



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



## Worcester Sixth Form College

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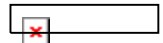
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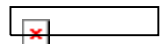
**Basic information about the college**



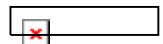
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Name of college:	Worcester Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	John Tredwell
Address of college:	Spetchley Road Worcester WR5 2LU
Telephone number:	01905 362600
Fax number:	01905 362633
Chair of governors:	Tom Libby
Unique reference number:	130719
Name of reporting inspector:	Martyn Rhowbotham HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 April 2005

**Part A: Summary**



**Information about the college**



Worcester Sixth Form College is located in the south-east of the city of Worcester just a short

fields and sports facilities extending to a further 25 acres. The college was founded on the site of the Worcester Grammar School for Girls following reorganisation in 1983. Participation rates for full-time 16 to 19 year olds are at approximately the national average. In addition to Worcester Sixth Form College there is Worcester College of Technology and four independent schools with sixth forms in the city. In the surrounding towns of Droitwich, Pershore, Malvern and Bromsgrove there are county high schools and independent schools with sixth forms. There is therefore a substantial element of competition amongst providers of post-16 education. Both Worcester Sixth Form College and Worcester College of Technology offer advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses as well as vocational courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. The college attracts about half of its students from the six partner schools for pupils aged 11 to 16, about one third from county high schools with sixth forms and the rest from independent schools or from beyond the county boundary. A significant number of students travel considerable distances to attend the college. The college attracts a majority of female students and increasingly students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over 400 students are in receipt of educational maintenance allowances. Worcestershire has a small minority ethnic population of 2.3% compared with 11.3% for the West Midlands as a whole. The minority ethnic population in Worcester, at 3.4%, is above the average for Worcestershire and has been rising quickly over recent years. Gross weekly earnings in Worcester are below both the West Midlands and the United Kingdom averages. The city of Worcester has the lowest household income in Worcestershire, being 92% of the county average and 96% of the UK average. Unemployment in the city and county is below regional and national levels.

Students' qualifications on entry to level 3 courses are below the national average for sixth form colleges. Courses for adults have been offered since incorporation and enrolments have increased steadily on both full-time and part-time courses. In 2003, there were some 1,786 enrolments from adult students, including some adult basic skills provision. The college has completed two phases of a three-phase capital project which has seen the replacement of the front of the main building, additional office space, new classrooms and information and communications technology (ICT) rooms and a new kitchen and cafeteria.

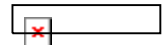
The college's mission is;

Worcester Sixth Form College will build upon its present strengths and independent status to:

- Provide high-quality general education designed to meet the needs of 16 to 19 year olds
  
- Widen access and extend opportunities to those returning to education
  
- Provide support and guidance for all students to encourage their personal and intellectual development
  
- Prepare students for further education and higher education, training or work in the European and wider international community
  
- Sustain a friendly, safe and attractive learning environment

- Maximise the benefits available from the resources at its disposal
- Work in collaboration with other providers.

### **How effective is the college?**



The inspection graded the quality of provision in five curriculum areas. Inspectors judged the quality of teaching, learning and attainment to be outstanding in one area and good in four areas. One contributory grade of satisfactory was also awarded. The college's main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

#### ***Key strengths***

- good teaching
- outstanding support for students
- high pass rates, particularly in comparison with students' prior attainment
- good staff expertise
- good enrichment activities
- innovative work experience programme
- productive links with schools and other external partners
- outstanding careers guidance

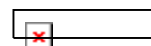
- good governance and leadership.

**What should be improved**

- retention rates on level 3 courses
- spaces for students' social activities
- some accommodation
- facilities for drop-in ICT
- self-assessment in some areas.

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

**Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**

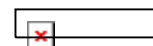


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Good.</b> There are high retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses. Teaching is good and there is very good achievement relative to prior attainment in most subjects. Curriculum support for students is outstanding. Retention rates are low and declining on AS-level human biology and the self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative.
Health and social care	<b>Good.</b> There are high pass rates on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) health and social care courses. There is much good teaching and productive partnerships with outside agencies.

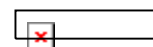
	Support for students is very good. Retention rates on the national diploma in public services are low and there is some inappropriate teaching accommodation.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Outstanding.</b> There are very high pass rates and students' achievements relative to their prior attainment are very good. Teaching is very good and is underpinned by outstanding academic and pastoral support. Students' practical work is of a very high standard and is supported by rigorous assessment. There is a wide range of courses at level 3.
Humanities	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are very high on most GCE A-level courses and progress relative to students' prior achievement is very good. Retention rates on AS-level courses are below the national average and, in AS-level psychology, students' achievements are low relative to their prior attainment. Teaching is very good and students receive good individual support, but they are not punctual to some lessons.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Contributory grade for modern foreign languages: <b>satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are high on most English courses and on several modern foreign language courses. Progress relative to students' prior achievement is good on English courses. Retention rates on French courses are low and some students in French and German progress less well. Teaching, support for students and enrichment activities are good. There is limited access to computer-related facilities.

#### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior management team provide strong leadership and have created a positive culture and ethos. Managers and teachers share a set of core values and are committed to achieving clear strategic objectives. Communication in the college is good. Data provided by the college information system are accurate, reliable and timely. Curriculum management is good. Pass rates are very high and progress by students relative to their prior attainment is outstanding. However, retention rates overall on level 3 courses are below the national average for sixth form colleges, particularly on some AS-level courses. Low retention rates on some courses were identified in the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are good and the profile is significantly above that normally found in sixth form colleges. Some curriculum reviews are insufficiently rigorous and parts of the self-assessment report lack evaluative judgement and are statements of normal practice. This was identified in the last inspection. Professional development reviews effectively inform a well-managed staff development programme. Social inclusion and widening of participation are promoted positively. Governance is good. Financial management is prudent. The college provides good value for money.

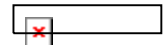
#### To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. Students are drawn from very mixed backgrounds and from a wide geographical area. There is an ethos of accessibility within a

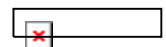
students is very good, especially for students with dyslexia. Teachers take close account of students' individual needs through robust initial assessment and a comprehensive tutorial system. The access to higher education (HE) programme meets the needs of adults returning to education. Few students are from minority ethnic groups although the percentage within the college's population is higher than in Worcester itself. The college has a prayer room. Access for wheelchair users is generally adequate. The required and recommended improvements identified in a recent disability access assessment are to be made during the summer in 2005 and are an effective response to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). The college has a race equality policy and has made good progress towards its implementation.

