

Strode's College

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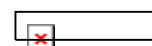
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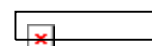
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Basic information about the college

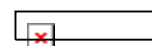


Name of college:	Strode's College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Dr Frank Botham
Address of college:	High Street Egham Surrey TW20 9DR
Telephone number:	01784 437506
Fax number:	01784 471794
Chair of governors:	Michael Heath
Unique reference number:	130833
Name of reporting inspector:	Janet Mercer HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 April 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

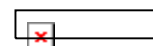


colleges in Surrey. It is located in Egham, in the borough of Runnymede. Since 1993, there has been a 50% growth in full-time student numbers to around 1,000 in 2003/04. Enrolments of students from minority ethnic backgrounds have increased from 8% in 2000/01, to 21% in 2003/04. This proportion is much greater than that seen in the local community. Approximately 15% of students come from two partner schools, 40% of the students at the college are from Spelthorne and the remainder is attracted from much further afield.

The mission of the college is to provide an education of quality and breadth within a supportive environment, enabling individuals to fulfil their potential and further their ambitions. The college is inclusive and caters for students with differing abilities, within the confines of an institution that is primarily for the education of full-time students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses.

The college offers programmes in 12 of the 14 areas of learning. The highest number of enrolments for students aged 16 to 18 are in humanities, English and modern foreign languages, science and mathematics, visual and performing arts, health and social care and information and communications technology (ICT). The majority of adult enrolments are on modern foreign languages and ICT courses. In 2003/04, there were 6,625 enrolments of students aged 16 to 18 and 1,956 adult enrolments. Some 90% of full-time students aged 16 to 18 are on advanced level courses.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the provision to be good in English and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in humanities and visual and performing arts. Overall provision in business and ICT was judged to be satisfactory, but ICT was given a contributory grade of unsatisfactory. Science and mathematics were judged to be unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on many general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses
- improving retention rates
- well-resourced and managed learning resource centre
- good access to computers for students
- wide range of advanced level courses

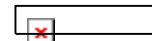
- good personal support for students
- good financial management
- good links with external organisations and parents.

What should be improved

- students' achievements on level 2 courses
- the proportion of students achieving high grades
- quality of teaching and learning
- use of information and learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning
- social facilities for students and some classroom accommodation
- management and delivery of key skills
- leadership to effect improvement
- use of data to improve students' academic progress
- strategies to improve students' performance.

subjects and courses in the full report.

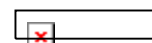
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are low on most advanced level subjects and in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) mathematics. Pass rates are high on environmental science courses. Assessment of students' work is thorough and supportive. Teaching does not sufficiently maintain students' interest and their skills for independent learning are not effectively developed.
Business and information and communications technology	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for information and communications technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory . Pass rates are rising on advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) business and GCE A-level business courses, but are low on most ICT courses. Teaching is generally satisfactory, although some fails to meet the needs of all students. Teaching for adults on ICT courses is good. Good staff, library and information technology (IT) resources support the development of students' skills for independent learning. Monitoring and recording of students' progress are not carried out consistently.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high in advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) drama, AS-level film studies, AS-level music technology and GCE A-level drama. Teaching is very good in film studies and music technology. In other subjects, there is too much teaching that does not sufficiently meet the needs of all students. Strategies and actions to bring about improvements have not yet been effective in all areas.
Humanities	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high in GCE A-level subjects, and in four AS-level subjects students make good progress relative to their prior achievements. Retention and pass rates on most GCSE courses are low. Teaching fails to make sufficient demands on students in a minority of lessons. Action to address weaknesses in government and politics has been ineffective.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Pass rates on GCE A-level, AS-level and Open College Network (OCN) courses are high. Teaching and learning are good and the area is well resourced and managed. Pass rates in GCSE English are low.

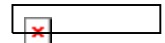
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers work in a friendly and consultative manner. The strategic plan sets appropriate objectives. Roles and responsibilities are understood by all members of staff. There are good links with external organisations. The college has grown substantially since the last inspection and has met its enrolment and financial targets each year. Financial management is good and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

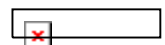
In some areas, managers have been slow to introduce effective measures to address weaknesses. Poor performance in mathematics, science, ICT and politics has not been dealt with effectively. Leadership and management are good in English and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in other curriculum areas. The quality assurance system has not been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning or the performance of students on a number of courses. Governance is good. The expertise of governors is well used, but governors pay insufficient attention to the areas of the college that are underperforming.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



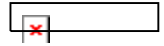
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college has been effective in widening participation. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has risen from 8% to 21% in the last four years. The college has increased its outreach provision from 1 to 14 centres and adult enrolments have risen considerably. Most teachers incorporate equality of opportunity effectively into their teaching. The college has a race equality policy and, while it has made some progress towards implementing its actions, some aspects are underdeveloped. Members of staff have received recent training on child protection policy and procedures, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and cultural diversity. Data on the performance of different groups of students are collected and analysed, but are not yet used effectively to rectify underperformance by some minority ethnic groups at the college. The college has identified that a minority of students find some of the social areas of the college intimidating. Some initiatives have been introduced to rectify this, but these have not yet been effective. The college meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA).

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Arrangements for ensuring students choose appropriate courses are generally effective. Induction programmes are successful in ensuring that most students have made the right choice and settle into their studies quickly. However, too many students who have little chance of success opt to take GCSE courses. The tutorial programme is effectively managed and provides a coherent and wide-ranging series of activities designed to support students in their studies, and to prepare them for progression from college to higher education (HE) or employment. Tutors and teachers provide very good personal support for students. However, the academic support provided has had limited success in raising standards and improving students' performance in examinations. Attendance and punctuality are carefully monitored, but systems to improve attendance have had insufficient impact. The college has been slow to recognise the need to provide additional learning support for students with a range of specific needs. However, students' individual needs are increasingly being identified and met through a range of support strategies.

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

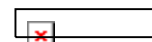
- friendly, helpful staff who care about students
- pleasant surroundings and friendly atmosphere
- wide range of subjects
- the range of extra-curricular courses and activities
- help for careers and job interviews
- good resources
- students' views are listened to.

What they feel could be improved

- lack of social facilities
- timetabling arrangements
- too much free time in the middle of the day

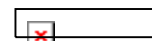
- some shabby and cold rooms.

