is being addressed by initiatives within the CoVE. These will provide opportunities for the workforce to gain qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Appropriate childcare qualifications and counselling courses allow for progression from level 1 to level 3.

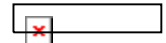
100. Opportunities for enrichment, timetabled into students' programmes, are good. They are well integrated into vocational studies and assessments. They are highly effective in raising students' self-esteem, as well as providing them with new interests.

101. Students are very well supported. Advice and guidance on entry are good. Robust assessment of students at interview and enrolment ensures that they are placed on the right course. They receive highly effective pastoral and academic support from teachers, committed to providing an ethos for learning in which students can achieve. A very effective tutorial programme integrates the elements of support well to ensure a holistic approach.

Leadership and management

102. Leadership and management are good. Good internal communications helps the effective use of quality systems. Challenging targets are set for recruitment, retention and pass rates, attendance and punctuality. Course review and self-assessment are effective in identifying weaknesses, but both require more rigour. The use of the college information system for monitoring course data is underutilised. The self-assessment reports accurately identify most strengths and weaknesses. Managers and teachers understand development priorities and how these will address the needs of local employers and the community. The CoVE is well managed and quality monitoring involves employers as well as college managers. An equal opportunities ethos is well embedded within both departments. Teachers and students enthusiastically celebrate diversity in all their activities.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- good attainment of a wide variety of skills
- much good teaching
- good specialist resources, particularly for digital media
- well-qualified and industrially experienced teachers
- good range of relevant courses attracting students from a wide geographical area

- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on national diplomas in music technology and textiles
- some inappropriate accommodation.

Scope of provision

103. Around 600 students aged 16 to 18 and 635 adults are enrolled on 93 courses, at entry level, levels 1, 2 and 3 and on a small number of short and non-accredited courses. Courses run for between 10 weeks and 2 years, during the day and in the evening and are mostly based at the main Poplar site. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in seven subjects including photography, fashion, textiles and art. There are GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses in art and design, a first diploma in media and five national diplomas, including graphic design, and more recently music technology and textiles. The creative arts modular programme provides a flexible one-year programme for adults including photojournalism, animation and web design.

Achievement and standards

104. Pass rates are good on most courses. All students have passed the access to photojournalism course over the last three years. The GCSE art and design course has a 100% pass rate for the second year in succession as do the GNVQ foundation and intermediate art and design courses. In contrast, pass rates on the national diplomas in music technology and textiles are poor, at 45% and 56%, respectively, in 2004. Managers have taken appropriate steps to seek to improve pass rates on the national diploma in music technology and there are some improvements, but issues remain to be resolved, particularly with the current first year group. The overall retention rate for the area is good, at 86%, and most course retention rates are at least at the national average. During the inspection the attendance rate was 72%, which is low.

105. Attainment of a wide range of skills on most courses is good. Students develop good personal skills, including confidence in their artistic and creative abilities, concentration and time management. They work effectively in groups and take responsibility for their own learning on individual projects. Independent study, research and creative thinking improve their work. One GNVQ intermediate student was able to explain the improvements in the quality of her work as a result of detailed research. Some high-quality work is produced showing good visual awareness, good use of tools and materials and application of creative thinking. Students are enthusiastic and make valuable contributions to discussions and work hard in lessons. They have good relationships with teachers.

106. Progression to employment from many courses is good. For example, a past student of the photojournalism course is a photographer for national and local newspapers, whilst another has received a BAFTA award for his flash animation. There are well-established internal progression routes, especially from the GNVQ art and design students, with many students progressing to HE.

