



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

# **Inspection report**

## **Leeds College of Music**

Dates of inspection: 18–22 April 2005

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Reference:

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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Leeds College of Music
Type of college:	Specialist Music College
Principal:	David Houlton
Address of college:	3 Quarry Hill Leeds LS2 7PD
Telephone number:	0113 222 3400
Fax number:	0113 243 8798
Chair of governors:	David Thompson
Unique reference number:	130545
Name of reporting inspector:	Tony Davis
Dates of inspection:	18–22 April 2005

## **Part A: Summary**

### **Information about the college**

Leeds College of Music is the only specialist music college in the further education (FE) sector. Approximately one third of its provision is in FE. The Leeds Music Centre was established in 1966 and became Leeds College of Music in 1971. In 1997, Leeds College of Music moved into purpose-built accommodation in the centre of Leeds. The college also utilises additional teaching spaces in the Derek Fatchett Centre, the Yorkshire Dance Centre and the Bridge Street site. An additional teaching block and student halls of residence will be completed in September 2005. Leeds has four general FE colleges, a Roman Catholic sixth form college and two other specialist FE colleges: Leeds College of Art and Design and Leeds College of Building.

The college serves a population of approximately 715,400, of whom 8.2% are from minority ethnic backgrounds, according to the 2001 census, compared with 9.1% nationally. FE and higher education (HE) students are recruited regionally, nationally and internationally, though the majority of FE students are from the region. The unemployment rate in Leeds was 2.7% in February 2005 against a national average of 2.5%. In the current year, the college enrolled 601 FE students, of whom 66% are full time, and 67% of those are aged 16 to 18. The majority of part-time students are adults. The level of recruitment of students aged 16 to 18 is around the same as the previous year though there are slightly fewer adults. The majority of FE provision is at level 3. The local education authority (LEA) subcontracts some of its adult and community learning provision to the college. In 2004/05, there have been 1,465 enrolments on to adult and community learning courses, which equates to approximately 142 full-time students. The college also runs a successful Saturday morning school for pre-16 pupils.

The college has three academic departments: FE, HE and community education. The performance studies team has overall responsibility for the delivery of various strands of musical performance across the college. Teaching and learning are managed by the director of studies along with the three academic heads of departments. The principal and two other senior managers, the director of finance and administration, and the director of development undertake cross-college roles, together with the head of quality assurance and staff development, the senior tutor, and the seven other members of the board of management. The college has 38 full-time and 117 part-time teaching staff covering its HE, FE and community education work.

The college's mission is 'to provide high-quality education and training for musicians, music teachers and associated technologists at both FE and HE levels. The college is committed to innovation, in order to remain responsive to the changing needs of the profession and employers. It regards as a priority the continuing promotion of quality, equality and distinctiveness in its provision, in partnership, where appropriate, with others. It is committed to developing increased opportunities for all, and to the provision of vocational

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and non-vocational courses which are open to members of the community at all levels of musical ability and aspiration, from beginners to postgraduates. Whilst aiming to maintain its role as a significant contributor to the artistic life of the region, it also seeks to consolidate and further its position within a national, European and international context.

**How effective is the college's FE provision?**

Inspectors judged the overall quality of the college's FE provision to be inadequate because one of the two areas of learning is unsatisfactory and leadership and management of the FE provision are unsatisfactory. Standards of teaching and learning and the quality of the second area of learning are satisfactory.

***Key strengths***

- very good specialist equipment and technical support at the Quarry Hill site
- effective strategies to develop resources
- good governance
- extensive range of courses meeting the needs of the local community
- productive links with external organisations
- thorough written feedback on students' work.

***What should be improved***

- course-level operational management
- retention rates
- tutorial and academic review practice
- the proportion of very good or outstanding teaching
- the initial assessment of students' literacy and numeracy skills
- the key skills provision
- quality assurance arrangements
- the effectiveness of self-assessment and action planning
- the music technology provision.

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

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**Quality of provision in FE 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), High (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).*

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Music	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are high on a minority of programmes in music, but low on practical and theory grade examinations. Students develop good analytical and practical skills in music on a broad range of programmes in a good learning environment. Aspects of course co-ordination and some procedures to monitor students' progress are ineffective.
Music technology	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Specialist equipment and technical support on the main site are very good although there is poor soundproofing between the music technology computer suite and adjacent rehearsal rooms. The college has a good range of courses and students receive thorough written feedback on their work. Retention rates on level 3 vocational courses are low and operational management is weak at course level. Students' academic reviews and group tutorials are not sufficiently effective.

**How well is the college's FE provision led and managed?**

Leadership and management of the FE provision are unsatisfactory. The principal and the governors have effectively managed overall growth. Governance is good. Resources are very good and the learning environment is vibrant. The college is responsive to local needs. Strategic targets for the retention and pass rates of FE students are not sufficiently challenging and operational target setting is not effective. Improvements in retention and pass rates have not been maintained. The current rates of retention for a significant proportion of FE courses remain low. The overall quality of teaching and learning has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. Key skills results are poor and the management of key skills is weak. Operational management is not sufficiently effective and there are too many students for whom the provision is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for quality assurance are insufficiently thorough and have not had enough impact on courses performing poorly. The current self-assessment report is too descriptive and lacks critical analysis. Some aspects of the management information system are not well developed. Financial management is effective and the FE department provides satisfactory value for money.