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

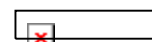


Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

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	62	34	4
19+	70	20	10
Learning 16-18	62	32	6
19+	80	10	10

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).

Achievement and standards



1. The college provides 37 subjects at GCE A level and 42 at AS level. There are six vocational qualifications at advanced level, three at intermediate level and one at foundation level. The college offers 10 subjects at GCSE. There is a wide range of OCN provision in modern foreign languages and short courses in ICT.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Most students who enrol at the college are aged 16 to 18. Retention rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 rose in 2003/04 and are now broadly in line with the national averages at all levels. Where references are made in the report to national averages, these are the averages for sixth form colleges.
3. Pass rates at levels 1 and 2 rose significantly in 2003/04. However, while overall pass rates at level 2 are close to the national average, A* to C pass rates for GCSE courses are very low on many courses. A* to C pass rates in GCSE English and mathematics have been consistently below national averages for the past three years and are unsatisfactory. In 2003/04, pass rates were well below national averages in GCSE French, geography, psychology and science. On level 2 vocational courses, pass rates were below the national average on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate business, but above in GNVQ intermediate ICT and leisure and tourism.
4. Pass rates at level 3 declined slightly in 2003/04 and are just below the national averages for sixth form colleges. Pass rates are high on GCE A-level and AS-level courses in English and modern foreign languages and visual and performing arts, on GCE A-level humanities and business subjects and on advanced level vocational courses in business. However, pass rates are below national averages on most courses in science and mathematics and ICT. Students on AS-level mathematics and GCE A-level and AS-level environmental science and computing courses achieve results which are at or above the national averages. Pass rates were 100% on approximately 45% of GCE A-level and 20% of AS-level courses, but were well below the national averages on 20% of all courses.
5. The proportion of students achieving high grades in 2003/04 is lower than the national average in over half of GCE A-level and AS-level courses, although there is considerable variation across curriculum areas. The percentage of students achieving higher grades is generally high in English and humanities, satisfactory in modern foreign languages, computing and business courses, and low in visual and performing arts, science and mathematics and ICT.
6. Data for 2003/04 indicate that overall most students make satisfactory progress relative to their prior achievements. In 2004, students' results were significantly better than predicted in AS-level environmental science, geography, law, and sociology. They were significantly lower than predicted in AS-level business, government and politics, GCE A-level art and in both AS-level and GCE A-level ICT and media studies. Data over three years demonstrate that students consistently achieve higher than predicted grades in AS-level economics, geography, music technology and sociology and GCE A-level music technology and psychology. However, students studying AS-level English language, film studies government and politics, and physics, GCE A-level English literature, art, mathematics and GCE A-level and AS-level ICT and media have achieved results lower than predicted over three years. Students are accepted on to most level 3 courses with qualifications that are broadly in line with the national cohort. However, on just over 20% of college courses students with lower levels of achievements are accepted to study for level 3 qualifications.
7. Pass rates in key skills are low. Retention and pass rates have been low over the last three years, and remain very low at level 1. Retention rates are still low at level 2 for communication and IT, but have risen in application of number. Pass rates at level 2 application of number have risen and in 2003/04 were above the national average. Attendance in most key skills lessons is very low, particularly for communication, where attendance was less than 50% in some lessons.
8. Inspectors judged attainment to be good or better in 56% of lessons, satisfactory in 36% and less than satisfactory in 8% of lessons observed. The proportion of good or better attainment is lower than the national average for sixth form colleges. In lessons where attainment is lower, students are not sufficiently motivated or inspired to learn.
9. Standards of students' work are generally satisfactory, and are good in English, modern foreign languages, film studies, music and music technology. Students produce work of a standard consistent with the level and stage of their courses. Written work in science and mathematics is

presented carefully. Students on AVCE business courses demonstrate a sound knowledge of business topics, such as human resource issues. Music students independently compose and arrange their own complex music sequences. Students in humanities subjects are able to express themselves clearly and communicate complex ideas. In English lessons, students make perceptive, analytical comments on texts in a confident and articulate manner. In modern languages, students demonstrate fluency in oral skills and accurate writing and listening skills. However, in some lessons in visual arts and media, students produce work which is no better than satisfactory.

10. Students make good progress from level 1 to level 3. Almost 45% of students on level 2 courses progress to level 3 in the college. Approximately 87% of students completing courses in 2004 progressed to HE or further education (FE), training or employment. A high proportion of students (40%) completing their courses gain employment in the local area. Over 88% of students applying to HE gained university places.

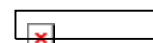
11. Attendance in lessons observed during the inspection was 82% and slightly below the national average of 86%. Attendance on some GCSE courses was very low, at below 70%.

Adult learners

12. Retention rates have risen at levels 2 and 3 and are in line with the national averages. However, at level 1, the retention rate has declined over the last three years, and was very low at only 57% in 2003/04. Pass rates have risen at all levels. There was a sharp decline in the achievements of adults at levels 1 and 2 in 2002/03, but pass rates rose in 2003/04 and are significantly above national averages. Achievements of adults at level 3 show a steady improvement over the past three years. Enrolments of adults accounted for 23% of total college enrolments in 2003/04. Of these, 45% were at levels 1 and 2 and 10% at level 3.

13. Adults on ICT courses make good progress in developing skills in using the keyboard and in software applications. Modern language students develop fluency in reading, writing and oral skills and in applying language skills in specific contexts.

Quality of education and training



14. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 78 lessons. Teaching was graded good or better in 63% of lessons, satisfactory in 32% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 5% of lessons. This teaching profile is significantly below the national average for sixth form colleges. Teaching was very good or excellent in 19% of lessons observed, significantly lower than the average of 35% in sixth form colleges nationally. Learning was good or better in 64% of lessons, satisfactory in 30% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 6% of lessons. This profile is below the national average for sixth form colleges.

15. There are significant differences in the quality of teaching among different curriculum areas. In English and modern foreign languages, teaching was good or better in four fifths of lessons observed, whilst in science and mathematics and business and ICT just over half the teaching was good or better. The proportion of good or better teaching is higher at level 3 than at level 2. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in 4 of the 5 curriculum areas inspected.