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 foundation art and design	1	No. of starts	17	*	15
		% retention	82	*	87
		% pass rate	93	*	100
GNVQ intermediate media communications and production	2	No. of starts	19	16	15
		% retention	79	69	93
		% pass rate	73	91	93
AS-level art studies/fine art	3	No. of starts	79	77	56
		% retention	73	77	77
		% pass rate	84	75	88
Access to photojournalism	3	No. of starts	*	16	17
		% retention	*	81	82
		% pass rate	*	100	100

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

107. Teaching is often good. Most lessons are planned well and provide a good framework for learning. In the best lessons, the different learning needs of students are addressed, both in planning and in practice. Teachers plan a wide variety of activities and provide opportunities for students to work to the best of their abilities. Students benefit from some good evaluative individual feedback in practical lessons. Students are clear what they have to do to improve their work. In some lessons, they are encouraged to comment on and evaluate their own work and that of others. Learning is good. In practical lessons, students make connections between theory and practical work. One group of GNVQ students were able to see the influence of Japanese art on Western artists and use Japanese styles and techniques in their work.

108. Specialist resources are good. They are excellent for digital media. Four modern, fully equipped studios contain a large quantity of industry-standard hardware and software. A well-used, drop-in computer centre allows students to work independently. They benefit from a library that has a good stock of up-to-date specialist books and journals. Good use is made in lessons of high-quality reference materials to inspire and inform students' work. Three studio technicians provide good support for daytime classes, but not for all evening courses. Excellent support is provided by photography technicians. Some photographic equipment needs updating.

109. Most accommodation is good, with large bright rooms, suitable for the activities taking place. Accommodation for photography, for example, allows good access to darkrooms and studios. However, some accommodation is inappropriate. Some lessons in the large, partitioned, open-plan computer room are disrupted by noise, and some classrooms can only be reached by walking through others. This is distracting for students. Some of the general classrooms in the basement have no natural light and can feel oppressive.

110. Teachers are well qualified, with a wealth of industrial experience. Most have higher qualifications and current industry experience and are specialists in their field. They undertake commissions and enter national competitions. Most have teaching qualifications or are working towards them.

111. The quality of pre-enrolment information advice and guidance is good. Students' induction is effective. Students are aware of the wide range of student support services available and how to access them. Students' tutorials are well planned and managed. Assignment work is planned well

and marked fairly, with helpful comments by teachers. Initial assessment identifies students' additional needs. Individual learning plans are in place, but there is inconsistency in the level to which they are used to set targets and drive forward students' progress.

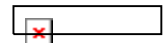
112. A good range of relevant courses attract students from a wide geographical area. Specialist courses are available at levels 1, 2 and 3. The curriculum reflects the current trends in the creative industries, whilst maintaining more traditional routes. Aspects of digital technology attract a larger than average number of female students. Animation and three-dimensional are particularly popular with the younger students. Enrichment activities provide many opportunities for external visits to galleries, museums and other places of interest. Over 20 visiting speakers, including, film directors and producers, advertising specialists and disc jockeys contribute to the programme.

Leadership and management

113. The provision is well managed. Managers and staff are dynamic and proactive, working effectively together, with an emphasis on quality improvement and supporting and developing staff and students. Teachers are fully involved in the work of the department. The student representative system provides valuable information to managers and staff. Managers use high-quality data effectively for target setting and monitoring. Self-assessment, internal verification and course reviews highlight strengths and weaknesses and identified actions are followed-up. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Quality is also improved through the work of the staff mentor. Too few teachers are observed as part of the college's scheme of lesson observation.

114. The area promotes equality of opportunity and diversity, both in the curriculum and through working relationships between teachers and students. Appropriate adaptations are made to ensure that the work of the department is available and accessible to all.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high retention rates

- good pass rates for most AS-level and GCE A-level courses in 2004

- good development of students' analytical skills

- very good teaching

- excellent progression to HE from access courses

- good guidance and support for students

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- few high grades in AS-level and GCE A-level subjects

- lack of punctuality by students on some courses.

Scope of provision

115. There are 656 students enrolled on humanities courses. Of these, 519 are aged 16 to 18, mainly at the sixth form college at Poplar, studying AS-level and GCE A-level subjects. Most of the 137 adult students are enrolled on the access to HE programme at Arbour Square. The most popular AS-level and GCE A-level subjects are government and politics, law, psychology and sociology, with smaller cohorts in history and AS-level geography. AS-level world development, philosophy and critical thinking have recently been introduced. The access to HE provision is organised as a modular programme through seven linked pathways. The humanities area contributes government and politics, history, law, psychology, sociology and south Asian studies to this programme, all at level 3. There is no level 2 provision.