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



Support for students is outstanding. Arrangements for initial guidance and support are very good. All students receive a thorough induction and procedures for identifying additional learning support needs are good. The additional learning support following this diagnosis is provided quickly and efficiently. Very well qualified learning support staff provide effective support in lessons and on an individual basis. Over 320 students access learning support in the college. The support provided for students with dyslexia is outstanding. Currently, 102 students with dyslexia are receiving support. The college has recently devised an innovative integrated studies programme as part of its learning support provision. Early indications are that this is effective in supporting students in the development of their literacy and learning skills. Tutorial support for students is central to their programme. Tutors know their students well and provide very good individual support and encouragement which is valued greatly by students. The tutorial process is managed well. Monitoring of attendance is very thorough. Students access a very good range of high-quality support services and the college has productive links with a large number of outside agencies. Careers information and guidance are outstanding. There is a very successful work experience programme involving over 700 students and an innovative and highly relevant careers management course that helps students to examine options both in HE and the world of work. Student services are situated in high-quality accommodation. Most aspects of student services have a high profile within the college and the services they provide are valued by students and staff. The management of student services is outstanding.

### **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***

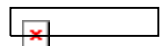
- very supportive teachers
  
- friendly and mature atmosphere
  
- student services

- range of trips and enrichment activities
- help with personal issues
- tutorial support
- range of courses.

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

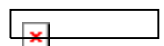
- social spaces
- availability of computers at peak times
- number and quality of toilets.

**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	88	12	0
19+ and WBL*	50	50	0
Learning 16-18	86	14	0
19+ and WBL*	40	60	0

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

\*work-based learning

## Achievement and standards

1. Overall judgements about achievements and standards for the years 2002 and 2003 are based on aggregate information in the college performance report produced by Ofsted. This is derived from data supplied by the college's individualised learner records. Data for 2004 are provided by the college.

2. The college's main curriculum provision is for full-time students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. The majority of these students are on courses leading to AS level and GCE A level chosen from a wide range. Around 150 students are studying level 3 vocational courses and there are 4 AVCE courses, and 3 Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses. At level 2, three GNVQ intermediate courses are offered as well as a small number of general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) and the BTEC first diploma in sports science. The college also makes evening class provision for adults. The majority of enrolments are in humanities, science and mathematics, English and modern foreign languages, and visual and performing arts and media.

### 16 to 18 year olds

3. Students' achievements are good overall. Retention rates on level 3 qualifications have been below the national average for sixth form colleges for several years. The college has put in place a range of strategies to improve retention rates at this level. Retention rates at level 2 were also below the national average until 2003/04 when they rose to 85%, which is above the national average of 81%.

4. Pass rates are well above national averages. Pass rates at level 3 have risen from 88% in 2000/01 to 93% in 2003/04, which is 5 percentage points above the national average. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are both well above the national averages. In 2003/04, the overall pass rate for GCE A level was 99%. The overall pass rate for AS level was 90%, which is above the national average of 85%. Achievements on AVCE and BTEC national diploma courses are substantially above national averages. In 2003/04, the proportion of high grade passes (A and B grades) obtained at GCE A level was above the national average of 45.8%.

5. Pass rates on level 2 courses have been significantly above national averages for several years.

The pass rate in 2003/04 was 95%, compared with the national average of 86%. GCSE high grade pass rates (A\* to C) have remained substantially above the national average over the last three years and, in 2003/04, were 59% compared with a national average of 44%. Pass rates on the three GNVQ intermediate courses are high and, in 2003/04, the pass rate was 89% compared with a national average of 81%.

6. The average GCSE points score of students on entry to the college on to advanced level courses is below the average for sixth form colleges. The college uses national systems to measure how well students perform in relation to their qualifications on entry. The data demonstrate that students across the range make very good progress. One system that compares the achievements of students in sixth form colleges places this college for 2004 in the top 20% of colleges for GCE A level and just outside the top 10% for AS level.

7. Progression rates for students are satisfactory. Around half of the students on level 2 courses progress to level 3 courses at the college. Of the advanced level leavers in 2004, 44% progressed to HE, with a further 11% taking a gap year and intending to apply to university. Figures for 2003 are 51% and 16% respectively. A significant number also progress to work and to further education (FE) courses, such as art foundation courses.

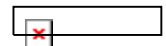
8. Although all students follow courses in key skills, relatively few complete key skills qualifications. Those students who take key skills tests achieve mixed levels of success. Pass rates in level 3 tests are low, ranging from 29% in communications to 39% in application of number.

9. The quality of students' work is high and often very high. Inspectors judged that the students' work was good or better in over 80% of the lessons observed. The standard of students' practical work is particularly high in art and design. Research in workbooks is creative and the exploration of ideas is thorough. Final artworks and artefacts are well presented. Music students demonstrate technical expertise and compositional fluency. In childcare and health and social care, students link theory to workplace practices very effectively. Students in science conduct practical work with confidence, paying careful attention to health and safety. There are innovative displays celebrating students' work in English. Attendance is high, averaging 88% between September 2004 and April 2005, which is above the national average (85.4% during 2002/03) for sixth form colleges.

### ***Adult learners***

10. Retention rates for level 2 and level 3 qualifications are slightly above the national average, although they were slightly below for level 1. Pass rates for all levels of course type are well above national averages.

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



11. Teaching, learning and students' attainment were graded by inspectors in 83 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 83% of these lessons and satisfactory in 17%. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. The proportion of good or better teaching is significantly above the national average for sixth form colleges and many examples of good teaching were observed in all of the curriculum areas inspected. Of the lessons that were judged to be good or better, 33% of these were either very good or outstanding. This is slightly below the national average for sixth form colleges. The profile for learning and attainment was very slightly lower than that for teaching. Observations of lessons for students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 88% of all lessons observed during the inspection. In these lessons, 88% of teaching was good or better. In the relatively small number of lessons predominantly for adult students that were observed by inspectors, 50% were judged to be good or better and 50% were satisfactory. Good or better teaching was observed on level 2 and level 3 courses. There is a larger proportion of good or better teaching by full-time teachers than by part-time teachers.