**To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?**

The college's response to educational inclusion is satisfactory, and to social inclusion is good. The college responds vigorously to the needs and interests of the local community and has comprehensive links with the professional music sector. However, the retention rates of students on many courses are unsatisfactory. Courses and community project initiatives are offered both in college premises and across the region, often in collaboration with partner agencies, to serve the requirements of under-represented and underachieving groups. There is good provision for particularly talented children. Cultural diversity through music is strongly promoted. All college buildings are fully accessible, and students identified as needing support are well catered for. Policies on equal opportunities, the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) meet statutory requirements and are implemented effectively. The college has not assessed the impact of these measures, nor has it analysed numbers of students by ethnicity, postcode or gender at course level.

**How well are FE students and trainees guided and supported?**

Support for students is satisfactory. A good range of welfare, finance and accommodation support is successfully promoted, well used and accessible to full-time and part-time students. Links with local support agencies are good. Guidance and advice prior to students starting their courses ensure that most students are clearly informed about their programme requirements. Induction for the majority of students is good. Group tutors know their students well and foster good relationships. Group tutorials are not clearly planned by tutors and not all students value the sessions. The recording of students' pastoral and academic tutorials is poor and their separate purpose, in addition to other support initiatives, is unclear. The overall co-ordination of support for FE students is not wholly cohesive. There is

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insufficient detailed analysis, monitoring and measurement of the impact of additional learning support. Students with identified support needs are generally well catered for. Initial screening for students to identify additional literacy and numeracy needs, however, is not sufficient. Advice and guidance for those who apply to HE courses are effective. The college has responded appropriately to recent child protection legislation.

### **Students' views of the college**

FE students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

#### ***What FE students like about the college***

- the atmosphere in the college and being around musicians
- good support from approachable tutors
- specialist library facilities and supportive library staff
- tutors who have good experience of the industry
- the mix of musical styles and range of subjects
- the opportunities for rehearsal and performance
- technical support in music technology
- the level of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

#### ***What they feel could be improved***

- time management and the scheduling of assignments
- the level of noise from rehearsal rooms adjoining teaching rooms
- the amount of time available to spend on study skills
- the support available to develop students' confidence as performers
- provision of out-of-lesson support for music theory
- more use of the 'blackboard' (virtual learning environment)
- availability of practice rooms
- the facilities at the Bridge Street site.

**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's FE provision as a whole

### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded high or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	71	23	6
19+ and WBL*	67	33	0
Learning 16–18	76	18	6
19+ and WBL*	67	33	0

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

*\*work-based learning*

### Achievement and standards

1. From 2001 to 2004, retention rates on FE courses have been volatile for all levels and ages except for level 3 students aged 16 to 18. In 2003/04, for students aged 16 to 18, all retention rates at all levels were broadly in line with national averages. At levels 1 and 2, there had been a significant fall in the retention rates from 2001/02 to 2002/03 and then an improvement in 2003/04 to around the national average. At level 3, retention rates rose steadily to around the national average in 2003/04. For adult students in 2003/04, all retention rates were also broadly in line with national averages. At levels 1 and 2, there had been a significant fall in the retention rate from 2001/02 to 2002/03 to 19 and 20 percentage points respectively below the national averages, followed by a rise in 2003/04 to around the national averages. At level 3, the retention rate improved by 14 percentage points to 69% in 2002/03, but fell to the national average of 59% in 2003/04.

2. At the time of inspection, the retention rate for a number of significant courses had declined or shown no signs of improvement. Of the 102 students who started the national diploma in music technology, only 48 (47%) were still in learning, a drop of 5 percentage points on the previous year. Current retention rates have also declined for the full-time level 2 course in popular music, the national award in music practice, the national diploma in music and the national diploma in popular music. The current retention rate for the level 2 music technology course has shown no signs of significant improvement. The current retention rates on the college's new national diplomas in performing arts and media (audio) are 50% and 39% respectively.

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3. Pass rates for all ages and levels have declined from 2002/03 to 2003/04 to around the same levels as in 2001/02, except for students aged 16 to 18 at level 2 where the pass rate in 2001 was very low. For students aged 16 to 18 in 2003/04, pass rates in additional specialist music qualifications at level 1 were 32 percentage points below the national average at 41%, a drop of 27 percentage points from the previous year. Pass rates at levels 2 and 3 declined by 5 percentage points from the previous year; level 2 to the national average of 74%, and level 3 to 5 percentage points below the national average at 80%. For adult students in 2003/04, pass rates at level 1 were 22 percentage points below the national average and 5 percentage points lower than the previous year. At level 2, pass rates were 9 percentage points below the national average and 13 percentage points lower than the previous year. Pass rates at level 3 were 3 percentage points above the national average, but had declined by 4 percentage points from the previous year.

4. Achievement of additional specialist music qualifications is poor. Of the 345 students who enrolled on music theory qualifications, only 120 (35%) passed the qualification and, of the 199 students who enrolled on music practical qualifications, only 85 (43%) passed the qualification. Pass rates for the additional key skills qualifications of application of number, communication and information technology (IT) are low. Of the 413 key skills enrolments in 2003/04, only 64 (16%) resulted in success. Students are most successful at key skills communication, where 38% of the 58 level 2 students, and half of the 8 level 3 students, passed their qualification.