Achievement and standards

116. Retention rates are consistently high. Retention rates for all AS-level and GCE A-level subjects exceeded the national average during the last three years. In 2004, pass rates for all subjects, except history and AS-level sociology, were comfortably higher than the national averages. However, pass rates for AS-level psychology, with the largest number of students, have declined for three years. Pass rates for AS-level sociology, while improving, have not yet reached the national average. In a number of subjects, students do not achieve the results indicated by their previous performance in GCSE examinations. Students also achieve few high grades. The pass rate for the access to HE programme is in line with the national average and progression to HE is excellent. All students who completed university applications in 2003/04 were offered places.

117. Attainment in most lessons is good or better. Students demonstrate a good understanding of their subjects and make references to key principles, research and theories during discussion and in written work. More confident students contribute to discussions without prompting. There is good development of students' analytical skills. They make clear links with previous learning. They are willing to challenge established theories and in some cases propose their own. For example, in a psychology lesson about eating disorders, a student suggested that anorexia could be a problem associated with the way the brain communicates visual messages. Teachers are aware of the barriers faced by students with low confidence and ask them direct questions to involve them in discussions. Punctuality and attendance are poor on some courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	40	66	42
		% retention	95	88	81
		% pass rate	66	72	74
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	47	76	88
		% retention	89	93	88
		% pass rate	93	85	75
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	67	80	81
		% retention	90	90	90
		% pass rate	58	60	74
GCE A-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	31	35	27
		% retention	97	94	96
		% pass rate	90	79	92
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	26	37	54
		% retention	88	92	98
		% pass rate	91	85	100
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	22	32	92
		% retention	100	97	92
		% pass rate	95	94	97
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	99	111	97
		% retention	72	76	76
		% pass rate	70	73	73

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

Quality of education and training

118. Teaching is good or better. In the better lessons, teachers are dynamic and enthusiastic and use effective strategies to ensure students' full participation. Many lessons take account of the individual needs and interests of students, including specific targets for some students. Teachers make good use of group discussions to promote learning and to encourage and challenge students to think analytically. There is a strong focus on the development of transferable skills, such as the ability to present convincing arguments, to develop and use presentation skills and to develop independent learning skills. Most classrooms have displays of students' work and teachers reinforce learning by referring to these during lessons. Many teachers make skilful use of the interactive whiteboards. In the weaker lessons, teachers' management of group discussions is insufficient and they fail to take account of students' different learning styles. In these lessons, there is less engagement with students and some become bored and lose interest.

119. Teachers are well qualified. All but one have teaching qualifications. Most are full time. Accommodation is good, although in one lesson the classroom was slightly cramped. Students can access a range of online IT resources, both at college and from home.

120. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are very effective. Students receive much support in their studies and in preparing for examinations. Most teachers provide very clear feedback on students' work. On access courses, students receive particularly helpful and detailed feedback. On many GCE assignments, teachers give clear, constructive feedback and indicate what students

need to do in order to improve and raise the standard of their work. However, on a few assignments, the quality of the feedback is inadequate and does not address poor writing skills, such as poor grammar and sentence construction.

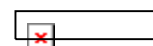
121. There is a good range of AS-level and GCE A-level humanities subjects. New AS-level courses have been introduced this year to cater for the broad range of students' interests and abilities. These include world development, philosophy and critical thinking. The access to HE provision is very flexible, offering a variety of pathways, allowing students to choose a programme comprising units of academic and vocational study.

122. Guidance and support for students are good. Tutorials are well organised and delivered. The innovative work of the tutorial support worker, identifying and supporting students who have attendance problems, is invaluable. There is much support available for students who need additional help with their studies. For example, in regular workshops, teachers provide guidance to students on writing skills and examination techniques or provide help with topics covered in lessons. The college also has an arrangement with a local university through which students receive support from undergraduate mentors.

