



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Seevic College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Business, administration, management and professional](#)

[A sample of retention and pass rates in business, administration, management and professional, 2002 to 2004](#)

[Information and communications technology](#)

[Sport, leisure and tourism](#)

[A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2002 to 2004](#)

[Health and social care](#)

[Visual and performing arts and media](#)

[Humanities](#)

[English, languages and communications](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

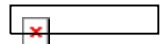
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2004/05](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

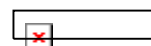
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

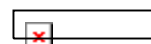


Name of college:	SEEVIC College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Geoff Arnott
Address of college:	Runnymede Chase Benfleet Essex SS7 1TW
Telephone number:	01268 756111
Fax number:	01268 565515
Chair of governors:	Bob Pluck
Unique reference number:	130681
Name of reporting inspector:	Ian Seath HMI
Dates of inspection:	25-29 April 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

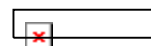


SEEVIC college is a large sixth form college in Benfleet, Essex. The college serves the local communities of Castle Point and Rochford, and since its formation in 1972 it has developed to serve a wide area of southern Essex including Basildon, Southend and beyond. The college now offers a wider range of provision than is usual for a sixth form college, especially for students aged over 19. Unemployment in the area is around 2.5% of the workforce and has fallen in recent months. This is above the average for England as a whole and significantly above the average for eastern England. The area has a relatively low participation rate in further education (FE) and progression to higher education (HE). Since the last inspection in January 2001, the college has actively sought to increase enrolments. The number of students aged 16 to 18 has increased by about 30% during this period. In 2003/04, 68% of the college's total of 3,028 students were aged 16 to 18 and 70% of these were on full-time level 3 courses. Most of the 967 students aged over 19 were on part-time courses.

The college has links with seven partner schools in Castle Point and Rochford. In 2003, over half of the full-time students aged 16 to 18 came from these areas. The college has a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in sport and leisure, and a number of franchise partners in this area. In the last three years, the college has further developed provision for adult students. It has three outreach centres offering information technology (IT), two of which are near areas of high social deprivation. Most courses are offered at the main site at Benfleet. About 95% of the college's students classified themselves as white British, slightly lower than the local population. Other post-16 providers in the area include two large general FE colleges and another sixth form college nearer London.

The college has undertaken a number of refurbishment and new building programmes since the last inspection. These include a new building, refurbishment of a number of curriculum areas, and increased social areas for students. Included within these are a number of open learning centres, both open access and with a curriculum focus. More recently, enhancements have included upgrading and improvements to sports facilities through CoVE funding, and improvements to meet disability discrimination legislation requirements. The college's mission is that 'SEEVIC college will be responsive to the needs of the community working in partnership to promote and provide a range of high quality learning opportunities'.

How effective is the college?



Eight areas of learning were inspected. The quality of provision is satisfactory in science and mathematics overall and in information and communications technology (ICT). Provision is good in mathematics, business administration, management and professional, sport, leisure and tourism, visual and performing arts and media, and in English, languages and communications. Provision is outstanding in humanities and health and social care. Leadership and management are good. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- academic and personal support for students
- enthusiastic and courteous students
- promotion of equality and diversity
- widening participation
- productive partnerships that benefit students
- accommodation and resources
- ethos of respect
- curriculum development
- the management of change
- provision in humanities and health and social care.

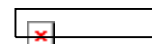
What should be improved

- the proportion of very good and outstanding teaching
- students' achievements based on their prior attainment on many courses
- punctuality and attendance on some courses

- the consistency of feedback on assessments
- opportunities for staff at all levels to contribute to decision making.