5. For the most part, the data supplied by the college were judged to be accurate. However, it was not possible to disaggregate or investigate certain data issues satisfactorily during the inspection.

6. The college does not have a systematic scheme for comparing students' on-course achievement grades with their previous achievements in order to measure progress made or value added. The individual academic review process to discuss students' ongoing progress was identified as a weakness in both curriculum areas.

7. Overall attendance during the week of inspection was unsatisfactory at 77%, but in line with the college's ongoing attendance records. Attendance was lower in music technology lessons at 73%. Overall attendance by adult students was very low at 61% and overall attendance at part-time and agency teachers' lessons was lower than for full-time teachers, at 72% and 67% respectively.

8. Around 10% of students who enrol on FE courses have progressed from the college's community provision and around 72% of successful students move into HE. The number of full-time students enrolling in 2004/05 is lower than the previous year by 5 percentage points for students aged 16 to 18 and by 12 percentage points for adults. This is due in most part to the withdrawal of the national certificate and national diploma courses in musical instrument technology. The number of part-time students remains about the same as the previous year.

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9. When considering the standards of students' work, inspectors found no discernible difference between the work of students aged 16 to 18 and adults. On music courses, students' work is of a high standard and they are confident in a range of musical styles. They display good musicality and have a sound grasp of music theory. The standard of music technology students' work is satisfactory. They are developing their knowledge and experience of a wide range of music technology equipment and software as well as their critical thinking and practical skills.

10. The separate reports on areas of learning in part C provide more detail about students' achievements and the standards reached on particular courses.

### **Quality of education and training**

11. The quality of teaching and learning in FE is satisfactory. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 38 lessons. They judged that teaching and learning were good or better in 66% of lessons, satisfactory in 29% and unsatisfactory in 5%. The proportion of good or better lessons is slightly below the national average for this area of learning in colleges inspected in 2003/04. Outstanding teaching was observed in 5% of lessons. The standards of teaching and learning in part-time and agency teachers' lessons are consistent with those of full-time teachers on music courses, although less effective on courses taught within music technology. Teaching and learning for adult students are satisfactory. Both teaching and learning are better in lessons for level 3 students.

12. Teachers' specialist expertise and current music-related industrial knowledge benefits students significantly. Many lessons enable students to link theory and practice effectively. Information and learning technology (ILT) is used appropriately to support teaching and learning. Soundproofing in FE music technology studios is poor and significantly impedes students' learning, often making it difficult for them to concentrate or hear what is being taught. The development of analytical and practical skills in music lessons is good. In musical theatre there is insufficient teaching and development of students' acting abilities. In many lessons, teachers fail to highlight and develop students' key skills.

13. In the best lessons, students' attention is gained and they learn quickly. Activities are varied and teachers use skilful questioning to check students' understanding. In these lessons, students are stimulated and inspired to learn. They are actively encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own performance and the performance of their peers. Group discussions are encouraged and are particularly effective within music performance. In the less effective lessons, teachers talk for too long and use limited teaching methods which fail to involve students. Progress is often slow in these lessons and there is insufficient checking of students' learning, particularly within theory subjects. Many lessons are taught in isolation with little cross-referencing by teachers to other lessons. Teachers do not build on students' learning and experiences from previous lessons and do not highlight the relevance of theoretical aspects in practical contexts.

14. The college has an attractive new building in a convenient city-centre location. The entrance foyer contains an airy, bright and spacious café and bar where HE and FE musicians

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and staff can socialise. There are very good specialist resources. A good range of high-quality performance spaces is used for performances, master-class lessons and to generate revenue. Students have access to a large selection of musical instruments and music technology equipment from efficiently run stores. Well-equipped studios and media rooms on the main site have very good technical support. The library has a large collection of specialist materials including carefully cross-referenced recordings in a range of media, sets of music scores, periodicals and commentaries.

15. Nearly all full-time academic staff in FE hold, or are working towards, qualified teacher status and the college is on track to meet LSC targets for part-time staff to gain qualifications. Teachers are vocationally qualified and many have relevant experience. Most instrumental tutors are current practitioners. Teachers' skills are developed during staff development days and part-time staff are encouraged, and paid, to attend. The college is very active in promoting health and safety. Progress in response to the SENDA audit is satisfactory. There is no suitable public performance space in the college for staged musical theatre. A new building, opening in September 2005, will allow the college to move some of its provision and withdraw from rented accommodation.

16. Assessment is thorough, regular and frequent. Assignment briefs are subject to a cycle of design and review. Assessors often work in teams to ensure consistency. Marking is rigorous and standardised. Helpful and focused written and verbal feedback give good guidance to students on how to improve. Tutors use electronic records to monitor students' progress and achievements. Internal verification is thorough. On community programmes, progress is monitored through individual learning plans. These are simple, but used effectively to negotiate and plan personal and tutor-led targets relating to students' individual programmes. Parents are kept informed of their son's or daughter's progress through annual open evenings.