16. The more effective lessons are well planned and teachers set clear learning objectives for students to achieve. Teachers use a variety of learning activities which provide opportunities for students to be fully involved in lessons. Progress is steady and teachers pay attention to students' different needs and learning styles. Teachers make skilful use of questions to check understanding and to consolidate and extend knowledge. Students learn from effective teacher demonstrations and are able to practise and apply what they have learnt. In a good chemistry lesson, following a clear

explanation by the teacher, students displayed effective practical skills and sound knowledge in preparing ethene from ethanol. Students in a business lesson were encouraged to develop their ideas on current business issues beyond simple responses. In a drama lesson, the teacher skilfully developed students' theoretical understanding by effectively linking theory and practice through a series of increasingly complex improvised scenes. Group work in a GCE A-level sociology lesson enabled students to apply theoretical knowledge to a case study and was highly effective and fun. Students in an AS-level English lesson used and defined complex linguistic terminology. In English and modern foreign languages, more able students are given a variety of extension activities and their progress is carefully monitored.

17. However, in too many lessons, teaching is uninspiring and fails to hold students' interest and motivate them to succeed. In the less effective lessons, there is too much emphasis on whole class activity and too much of the work is done by the teacher. Students in these lessons fail to develop skills for independent learning and they are easily distracted. They are not encouraged to devise their own solutions to problems and often make slower progress than they should. Teachers do not effectively check on students' learning and understanding. In a few lessons, teachers talk or dictate for long periods of time and students lose interest and are inattentive. Too little use is made of ILT in lessons and students do not benefit from the range of technologies available to enhance their learning.

18. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. Handouts are generally well presented and attractive. The library is well stocked and used extensively by students. Opening hours have been extended on two evenings a week to meet the needs of part-time students. There is close co-operation with most curriculum areas to maintain and update library resources.

19. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach. Some teachers have industry experience and qualifications, although these are not always recent. A high proportion of full-time teachers have a teaching qualification. Technical support is sufficient in most areas of learning, and good in science.

20. Provision of computers is good, with a ratio of one computer to every three students. Each full-time teacher has a laptop computer. The college has only two interactive whiteboards, both in the mathematics area, and a small number of data projectors. Use of ILT by teachers in lessons is underdeveloped. Many curriculum areas have developed intranet sites, the best of which contain recorded lessons and interactive activities.

21. The college has refurbished several rooms since the last inspection. Accommodation is good for English, chemistry, art and music. Modern language students have particularly good resources, including a well-used language laboratory. There are good sports and outdoor recreation facilities. Some accommodation is still poor. Some of the nine huts are cramped with inadequate lighting. Social areas for students are very limited and the students' refectory and common room are uninviting. The college has a detailed accommodation strategy, with plans to improve the unsatisfactory accommodation. Health and safety risk assessments are carried out for the college site, but they do not yet extend to the 14 outreach centres.

22. In most subjects, students' progress is assessed rigorously and monitored effectively. Homework is set frequently, and is marked and returned promptly. Detailed feedback on assignments is aimed at helping students to improve. A system of students commenting on their own work, and setting targets for improvement works well for individual assignments. Students' progress at subject level is carefully tracked, and monitored against a minimum target grade based on their prior attainment. Subject progress reviews are conducted three times a year. These record grades for effort and attainment in each subject, as well as attendance. Parents or carers of students aged 16 to 18 receive regular progress reports.

23. Initial assessment is effective in assessing students' levels of literacy and numeracy, and in identifying students with specific individual learning needs. This information is used effectively by the learning support team to provide additional help, and most students benefit from the assistance offered. Data on the achievements of different groups of students are collected, but little action has yet been taken to identify and address the causes of the poor retention rates of some minority ethnic

groups on level 2 courses.

24. The college has a very good range of level 3 courses. Good collaboration with feeder schools ensures appropriate progression routes for Year 11 students. Although some level 1 and 2 courses have been introduced, there are few progression opportunities in some curriculum areas. Approximately 10% of students are taking level 2 qualifications, of whom 44% progress to level 3 courses. Provision for adult part-time students has increased, with adult enrolments rising to 1,956 in 2003/04. The college has formed partnerships with other adult services to offer a range of courses in different geographical areas and for students with disabilities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has increased from 8% to 21% in the last four years. The college has experienced some tensions between different faith groups and is currently seeking to resolve these through positive promotion of diversity. Adequate arrangements have been made for a prayer room and collective worship sessions for different faith groups.

25. A wide range of enrichment courses and activities is available for students, including sports, leisure, arts, drama, music and clubs. Participation rates are high on many of these activities. Many teachers make use of outside speakers and arrange visits that broaden students' experiences. Vocational course leaders have introduced industry-relevant qualifications, but too few vocational students undertake work experience.

26. There is effective integration of the communication key skill at level 3 with the tutorial programme. Numbers of students undertaking communication at level 3 are high. Other key skills are not integrated with courses and do not have subject or vocational relevance for students.

27. Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Links with local feeder schools, and with the wide range of other schools from which the college recruits, are good. Arrangements to ensure that students are fully informed about the college and choose appropriate courses are generally effective. All full-time students are interviewed prior to receiving their GCSE results, and course choices are reviewed at enrolment. An effective induction period helps students to settle into the college and confirm their course choices. However, some students who choose to take GCSE courses, particularly in mathematics and English, have a limited chance of success. The college has recently reviewed the entry criteria for these subjects.

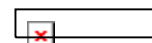
28. Tutorial provision is well managed and regularly reviewed. Students' views on the quality of tutorial provision are frequently sought. Tutorials are particularly effective in preparing students for the transition to HE, and in assisting with applications to university. All advanced level students are expected to seek accreditation for the tutorial programme by achieving a qualification in communication skills, and a GCSE in general studies. However, many students do not successfully complete these qualifications. Personal tutors and teachers provide particularly good personal support for students. Teachers are available to students outside lessons. However, procedures for monitoring students' progress through the tutorial system pay insufficient attention to setting demanding targets for students to raise standards. Regular reports on students' progress do not identify how well students are doing in comparison with their predicted grades, and the targets set by both teachers and students are often imprecise and vague.

29. Students' attendance at lessons and their punctuality are assiduously monitored. Individual students are accountable for poor attendance, and parents are contacted where appropriate. Although attendance rates on most courses are satisfactory, on several courses, particularly at level 2, attendance is low. Insufficient action has been taken to address the causes of low attendance.