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

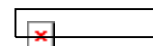


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for mathematics is good . Pass rates in advanced subsidiary level (AS-level) and general certificate of education (GCE A-level) mathematics are consistently high and students make good progress. Laboratories and teaching accommodation are well resourced and teachers make good use of information and learning technology (ILT). Too little use is made of practical chemistry in teaching. Pass rates in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) mathematics have improved significantly.
Business, administration, management and professional	Good. Retention rates have improved since the last inspection. Pass rates are high on a majority of courses and are improving. Most teaching is good or better, but a few lessons are uninspiring. Resources to promote independent learning are good. Academic and personal support for students are very good. Feedback to students is not always sufficiently detailed.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Pass rates in AS-level ICT are very high but, in AS-level computing and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate IT, they are low. Monitoring of students' progress is very effective. Students undertaking IT key skills benefit from excellent accommodation, but attendance at these lessons is low. In computing and ICT, accommodation restricts theory teaching. Adult participation in IT has been increased through a number of successful outreach initiatives.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses. Assessment practice and accommodation in sport are good. The management of curriculum development is good. Pass rates on short programmes are consistently low. The use of ICT in sport theory lessons is underdeveloped.

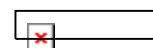
Health and social care	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates on full-time courses are very high and there is much very good and outstanding teaching. Resources are very good and there are effective and extensive partnership arrangements to support learning. Subject and personal support for individual students are very good. Leadership and management of the area are outstanding.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses, but retention rates on vocational courses are low. Students demonstrate a high standard of creative and technical skills in practical work. Individual support for students is comprehensive. Accommodation is modern, well designed, and well equipped.
Humanities	Outstanding. Students achieve high pass rates on a wide range of courses. Much of the teaching is very good and some is outstanding. The standard of students' work is high and they evaluate key sources confidently. Assessment is thorough. Leadership and management of the programme area are very good.
English, languages and communication	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on GCE A-level courses. Much teaching is good, and individual support for students in lessons is very good. Management of the curriculum is effective and focused on bringing about improvement. In a minority of lessons, there is insufficient promotion of discussion, participation by students, or group work.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior management team's successful commitment to widening and increasing participation is shared by staff and governors. The process of growth in student numbers has been well managed. Overall retention and pass rates are high, but on some courses students' grades are lower than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Clear line management and decision making procedures are adhered to rigorously. Communication is good, but some staff feel they would like more opportunity to contribute to decision making. Quality assurance systems are comprehensive and robust. A few faculty action plans for improvement are not sufficiently detailed. Professional development is well organised and effective. Equal opportunities are monitored consistently and practical steps are taken to meet gender and ethnicity targets. The college is financially well managed and gives good value for money. Governors are effectively involved in strategic planning and self-assessment through corporation meetings, committees and twice yearly conferences.

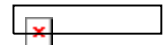
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to education and social inclusion is very good. The college has established productive partnerships with its local community, employers and schools. The college offers a comprehensive range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses, vocational courses at levels 1 to 3, and full-time and part-time courses for adults at levels 1 to 4. The admissions policy enables students aged 16 to 18 with different levels of GCSE attainment to join appropriate courses. Students with identified learning needs are very well supported. About 3% of the college's students are from a

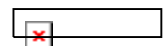
available for students and staff. The college has made good progress in response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the special educational needs and disability act 2001 (SENDA). There is a detailed race equality policy and action plan. Retention and pass rates are monitored very closely against racial and gender groupings to identify and respond to areas of underperformance. The college has successfully raised the pass rates of students from black ethnic backgrounds. It has made adaptations to its accommodation in response to disability discrimination legislation and 98% of the college's premises is accessible for those with restricted mobility. An extensive and subsidised bus service allows students from more remote areas to attend the college.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are outstanding. The college has very good links with local and partner schools and effective transition procedures for new students. Students and their parents and carers receive extensive and impartial initial advice and guidance. There is prompt initial assessment of additional learning needs and timely communication of results and outcomes to students and staff. A very large proportion of students take up the offer of additional support and improve their performance. The range of specialist support services for students with specific needs is comprehensive. Students have access to a wide range of adaptive technology, for example, for those who have sensory impairments. Students with multiple and complex difficulties are able to attend college and successfully complete their studies. Careers and HE advice and guidance are well organised and integrated into the tutorial system. Students have good access to personal support through the college counsellor and the college nurse. Personal tutors are valued by students who appreciate the support they receive on both personal and academic issues. Attendance monitoring has undergone recent improvements and there is close communication between the college and parents and carers on any attendance issues. Despite these improvements, attendance and punctuality remain a weakness in a minority of lessons. Students feel safe and welcomed at the college.