17. Initial assessment of entrants to FE courses is not used routinely. Only students with general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades below C in mathematics and English are screened to identify additional learning support needs. All students are interviewed, but records of these interviews are too descriptive and not sufficiently evaluative. The initial assessment of music technology students' capacity to succeed on the course is not based sufficiently on previous experience and ability. Full-time music students sit a theory test which defines the theory grade they will study, but is not used to identify particular support needs. Prospective student performers must pass an entry audition. Records of these are brief and make recommendations for action. The initial assessment of FE students is not used effectively in developing their individual learning plans. Outcomes from initial assessment are poorly recorded and lack detail. Set learning goals are based on achievement in assignments and do not focus sufficiently on students' skills and personal development.

18. Throughout their course, the planning of FE students' progress is reactive and not based on previously set targets or goals. Progress is poorly recorded and insufficiently specific, and measurable targets are not set. Students are not motivated to meet demanding

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goals. Music students keep an instrumental practice log, but this is not used consistently to plan or monitor their work, or to encourage reflective practice. FE students' progress is monitored termly at individual academic reviews with their tutor. These sessions are constructive and personal, and academic goals are discussed. However, records of the discussions are often lacking in detail, and monitoring and evaluation of progress are ineffective. Students do not receive a written record of the session.

19. The college offers a very good range of music courses to meet the diverse interests and needs of the community. Full-time and part-time vocational courses are offered at intermediate and advanced levels, and a wide range of courses is available for beginners. Good links exist with local colleges to provide students with wider access to general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) subjects. Progression opportunities to HE and training are good. There is good provision for musically talented school children.

20. Students' individual needs for tuition in music theory and instrumental playing are met well. All students have many opportunities to perform in a variety of public venues and in the college's regular stimulating informal lunchtime recitals. Enrichment activities provide further opportunities to play together, often alongside more accomplished performers.

21. Substantial provision is available in the community, and the college promotes culturally eclectic music to the local population with vision and passion. By playing a leading part in many multi-agency projects, the college enables people of all ages and technical abilities to make music across a wide cultural spectrum. The college takes its provision into targeted communities and works through the family learning centres in Leeds to involve many people who are unlikely to attend more conventional courses. Links with schools and other educational establishments are good, and the connections the college maintains with current professional practitioners are of substantial benefit to students. An active business advisory board ensures that employers are closely involved in the strategic development of the college.

22. Pass rates in key skills are low, and there is insufficient attention paid to ensuring that students develop their skills in communication, numeracy and information and communications technology to the levels that will enable them to succeed in HE or gain future employment. The college's management of the teaching and assessment of key skills is unsatisfactory.

23. Support for students is satisfactory. Students can receive help on a good range of welfare, finance and accommodation issues. Support staff take part in open days and induction to ensure their services are promoted. Links with local support agencies are good. For example, in some cases, liaison with doctors, parents and specific services such as community mental health teams has supported vulnerable students to continue their studies. There is very good promotion of students' well-being through posters and available literature. Pre-entry guidance and support ensure most students are clearly informed of the requirements of their course. The overall monitoring of students' support is not wholly cohesive. There is insufficiently detailed analysis and measurement of the impact of additional support on learning and attainment. The current location of student support services does not encourage

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an integrated approach to the provision. Plans are in place, however, to relocate support services in the new college extension. Students' views are routinely collected through questionnaires at the end of the academic year and actions are identified and fed back to students by means of a leaflet.

24. Induction for most students is effective and enables them to settle quickly into their course. During the two-week induction period, all FE students are given the opportunity to participate in a range of ice-breaking activities. For example, a trip to the local 10-pin bowling alley was subsidised by the college to enable students to get to know their peers and teachers.

25. The quality of individual tutorials is variable. All full-time students have a designated group tutor who is responsible for reporting on their academic progress. Relationships between students and their tutors are good. Group tutors, however, are not responsible for discussing and recording pastoral issues. Formal welfare reviews are held twice a year by separate welfare advisors to discuss students' pastoral needs. The purpose of these specific welfare reviews in addition to the range of support available and their relationship to students' academic progress reviews are unclear to many students. The recording of students' pastoral and academic issues is poor with many written comments being too cursory. Group tutorials are not planned clearly by tutors and not all students value the sessions. Promotion of equality and diversity through tutorials is adequate. Tutorials are not observed as part of the college's internal observation process. Most part-time students are supported well. Advice and guidance for those who apply to HE are effective.

26. Students who are identified as needing learning support prior to enrolling or at an early stage in their course are generally well-supported, although additional in-class help is not provided. Those identified with dyslexia needs are allocated laptops, voice recording devices or extra time for assignments. Initial screening for FE students with additional literacy and numeracy needs is insufficient. Many students who do not qualify for initial assessment, but may require extra help with their studies are not identified automatically at an early stage in the course. All students can use a study skills drop-in facility to request help with issues such as proofreading or time management.

27. A senior support manager and a governor have the designated responsibility for child protection issues. Appropriate policies and procedures for child protection are in place. Most staff and governors have been made aware of the policy through a college newsletter and the college's intranet. Formal awareness training, however, is not planned until the end of the academic year. In addition, the college has a newly introduced policy for identifying and supporting students with mental health issues.

28. The systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality are good. A new electronic student tracking system provides a rigorous and consistent approach to monitoring the attendance of individual students. However, attendance remains slightly below the national average for colleges of this type.