30. A small team provides good one-to-one support for students with a range of specific learning difficulties, and for students with weak study skills. Students in need of additional support are identified when they apply to college, through the initial assessment process or by self-referral or referral by teachers. The college has been slow to recognise the need to provide extra support for students, particularly on level 2 courses, but the provision is increasing. At the time of inspection, over 80 students were receiving tailored additional help. No support is provided within the classroom. Although support is available for students for whom English is a second language, the college has yet to recognise the potential support needs of bilingual students.

31. A satisfactory range of welfare services is available to provide students with support on personal, welfare and financial issues. A college counsellor is employed for one day a week. Advice and guidance on careers are provided through tutorials and in partnership with the Connexions service. The college's child protection policy meets legal requirements, and has recently been extended to include vulnerable adults. Teachers and governors have received training on the policy and its implications.

Leadership and management



32. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior and middle managers work in a friendly and consultative manner. Lines of communication are very good. The strategic plan sets appropriate objectives. The operating, staff development and other plans are linked effectively to the college's strategic plan. Governors and senior managers effectively monitor the implementation of these plans. Roles and responsibilities are understood by all members of staff.

33. The college has made progress in some areas identified as weaknesses in the previous inspection report. Retention rates have risen over the last four years and are now similar to the national averages for sixth form colleges. However, students' achievements vary across different curriculum areas. Pass rates are generally high in English, modern foreign languages, visual and performing arts, on advanced level business courses and GCE A-level humanities subjects, but below the national averages on the majority of science and mathematics and ICT courses. The proportion of high grades achieved by students on over 50% of GCE A-level and AS-level subjects was below national averages in 2003/04.

34. In some areas of the college's work, leadership has been ineffective and managers have been slow to address key weaknesses. Changes to additional learning support, the ILT strategy, individual learning plans and systems for monitoring of students' progress have not yet led to sufficient improvement. Leadership in English and modern foreign languages is good. In most other areas, it is satisfactory. However, curriculum leadership and management in mathematics, science, ICT and politics have not been effective in remedying low retention and pass rates, or improving the quality of teaching and learning, over a number of years.

35. The quality assurance framework is well understood and implemented. The self-assessment report is thorough and college wide but insufficient weight has been given to many weaknesses related to students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. The framework includes internal lesson observations, target setting, comparisons of college data with national averages, external quality reviews and a recently introduced formal review of subject areas. Some improvements have taken place. For example, the retention rate at level 3 has improved from 64% to the national average of 89% since the last inspection. Students' performance compared to predictions based on their entry qualifications has improved considerably over the last three years. However, there has been little discernible improvement on a large number of courses. The quality assurance system has not been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The proportion of good or better teaching observed during the inspection is 12 percentage points below the national average for sixth form colleges.

36. Staff appraisal is carried out assiduously. Staff development needs are identified through this process and through questionnaires and surveys. Curriculum and support teams identify collective needs. A well-structured and thorough staff development plan takes account of strategic objectives and identified needs. However, staff development activities have had insufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on the achievements of a considerable number of students.

37. The college has productive links with external organisations and is generally held in high esteem. Links with many of the local secondary schools are excellent. In one local school, this has led to joint strategic planning, mentoring of school pupils by college students and collaborative teaching.

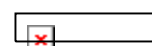
Relationships with HE institutions are good and improving.

38. The college is educationally inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy with supporting policies on disability and race equality. An action plan for the SENDA is implemented effectively. Work has been carried out to meet the requirements of the act. An action plan on equality of opportunity identifies many actions related to race equality, but these are underdeveloped. There is considerable staff development on all aspects of equality and diversity. The college facilitates acts of collective worship for different faiths. There is an active Christian Union and a prayer room is provided for Muslim students. There are many examples of teachers developing resources and delivering sessions that exemplify good practice in the promotion of equality and diversity. However, the response to students' concerns over tensions in social and circulation areas has been slow. Teaching and learning styles have not been adapted to take account of the rapidly changing college population and to meet the needs of students from very different cultural backgrounds.

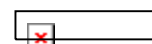
39. Governors have a good working relationship with senior and middle managers and other staff. They contribute to the formulation of the college's mission and its strategic objectives. Their expertise is used effectively and they give freely of their time to the many committees and to college activities. Governors monitor and evaluate financial management consistently and effectively. There is a good understanding of the running of the college both at a senior management and middle management level. Governors have formal links with curriculum and support functions. Individual governors report to the whole board regularly on these links. The quality and standards committee monitors the performance of students regularly and systematically. They are well aware of the courses that are substantially underperforming, but do not give sufficient attention to the relatively large number of courses that are attaining results at or marginally below the national averages.

40. Financial management is very good. The college has consistently been in financial category 'A'. Student numbers and analyses of costs are taken into account by senior managers in making decisions, although there is no formal course-costing model. Staff utilisation is monitored and controlled. The average class size during the inspection was 11.3 which is well below the national average of 13.1 for sixth form colleges. Retention and pass rates that are comparable with national averages, low average class size, but prudent financial management and satisfactory deployment of resources indicate that the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in environmental science
- thorough marking and helpful feedback on students' work.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in most advanced level subjects
- very low pass rates at grade A* to C in GCSE mathematics
- teaching that fails to motivate all students
- inadequate development of students' skills for independent learning.

Scope of provision

41. A wide range of GCE A-level courses is provided including biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science and mathematics. Mathematics options include pure mathematics, pure and statistics, pure and mechanics, use of mathematics, and further mathematics. Science and mathematics are offered at GCSE level. There are no vocational science courses. Almost all students are aged 16 to 18. Each year, approximately 200 students take advanced level courses. Over 100 students take GCSE mathematics, with 38 studying GCSE science.

Achievement and standards

42. Pass rates are significantly below national averages in most subjects. For example, in AS-level biology in 2004, only 60% of the students who completed the course passed the examination. At GCE A level, pass rates have been below the national averages in most subjects for two of the last three years. In environmental science, pass rates are very high, with all students who completed the AS-level and GCE A-level courses in 2004 being successful. Pass rates on AS-level mathematics are slightly higher than the national average. Retention rates are below national averages in AS-level biology, chemistry and physics and GCE A-level mathematics, and close to national averages in all other subjects. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics have been unsatisfactory for several years with a very low proportion of students achieving A* to C. Of the 134 students starting the course in 2003, only 29 were successful. Most advanced level students make average progress compared to predictions based on their prior achievements. In 2003/04, students in AS-level environmental science achieved significantly better results than those predicted from their GCSE achievements, but in AS-level physics and GCE A-level mathematics, students have achieved results lower than predicted, averaged over the past three years.