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

- teachers provide extra support

- being treated as an adult

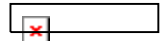
- induction
- weekly targets
- careers and Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) advice
- good access to IT and the virtual learning environment
- access for students with restricted mobility
- very good teaching.

What they feel could be improved

- expensive food
- overlong breaks between lessons
- insufficient social space
- car parking
- security in car park
- noisy areas used for lessons
- some boring lessons

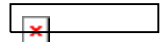
- o tutorials
- o general studies.

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

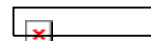


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	72	24	4
19+ and WBL*	60	40	0
Learning 16-18	72	25	3
19+ and WBL*	60	40	0

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. SEEVIC college offers a broad range of education and training in 10 of the LSC's 14 areas of learning, and at all levels including foundation. The inspection graded eight of these areas. At the time of inspection, almost all of the college's 2,091 full-time students were aged 16 to 18. Over 98% of the college's 1,016 part-time students were aged 19 and over. In 2004/05, about 10% of the college's enrolments are on foundation level courses, about 19% on intermediate level courses, and about 71% on advanced courses, mainly GCE A levels and AS levels. During inspection week, attendance, at 83%, was close to the national average. The average number of students in each lesson was 13.8, significantly higher than the national average for colleges of this type.

2. Students develop skills of a high standard. In mathematics, students work well together to solve graphical problems. In business, students demonstrate good keyboard and practical skills. ICT students become proficient in the use of software and are able to develop websites. Sports students apply coaching and leadership skills to the management of groups. Health and social care students produce high standards of work, and visual and performing arts students develop good technical skills to produce work that is imaginative and creative. In humanities, students produce written work of a high standard and develop skills of evaluation and discussion. Language students confidently have conversations with native speakers, and students of English develop good research skills.

3. The college uses a nationally recognised system to evaluate the extent to which students achieve GCE A-level and AS-level examination grades better than would be predicted on the basis of GCSE results alone. Overall, these data indicate that students aged 16 to 18 enter the college with lower GCSE results than the national average. Despite this, students on AS-level courses achieve better results than would be predicted, and are amongst the top 25% of similar colleges nationally. Overall, students on GCE A-level courses achieve results in line with those predicted, however, there is considerable variation between courses. Progression to HE is high for adult students. In 2003/04, almost 90% of those who completed the access course progressed to HE. Similarly, 83% of students aged 16 to 18 who applied for HE in 2003/04 progressed to HE. A large proportion of full-time students gain employment.

4. When compared to similar sixth form colleges, the proportion of students who succeed is uneven. Between the years 2000 and 2003, success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on foundation courses remained significantly above the national average. However, for adults on the same courses, success rates declined significantly in 2003. On intermediate courses, success rates for students aged 16 to 18 declined to within the bottom 10% of similar colleges. However, for the relatively small number of adults on these courses success rates improved to significantly above the national average. For most students on advanced courses, success rates remained around the national average for the years 2000 to 2003. However, for the relatively small number of adults on these courses the success rate declined to significantly below the national average over the same period. Overall, the college's data indicate significant improvements in the performance of many courses in 2003/04 compared to previous years. The college's overall pass rate for advanced key skills communications is significantly above the low national average for colleges of this type.

5. There are many examples of college students who have demonstrated outstanding individual achievement. For example, a group of students with learning difficulties successfully set up their own business. Another student with dyslexia, which had not been diagnosed, was successfully supported and has progressed into teaching. A number of students have been successful in national sporting events, for example, mens badminton, mens rugby, and ladies swimming.

16 to 18 year olds

6. In 2003/04, 97% of the college's full-time students were aged 16 to 18. Within this group, about 70% were enrolled on advanced courses, mainly AS-level and GCE A-level courses. A further 21% of this group were enrolled on to intermediate level courses.

7. Overall, retention rates have been variable for students aged 16 to 18. For students on foundation courses, the overall retention rate was slightly above the national average in 2002/03. At

intermediate level, overall retention rates fell to significantly below the national average for colleges of this type in 2002/03. However, the college's own data indicate that the average improved to about the national average in 2003/04. For GCSE and GNVQ intermediate courses, overall retention rates were just below the national average for the years 2000 to 2003. On AS-level and GCE A-level courses, the overall retention rates of students aged 16 to 18 have been consistently close to the national average for the last three years. However, the retention rates of students on advanced vocational courses have been consistently below the national average. Overall, retention rates for male and female students are similar.