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**Leadership and management**

29. Leadership and management of FE are unsatisfactory. The principal provides strong and supportive leadership with a determined focus on growth and development and the principal and the governors have managed overall growth effectively. Resources are very good and senior managers have been effective in creating a vibrant and lively culture within the college. The principal and governors are committed to FE which represents around a third of the students in the college and contributes around 37% to the overall income. The college has effective partnerships with a number of local, regional and national bodies that benefit students. Links with local community and employers promote good local developments. For example, the college is a lead partner in a high-profile local project in Yorkshire to promote music. Links with HE institutions are well established.

30. Since the last inspection, overcrowding for FE students has been resolved and new teaching and residential accommodation has been built which will open in September 2005. The effectiveness of staff appraisals has improved and they are now adequate. Students receive appropriate feedback about managements' responses to questionnaires. Up to 2003/04, FE retention rates improved from 57% to 74% for level 3 students aged 16 to 18. Retention rates for adult FE students and pass rates for both age groups have fluctuated above and below the college's 1999 figures and, in 2003/04, were around the same rates as those reported at the last inspection. However, current rates of retention for a significant proportion of courses have declined over the last year, remain low or have not shown sufficient improvements over the last two years. The college has started two new full-time national diploma courses. Retention rates for the new courses, which are in their second year, are low. The overall quality of teaching and learning in FE has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. Some aspects of FE group tutorials remain weak and there are still deficiencies in the analysis of data on students' performance.

31. The college is the only specialist FE music college in the country and is regarded in high esteem in the communities that it serves. However, overall targets for the retention and pass rates of FE students are not sufficiently challenging. Operational target setting is not effective and targets within the operational plans are not always precise. For example, targets for the recruitment of women or students from under-represented groups are not sufficiently specific.

32. Governance is good. Governors have a good understanding of their duties and provide the college with strong and enthusiastic support. Governors and senior managers have set a clear mission and strategy for the college which is monitored and updated annually. Governors work well with the executive team and are informed about the key strengths and weaknesses of the college and areas for improvement. Governors are effective in challenging the work of the executive team and have productive meetings with senior and middle managers to review college policies and to determine strategic direction. They are supported by an experienced and skilled clerk. Governors provide the college with a good range of expertise and use appropriate criteria and useful targets to monitor their own performance effectively.

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33. On the whole, communication within the college is satisfactory. The college is complex, with three distinct areas of activity and a large proportion of part-time staff. The senior management structure is clear. Frequent staff meetings and a monthly newsletter ensure that most members of staff are adequately informed about issues facing the college. Relationships between staff and managers are good. Communication between part-time and full-time teachers on some FE courses is not sufficiently effective.

34. Arrangements for staff development are satisfactory in identifying training and continuing professional development needs. Teachers' vocational expertise is good and they have access to a wide range of opportunities for professional development. All new full-time teachers are observed teaching within their first six months and receive useful feedback. The findings of lesson observations are used adequately to review teachers' performance. However, performance management and the setting of key targets are not used consistently during the appraisal process. Some teachers do not have sufficiently challenging performance-related targets.

35. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is satisfactory. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment. Discriminatory behaviour is tackled firmly and effectively. The college has not revised the equality and diversity policy to comply with recent legislation. Data on recruitment, retention and pass rates are analysed sufficiently for different ethnic groups and performance is compared adequately to national averages. Although senior managers review aggregated data, analysis is not undertaken in sufficient depth for each course. Ethnicity data do not differentiate sufficiently between overseas students and indigenous minority ethnic students. There are few women on some courses. The college recognises this issue, but there are no action plans to address the gender imbalances.

36. The college's response to the requirements of the SENDA has been satisfactory. FE teachers have received some training and the arrangements for eliminating discriminatory practice in admission, enrolment and teaching are adequate. The college's response to the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 is underdeveloped. The college established an appropriate policy in May 2002, but the implementation of the race equality action plan is not monitored effectively and the policy has not been revised.

37. The day-to-day co-ordination and management of FE at course level are not sufficiently effective or cohesive. Curriculum leaders do not have targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates or progression. Operational managers in FE have been slow to improve some weaknesses and there are too many students in areas where the provision is unsatisfactory. Some strategic objectives have not been implemented with sufficient vigour. Where course management is weaker, there is less effective communication between full-time and part-time staff and the sharing of good practice is not widespread.

38. Arrangements for quality assurance of the college's FE provision are insufficiently thorough and have not had enough impact on courses performing poorly. There is a number of formal committees which focus on raising standards and there is a culture of professional discussion and scrutiny. However, course reviews and evaluations do not sufficiently

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consider the effectiveness of teaching and assessment. Some teachers are not involved fully in the development of course evaluation reports. The use of action plans to guide improvements is widespread, but some plans are not monitored sufficiently and a number of actions are still to be carried out. The teaching observation programme is incomplete. Tutorials are not observed. Some observers have not been sufficiently critical. The college recognised this weakness and has introduced useful strategies to rectify this. The promotion of equality of opportunity in lessons is not monitored adequately. Results of the teaching observations programme are not routinely brought together into an overall report. The current self-assessment report does not take full account of all the requirements of the common inspection framework. It is too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. The report fails to identify weaknesses in tutorials and curriculum management.