Leadership and management

123. Curriculum management is good. Since the previous inspection, action has been taken to address the weaknesses then identified. Staff have a strong sense of purpose and a shared sense of commitment towards improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is a mutual respect between staff and students and staff are sensitive to the individual needs and culture of their students. Communication between staff and managers is good. Quality assurance is thorough and inclusive. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Regular meetings agree actions to improve teaching and learning and students' progress. There are good opportunities for teachers to develop their teaching skills. For example, new teachers are part of a peer mentoring group, led by an experienced teacher and an ICT tutor helps them to develop their skills in using these technologies in lessons.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- good retention rates on most courses

- good pass rates on key skills communication level 1, literacy national tests on short courses and GCSE English

- very good teaching and learning

- accomplished team of exceptionally skilled and experienced teachers

- good resources and accommodation
- wide range of provision, offering good progression
- particularly good support for students
- outstanding leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of learning activities to meet individual needs.

Scope of provision

124. Skills for Life is at the heart of the curriculum. The college offers a range of literacy and numeracy courses from entry level to level 2 at the three main sites, in community centres and in the workplace. In addition, the college offers key skills in communication and the application of number, GCSE English and additional learning support on mainstream courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 3,469 students enrolled on these courses. Many courses are designed across curriculum areas. For example, courses that combine vocational studies with ESOL and pathway courses at levels 1 and 2 are taught by teams of literacy and ESOL teachers alongside vocational specialists in six subject areas.

Achievement and standards

125. Students' achievements are good on most courses. Retention rates on literacy and numeracy courses have been maintained at 85% since 2001. The pass rate for all literacy courses has improved significantly, from 71% in 2001/02 to 86 % in 2003/04. Similarly, the numeracy pass rate has increased from 70% in 2001/02, to 81% in 2003/04. More than 70% of students on literacy and numeracy courses at level 1 progress to other programmes at the college. The GCSE English pass rate at grades A* to C for 2003/04 is well above the national average, at 61%. The retention rates for the key skills of communication and the application of number at level 1 are very good. The pass rate for communication is good at 72% and for the application of number it is significantly above the low national average. The pass rate for literacy achievements test at levels 1 and 2 on short courses in 2003/04 is good, at 75%, but poor for the long courses, at 35%. The college has implemented a strategy for improvement, including closer monitoring of students' progress and the introduction of online testing. Retention and pass rates for students receiving additional learning support are good.

126. Students make excellent progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and language skills. The standard of work in the majority of lessons is very good. Students are actively encouraged to develop their independent learning skills. Attendance and punctuality are generally good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English (grades A* to C)	2	No. of starts	178	228	188
		% retention	81	80	73
		% pass rate	52	62	61
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	35	183	122
		% retention	66	99	89
		% pass rate	70	52	72
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	188	231	225
		% retention	66	100	92
		% pass rate	23	42	40
Literacy achievement tests (one year)	1 and 2	No. of starts	143	77	257
		% retention	97	69	95
		% pass rate	79	91	35
Literacy achievement tests (short courses)	1 and 2	No. of starts	363	240	268
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	70	54	75

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

Quality of education and training

127. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have high expectations of students. They use a range of challenging activities to motivate and inspire students. Teaching is very well planned to meet individual needs within group settings. Schemes of work are detailed and cross-referenced to the national core curricula and relevant qualifications. Classroom management is particularly effective on introductory and foundation vocational courses for students aged 16 to 18. In the best lessons, literacy, numeracy and language skills are developed in the vocational context. Students on an introductory motor vehicle maintenance course successfully converted metric measurements related to the height and width of vehicles. Students confidently articulated how they applied their number skills in their work. In a few lessons, there is insufficient focus on a specific context for the literacy, numeracy or language learning.