8. For students aged 16 to 18 on foundation courses, overall pass rates have been consistently above the national averages though they declined in 2002/03. On intermediate level courses, however, pass rates fell significantly between 2000 and 2003, when they were 12% below the national average for similar colleges. The college's own data indicate that this figure improved in 2003/04. The overall pass rates for GCSE and GNVQ intermediate courses have been above the national average for the last three years. In 2003, they were 4% and 13% respectively above the national average. For the large number of students aged 16 to 18 on AS-level courses, the overall pass rate was close to the national average in 2002/03. However, for GCE A levels, the overall pass rate was 5% below the national average in the same year. The college's own data indicate that the overall pass rate for students on advanced courses improved in 2003/04. Overall, male students are not as successful as females on intermediate courses but, at advanced level, there is little difference.

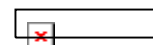
Adult learners

9. In 2003/04, just over 960 students aged 19 or over attended the college. Of these, the majority (94%) were on part-time courses.

10. Overall, the retention rates of adult students are uneven. At foundation level, the retention rate was very high between 2000 and 2002. However, in 2003, it fell to significantly below the national average, but improved markedly in 2004. At intermediate level, retention rates of adults have been consistently around the national average, although college data indicate an improvement in 2003/04. For GCSE courses, the retention rates of adults fell to just below the national average between 2000 and 2003. At advanced level, relatively small numbers of students enrol on GCE A-level and AS-level courses. For these students, retention rates are below the national average. However, for the larger numbers of adults taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs), retention rates are high and were significantly above the national average in 2002/03. Overall, the retention rates of adult male students are significantly lower than for females.

11. Pass rates for adult students are generally uneven. For example, the overall pass rate for foundation courses declined from significantly above the national average in 2002 to significantly below in 2003, but improved in 2004. At intermediate level, the overall pass rate was high in 2002/03, but fell significantly in 2003/04. For adult students on advanced courses, the overall pass rate fell to significantly below the national average in 2002/03, but improved in 2004.

Quality of education and training



12. The inspection graded a total of 137 lessons. Of these, teaching was judged to be good or better in 72% of lessons, satisfactory in 25%, and unsatisfactory in 3%. The proportion of lessons which are good or better has improved significantly since the last inspection. There has been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons. The proportion of good or better teaching is now close to the national average for colleges of this type. Within this profile, however, the proportion of teaching which is very good or outstanding is significantly lower than the national average.

13. Where lessons consist mainly of adults, the proportion in which teaching is good or better is significantly smaller than for those lessons where students are aged mainly 16 to 18. There is a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in three of the eight areas of learning inspected. Inspectors observed unsatisfactory lessons in business, administration, management and professional, sports and leisure, and in visual and performing arts and media. The teaching of intermediate level courses is not as good as for advanced level courses. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is significantly larger in these lessons, and the proportion of good or better lessons significantly smaller than at advanced level. The best teaching is seen in mathematics, health and social care, humanities, and English and languages. Inspectors graded practical lessons higher than those consisting mainly of theory. Overall, group tutorial lessons are not taught well. Students often doubt their value, although they are appreciative of the individual support which tutors give them.

14. The best lessons are well planned and they cater for students of all abilities and learning styles. Activities are varied and interesting, and learning is checked regularly using a variety of means. Lessons are well paced and explanations clear. Students actively participate and learn from each other as well as the teacher. For example, in access to HE, teaching successfully stimulates students to make valuable contributions based on their own experiences and raise interesting questions for discussion. In advanced mathematics lessons, teachers and students collaborate to solve problems using different approaches, and students are willing to ask for clarification or explore differing mathematical methods. Opportunities for group work are often used, for example, to discuss different aspects of a central theme. The best teaching maintains students' interest and stimulates debate. For example, in a psychology lesson on therapies, students were fascinated by the subject matter and eagerly participated in the discussion which followed. The teaching of practical skills is often very successful. For example, in graphics, students are encouraged to gather interesting material and their final projects contain work of a high standard. Many teachers use ILT very effectively, for example, in short lessons during which students independently log on to websites to illustrate topics discussed in lessons.