39. The management information system is used to provide regular and timely information to the LSC. It is used adequately to inform corporate and management decision making. The attendance monitoring and reporting system is effective. FE curriculum managers are unable easily to utilise important information to help improve the quality of teaching and learning. Data are not used sufficiently to analyse the value added in students' achievements. During the period of inspection, the college had considerable difficulty in providing a timely analysis of retention and pass rates data.

40. Financial management is effective. Enrolment numbers in 2001 and 2002 fell short of projections. The college has taken decisive action to address revenue shortfalls. In 2004, the college exceeded its funding targets and is on track to meet its current targets. Significant developments have taken place with the aim of improving the college's finances in 2005. Staff are deployed appropriately. Arrangements for the identification of risk and the management of risk are satisfactory. Managers have taken appropriate action to improve the productivity of full-time staff. However, cost analysis at course level is underdeveloped. The FE department provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Part C: FE curriculum and occupational areas**

### **Music**

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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on the full-time level 2 music access programme, GCE A-level music and the national award in music practice
- good development of analytical and practical skills in music
- good peer collaboration in musical theatre practical lessons
- high-quality learning environment
- broad range of courses.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention and pass rates in practical music grade examinations
- low pass rates in theory grade examinations
- insufficient development of students' drama skills on the musical theatre course
- some ineffective monitoring of students' progress
- insufficient co-ordination at course management level.

#### ***Scope of provision***

41. The college's FE music performance pathway comprises 'music first', a one-year introductory programme at level 2 with options in classical music and popular music, a one-year access to HE performance-based course for adults at level 3, a national award in music practice, and two-year national diploma and national certificate programmes in music, popular music and performing arts (musical theatre). Students study for graded theory and practical examinations as additional qualifications. Evening classes in GCSE music, advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and GCE A-level music, music theory and practical lessons in violin and classical guitar are offered by the community education department. There are currently 176 full-time FE students on music performance courses, of whom 131 are aged 16 to 18. Of the 143 part-time students, 130 are adults. There are 13 students aged 14 to 16 studying on LSC-funded community education courses.

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***Achievement and standards***

42. Pass rates on the full-time level 2 music programme, GCE A-level music and the national award in music practice are high. Retention rates rose in 2003/04 on the national diplomas in music and popular music and are satisfactory. However, pass rates have declined. Pass rates on additional music theory and practical music grade examinations are low. In 2003/04, of the 199 students entered for practical music grade examinations, only 85 passed and, of the 345 students entered for music theory examinations, only 120 were successful.

43. Students' work in music is of a high standard. Students perform with confidence in a range of musical styles. They display good musicality, accuracy and expression in solo and ensemble performance contexts. Most music students have good aural skills with a good grasp of music theory appropriate to their level of programme. Musical theatre students display high standards in singing with many students able to hold a strong melodic line in multi-part ensembles. However, they lack confidence and technical skills in synthesizing the dramatic elements of their performance with the music and dance elements.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Graded music exams 1 to 4 in theory and practical subjects (1 year)	1	No. of starts	11	54	98
		% retention	73	20	67
		% pass rate	100	73	58
Theory grade 3	1	No. of starts	49	160	208
		% retention	96	31	69
		% pass rate	55	66	31
Music First (Music and Popular Music pathways)	2	No. of starts	28	35	33
		% retention	73	71	78
		% pass rate	87	98	91
GCE A-level music	3	No. of starts	16	14	11
		% retention	88	100	100
		% pass rate	100	93	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
National diploma in music	3	No. of starts	43	24	16
		% retention	42	71	81
		% pass rate	78	100	63
National diploma in popular music	3	No. of starts	44	37	15
		% retention	39	49	79
		% pass rate	88	78	67

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

### ***Quality of education and training***

44. Most teaching in music performance is satisfactory or better. The proportion of better than satisfactory teaching is similar to that normally found in this area of learning in similar colleges. Students develop good skills in the close reading of musical texts to identify key features of musical form. For example, in the study of a Schubert song, students were directed skilfully by their teacher to investigate and evaluate the contribution of structure, harmony and melody to narrative and characterisation. In another lesson, good questioning by the teacher facilitated students' understanding of montage compositional principles and orchestration in Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. Good links are made between theory and practice in some sessions. In a lesson on polyrhythms, students studied the notation of rhythmic patterns in flamenco and then applied these to their own compositions.

45. Music students show good rehearsal discipline in practical lessons. They take direction from their teachers and incorporate suggestions into subsequent performances. In some less successful practical lessons, passages are rehearsed without a sufficiently clear indication given of how the performance might be improved. There is good collaborative learning by musical theatre students. They work productively in groups to explore and exchange creative ideas. They offer constructive criticism to each other during and after the performing of work and discuss their research findings in informal classroom discussions. For example, a group exploring Fosse's choreographic style developed the opening dance routine for the musical *Chicago* by exploring motifs and images in a mutually supportive way, displaying technical awareness and creative flair.

46. Students' drama skills in the musical theatre course are not being developed sufficiently. The teaching of drama is underdeveloped and dislocated from other elements of the course. There is insufficient emphasis on acting in the teaching of character development and portrayal, and storytelling.