128. GCSE English teaching is challenging and at times inspirational. Students are confident in their understanding of poetic devices. They are competent in close reading and analysis of texts and poetry. One student cogently explained to his peers the biblical references in the title of a poem and how this influenced his reading of the text. This generated a lively discussion.

129. Additional learning support is well planned and taught. Students have access to a wide range of support. They receive effective one-to-one tutoring in the drop-in centre, as well as guidance to help them use online learning activities. In the best lesson support, careful preparation ensures that literacy, numeracy and language development is successfully incorporated in learning activities, to meet the needs of individuals. Students display highly developed skills in using ICT to extend their underpinning knowledge. For example, a group of students on a creative IT course confidently used a database to revise the application of the mean, mode and median values. Effective communication between subject and support teachers enables successful tracking of students' progress.

130. Teaching on courses combining ESOL with vocational studies is particularly good, with exceptionally well-planned and creative integration of language development. In a beauty therapy lesson, students' understanding and use of specialist language was innovatively checked by the completion of a spelling grid, broken down into basic terms, specialist tools and 'lotions and potions'.

There is a good focus on developing oral skills.

131. Accommodation and resources are good. Teachers are exceptionally accomplished, skilled and experienced. They have appropriate qualifications. Students speak highly of the professionalism and dedication of teachers. Teachers and support staff undertake regular professional development. This has helped them to confidently use the interactive whiteboards. The specialist classrooms for literacy and numeracy have well-displayed resources and ILT for students' use. The college's computer-based curriculum web has a wide range of attractive in-house and commercially produced resources. This provides an effective platform to share ideas and good practice.

132. Initial assessment is well managed and identifies students' levels of literacy, numeracy and key skills. Graded lessons in literacy and numeracy are successful in ensuring that students start at the appropriate level for their abilities and prior attainment. Most teachers set realistic, challenging targets with students. Tutorials are regular and effective. Students' progress is monitored and reviewed against targets in the individual learning plans. There are inconsistencies in the quality of target setting. Targets are not always sufficiently specific and the tasks are too broad. Students' progress is sometimes recorded as a list of work done rather than an evaluation of the skills developed. Assessment and verification procedures are thorough and rigorous. Homework is set regularly and assessed against common marking schemes. Feedback is detailed and helps students to improve their skills.

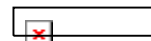
133. A wide range of provision offers very good progression routes. The college has developed a highly effective strategy in partnership with the borough to widen participation. The newly opened 'Ideas Store' is a joint initiative offering literacy, numeracy and language courses alongside library and computer facilities. Skills for Life courses are run in an extensive range of localities to meet students' needs. Information about the six, broad career pathways available at the college is widely advertised. Students receive excellent advice and guidance on progression opportunities. The college offers an exciting range of enrichment activities which are valued by students.

134. Students receive very good academic and pastoral support. Initial advice and guidance are effective. Course advisers are appropriately trained and experienced. Rigorous diagnostic assessment informs the choice of level of students' study and their individual learning plans. Assessment of additional learning needs is co-ordinated by the additional support team, working closely with personal tutors to ensure effective support. Students with dyslexia or dysphasia are assessed by trained staff and given appropriate support. Support workers very ably help students in lessons. Students use the college's Employment Solutions for support to seek work. Introductory information about the college's services is available in an excellent version suitable for students on entry level programmes and in a variety of community languages. Students value the breadth of support they receive.

Leadership and management

135. Leadership and management are outstanding. The dynamic vision for Skills for Life is central to the college's mission. It is integral to the strategy developed by the senior management team to improve retention and pass rates. The clear strategic direction is effectively implemented by programme and course leaders. The Skills for Life task group contributes significantly to raising standards by careful monitoring of provision and identifying priority areas for improvement. Challenging targets for literacy and numeracy have been met for the past three years. The self-assessment report accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses. Teams work collaboratively to raise standards of teaching and learning. The peer lesson observation process works well. Sharing of good practice is particularly successful and valued by teachers. The development of the Skills for Life professional development centre, one of three in East London, has had a dramatic impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on externally accredited courses

- much good teaching

- highly effective use of ILT in teaching and learning

- wide range of innovative and responsive programmes to meet the needs of students, the community and employers

- strong team of experienced and committed staff

- good management of a large and complex range of provision.