43. The standard of written work produced by most students is satisfactory. It is usually presented carefully, and in advanced mathematics shows all the working out employed to arrive at the solution. Chemistry students regularly perform well in the Royal Society of Chemistry's national schools' analyst competition. However, the quality of students' work on GCSE courses is frequently below the expected level. Average attendance at lessons is below that for similar colleges nationally. Attendance is particularly low in GCSE science and mathematics.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	115	121	134
		% retention	72	83	78
		% pass rate	36	25	28
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	53	39	60
		% retention	85	90	85
		% pass rate	82	83	78
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	104	95	124
		% retention	83	84	82
		% pass rate	74	81	60
AS-level environmental science	3	No. of starts	18	24	20
		% retention	94	83	90
		% pass rate	82	90	100
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	33	49	55
		% retention	97	94	93
		% pass rate	75	98	80
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	45	45	48
		% retention	93	84	83
		% pass rate	81	92	83

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

Quality of education and training

44. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but the proportion of good or better teaching is low. Lessons are carefully planned, but insufficient thought is given to using teaching methods that actively involve students in learning. In many lessons, although teachers explain topics carefully, there are few opportunities for students to work things out for themselves or to develop skills for independent learning. In the less effective lessons, students do not maintain concentration and frequently rely too much on the teacher's support to remedy deficiencies in their work. For example, in one GCSE lesson, one group of students made little effort to solve problems, but instead chatted amongst themselves while awaiting help from their teacher. Little use is made of ILT in teaching and learning and students do not benefit from the range of modern technologies and software to engage their interest in mathematical and scientific enquiry.

45. In the better lessons, students are clear about what they need to achieve, and work purposefully to improve their skills and knowledge. For example, in one good chemistry practical lesson, following a clear and brief explanation of the task from the teacher, students displayed effective practical skills and sound underpinning knowledge in preparing ethene from ethanol by dehydration. Particularly good attention was paid to health and safety issues.

46. Most teachers are well qualified in their subjects, and are very experienced with considerable subject knowledge. Accommodation is generally good, although in some cases poor blackout facilities make it difficult to see overhead transparencies clearly. Teaching rooms as well as laboratories have a strong curriculum identity through the display of posters and students' work. Many aids to teaching and learning such as models and preserved specimens are on display in rooms and laboratories. The library contains an appropriate range of textbooks and magazines, as well as a selection of videos of scientific and mathematical interest.

47. Assessment processes are both thorough and supportive. Assignments are marked accurately and in accordance with assessment criteria. Marked work is returned promptly and helps students to understand why marks have been lost and how work can be improved. Individual learning plans attached to returned assignments provide worthwhile targets, agreed by both student and teacher, for future improvement. Assessment criteria are made clear and are fully understood by students.

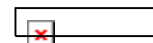
48. The college offers a wide range of courses. These include some seldom offered in sixth form colleges such as environmental science and use of mathematics. No vocational science course is offered, but an AS level in applied science is planned for next year. Courses are frequently enriched by inputs from outside organisations and educational visits.

49. Subject support is good, and teachers give willingly of their free time to provide further explanation and help. Teachers also provide much individual support during lessons, but there is no additional support for students with specific needs from specialist staff within lessons.

Leadership and management

50. Overall curriculum leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Students' achievements have been poor for several years. Insufficient action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Recent efforts to identify and share good practice have met with limited success. Self-assessment reports use data accurately and all teachers are involved in their compilation. However, action plans designed to address weaknesses lack detail and do not specify precise responsibilities and targets. The internal lesson observation process has not identified the failure to involve students in learning. Equality of opportunity is promoted positively.

Business and information and communications technology



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

The contributory grade for information and communications technology is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level and AVCE business courses
- good teaching on adult courses in ICT
- good resources for independent learning.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on most ICT courses
- much uninspiring teaching

- inconsistent monitoring and recording of students' progress.

Scope of provision

51. The college offers a broad range of qualifications in business and ICT. Courses in business include vocational qualifications from levels 1 to 3 and GCSE and GCE A-level and AS-level business. In ICT, courses include GNVQ intermediate, AVCE part, single and double awards, GCE A-level and AS-level computing and ICT. The majority of the 490 students in business and 374 in ICT are aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses. Part-time adult students account for 31 enrolments in business and 58 in ICT.

Achievement and standards

52. Pass rates are satisfactory overall in business, but are below national averages on most ICT courses. Retention and pass rates are steadily rising on AVCE business courses. Pass rates on GCE A-level business are consistently high. Retention rates have declined on GNVQ foundation business over the past three years and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business have been consistently below national averages. Pass rates on AS-level and AVCE ICT courses are significantly below national averages. Students on AS-level and GCE A-level computing courses are achieving results in line with national averages.

53. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory and is high on GNVQ foundation and AVCE business courses, GNVQ intermediate in IT, CLAIT and level 1 word processing. Students in AVCE business demonstrate a thorough working knowledge of business studies topics, such as the management of human resources. These students use computers competently to produce coursework, but ILT is not used widely to enhance learning in business and ICT lessons.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation business	1	No. of starts	18	14	18
		% retention	83	79	61
		% pass rate	80	100	82
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	*	16	21
		% retention	*	94	86
		% pass rate	*	53	83
AVCE business double award	3	No. of starts	23	18	11
		% retention	70	89	100
		% pass rate	81	75	100
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	60	70	64
		% retention	95	89	95
		% pass rate	100	97	98
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	97	96	83
		% retention	85	71	89

		% pass rate	66	63	42
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	19	16	20
		% retention	95	88	100
		% pass rate	78	100	90

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching in business and ICT is satisfactory, although the proportion of good or better teaching is lower than that usually seen in sixth form colleges. Lesson plans are generally clear and schemes of work are detailed. In a good level 2 ICT lesson, progress was brisk. The teacher used a variety of learning activities to maintain students' interest. In a level 1 business lesson, the teacher made good use of directed questions to develop students' knowledge and understanding. The better teaching successfully drew links between topics taught and current business issues. However, in too many lessons, teachers rely on a limited range of teaching methods which fail to motivate students and hold their interest. Teaching and learning activities are unexciting and do not meet students' individual needs. Questions posed are too general and do not give all students the opportunity to explore their ideas or check their understanding.