15. In the less successful lessons, planning does not always cater for all students. Those who have completed tasks are left unoccupied, and the more able students are not encouraged to fulfil their potential. In a minority of lessons, teaching is uninspiring and some students become bored. Exposition is overlong with too little contribution from students. There is little variety or effective use of group work. Lesson objectives are not always clear or shared with students, who may have little idea what they are supposed to have learnt. The use of ILT is not always effective.

16. Co-ordination of key skills is good. The college's key skills policy is clear and comprehensive. The key skills co-ordinator is supported by seven facilitators who work very closely with subject leaders to identify key skills evidence and provide specific workshops for external test preparation and portfolio compilation. The college offers key skills in IT at level 2 and communication at level 3. Students aged 16 to 18 are able to re-take GCSE English and GCSE mathematics if appropriate. Similarly, all students aged 16 to 18, who do not have GCSE IT, take the key skills qualification in IT at level 2. Students attend weekly lessons for one term only which include skills development, test preparation and portfolio building. The college has adopted an integrated approach to key skills communication at level 3. All GCE A-level students compile portfolios for communication mainly through AS-level and GCE A-level general studies and through some of their other GCE A-level subjects. Facilitators attend these lessons at specific points in the year to help students compile their portfolios and to prepare students for their tests. Students following vocational courses at level 3 attend weekly lessons in the second year of their course to compile evidence and prepare for tests.

17. The college occupies a pleasant site with well-maintained and attractive grounds. Students value the accommodation and facilities. Since the last inspection, the college's use of temporary buildings has been reduced significantly. New teaching accommodation, opened in 2003, includes a very high-quality, well-equipped, learning resource centre, a well-stocked library, and spacious classrooms which include specialist practical classrooms for early years and health and social care. The college has also refurbished many of its older teaching rooms. Accommodation for visual arts has been custom built and includes a studio for photographic and art work which is fully equipped with industry-standard IT facilities. In ICT, the layout of classrooms restricts the teaching of theory. The facilities for teaching sport are good at the college, and fitness equipment is excellent in the two

franchise partners. The college uses three community venues to deliver ICT training. Generally, these venues are well equipped, spacious and are accessible for students with restricted mobility. However, the centre in Wickford has poor access for those with restricted mobility.

18. Specialist resources are particularly good in science, health and social care, and visual and performing arts and media. However, the theatre lacks nearby changing rooms and music studios are too small for the number of students. Most students have very good access to computing facilities. However, in English, modern foreign languages and humanities, teachers do not always exploit opportunities to use ILT effectively in classrooms. In music, there are too few computers. The library and learning resource centres are well used. Students benefit from an excellent and well-used virtual learning environment which contains a very good range of course materials, presentations, links to websites and a range of assessment materials. Users can access the virtual learning environment from home. Technical support for ICT is well managed. The key skills area provides excellent teaching accommodation. The area is well designed and enables a wide variety of tasks to be organised simultaneously. Almost all areas of the college have easy access for students with restricted mobility.

19. Teachers and support staff are very well qualified. A very large proportion of teachers have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and use their experience to the benefit of their students. Some teachers have industrial experience and, in art, still work in their industry. However, in business, few teachers have recent industrial experience. The CoVE in sport enables the college to use the expertise of the staff of the two partners. These staff are also included in the college's own staff development processes. Staff development is good and prioritises the college's key strategic objectives.