Weaknesses

- lack of clear learning objectives in weaker sessions

- inadequate target setting on some individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

136. The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time ESOL courses from entry level to level 2 on all college sites, in 40 community venues and in the workplace. Courses are available in the daytime and in the evenings. The ESOL provision is located in three programme areas providing courses for 3,126 students and key skills and literacy, numeracy and language support across the college. Some 66% of all enrolments in the foundation programme are in ESOL.

Achievement and standards

137. Achievement is good and improving. A high percentage of students progress to higher levels within the ESOL programme and to other college courses. Many students who leave the college gain

employment or continue their studies. There are opportunities for internal and external accreditation for all students. Overall pass rates on externally accredited courses are good, at 83%. In the Certificate in English Language Skills (CELS) examination, 25% of students passed with merit. In the English Speaking Board examination, 40% of students achieved a credit or distinction.

138. Students achieve a good standard in reading and writing. In one outstanding entry-level lesson, students were able to use a range of challenging and complex vocabulary in a discussion about crime. Students' increasing confidence in their use of English can clearly be seen in such lessons. Students also gain confidence to interact socially. Adult students are able to use their newly acquired language skills in their personal lives. During the inspection, attendance was good, at 79%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English for speakers of other languages, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
English Speaking Board, certificate in spoken communication and presentation	entry	No. of starts	266	1189	296
		% retention	98	89	87
		% pass rate	84	79	80
Trinity graded examination in spoken English	entry	No. of starts	*	40	129
		% retention	*	90	93
		% pass rate	*	64	84
Pitmans Examination Institute, ESOL	entry	No. of starts	**	36	204
		% retention	**	100	84
		% pass rate	**	67	64
Pitmans Examination Institute, ESOL	1	No. of starts	*	25	86
		% retention	*	100	77
		% pass rate	*	60	82

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

* course did not run

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

139. Much of the teaching is good or better. Some is outstanding. Most lessons are well managed with effective introductory activities and logical progression. There is an appropriate balance of speaking, listening and writing tasks. In the best lessons, students do most of the talking, with few prompts from the teacher. Teachers correct mistakes by students and emphasise accuracy. The best lessons are imaginatively planned and include a variety of activities that make good use of interesting, relevant and engaging contexts. For example, in one lesson, students created a crossword puzzle using words related to multicultural topics.

140. ILT is used highly effectively in lessons. Interactive whiteboards are used well to focus students' attention on key points. Audio and video equipment is used effectively. In one entry-level lesson, students were creating their own websites to keep their electronic portfolios. Their use of ILT is carefully monitored to track their progress. Teachers are participating in a national project in this area. All students have an e-mail address and use it to send their homework to their teachers.

141. Weaker lessons lack clear objectives. Too much time is spent on dull and repetitive activities, such as completing written worksheets. There is insufficient development of students' oral skills. In teacher-led lessons, students have too little opportunity for extended speaking. Some teachers miss

opportunities to correct common errors and use them as incidental teaching points.

142. Resources are good. High-quality printed resources are used effectively to support learning. National core curriculum materials are used by the majority of teachers. A number of high-quality, interesting booklets, such as 'Quick Cook Bengali Recipes,' written by students are used well on entry level courses. There is a strong team of experienced, highly qualified and committed staff. Many are leading on national initiatives, for example, 'Embedded ESOL in Vocational Areas', and ICT and ESOL projects. Learning resources are good in community venues. Many are equipped with laptop computers and staff have access to the college's virtual learning environment. Teaching rooms are fit for purpose and have good displays that include advice on study skills and clear statements relating to students' responsibilities. The accommodation at Bethnal Green is of a notably poorer quality than other centres.