12. Teachers are enthusiastic and display high levels of expertise in their subjects. There is much mutual respect between teachers and students. There is a positive and purposeful atmosphere in lessons and teachers have high expectations of their students. Students respond well to the high levels of encouragement and support given by their teachers and learning is stimulating and productive.

13. Most lessons are planned well and teaching and learning are supported by a comprehensive scheme of work. Learning objectives are not always shared formally with students. In the best lessons, learning is checked frequently through skilled questioning by teachers. Attention is given to the individual learning needs of students and they receive constant feedback on their progress. Opportunities are provided for students to demonstrate their learning and understanding through a range of well-planned activities. In health and social care lessons, teachers use their industrial experience well to help students relate their learning to the caring professions. In science lessons, students are encouraged to confirm theories from carrying out their own research and experiments. They work well individually and in groups. In humanities, English and the best modern foreign languages lessons, discussions are lively and students develop informed arguments about complex issues and concepts. In art and design, students work well to achieve their individual targets and they develop very high level skills of analysis and communication. Students following general studies as part of the integrated studies support programme benefit from developing learning skills from a wide range of innovative and imaginative activities. Students are enthusiastic and are motivated to do well. Many students benefit from a range of visits and trips designed to consolidate their learning on their courses. These events are greatly appreciated by students and are highly successful.

14. In a minority of lessons, students' learning and understanding are not checked frequently enough by teachers and the range of learning activities is narrow. Learning is disrupted in a minority of lessons by lack of punctuality. When this occurs, the situation is managed well by teachers so as to minimise disruption.

15. The college occupies a pleasant site on the south-eastern edge of the city. Since the college was established in the buildings of what was a girls' grammar school, the number of students has increased substantially. At the time of the last inspection, recent improvements had been made in terms of building developments and refurbishment. Since that time, there have been further building developments, notably a new canteen and kitchen area, and improvements have been made to ICT provision. Accommodation is, on the whole, adequate. Some classrooms are small, but there are some newly built specialist rooms that are of high quality. Excellent sports facilities are available to students, either owned by the college or under joint use agreements. There is a small number of temporary classrooms which are fit for purpose and a shortage of space for department offices and technical support, particularly for science. There is little social or recreational space for students and some toilets are in need of refurbishment. An accommodation strategy is in place to address these needs.

16. Teachers are well qualified and have a high level of subject knowledge. Many have external examination experience and a significant number undertake work placements as part of their regular development. Staff development is given a high priority. A well-established performance development and review process covers support staff as well as teachers and is linked effectively to training plans. There is a comprehensive induction process for new staff.

17. Facilities and resources for teaching are good. The number of networked computers, and their quality, has improved since the last inspection. Access for students to computer facilities is better than it was although, at peak periods, it is still limited. There is a well-designed college portal, which is operating very effectively as a college information and communication system. Its use by departments to support learning is variable, but developing. Equipment to support teaching is generally good although provision to support media studies is insufficient. The learning resource centre is well used and has good links to departments. There are some excellent displays of work in department areas.

18. An established system for the regular formal monitoring of students' progress is well planned and understood by all staff and students. Individual learning plans are agreed with students early in their course when they are informed about their target minimum grades. Reviews of progress are

recorded in detail. The system ensures that students are fully aware of their progress and informs them of how they might develop further. Reviews are scheduled carefully to fit in with planned reporting and parents' evenings. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress through formal reports and frequent informal contact. Assessment practice overall is sound and consistent across subjects and departments. Assessment is fair and meets awarding body criteria. Homework and assignment briefs accurately reflect course requirements. They are marked promptly and most contain constructive comments on how students might improve. In many curriculum areas there is a structured approach to moderating students' work and consistency in marking and grading. Internal verification on vocational courses meets national standards. External verifiers' and moderators' reports are positive.

19. There is a wide choice of subjects available. The college has a flexible approach to entry qualifications. An extension programme is available for more able students. The access programme meets the needs of adults returning to education. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. The college has six unfunded sports academies and students have many opportunities to play representative sport. There are extensive exchange programmes, field trips and outings to cultural and other events. The college's campus is situated conveniently and well served by buses from outlying areas.

20. The college responds well to local circumstances. There are close relationships with local schools. Sports students have assisted local primary schools with their sports days. The college has responded well to referrals of local organisations from the local 'skills station'. This has included acting as a language training provider for local businesses and in the training of staff from a welfare organisation and a local primary school to help them support pupils from Portuguese families.

21. Support provided for students, both formally and informally, is a key strength of the college. Students are supported well in lessons, and the innovative tutorial system is regarded highly by students who greatly appreciate the care and support provided by their teachers and tutors. Prospective students visit the college during the summer term to gain information about the opportunities available and to explore their possible choices. There is a well-planned induction programme to help students to settle into their course and college life.

22. Arrangements for initial guidance are good and the procedures for identifying additional learning support needs are highly effective. Detailed and helpful guides for students, teachers, learning support assistants and tutors are used well. All full-time students take a diagnostic assessment to identify any additional learning support needs. Support is then provided quickly and appropriately to meet the needs of individual students. Support takes the form of individual lessons or workshops or is provided through the involvement of well-qualified learning support assistants in lessons. The number of students accessing learning support has grown steadily over the last three years. There are currently 325 students receiving additional support. A small number of students whose first language is not English also receive individual language support. Students with dyslexia are supported very well. Diagnostic assessments are carried out and support plans established. Currently, 102 students have been diagnosed with dyslexia and are receiving specialized support from very well-qualified staff. Of the 102, nearly 70 students have been diagnosed by the college for the first time in their educational careers as having dyslexia.

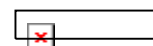
23. The college has recently implemented an integrated studies support programme for students whose initial entry qualifications indicate they may need additional help. The course is based on AS-level general studies and integrates the development of key skills, ICT and additional learning support. Early indications are that the programme is successful in supporting students in an innovative and effective way and in redressing the low retention rates on some AS-level courses.