55. Teaching for adults on ICT courses is good. Teachers provide clear explanations and maintain students' interest. A range of activities helps students to develop good practical skills. Teachers show awareness of individual learning needs and students make good progress.

56. Resources for independent learning are good, and include a wide range of specialist library resources for business and ICT and online resources developed in the college. Most teachers are qualified in their subject area and hold or are working towards a teaching qualification. However, few teachers have recent industrial experience or updating of their skills. Accommodation is satisfactory and classrooms are adequately furnished. Students value the support given to them by teachers outside timetabled lessons.

57. Systems for monitoring and recording of students' progress are not implemented consistently. On GNVQ foundation and intermediate business courses, teachers provide detailed written feedback on students' assignments. On advanced level courses, teachers record progress on assignments. However, on some ICT courses, work is set or marked too infrequently to check students' understanding and effectively monitor their progress. Informal communication between teachers is good and they know their students well, but not all teachers keep comprehensive or detailed records of marked work. Formal recording of homework and assignment marks is underdeveloped and students' progress against targets is not sufficiently closely monitored. Students at risk of underperforming or those who could progress more quickly are not effectively identified. The majority of targets set for students are too long term and do not clearly identify actions for improvement.

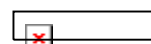
58. Links with industry are underdeveloped, particularly in ICT. The college recognises this as an area for future development. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to undertake work placements or company visits. However, local finance and accountancy firms have supported some students with aspects of business coursework and students have recently attended series of business-related conferences. Key skills are not integrated with the curriculum.

59. Students receive satisfactory advice and guidance at interview and through the induction process. Full-time students undertake an initial assessment to identify needs for learning support. Learning support staff and teachers communicate regularly about students' progress, but this is not formally recorded. Students attend regular tutorials and personal tutors conduct progress reviews twice yearly with students to monitor progress. Subject teachers and personal tutors communicate informally about students' attendance, examination and unit results. Students receive good support from subject teachers and personal tutors.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall in business and ICT. Action plans for ICT include strategies for improvement, but these have not yet had a measurable impact on raising students' achievements. Good communication among teachers takes place through informal discussions and regular faculty and departmental meetings. Too few meetings focus on improvements to teaching and learning and discussions on students' progress. It is not clear how managers monitor students' progress, or plan and evaluate actions for students giving cause for concern. There are few opportunities for teachers to share good practice. Lesson observations are clearly linked to staff appraisal and development needs are identified through the appraisal process.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in AS-level drama, AS-level film studies, AS-level music technology, and GCE A-level drama
- very good teaching in film studies and music technology
- very good enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on a minority of courses
- too much teaching that lacks emphasis on learning
- inadequate strategies and actions to secure improvements.

Scope of provision

61. The college offers a wide range of courses at level 3. These include AS-level and GCE A-level art, textiles, design technology, media studies, film studies, drama and theatre studies, music, music technology and City and Guilds media techniques. Of 639 enrolments on visual and performing arts courses, 225 are on art and design, 166 on performing arts and 248 on media and film courses. The

majority are full-time students aged 16 to 18. A range of additional courses is offered for full-time students and a few part-time courses for adults.

Achievement and standards

62. Pass rates are high in AS-level drama, music technology and film studies, and in GCE A-level drama. Pass rates in all other subjects are close to the national averages. Most students make average progress against predictions based on their prior achievements. However, many students on GCE A-level art and AS-level and GCE A-level media courses have achieved results lower than those predicted from their GCSE results over the past three years. Retention rates on most courses are at or above the national averages, but have been consistently low on City and Guilds media techniques and AS-level film studies courses.

63. Students' work in film studies, music and music technology lessons is of a high standard. In one film studies lesson, all students responded enthusiastically to challenging tasks comparing 1960s cinema in France and the United States of America. In a music technology lesson, students independently composed and arranged their own complex music sequences. In some visual arts and media lessons, students produce work that is no more than satisfactory. Such work includes simplistic ideas for personal research, subjective responses to open questions and regular instances of students chatting or being easily distracted.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 7700 certificate in media techniques	2	No. of starts	44	67	59
		% retention	66	63	44
		% pass rate	97	57	85
AS-level film studies	3	No. of starts	43	62	56
		% retention	81	76	73
		% pass rate	97	98	100
AS-level music technology	3	No. of starts	20	36	33
		% retention	90	97	79
		% pass rate	100	97	100
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	100	85	95
		% retention	85	85	88
		% pass rate	91	93	94
GCE A-level art (two dimensional)	3	No. of starts	16	30	19
		% retention	88	87	100
		% pass rate	93	96	95
GCE A-level drama	3	No. of starts	36	38	31
		% retention	97	89	94
		% pass rate	97	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

64. Teaching in film studies and music technology is very good. However, the proportion of good or

better teaching overall is lower than in similar colleges. In the best lessons, teachers plan well and focus clearly on outcomes for students. For example, in a film studies lesson, students demonstrated a good understanding of aspects of social class in 1960s British film. Students in music technology made very good progress in composing and arranging a music track to accompany a film. The teacher effectively supported students working independently, resulting in strongly individual work by students. In less effective lessons, teachers do not check learning. They talk for too long and do not provide sufficiently varied activities to develop students' skills and learning. Teaching does not effectively challenge all students to learn and many make slower progress than they could.

65. Resources are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach and demonstrate good subject knowledge. Many are practitioners or have worked in the creative industries. The art and design areas are well equipped and furnished and provide comfortable well-lit work areas. The drama studio is an effective performance space, but there are limited alternatives for busy rehearsal periods. The television studio and control room provide a good environment to produce programmes. There are, however, limited editing facilities for the number of students. Music has sufficient workstations and a recording studio which are effectively scheduled to allow students to produce music sequences. Students in design and art use ILT well in studios, but there is limited use of the college's intranet except in media techniques where specifications, handouts and students' work are available online.

66. Overall, assessment is satisfactory, but practices are particularly good in drama, music and design. Students are given clear feedback and further actions for improvements using the grading criteria. Art teachers are addressing previous weaknesses through more effective internal moderation. Film and media assessment practices are satisfactory, but do not always provide a sufficiently detailed rationale for the awarded grade and offer general rather than specific points for improvement.