47. The college provides music performance students with a stimulating learning environment. Students are regularly given the opportunity to perform and hear music in a range of venues including a professional concert hall and recital room, and in more informal settings including a café bar. Students gain considerable benefit from being able to perform alongside, and interact with, the college's HE students. There are high standards of specialist resources including digital recording facilities, very good technical support, good provision of rehearsal space and a wide range of musical instruments. The college has extensive specialist music collections housed in the library, which has a separate listening area and online resources. Teachers are well qualified and many are practising professionals in the cultural industries. They have good links with local venues to provide opportunities for additional public performance.

48. Assessment is satisfactory. The procedures to verify assessments and students' work are robust and thorough. Assignment briefs are well designed. Students receive useful evaluative written feedback with explicit reference to assessment criteria. However, the system to monitor FE students' progress is not sufficiently effective. Some log sheets simply list activities without any evaluative comment to indicate the progress made. The targets set lack detail and do not give an indication of the specific areas requiring additional work.

49. Students have access to a wide range of courses. There is a broad range of options for individual instrumental tuition and good internal progression opportunities from level 1 courses provided by the community education department to the college's degree and postgraduate programmes.

50. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory overall. The well-produced publicity material gives a clear account of the courses available. All students are interviewed and auditioned and music students are required to take a diagnostic test in music theory. Course handbooks provided at induction give useful information and make clear the assessment requirements and expectations of students. However, there are no arrangements to ensure that all students receive a diagnostic initial assessment in literacy and numeracy at the start of their course. There is an over reliance on past educational history and decisions by individual tutors to identify additional support needed. Where support needs are identified additional help is given. Personal support provided by tutors is good and valued by students. However, in some cases the recording of targets as part of the academic review process is ineffective. Many of the completed reviews lack detailed action plans and targets are too general or do not address issues identified in the review process.

### ***Leadership and management***

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The management and deployment of staff are satisfactory. Members of staff receive regular appraisals which are effective in identifying professional development needs. Most staff have been observed teaching. Findings from observations are not being used systematically to identify common points for improvement. Course level co-ordination is not effective and there is a lack of clarity over responsibilities currently shared amongst course team members. Individual units are planned well, but there are insufficient links made between units. Some teachers lack

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awareness of the activities undertaken by students in other, complementary units. Where communication between staff is poor, some students experience an overlap of course content. Students' key skills portfolios are not developed sufficiently. Members of staff have little involvement in the overall course planning, formal course review and evaluation processes, including target setting at course level. Annual course reports provide a good evaluative commentary, but make insufficient reference to the quality of teaching and learning.



## **Music technology**

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

### ***Strengths***

- very good specialist equipment and technical support on the main site
- thorough written feedback on students' work
- good range of courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on level 3 vocational courses
- poor soundproofing in some music technology rooms on the main site
- inadequate recording of academic reviews
- ineffective group tutorials
- weak operational management at course level.

### ***Scope of provision***

52. The college offers courses in music technology and media (audio). The majority of courses are provided at the college's main Quarry Hill site, though some subjects are taught at the Bridge Street and Derek Fatchett sites. Courses include the level 2 music technology Music First Open College Network (OCN) course, the level 3 national diploma in media (audio), and the national diploma and national certificate in music technology. These courses are managed by the FE department. The AS-level and GCE A-level courses in music technology are managed by the community education department. Students have the opportunity to take additional qualifications in music. There are currently 178 students on music technology courses, of whom 160 are studying full time and 116 are aged 16 to 18.

### ***Achievement and standards***

53. Pass rates for the small number of AS-level music technology students are high. Retention rates are low on level 3 vocational courses. In 2003/04, the retention rate on the national diploma in music technology course was 52%. Of the 102 students who started this course in 2003, only 48 are still in learning. In 2003/04, the retention rate on the national certificate in music technology was 40%. Of the 18 students who started the national diploma in media (audio) course in 2003, only 39% were still in learning at the time of the inspection.

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54. The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall. Students are developing appropriate critical thinking and practical skills. Standards of attainment in the classroom are satisfactory. Attendance during the week of inspection was unsatisfactory at 73%.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in music technology, 2002 to 2004***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Music First (OCN)	2	No. of starts	12	21	26
		% retention	92	62	66
		% pass rate	73	76	69
National certificate in music technology * 1 year ** 2 year	3	No. of starts	50*	***	65**
		% retention	80*	***	40**
		% pass rate	63*	***	65**
National diploma in music technology	3	No. of starts	****	86	56
		% retention	****	53	52
		% pass rate	****	87	86

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

\*\*\*course did not run

\*\*\*\*data unreliable

***Quality of education and training***

55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a well-managed and stimulating listening skills lesson, students developed their ability to recognise rhythms, intervals and harmony. In a recording studio lesson, the teacher demonstrated signal processing techniques effectively, combining good theoretical knowledge with hands-on practical experimentation by the students. In poorer lessons, teachers do not link theory and practice. The pace of learning is slow and few demands are made on students. In some lessons, teachers are eager to sort out students' technical difficulties or misunderstandings, but do not help them to develop their capacity for problem solving. In some lessons, there is insufficient checking of students' understanding. Teachers do not sufficiently develop students' key skills or portfolios within the vocational curriculum. Students' GCSE passes at grade C or above are used as a proxy for the whole key skill rather than just the externally examined component. Additional discrete key skills lessons do not sufficiently relate to students' main programme of study and are not well attended. Poor use is made of available ILT in some lessons.