24. Students can access a very wide range of specialist support services. These include counselling, a chaplaincy, financial advice and specialist services provided by external partners. There is youth mentoring for students from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, health advice and help with planning of gap years. In addition, the college provides exciting opportunities for students to experience a range of community-based activities through an innovative partnership with the Millennium Volunteers. Student services are situated in good accommodation and are resourced well. Careers advice and guidance are outstanding and enjoy a very high and active profile within

the college. Students benefit from a well-designed, 10 hour careers management course which enables them to plan for progression into HE or into work. This is complemented by careers interviews based on the outcomes of the programme. The college also works closely with the Connexions service. Students receive very good support with their applications to HE. The college arranges mock interviews with HE partners and also with employers. A very successful work experience programme is in place. Over 700 students a year benefit from this early opportunity to gain experience within the profession or area of work they are considering.

25. The college has invested significant resources in developing its tutorial provision. A team of 23 specialist tutors covers academic and vocational courses and provides support that is greatly valued by students. Tutors are managed well by the senior tutors and they co-operate with subject teachers and student services to provide a comprehensive and coherent support service. Tutors know their students well. They meet frequently with them both individually and in groups. Students can arrange to see their tutor at any time by booking an appointment through the tutorial receptionist. A more formal evaluation of the impact of student support on retention rates in particular is needed. The college has appropriate child protection procedures in place.

## Leadership and management



26. Leadership and management are good. The college is led strongly by the principal and senior management team who provide a clear sense of direction. Teaching and support staff feel valued. Members of staff are consulted on most issues and their views are respected. They share a set of core values and the college's mission to build on its present strengths, to widen access and extend opportunities to those returning to education. Since the last inspection, important changes have been made in the curriculum and the tutorial structure. Levels of students' achievements have been consistently high.

27. The three-year strategic plan has clear aims and specific targets. These aims include developing the course structure and learning opportunities, improving recruitment and retention rates, improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising achievement, improving support for students, improving the resources and management of the college, and ensuring high standards for the recruitment, development and retention rates of staff. Approval of strategic objectives and associated targets follow full discussions at staff and senior management team meetings. These objectives and targets form the work programme for the principal and senior managers against which they will be appraised, and the priorities of all departments. Monitoring of the implementation of the strategic plan is thorough.

28. Communication in the college is good. This includes consultations with all staff, the publication of staff and student bulletins, and substantial communication on the intranet. Communications celebrate success as well as disseminating important messages, and serve to reinforce the mission of raising achievement. The management structure is clearly understood by staff. An open management style encourages staff to express their views and to become involved in committees and working groups. A college calendar schedules formal meetings. Managers are easily accessible and information is readily available to staff. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. The college information system provides accurate, reliable and timely data to managers and staff, and access to key student reports and policies. An electronic register system has improved significantly the tracking and analysis of students' attendance.

29. Levels of students' achievements have been consistently high. Pass rates are very high and progress of students relative to their prior attainment is outstanding. However, retention rates on level 3 courses are below the national averages for sixth form colleges, particularly on AS-level courses. Demanding targets have been set for all courses in 2004/05. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during inspection. Teaching and learning are good and the profile is above that normally found in most sixth form colleges. Curriculum management is good, but some curriculum

areas have been slow to identify and initiate appropriate actions to tackle and remedy issues such as low attendance and retention rates.

30. Quality assurance and quality control systems cover all aspects of the college. Termly departmental reviews, involving all staff, scrutinise every aspect of provision and set targets for improvement. A member of the senior management team attends all departmental review meetings. Detailed data on attendance, and retention and pass rates are provided to curriculum teams. Analysis of these data, including progress of students relative to their prior attainment, and comparison with the previous year, are a major focus of quality assurance and self-assessment. In many curriculum areas, the nature of weaknesses is established quickly and effectively and specific actions are agreed and implemented with positive results. In other areas, strengths are overstated and targets are insufficiently precise. Some teams are unaware of departmental or course targets. The quality of teaching and learning is a standard item at review meetings. Lesson observations of all teachers take place and feedback from students is collected frequently. Assessment of teaching at curriculum and college level focuses on highlighting strengths and weaknesses. Lesson observations are not graded. Self-assessment is conducted thoroughly. Inspectors largely agree with the overall self-assessment report, but not with the weighting accorded to some strengths and weaknesses. The sections of the self-assessment report relating to key questions 3, 4 and 5 often lack evaluative judgements and are statements of normal practice.

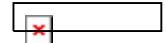
31. Professional development reviews effectively inform a well-managed staff development programme. Reviews of all staff are conducted annually, although a few for part-time staff fall behind schedule. Full-time members of staff are very positive about the annual reviews as an opportunity to reflect upon their performance during the previous year and to identify their development needs. Many report that their requests for individual staff development are always met. New members of staff value highly their induction into the college and the support received from line managers, mentors and colleagues. The overall staff development programme is planned effectively. Organisational priorities are clearly identified. The programme achieves a good balance between individual, curriculum and college needs in line with strategic objectives.

32. The college's response to social inclusion and widening of participation is positive. It has an appropriate equal opportunities policy and discrimination statement. An equal opportunities group is active in raising awareness of the implications for both staff and students, and in ensuring the college is taking action to fulfil legislative requirements. The race equality policy meets legal requirements and the college has made good progress towards its implementation.

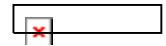
33. Governance is good. The corporation has successfully addressed most of the weaknesses in the last inspection. Clerking arrangements are now satisfactory with the appointment of an independent clerk to the corporation. In the last two years, the corporation has successfully made appointments to redress the gender imbalance in its membership. The college benefits from the wide range of expertise of the governors, who have high expectations of the college. They demand and receive data on a wide range of issues and interrogate the data thoroughly. Decisions and actions are recorded carefully. Governors know the college well including the strong and weaker curriculum areas. Each governor has a department for whom they act as the corporation link, and attends departmental review meetings. The ongoing training programme for governors is good. Key performance indicators for the full corporation and its committees are reviewed annually.

34. Financial management is prudent. The college has had a small operating deficit for the past two years following completion of the first two phases of a building and refurbishment programme to cope with increasing numbers of students being recruited to the college. The financial implications of phase three have been assessed carefully. The college holds category B status. A local LSC review, conducted during the inspection, raised no significant concerns about the financial management and governance frameworks of the college. Taking into account the college's deployment of staff, high pass rates and outstanding progress of students relative to their prior attainment, the college provides good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science and mathematics



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

#### **Strengths**

- high retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- very good achievement relative to prior attainment in most subjects
- outstanding curriculum support for students
- very good teaching.

#### **Weaknesses**

- low and declining retention rate in AS-level human biology
- insufficiently evaluative self-assessment.