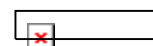
67. Students have very good opportunities to undertake enrichment activities including performing in theatre productions. Teachers are very generous with their time to support rehearsals. There are regular visits to theatres, galleries and film events. Students who undertake media techniques enjoy and gain much from their experiences in television production. Media students also run skills events for Year 9 students from local schools. Links with practitioners in the creative industries help with students' preparation for HE and employment.

68. Students are well supported. Students coming to the college receive appropriate information, advice and guidance. There have been less effective selection processes for second-year students who wish to take up a new AS level, and a high number of withdrawals have taken place, particularly in film studies. Strategies have been put in place this year to ensure that such students are given clear advice on the requirements of subjects.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are good within the team. Resources are well managed. Meetings are well documented and progress against actions is monitored. Quality assurance processes are not effective in bringing about improvements. The college has failed to identify variations in the quality of students' learning experiences in different subjects. Staff development has not yet been effective in improving the quality of lesson planning. Managers have identified clear priorities for development which include raising the proportion of high grades, developing the use of ILT in lessons, raising the effectiveness of target setting for students and developing level 2 and vocational courses.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates at GCE A level
- good progress relative to prior achievement in four subjects at AS level
- thorough and effective assessment practices.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on most GCSE courses
- unexciting teaching in a minority of lessons
- insufficient action to address weaknesses in government and politics.

Scope of provision

70. The college offers a broad range of humanities subjects for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Students can study classical civilisation, general studies, geography, government and politics, history, law, psychology, and sociology at GCE A level, and citizenship, critical thinking, European studies and philosophy at AS level. There are GCSEs in geography, psychology and sociology, and most AS-level students take GCSE general studies in their first year. GCE A-level psychology is available for adults in the evening. The highest enrolments are for psychology, law and history. There are 200 full-time students aged 16 to 18, and 29 part-time adult students studying psychology.

Achievement and standards

71. Students' achievements are satisfactory. Retention rates on most GCE A-level and AS-level courses have risen since the last inspection and are now close to national averages. Students who progress to the full GCE A level do very well, with 100% pass rates on most courses. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B in 2004 was high in economics, geography, history, psychology and sociology. Pass rates at AS level in 2004 were above national averages in citizenship, economics, geography, law, and sociology. However, in AS-level psychology, pass rates have been consistently below the national averages. Pass and retention rates in AS-level government and politics have been low over the last three years, with no high-grade passes in 2004. Students on GCE A-level courses achieve grades which are broadly in line with those predicted from their GCSE performance. At AS level, students achieve higher grades than predicted in economics, geography, psychology and sociology. Retention rates on GCSE courses are very low and too few students who begin these courses achieve grades A* to C.

72. Students' written and oral work is of a standard consistent with the level and stage of their courses. In lessons, they are attentive and work well. Students work effectively in pairs and groups

and learn from one another. Students' questions to their teachers show a sound grasp of, and interest in, concepts and theories. Some students are able to express themselves very clearly and to communicate complex ideas. For example, students in a history lesson engaged in a sophisticated discussion about the factors influencing Krushchev and Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. The quality of some students' work on GCSE courses is weak.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	59	56	56
		% retention	86	88	86
		% pass rate	88	92	98
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	108	91	99
		% retention	83	95	82
		% pass rate	79	88	90
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	144	154	162
		% retention	74	83	78
		% pass rate	82	81	81
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	49	57	51
		% retention	92	86	84
		% pass rate	93	88	95
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	55	53	73
		% retention	95	94	96
		% pass rate	92	96	99
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	42	57	62
		% retention	90	96	92
		% pass rate	100	100	98

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

Quality of education and training

73. Teaching and learning are good in many lessons. Most lessons are well planned and contain a variety of learning activities. They begin with a statement of aims clearly linked to the scheme of work or earlier lessons. Teachers make skilful use of questions to check understanding, and to consolidate and extend knowledge. In the best lessons, teaching is lively and enthusiastic and students enjoy their learning. For example, in a philosophy lesson, a range of interesting activities punctuated with rapid question and answer exchanges promoted a real interest in philosophical ideas. In a sociology lesson on crime and deviance, students enjoyed working in groups to apply their theoretical knowledge to a case study on street robbery. In a classical civilisation lesson, students worked effectively in pairs to develop answers to an examination question on Sophocles' Antigone. The teacher changed the partners after each task. Students enjoy working in this way and learn effectively.

74. In the less effective lessons, students are less actively involved and too much of the work is done by the teacher. Students continue to be attentive, but learn more slowly. For example, in one lesson, the constant intervention of the teacher impeded students in completing the group tasks set for them. Some lessons lack variety and do not challenge students to learn. A minority are dull and unimaginative and fail to achieve their objective. For example, in one unsatisfactory lesson, there

was no clear rationale for the tasks set for students.

75. Teachers are appropriately qualified, and many have higher degrees in their subjects. There is little use of IT in lessons, but students are referred to appropriate subject websites and the college's intranet. Materials on the law site are good and are integrated with lessons. Some lessons are recorded and placed on the intranet so that absent students may catch up on missed work. A wide range of learning materials is produced by teachers, although the quality of printing is sometimes poor. Students make good use of up-to-date textbooks and other more specialised texts. The quality of accommodation is satisfactory. The best classrooms have good displays of subject materials and students' work.

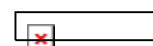
76. Teachers use a range of suitable methods to assess students' progress. There is effective checking of progress in lessons through initial recapitulation exercises and skilful use of questions. Homework is set regularly and returned promptly. Marking is thorough and designed to help students to improve. Students value the detailed feedback. They complete review sheets for each piece of assessed work and agree targets for improvement with their teacher.

77. The college offers a broad range of choice in humanities subjects at advanced level together with five courses at GCSE. New options in philosophy and history of law were introduced recently. Study of humanities subjects is enriched by field trips, visits from outside speakers, and participation in competitions. Students receive accurate and helpful information on courses before they come to the college, and receive good support from teachers throughout their studies.

Leadership and management

78. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work well together in teams. Arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory. They include classroom observations, and analysis of students' performance data and students' feedback. Self-assessment reports provide a broadly accurate assessment of the quality of provision, and action planning and target setting are satisfactory. However, management interventions have failed to bring about improvements in government and politics, and in pass rates in AS-level psychology, which are consistently below national averages.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all AS-level, GCE A-level and OCN courses
- good teaching and learning
- very good learning resources

- dynamic and effective leadership.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCSE English.