56. The soundproofing between the music technology computer suite and adjacent rehearsal rooms on the main site is poor. Loud rehearsals in adjacent rooms make it difficult for students and staff to concentrate on the teaching of new concepts or the development of compositions. FE recording studio control rooms are not sufficiently insulated. The college is confident that these issues will be resolved when the building extension is completed later in the year.

57. Students use a very good range of specialist equipment which is well maintained by technicians. Two recording studio control rooms share a central recording space and both studios are well equipped with analogue mixing desks, high-quality hardware and digital audio software, and a comprehensive selection of high-quality microphones. Close attention is paid to health and safety in the studio environments. Students also have access to a large number of up-to-date music-sequencing computers. The specialist equipment available at the Bridge Street site is adequate to allow students to meet the standards required by the award. However, there are insufficient CD writers to allow students to store and transfer their files efficiently and the hardware is not adequate for processing large audio files. The library is well stocked. Students have access to computers, though there is a lack of CD writing hardware to meet the requirement for students to hand in their completed assignment work on CD ROM. Teachers are appropriately qualified in music technology with good experience of the music industry though not all have teaching qualifications.

58. Assessment feedback is thorough. Students receive encouraging written and verbal feedback with constructive critical comments on well-designed feedback sheets. The written feedback covers all assessment criteria. The assignment briefs are clear and include helpful grading criteria. Students value the written feedback they receive and feel it helps them improve the standard of their work. The student handbook provides clear guidelines on assessment.

59. The college has a good range of music technology courses. Students can progress from non-accredited evening classes to level 2 and level 3 vocational and academic accredited courses, and to related undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the college. Students can gain experience in a wide range of specialist subjects.

60. Academic reviews are not sufficiently effective or appropriately recorded. Many students do not complete the required pre-review form. Students' performance and progress are not sufficiently analysed or recorded. Targets set are often superficial and imprecise. Deadlines are not clear, and many targets are undemanding. Not all review forms are completed fully. Additional learning support needs are not recorded sufficiently. In some instances, students had identified issues which might affect their progress, but there was no record of the strategies or support needed to complete their studies. Students are not given copies of the review forms. The systems for identifying and supporting students who are at risk of leaving their course early are not sufficiently effective.

61. Group tutorials for students are unsatisfactory. Many students' attendance at group tutorials is poor throughout the year. The tutorials lack purposeful content and students do

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not feel that they benefit from them. Students do, however, value the support they receive when applying to HE.

### ***Leadership and management***

62. Leadership and management of the music technology provision are unsatisfactory. Operational management at course level is weak and actions to improve retention rates are ineffective. Senior managers have a good awareness of the retention rates on the level 3 music technology programmes which remain very low. However, curriculum leaders are not sufficiently aware of retention rates on their courses. Students are not always enrolled to the most appropriate level of study. The initial assessment of students' foundation skills of literacy and numeracy is not sufficiently thorough.

63. Management information is not used at curriculum level to analyse the performance of courses and the current retention rates of students enrolled. One curriculum co-ordinator was not aware of the critically low numbers of students in some lessons. Timely and accurate data are not available. Many teachers do not have a clear understanding of how the units they teach contribute to the whole of a student's qualification.

64. Overall, quality assurance is ineffective. The self-assessment report contains much useful information, but is too descriptive and lacks critical evaluation. Too few members of staff are involved in its development. The quality assurance system does not adequately consider practices to recruit students nor the process of academic reviews. The teaching observation system is ineffective. The internal moderation of students' assignment work, however, is thorough. Part-time teachers who join the college mid-year receive little initial support or information about the context of their work.

65. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college promotes under-represented groups in its music technology recruitment literature though it has had little success in attracting female students.

## Part D: College data

**Table 1: FE Enrolments by level of study and age**

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	4	27
2	28	31
3	68	42
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in spring 2005*

**Table 2: FE Enrolments by curriculum area and age**

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Construction	22	15	6
Visual and performing arts and media	313	303	94
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in 2005*

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
1	Starters excluding transfers	134	191	206	68	162	174
	Retention rate %	97	61	77	96	49	71
	National average %	82	80	80	70	68	68
	Pass rate %	47	68	41	51	57	52
	National average %	76	73	73	77	74	74
2	Starters excluding transfers	68	73	150	41	83	117
	Retention rate %	87	71	73	85	42	72

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
	National average %	77	77	77	72	70	70
	Pass rate %	39	79	74	66	80	67
	National average %	76	74	74	73	76	76
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	386	262	237	165	146	126
	Retention rate %	62	65	74	55	69	59
	National average %	75	75	75	66	59	59
	Pass rate %	77	85	80	75	82	78
	National average %	82	85	85	68	75	75

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

*Sources of information:*

- National averages: Benchmarking Data 2002 to 2003: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.*
- College rates for 2003 to 2004: College ISR.*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	High or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	73	24	3	29
Level 1 and 2 (foundation and intermediate)	57	29	14	7
Other sessions	0	100	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>38</b>

**Notes**