#### **Scope of provision**

35. There is a wide range of AS-level and GCE A-level subjects in science and mathematics for students aged 16 to 18. This includes biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, further mathematics and geology. Various modules are available in mathematics courses and students taking chemistry and physics courses who are not studying AS-level mathematics can access free-standing mathematics qualifications. GCSE biology and mathematics are available. More able students can take advanced extension awards and the Cambridge entrance examinations. Adult students follow the science and mathematics options on the access to HE course. A GCSE mathematics evening class is also available. In total, there are 888 enrolments in mathematics and science; 395 are enrolled on mathematics courses and 493 on science courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

36. At GCE A level, there are consistently high pass rates in all subjects in this area. Retention rates have also been high although, in 2003/04, the retention rate in biology of 95% was slightly below the national average. At AS level, the pass rates in chemistry, physics and biology have generally been above national averages, particularly in chemistry. Retention rates at AS level have been generally below the national averages. For some subjects, the gap is small, but for others it is significant. For example, for 2003/04, the retention rate in AS-level human biology had declined to 75% compared to a national average of 90%. Strategies to address the issue are in place. The achievements of students relative to their prior attainment are very good in most subjects. The standard of students' work is high and often very high. Students' files are mostly well organised and contain well-marked and annotated work. Students show confidence and accuracy in their practical work and pay good attention to health and safety procedures. Students on the GCSE mathematics course demonstrated good understanding of translations and rotations and their relationship to co-ordinates in carrying out a practical exercise. There is good progression to HE.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	152	167	208
		% retention	79	81	88
		% pass rate	61	56	50
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	74	65	40
		% retention	85	83	75
		% pass rate	92	85	80
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	59	45	44
		% retention	95	98	95
		% pass rate	98	93	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	40	29	38
		% retention	98	100	97
		% pass rate	97	100	97
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	129	115	99
		% retention	81	86	88
		% pass rate	66	78	77
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	48	63	62
		% retention	88	89	84
		% pass rate	95	96	83

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

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

37. Teaching in science and mathematics is good. Detailed schemes of work provide a good basis for teaching and the majority of lesson planning is good. The best lessons provide challenges for students of varying abilities and include a range of learning activities such as individual, paired and group tasks. Students are committed and attentive. For example, in an AS-level physics lesson, groups of students carried out a design brief to produce a pair of sports glasses for someone with a visual impairment. This required the application of previous learning on materials to a real situation and the level of debate and discussion indicated a very high level of understanding. In an AS-level



biology lesson, students used a card sorting exercise to determine the action of four hormones in the menstrual cycle. In both cases, students demonstrated very good communication skills and knowledge.

38. All teachers are well qualified and experienced; many are external examiners. Teachers participate in relevant training and updating. Laboratories are dated, but have a range of good equipment. Preparation rooms are small and have to be used as work spaces for staff. Well-organised laboratory support for practical work is provided by a team of qualified and experienced technicians. There is no specialist geology laboratory. The accommodation for mathematics is variable in quality. Mathematics teachers have good access to relevant software. There is an increasing range of good interactive materials on the virtual learning environment which is being developed by staff for access by students at college and from home. Resources in the learning resource centre are good.

39. Students receive outstanding subject support. Very effective individual help is provided in lessons and additional workshops are available at convenient times. Teachers give freely of their time to support students. The development of excellent materials and resources underpins students' learning. Tests are planned well, marking is thorough and students receive detailed written feedback on how to improve. Most teachers maintain comprehensive records, including careful monitoring of students' progress against targets. Regular reports to parents give details of progress and also raise any concerns. Innovative practice in physics is the use of students' self-assessment of their own progress using the virtual learning environment.

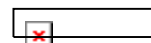
40. Attendance is monitored effectively and students receive very good tutorial support from their personal tutors. This is complemented by excellent personal support through direction to relevant sources of help in college, or to external agencies. Language support is available for students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are very good links with partner schools.

41. Students take part in a very wide range of enrichment activities including field work visits to Iceland, Munich and the Isle of Skye. Biology students visit the Wales Gene Park to study genetic fingerprinting and a number of visiting speakers provide lectures, for example, in astrophysics. Students attend scientific conferences and there has been considerable success in national Olympiad competitions in mathematics, biology and chemistry.

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

42. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are good. Regular departmental meetings take place, but more could be done to share good practice. Course documentation is detailed and very good use is made of data on students' entry qualifications to analyse their progress and achievements. Quality assurance procedures support the self-assessment report and a development plan identifies some strategies for improvement, but overall the report is not sufficiently evaluative. Available resources are used well to give good value for money. Members of staff are aware of equal opportunities issues and analyse the achievements of different groups of students, but there is still some gender imbalance in recruitment on to science and mathematics courses.

### **Health and social care**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and AVCE health and social care courses

- much good teaching
  
- productive partnership arrangements
  
- very good personal and academic support for individual students

**Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on the national diploma in public services
  
- some unsuitable teaching accommodation.

**Scope of provision**

43. There are 182 full-time and 10 part-time students enrolled on courses in health and social care, early years, public services, counselling and access to care studies. Some 172 students are aged 16 to 18 and 20 are aged over 19. Currently, over 40 pupils aged 14 to 16 are studying for the applied GCSE in health and social care in partnership with a local school. Courses are available at levels 2 and 3 in health and social care and level 3 in childcare. For adults, there is a level 3 course in counselling and the access programme is available at levels 2 and 3. There is a comprehensive enrichment programme including recreational activities and students have the opportunity to take additional vocational qualifications including first aid and food and nutrition. A wide range of work experience opportunities supports college studies, including placements in local schools, private day nurseries and family settings.