Scope of provision

79. The college offers a wide range of courses in English and modern foreign languages. In English, students can study the certificate in adult literacy, GCSE English, AS-level and GCE A-level English language, English literature or English language and literature. There are 378 students aged 16 to 18 studying English. Over 100 full-time students aged 16 to 18 study GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level French, German and Spanish. Some 450 students aged over 19 study foreign languages. Arabic and Japanese are offered at level 1, while French, German, Italian and Spanish are all offered from level 1 to level 5.

Achievement and standards

80. Pass rates are high on all advanced level English courses, and a high proportion of students achieve high grades in AS-level English language and English literature. Pass rates on all modern foreign language courses are high, with particularly high pass rates for adults on OCN courses. However, GCSE English A* to C pass rates have declined and are well below the national averages. Changes put in place to bring about improvements have yet to make any impact on pass rates. Retention rates are high on advanced level English courses, but are low on OCN foreign language courses and below the national average in AS-level modern languages.

81. The standard of students' work is high. In the best English lessons, students are able to provide perceptive analytical comments on texts in a confident and articulate manner. Essays show the ability to produce sustained and cohesive analytical writing. In modern foreign languages, students demonstrate fluency in oral skills and accurate written and listening skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	107	91	110
		% retention	82	88	73
		% pass rate	45	40	27
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	45	28	34
		% retention	87	71	74
		% pass rate	46	80	60
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	79	49	59
		% retention	81	88	90
		% pass rate	84	81	91
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	92	72	80
		% retention	84	88	88

		% pass rate	87	97	96
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	39	30	27
		% retention	67	47	70
		% pass rate	69	86	95
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	49	58	45
		% retention	98	90	91
		% pass rate	96	96	100

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

Quality of education and training

82. Teaching and learning are good. Students are interested and attentive. Lessons are thoroughly planned. Teachers take account of different learning styles and plan tasks to cater for all abilities. Students demonstrate good skills in most lessons. In the best lessons, students work well, both in groups with mixed ability levels and in groups organised according to ability with appropriate tasks for each. In an AS-level English language lesson, students talked animatedly about the relationship between conversation and gender, and used and defined complex linguistic terminology. In a GCSE French lesson, a stimulating auction game maintained students' interest and consolidated complex grammar. In all AS-level and GCE A-level lessons, more able students are given a variety of extension activities, and their progress on these is regularly monitored. In the less effective lessons, progress is slow. Teachers talk for too long and students have limited opportunities to work independently.

83. Resources are good. Excellent material is available on the intranet for both English and foreign language students. Very good in-house resources are designed to promote independent learning and improve language skills for students on level 2 and level 3 courses in French, German and Spanish. Dedicated rooms are light and airy and good use is made of wall displays, especially in English where assessment objectives are clearly displayed around the room and frequently referred to. Students are presented with neat, attractive handouts. Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified. Staff development for full-time and part-time teachers is always relevant and used to raise standards of teaching and learning.

84. Assessment is good. Work is thoroughly marked with clear indicators for improvements. Students are aware of the assessment criteria. All class work assignments are marked using examination marking schemes and linking comments to assessment objectives so that students become familiar with exactly what is expected of them. Students monitor their progress through self-assessment coversheets on every piece of major written work and through course review days. Targets are set at the beginning of the year, based on students' prior attainments and course requirements. These targets are reviewed formally twice during the year, and informally for every major piece of written work so that students are always aware of their progress in relation to general course targets and their individual target minimum grades.

85. The wide range of courses and levels in English and modern foreign languages meet the needs of students. AS-level and GCE A-level English language and literature courses have been introduced to meet demand from students and they are proving to be very successful. The certificate in adult literacy is being offered as a pre-GCSE programme for the first time this year as a strategy for dealing with low pass rates in GCSE English. The format of review days has been changed in response to feedback from students. In English lessons, course material promotes cultural diversity and students' experiences are discussed in a supportive environment. Cultural differences are regularly discussed in modern foreign language lessons.

86. Support for students is satisfactory. Pre-course advice and guidance ensure that most students are placed on appropriate courses and levels. Previously, too many students with low prior achievements in English were enrolled to GCSE English. Steps have been taken to provide an

alternative, although only five students are currently enrolled to the pre-GCSE programme. Additional learning support is offered to all students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and for those needing help with study skills. Tutorials for second-year students are interesting and relevant, and support progression to HE or employment. The college has been slow to implement effective procedures for dealing with low attendance. Students' attendance is below the national average, particularly in some GCSE lessons where half the students have attended for less than 60% during the spring term.

Leadership and management

87. Leadership and management are good. Positive, dynamic leadership is the driving force in both English and modern foreign languages. Teachers respond positively to praise. Teachers and students contribute to course reviews. The self-assessment reviews are effective and highly analytical. Feedback from students is used in future planning. Teachers and tutors effectively use data on retention and pass rates to plan provision and monitor progress. Formal and informal observations of teaching and learning are valued by teachers and are used to share good practice and identify needs for development. Department and course team meetings are held regularly for full-time and part-time teachers and there is a strong focus on raising standards in teaching and learning.

Part D: College data

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

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	4	32
2	37	13
3	53	10
4/5	0	0
Other	6	45
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

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

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	832	81	11
Land-based provision	0	85	1

Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	54	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	406	99	6
Information and communication technology	467	270	9
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	379	3	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	29	0	0
Health, social care and public services	41	0	0
Visual and performing arts and media	550	12	7
Humanities	1,653	49	20
English, languages and communication	1,671	446	25
Foundation programmes	123	107	3
Unknown AOL	420	804	13
Total	6,625	1,956	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	213	68	70	158	51	202
	Retention rate %	72	79	80	64	65	62
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	79	74	75	95	88	15
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	934	926	936	101	82	184
	Retention rate %	66	77	75	67	77	69
	National average %	80	82	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	78	61	73	69	87	26

	National average %	84	83	86	68	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	3,579	2,938	2,827	80	66	102
	Retention rate %	64	86	87	54	65	53
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	81	80	89	40	56	76
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000/01 to 2002/03: College ISR

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)	64	33	3	58
Level 2 (intermediate)	46	36	18	11
Level 1 (foundation)	83	17	0	6
Other sessions	67	33	0	3
Totals	63	32	5	78