143. A thorough and detailed, initial diagnostic assessment is used to place students on an appropriate level of programme. There are good checks on students' learning throughout their studies. On the 'Further Education for Young Adults' programme, students receive detailed progress reports. Homework is set regularly and marked with encouraging comments. A common marking policy is used by all staff to correct students' written work. Standardisation and moderation on internally accredited courses is rigorous.

144. Individual learning plans are not always used effectively to help students learn independently. In some lessons, students have identical learning targets. Grammar points are sometimes used as learning targets set outside any meaningful context. Some teachers are unclear about setting relevant targets appropriate to the needs of individual students. Useful information about individual students and their language needs is not always used to plan teaching.

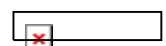
145. Support for students is good. Information about courses and progression routes is clear. Good advice and guidance are available to help new and existing students choose the right courses. There is an effective tutorial system for both full-time and part-time students. Teachers monitor students' attendance rigorously and challenge poor punctuality. ESOL students progressing to mainstream courses are provided with language support individually during their lessons, in small groups or in workshops. Language support is advertised around the college and students are encouraged to take up this support. All students are given a well-designed diary containing useful information about their courses and details of support services. Childcare facilities are available at the main sites and at community venues. There is an extensive enrichment programme of visits to places of cultural interest.

Leadership and management

146. Leadership and management are good. A complex and innovative range of courses meet the needs of stakeholders. Partnerships with community and voluntary organisations and with employers are very good. There are good links with HE. Managers are actively involved in curriculum matters. Communication between teachers is good. They work well together and share good practice. Part-time teachers and those in community venues are well supported. New teachers have mentors to support them. There is a comprehensive staff development plan. Teachers' performance is monitored through lesson observations. Key themes for improvement in teaching are delivered through a well-designed modular training programme.

147. Teachers actively encourage students to share their cultural values and heritage in lessons. The quality assurance system effectively monitors and reviews courses. Students' views and the needs of the community and employers are considered in new course developments. Resources are deployed effectively to widen participation.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- outstanding provision in catering

- lively and engaging teaching

- effective use of good accommodation and resources.

Weaknesses

- inadequate formal evidence of students' achievements

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs

- inappropriate activities or teaching methods for less able students.

Scope of provision

148. The college runs two full-time courses, for 15 school leavers with learning difficulties, as part of the sixth form college provision at Poplar. 'Move On 2', with nine students, has been designed to replace a previous course which did not meet the needs of students with more severe learning difficulties. 'Move On 1' caters for students who are not yet able to cope with Move On 2. Both courses are in their first year of operation. Additional full-time students follow the NVQ level 1 catering programme. Some 120 part-time adult students select subjects of their choice from a wide range of modules at the Arbour Square site and in other nearby accommodation. A small franchised provision, Poetry in Wood, operates in a local training centre. A link course is offered for Year 11 pupils in a local special school for children with special educational needs.

Achievement and standards

149. Students' achievements and the standard of their work are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. In catering, they are outstanding. Students prepare food to commercial standards. They are frequently commissioned by both the college and outside organisations to provide buffets for prestigious events. Move On 2 students are able to move independently around the college confidently and purposefully, delivering letters to staff, and putting up posters as well as using the canteen and other facilities of their own choosing. In the franchised provision, students used power tools with confidence to produce highly individualised clocks. However, the college does not have adequate formal evidence of students' achievements.

Quality of education and training

150. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. In all lessons, teaching is lively and engages the interest of students. As a result, students work hard and apply themselves conscientiously. In the most effective lessons, students undertake some individual work and learn a range of skills through practical activities. In an outstanding catering lesson, students prepared a selection of attractive and tasty apple desserts. In a very good ceramics lesson, adult students with severe learning difficulties worked with high levels of concentration as they each created an animal of their choice, using drawings they had previously made as templates. The teacher made effective use of a student's work to illustrate the importance of water in joining pieces of clay, and developed students' vocabulary by encouraging them to describe the feel of the clay. Students with the most severe disabilities learn to follow verbal instructions and simple routines and conform to appropriate standards of behaviour in class, around the college and in the community.