**Achievement and standards**

44. There are high pass rates on health and social care courses. Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate health and social care and first aid have been above national averages for three years. Pass rates on the AVCE health and social care course are high. However, the retention rate on the national diploma in public services is low and has been below the national average for three years. Students arriving late at the beginning of the day, mainly due to transport problems, are dealt with promptly. The standard of work produced in lessons is high. In both early years and health and social care, students are able to link theory to workplace practices. For example, in a lesson on communication skills, students were able to state the barriers to communication they had experienced in placement when caring for the elderly. Progression to further study or employment is good. In 2003/04, 72% of AVCE health and social care students progressed to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First aid at work short	1	No. of starts	82	37	47

course		% retention	93	100	100
		% pass rate	95	100	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	17	15	12
		% retention	71	93	75
		% pass rate	92	93	100
AVCE health and social care double award	3	No. of starts	26	26	33**
		% retention	73	85	72
		% pass rate	100	86	96
BTEC national diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	11	9	5
		% retention	18	44	40
		% pass rate	100	75	100
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	16	12	*
		% retention	69	75	*
		% pass rate	91	89	*

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

\* course did not run

\*\* college figures

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

45. There is much good teaching. Lessons are well planned and purposeful with clear aims and objectives which are shared with students. Teachers use a variety of learning activities including case studies, role plays, visits and visiting speakers. For example, public services students have visited police headquarters to undertake the police induction training. In the best lessons, teachers identify preferred learning styles and modify their teaching methods appropriately. They involve students in a range of activities which provide opportunities for developing their skills as well as their knowledge of theory. Students share their experiences with each other in lessons and use their personal and work experience to consolidate their learning. Key skills are taught by vocational teachers and integrated with the main course of study.

46. Teachers are well qualified and all have a teaching qualification. Some have recent and relevant industrial experience and use good examples from their professional and personal experience to help students learn effectively. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively in lessons and there are relevant displays on equality and diversity in classrooms and corridors.

47. A good range of high-quality vocational resources is available to support learning. Students make good use of craft materials, handouts and other learning aids including electronic and anatomical babies. The library is well stocked with a range of texts and videos. There are designated rooms for health and social care, including a specialist practical room for early years. This accommodation is good and classrooms have a range of IT to support learning and enhance research skills. Some teaching takes place in laboratories. In these rooms it is not possible to move furniture for group work and one laboratory has no computers.

48. Assessment of students' work is good. Marked work includes feedback to help students improve the standard of their work. However, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always corrected on written work. Teachers use questions effectively in lessons to assess students' understanding. Initial assessment is thorough and quickly identifies students requiring additional support. Learning support tutors are used effectively in class to assist students with dyslexia and those requiring assistance with assignments and study skills.

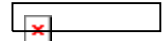
49. There is a satisfactory range of provision and progression opportunities in early years and health and social care. Extension lessons in ethics are provided at lunchtime for students wishing to progress to medicine and nursing in particular. Effective links with employers, professional agencies, the education sector and specialist hospitals provide students with a range of work placement opportunities. Enrichment activities enhance careers prospects and broaden students' experience.

50. Support and guidance for students are very good. Personal and academic targets are set and carefully monitored through the tutorial system. Actions to improve performance are identified by students and teachers. There is much personal support and this is valued by students. For example, one student was referred to an agency outside the college to assist with accommodation. The programme for group tutorials is comprehensive and includes outside speakers and visits. The induction programme enables students to settle quickly into their courses and there are special arrangements for those who start late. Careers advice is good and includes contributions from employers and representatives from local universities.

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

51. Leadership and management are good. Communication across the department is effective and senior managers are supportive and approachable. There is an open communication route to senior managers. A link governor, who is a qualified nurse, takes an active interest in the department. The meetings structure ensures coverage of curriculum and development issues. There are strategies in place to raise retention and pass rates. Continuing professional development is encouraged. Performance data are purposefully analysed and used to inform planning. Quality assurance is robust and focuses on raising standards of teaching and learning. The self-assessment process is largely accurate although some strengths are overstated. All course teams make a positive contribution to the identification of strengths and areas for development. Actions to bring about improvement are identified and progress monitored at regular intervals. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted and firmly embedded in practice.

### **Visual and performing arts and media**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- very high pass rates
  
- very good students' progress relative to prior achievements in art and design
  
- good teaching
  
- very high standards of students' practical work

- very good academic and pastoral support
  
- good assessment practice focused on improving achievement
  
- extensive range of level 3 programmes.

**Weaknesses**

- insufficient editing equipment in media.

**Scope of provision**

52. There are currently 764 students enrolled within this curriculum area. The majority are aged 16 to 18 and studying full time. There is a very small evening part-time provision. All subjects are offered at level 3 at both AS level and GCE A level. There is no level 2 provision. The range of programmes includes subjects in all areas of visual and performing arts and media. The largest number of students is studying art and design in fine art, graphic design, photography, textiles and jewellery. The remaining students are studying media and film studies, performance studies, music and music technology.

**Achievement and standards**

53. Achievements are very good and pass rates are outstanding. For example, the pass rate for the last three years has been 100% in GCE A-level dance, drama, theatre studies, graphics, photography and textiles. Pass rates are also consistently very high on AS-level jewellery, fine art, photography and textiles. The percentage of high grades has been consistently above the national average in all subjects, except performance studies and music, for the past three years. Students studying art and design have consistently made very good progress relative to their prior attainment. Standards of students' practical work are high. Visual research in students' workbooks is creative and the exploration of ideas is thorough. In a graphic design lesson, a student was preparing a fund raising leaflet for homeless teenagers and had developed images from cardboard and paper rubbish which, in colour, texture and shape, reflected the coarse and rough nature of life for the homeless. Creative approaches are rigorously analysed and evaluated. Final artworks and artefacts are well presented. Performance skills are well developed. Media students demonstrate confidence in their understanding of the key concepts of media and apply them successfully. Music and music technology students demonstrate technical expertise and compositional fluency. Students display high levels of knowledge and understanding and have confidence in their abilities.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCE A2 fine art	3	No. of starts	37	45	33
		% retention	95	91	100
		% pass rate	100	100	97

AS-level fine art	3	No. of starts	49	54	73
		% retention	96	85	84
		% pass rate	98	100	97
GCE A-level graphics	3	No. of starts	19	20	24
		% retention	95	100	96
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level graphics	3	No. of starts	25	33	45
		% retention	96	88	87
		% pass rate	100	100	97
GCE A-level textiles	3	No. of starts	11	29	16
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	125	133	129
		% retention	82	76	86
		% pass rate	96	93	94
GCE A-level drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	13	22	16
		% retention	100	95	94
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

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

54. Teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned and structured. Teachers use a wide range of exercises and methods to develop and consolidate learning. They are enthusiastic and stimulating, focusing on the needs of individual students to help them achieve their full potential. Teachers are supportively critical. They encourage students to explore concepts, ideas and theories. Activities are suitably demanding and set at an appropriate level. Students make progress through the clarification of personal goals and target setting. There is an appropriate balance between the teaching of theory and practical skills. Students are prepared particularly well for examinations and gain the confidence to display their knowledge. In a small minority of lessons, there is some ineffective questioning which fails to encourage students to respond.