20. Overall, the assessment of students' performance is good and feedback helps students to know what they need to do to improve their work. The college has a comprehensive assessment policy. Minimum target grades are used effectively to support continuous improvement of students. The review and reporting of students' progress are systematic with regular review days where the normal timetable is suspended. Personal tutors carry out individual reviews with students and monitor progress effectively. Students judged to be at risk of underachieving are given targets based on their performance, effort and motivation. The college maintains close contact with parents and carers through regular reports outlining grades and any concerns or issues. Students who continue to underachieve or cause concern work with senior tutors to develop detailed short-term targets. Students value the process of target setting and the close support of their subject and personal tutors in improving their performance. Whilst college assessment systems are well organised and appropriate, assessment practice within curriculum areas is inconsistent. In humanities, health and social care, science and mathematics and English and modern foreign languages, assessment is thorough and supports the improvement of students' performance effectively. In other areas, such as business and areas of visual and performing arts, feedback to students is less effective in guiding them towards improvements. The college has extensive external and internal verifier policies. External verifier reports are disseminated as appropriate, and actions to address issues are identified and monitored. Internal verification for vocational courses is well developed.

21. The college has satisfactory arrangements for child protection. The comprehensive child protection policy is reviewed regularly and is accessible to all staff. Associated child protection procedures have been developed. All staff receive training in child protection issues and are police checked. The college makes satisfactory arrangements to train and check new staff. A designated senior member of staff is responsible for child protection issues and has received appropriate training. College links with local child protection agencies are well developed. The college ensures that vulnerable students are protected and actively promotes their achievements. Governors have not yet been trained in child protection issues. SEEVIC College is the lead institution in a small Increased Flexibility (IF) programme with seven local schools. This has enabled about 25 pupils aged 14 to 16 to participate in vocational training in construction and IT at local training providers. In addition, partner schools have developed a range of GCSEs in vocational subjects. None of these pupils attend the college.

22. The college has successfully adapted its curriculum to widen participation. The range of courses is comprehensive for students of all ages. The college offers a very wide range of GCE A levels in

humanities, visual and performing arts and media, and science and mathematics. Most GCE A-level students study for five AS levels or four GCE A levels. About half of full-time students follow vocational courses which include Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas, GNVQs, advanced vocational certificates of education (AVCEs) and vocationally specific units. The college is very careful to match its curriculum to the needs of its students. Adult students in business take the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) qualification at foundation to technician level. In ICT, a range of IT qualifications is available from entry level to intermediate level. The college enrolls a small group of adult students on the access to HE course. NVQs are available in care and sport. The college works closely with other adult education providers to identify opportunities for students in deprived areas of south-east Essex.

23. The college works very closely with a range of employers for the benefit of its students. Over 800 students annually are provided with work placements with local employers. In care, work placements are available in schools, crèches, day nurseries, playgroups and hospitals. In business, students gain experience of a range of administrative organisations. Students are interviewed by work experience providers prior to their placement. The CoVE in sport has enabled the college to meet the development needs of staff in the fitness industry. Students also benefit from placements at fitness centres.

24. The college offers good enrichment opportunities. In business, students attend mock interviews at which local employers are present. In humanities, visiting speakers regularly present to students. Visual and performing arts and media students often undertake study visits to galleries and theatres. Sport students participate in local and national competitions. In health and social care, students visit a range of local businesses and institutions as well as receive a number of visiting speakers, including general practitioners and health visitors.

25. Support and guidance for students are outstanding. The college has effective transition arrangements for new students, and particularly with its seven partner schools in Castle Point and Rochford. Information and introduction activities for young people are available from year 9, and college staff both visit schools and take part in teaching activities. Arrangements for late applicants to the college are well organised and comprehensive. Induction is effective in helping students to settle quickly into their courses, learn about their courses and establish new friendships.

26. Students benefit from effective and impartial initial advice and guidance. Initial screening for literacy and numeracy needs is prompt, and the results and outcomes of screening are communicated quickly to personal and subject tutors. Additional learning support through the college's Learning Plus faculty is excellent. The take-up of additional learning support is very high. Learning assistants are deployed to those courses and lessons where support is needed. The impact of learning support on students' retention and pass rates is monitored closely and effectively. Data demonstrate that learning support is very effective in helping students to achieve and progress in their studies. Students have access to a very wide range of specialist support including an educational psychologist, support for students with dyslexia and very good support for students with hearing impairments. Learning support assistants are well qualified and experienced. The management and recording of support are clear and well organised. Individual education plans are precise and provide detailed targets and recording of progress. Plans are used purposefully in students' progress reviews with personal tutors. Students with multiple and complex difficulties are able to attend college and successfully complete their studies. The college co-operates closely with parents, carers and professional agencies to ensure that students receive high-quality and effective support.