151. In most lessons, students all work on the same activity, with the same planned learning goals, regardless of differing skills and abilities. As a result, some students cannot learn successfully as the content of lessons or the literacy skills required are beyond them. Teachers make detailed preparations for their lessons, but these are insufficiently related to students' individual learning needs. In the adult provision, the focus is sometimes on students taking part in an activity rather than learning new skills.

152. Teachers can often describe students' progress, but the college cannot yet effectively show evidence of students' overall achievements, or accurately measure all of their progress. Many achievements are therefore not recorded. Systems are improving, particularly in the work with younger students. All students have an individual learning plan, and the format of these plans is good on the Move On courses. They are not yet sufficiently developed and used successfully in measuring overall achievement, particularly in the adult provision. Many do not contain challenging goals or relevant targets against which achievement could be recorded. There are few links between students' long-term goals, their assessments, the targets on their individual learning plans and the teaching they receive. Progress against targets is rarely monitored or recorded in lessons.

153. Enthusiastic and energetic staff, from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, enables students from all backgrounds to feel safe and valued. Students' work is attractively displayed in their well-appointed base rooms. Learning resources are well used so that students with severe learning difficulties use interactive whiteboards, kitchen and woodworking equipment with confidence. The range of provision is suitable for the needs of the students and the local communities. Liaison with parents and carers is good. Learning mentors work effectively to support students in lessons and in their breaks. Students are very well known as individuals and they receive good support on personal issues.

Leadership and management

154. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The managers responsible for the different strands of the provision have successfully introduced several key improvements from the beginning of the current academic year. Courses for school leavers have been redesigned and extended, to meet their needs more effectively; the provision for adults has been changed so that students have the opportunity to come into college rather than have lessons in their day centres; and well-designed, new individual learning plans have recently been introduced.

155. Managers make accurate judgements about the quality of the provision. Quality assurance is good and leads to improvement. The self-assessment report identifies similar strengths and weaknesses to those identified through inspection and managers are already working on improving areas of concern, such as the formal assessment and recording of students' achievements and progress. Staff make good use of the extensive, well-managed opportunities for professional training and staff development and value the opportunities available to them. The extent to which equality of opportunity is promoted is very good. Relationships with local feeder schools and voluntary and statutory organisation within the borough are strong and contribute to students' ability to benefit from the college provision.

Part D: College data

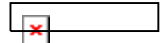
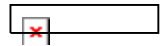


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	36	59
2	26	13
3	34	7
4/5	0	1
Other	4	20
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,349	792	9
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	12	1	0
Business administration, management and professional	308	319	3
Information and communication technology	646	924	7
Retailing, customer service and transportation	16	34	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	331	616	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	111	375	2
Health, social care and public services	229	1,494	7
Visual and performing arts and media	842	806	7
Humanities	504	348	4

English, languages and communication	455	714	5
Foundation programmes	1,066	9,911	47
Unknown area of learning	8	999	4
Total	14,618	34,882	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+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	808	988	858	422	576	816
	Retention rate %	82	78	76	75	85	75
	National average %	75	74	75	73	74	71
	Pass rate %	59	62	73	55	49	85
	National average %	64	65	73	68	68	76
2	Starters excluding transfers	961	1,049	1,002	559	702	771
	Retention rate %	76	77	78	72	76	67
	National average %	70	70	70	70	69	68
	Pass rate %	50	57	76	57	60	67
	National average %	67	67	73	64	69	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,805	1,589	1,823	730	644	401
	Retention rate %	74	85	80	77	62	72
	National average %	67	75	75	67	68	67
	Pass rate %	67	67	81	61	65	65
	National average %	70	73	76	65	69	73
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	74	37	51
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	68	78	51
	National average %	**	**	**	65	67	70
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	22	79	58
	National average %	**	**	**	50	48	56

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/ILR*

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

**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)	69	29	2	87
Level 2 (intermediate)	84	16	0	37
Level 1 (foundation)	67	29	4	24
Other sessions	65	29	6	62
Totals	70	27	3	210

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