55. Accommodation and equipment are satisfactory. All subjects, with the exception of media, have sufficient equipment. There are insufficient video editing facilities for media students and much accommodation is cramped. This restricts students' learning of the theory of media through practice. Syllabus choice in GCE A-level media and film studies is restricted by the need for a qualification without a practical module. Art and design rooms are equipped with an extensive range of specialist equipment which gives students opportunities to experiment and pursue ideas through multiple routes. Art and design rooms have discrete collections of books and other resources. The product design workshop lacks some computerised numerical control and computer aided manufacture tools. The photographic darkroom and digital workroom on separate floors causes particular difficulties with split group working. There are four new soundproofed music practice rooms and a new recording studio. Music technology students have 14 newly installed computers equipped with current software. Dance students have access to a large, well-equipped hall and a separate teaching space. Performing arts students use a large performance space equipped with appropriate lighting. The learning resource centre supports students' learning well. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Staff development focuses on improvements in teaching and learning.

56. Assessment practices support learning well. There are good systems for monitoring performance

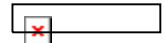
and progress including the use of predicted and target grades. Written and verbal feedback to students is detailed and informative. Marked work is returned promptly; in some cases, it is e-mailed directly to the student at home.

57. Academic and pastoral support is very good. Course tutors, student services and teachers work very well together to provide a coherent and highly effective approach to all aspects of student support. Initial assessment is carried out promptly. It is accurate and well documented. Teachers understand students' needs fully. Additional learning support is good and provides appropriate support for students with identified needs.

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

58. Leadership and management are good. Equal opportunities are promoted effectively. Quality assurance is systematic and involves staff and students fully. Curriculum managers are self-critical and seek continuous improvement. There is a good team spirit within the departments. Demanding targets are set for students' achievements. Data on students and their performance are accurate and are used well by teaching staff and curriculum managers to plan for improvements. Accommodation is used efficiently and teachers are well deployed and make effective use of resources.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very high pass and retention rates at GCE A level
  
- outstanding students' achievements relative to prior attainment at GCE A level
  
- high pass rates on most AS-level courses
  
- very good and enthusiastic teaching
  
- good assessment practices focused on improving achievements
  
- very good individual support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- consistently low retention rates on most AS-level courses
  
- poor progress relative to prior achievement in AS-level psychology
  
- lack of punctuality in some lessons.

**Scope of provision**

59. The college offers a wide range of level 3 courses including classical civilisation, general studies, geography, history, law, philosophy, politics, psychology, religious studies, and sociology at AS level and GCE A level as well as critical thinking and social policy at AS level. There are currently 1,635 enrolments, most of whom are students aged 16 to 18. Sociology and psychology have the largest numbers of students enrolled at 221 and 231, respectively. There are 31 adult students on the access to HE course.

**Achievement and standards**

60. The majority of pass rates are above the national averages and many are very high. In many subjects, the proportion of higher grade passes is well above the national averages. The proportion of higher grade passes is outstanding in history and in government and politics at both AS level and GCE A level. In most subjects, the achievements of students relative to their prior attainment are very good. Retention rates at AS level are generally low, and many have been below the national averages for the past three years. Students speak confidently and knowledgeably about their work and engage in vigorous debate. In a politics lesson on the effectiveness of pressure groups, one student questioned the view that the destruction of genetically modified crops is vandalism, justifying his challenge with the argument that the real vandalism was the pollution of the organic environment in the first place. In a classical civilisation lesson on Greek art and architecture, students confidently and enthusiastically made major, detailed contributions, drawing on the very good knowledge and understanding they had acquired as a result of information and learning technology (ILT) research partly based in the college's learning resources centre. Students are late to some lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	106	89	125
		% retention	86	84	84
		% pass rate	96	84	98
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	108	106	110
		% retention	86	80	82
		% pass rate	90	92	86
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	178	152	157
		% retention	83	80	82
		% pass rate	84	80	80
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	110	126	155
		% retention	77	79	82



		% pass rate	96	93	93
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	60	58	53
		% retention	100	97	100
		% pass rate	97	100	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	42	72	63
		% retention	95	94	98
		% pass rate	100	99	98
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	52	58	66
		% retention	92	100	98
		% pass rate	96	100	100

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

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

61. There is much very good teaching. Initial assessment is used to understand and plan for the learning needs of individual students. Enthusiastic and well-informed teachers maintain students' interest using a variety of suitable strategies. For a politics lesson on national identity, all students brought in one object which typified to them the English identity. When they had justified their choices to the group they had enjoyably developed an understanding of the English identity.

62. Teachers are well qualified and many have higher level degrees. They have a commitment to subject and professional development and many have experience as external examiners. Overall accommodation is adequate and, although some rooms are hot and overcrowded, there is no adverse impact on teaching and learning. There are, however, insufficient computer workstations for students.

63. There are good assessment practices which focus on the monitoring of students' learning and improving achievements. During the review processes, which take place twice a year, progress against target grades is monitored closely. Students' work is usually returned promptly with constructive feedback.

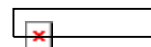
64. There is a wide range of subject-based enrichment activities. These include opportunities for trips abroad to countries such as Iceland, France and Germany as well as visits to locations in this country such as the Old Bailey, Parliament, Lincoln's Inn, North Wales and the Long Mynd. Classical civilisation students have taken part in an archaeological dig and produced a report.

65. Initial advice and guidance given to students are good and further support is offered to those needing it. This includes individual help outside lesson time and e-mail support in addition to support in class. Revision lessons are organised at appropriate times in the year and revision materials are accessible through the college's network. Tutorial support is good and valued by students.

### **Leadership and management**

66. The management of the individual subjects and departments is good. Regular department and subject meetings are held at which teaching and learning and student related issues are discussed. Most judgements in the self-assessment reports are accurate, although there is a tendency to overstate strengths. Some targets are vague and there is a delay between identifying a weakness and putting actions in place to remedy it. The physical separation of psychology teaching from the rest of the department hinders communication. Currently, strategies to improve retention rates are in place. Activities in lessons and the use of unbiased materials help to avoid any form of discrimination.