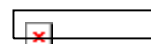
27. Tutorial provision is well planned. Tutor guides provide useful guidance on the role and purpose of the personal tutor including detailed guidance on dealing with personal and academic issues. However, many students do not value group tutorials. They value the role of the personal tutor in reviewing and supporting their progress. Students benefit from effective communication between personal tutors, subject tutors and learning support assistants.

28. The college has introduced improved systems to monitor students' attendance and performance. Accurate feedback to personal tutors on students' attendance is prompt, and unauthorised absences are followed up quickly. Despite this, attendance and punctuality remain a weakness in some

curriculum areas. Students have good access to personal support. The college provides a qualified and experienced college counsellor and a nurse who provide extensive support on a range of personal issues. Services are extensively advertised and well used.

29. Careers' advisors are well qualified and experienced, and careers' advice is well integrated into the tutorial and induction programme. Adult and part-time students have good access to careers' advice and there are appropriate resources to support applications to HE and employment. Students value the advice they receive.

Leadership and management



30. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection, the college has set out to widen and increase participation. This process has been managed very effectively. The college has diversified its curriculum, offering significant general vocational elements at levels 2 and 3 for full-time students aged 16 to 19 and increasing adult outreach provision. The college achieved full CoVE status for its sport and leisure provision in 2003/04. Enrolments of 16 to 18 year olds have increased significantly in recent years. An £8 million building and refurbishment programme has produced a vibrant learning environment with extensive access to IT to accommodate this growth. Pass and retention rates at level 3 have risen and are now around the national average for sixth form colleges. However, students on a number of courses at AS level and GCE A level do not achieve the grades predicted by their GCSE results.

31. Communication is good. The management style is open, supportive, challenging and self-critical. Clear line management and meeting structures are observed rigorously and are well understood by staff. There are monthly staff meetings and a weekly college bulletin. The decision-making structure is clear. All key decisions are made in the strategic management meeting. The college also sets up short-term working groups to address college initiatives. Staff feel, however, that they would like more opportunity to contribute directly to decision making.

32. The principal and senior management team provide strong and confident strategic management and communicate a clear strategic direction. The mission to increase and widen participation is shared by staff and governors. A coherent planning cycle links the self-assessment process, curriculum planning, and the setting of staffing budgets. Strategic options, underpinned by a realistic risk analysis, are considered well in advance of decision-making deadlines at senior management events, enabling the college to respond quickly and effectively to unexpected opportunities. Valuing all students, inclusivity and raising achievement are priorities shared across the college. There is detailed project planning for significant developments, for example, the implementation of the new virtual learning environment. Much of curriculum management of faculties is strong. Teachers work as effective teams and are well supported by managers. The learning support faculty is very well managed and has contributed to the raising of achievement across the curriculum.

33. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive. In course reviews, strengths and weaknesses are analysed in detail. The evaluation of teaching and learning is generally very detailed. Faculty action plans for a few courses are insufficiently rigorous and lack clear success criteria. Underperforming courses are subjected to executive review at which an action plan is agreed and subsequently monitored by members of the executive team. This process has led to significant improvement on some courses, but in a minority of areas these strategies have not led to improvement. Central support services produce self-assessment reports and set targets. This process is supported by a survey of staff as customers. The college self-assessment report is evaluative and self-critical. Use is made of student and staff questionnaires reinforced by focus groups. Complaints from students and parents are recorded, investigated thoroughly, and reported to the corporation.

34. All teachers are observed and graded annually. The college has around 50 observers, mainly

heads of faculty and subject leaders. Strengths and weaknesses are reported, but are not always sufficiently detailed.

35. Professional development is very well organised, responsive and effective. Training priorities have a strong focus on ILT, teaching and learning, equal opportunities, subject leader development and the improvement of underperforming courses. There is extensive in-house training where good practice is often shared across faculties. For example, on a professional development day, staff reviewed and shared outcomes of learning experiments stimulated by an earlier training event on teaching and learning. The induction programme for all new staff is supportive, and all are allocated a mentor. Newly qualified and unqualified staff are given time to support their training and development. All employees participate in a professional review process where achievements, targets and development needs are recorded.