## English and modern foreign languages



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

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most courses
  
- good progress by students relative to their prior achievements in English
  
- high levels of staff expertise
  
- much good teaching
  
- innovative displays of students' work in English
  
- good enrichment activities.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor progress by students relative to their prior achievements in French and AS-level German
  
- low retention rates on French courses
  
- insufficient use of ILT to support learning.

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

67. The college offers English literature, English language, French, German, Italian and Spanish at AS level and GCE A level. GCSE courses in English language, Italian and Spanish are also available. The two departments provide adult evening classes at a range of levels and make a contribution to the daytime adult access courses. There are 330 students in this curriculum area, representing 13% of the college total of full-time students and 34% of the part-time and evening classes. All the courses are delivered on the college's site. Of the total enrolments, 63% are in English, and 37% in modern foreign languages.

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

68. Pass rates at GCE A level were 100% in all subjects in this area for 2003/04 and have been consistently high over the last three years. In English, pass rates at AS level have been in line with national averages over the last three years. In modern foreign languages, pass rates at AS level have been more variable but, in 2003/04, they were above the national averages in French and German. The progress that students make relative to their prior attainment is good overall in English, but is less than expected in modern foreign languages.

69. Retention rates at AS level have been below the national averages although, in English literature, the retention rate was at the national average for 2003/04. At GCE A level, retention rates in English are high, but in French they have been below the national average for two years. In GCSE English language, the retention rate is slightly below the national average although the proportion of high grade (A\* to C) passes obtained in 2003/04 rose above the national average.

70. The standard of students' work is satisfactory and sometimes high. In English, students are confident in their communication and their displays of work are creative and innovative. Written and oral work are satisfactory. Many English students progress to HE, with a large proportion taking English-related degrees. In modern foreign languages, students work with appropriate levels of fluency and accurate pronunciation.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	123	113	133
		% retention	88	83	90
		% pass rate	94	98	93
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	79	73	70
		% retention	99	95	96
		% pass rate	100	99	100
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	143	114	143
		% retention	86	82	85
		% pass rate	94	91	94
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	75	84	65
		% retention	97	99	100
		% pass rate	97	100	100
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	81	89	114
		% retention	73	72	77
		% pass rate	53	47	60
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	37	44	29
		% retention	92	82	79

		% pass rate	76	81	87
AS-level German	3	No. of starts	16	24	29
		% retention	88	75	90
		% pass rate	43	78	96

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

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

71. Teaching and learning are good. There is much well-planned teaching across both departments. Some teaching is occasionally too structured, and loses spontaneity. There is limited access to, and use of, interactive resources in many lessons. Students are given many opportunities to express ideas and personal responses in lively English display work, in the best modern foreign language lessons, and on the many trips and exchanges that are organised.

72. Teachers know their students well, monitor their work thoroughly and provide excellent support. Two modern foreign language assistants work with the college's learning support services. Lessons observed all included many opportunities for students to ask for clarification of understanding, or to receive feedback. There is regular assessment of the four main language skills, and marking systems used by English teachers encourage students to analyse their own work before thorough marking and moderation. A system of target setting allows for the effective monitoring of students' progress. Students value the support their teachers offer them and feel they can always approach English teachers, knowing they will receive positive help and encouragement for both academic and personal issues.

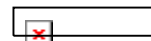
73. Teachers of English and modern foreign languages are all very well qualified and several are public examiners. There is some cramped accommodation for English students although a small number of innovatively designed specialist rooms in both English and modern foreign languages encourage more active learning and forms of assessment. The provision for, and use of, ILT facilities is underdeveloped in both departments. In modern foreign languages, students are beginning to use the college intranet for foreign language conversation. Facilities and equipment in the learning and resources centre are good and support independent learning.

74. English and modern foreign language courses fulfil the needs of most students. Progression by students to related subjects at university is good. Opportunities for further enhancement of students' experience in English and modern foreign languages are made available by teachers. The languages department is a language training provider for some local companies and has provided bespoke courses, as well as supporting teachers at a local school with the integration of pupils from Portuguese families. Theatre trips, conferences, customised battlefield trips abroad, and exchanges, all add to students' experiences at college.

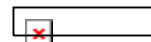
### **Leadership and management**

75. Leadership and management of both curriculum areas are good. There is a co-operative working atmosphere, consistent practices, and an underlying concern that these should fully support all students, regardless of ability, gender or race. Modern foreign language managers are actively involved with evening class provision and communication with part-time staff is good. The college intranet includes a recently developed facility for students to communicate in different languages. Some effective actions have been taken to improve teaching methods, for example, in GCSE English. Other developments, such as using computer-related equipment to support learning, expanding the use of specially designed learning spaces, and addressing retention rates in French and AS-level English language courses, are either at an early stage or overdue.

## **Part D: College data**



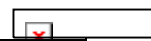
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04**



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	3	76
2	11	12
3	86	11
4/5	0	0
Other	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in 2005*

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



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	970	206	18
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	44	2	1
Business administration, management and professional	363	64	7
Information and communication technology	199	219	6
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	305	55	6
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	17	132	2
Health, social care and public services	257	739	15
Visual and performing arts and media	692	28	11
Humanities	1,260	55	20
English, languages and communication	656	97	12
Foundation programmes	18	116	2

<b>Total</b>	<b>4,781</b>	<b>1,713</b>	<b>100</b>
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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
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	28	70	54	448	488	392
	Retention rate %	89	77	78	67	68	67
	National average %	75	83	*	72	73	*
	Pass rate %	84	87	85	95	84	84
	National average %	75	72	*	73	75	*
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	358	444	520	153	134	152
	Retention rate %	77	79	85	64	47	71
	National average %	81	81	*	70	69	*
	Pass rate %	96	95	95	74	89	83
	National average %	84	86	*	70	74	*
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	3,853	3,760	3,915	205	180	170
	Retention rate %	88	86	87	61	62	75
	National average %	89	90	*	72	73	*
	Pass rate %	91	90	93	87	82	87
	National average %	87	91	*	73	77	*

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2001 to 2003: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 2001/02 to 2003/04: College ISR.

\*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)	86	14	0	71
Level 2 (intermediate)	70	30	0	10
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	1
Other sessions	0	100	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>83</b>

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