36. A detailed equal opportunities policy includes race equality and disability statements and is monitored by the equality and diversity committee. An annual report is produced which analyses pass and retention rates and recruitment by ethnicity and gender. Improvement targets are set. The college meets the requirements of disability discrimination legislation. Most work, recommended in an access audit report commissioned by the college, has been completed. Practical projects have been set up to improve underachievement of males and the college has undertaken research on the experience of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. All staff have been trained to work with male underachievement and students with autistic spectrum disorders. Each faculty is expected to outline a teaching activity which promotes awareness of equality and diversity. Inspectors observed a number of examples of good integration of equality and diversity themes in lessons.

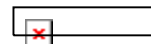
37. The college has strong links with partner schools. It has developed a partner-wide virtual learning environment. The college promotes a shared vision of 14 to 19 progression within the local community including options in other colleges. The college locally leads the Aimhigher partnership and the IF programme.

38. The college gives good value for money and has maintained financial category A status through the period of significant investment in the building project. Financial planning is careful and prudent. Monthly management accounts with detailed commentaries highlight variances in the budget and are monitored by the finance and estates committee and the corporation. The college has consistently exceeded its funding targets and maintains high average class sizes.

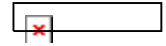
39. Data returns are timely and accurate. The management information services team is able to produce a range of reports to support decision making by the senior management team and the corporation and to ensure robust self-assessment at course level. The college recognises that central computerised information services to support the tracking of students' progress are not yet integrated fully.

40. Governance is good. Governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role and are involved in strategic planning through the regular meeting structure and biennial conferences. The client services committee receives regular reports on students' pass and retention rates and attendance. It monitors academic performance closely. The corporation has extensive knowledge of the college's activities, and each governor is paired with a college manager. While elements of training occur throughout the year, training is not formally planned and monitored. The corporation produces a detailed self-assessment report of its activities. This identifies strengths and weaknesses, and sets targets for improvement.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Contributory grade for mathematics is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- consistently high pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics
- good use of ILT to support learning
- high standard of work and good progress of students in advanced mathematics
- well-resourced laboratories and specialist accommodation.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to the needs of individual students in lessons
- insufficient use of practical chemistry in teaching
- poor attendance in core and GCSE mathematics.

Scope of provision

41. The range of science and mathematics courses at advanced level is good. Some 192 full-time students aged 16 to 18 study biology, human biology, chemistry, physics or mathematics at AS level or GCE A level. Fewer students study double award or further mathematics. There are 205 students enrolled on GCSE mathematics courses, and a further 35 undertake core level 1 mathematics. A small number of students study biology as part of an access to HE course. Small numbers of adult students are enrolled on to one-day modules or NVQ courses for laboratory technicians.

Achievement and standards

42. Pass rates, including those at higher grades, are consistently high in AS-level and GCE A-level

mathematics. This is achieved despite low average GCSE scores on entry. In science subjects, most pass rates are close to national averages, but are below the national average for higher grade passes. In AS-level physics and GCE A-level chemistry, pass rates are low and students do not make good progress when compared with their performance at GCSE. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics improved significantly to just above the low national average in 2004. Although attendance on advanced courses is good, it is poor on level 1 and level 2 mathematics courses. A large proportion of students progress to HE.

43. Advanced mathematics students demonstrate high standards of work and make good progress. They work together very well and develop a good learning atmosphere. For example, in one lesson, students co-operated to solve graphical problems in trigonometry. In GCSE science, students develop good practical skills. For example, they confidently set up equipment and use it to measure angles of incidence and reflection. However, they are less confident in recording and interpreting their results. Biology students discuss environmental issues such as deforestation enthusiastically.

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	104	91	140
		% retention	80	77	82
		% pass rate	40	37	51
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	141	136	124
		% retention	89	83	88
		% pass rate	86	82	82
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	54	56	47
		% retention	93	88	89
		% pass rate	78	69	52
GCE A2 biology	3	No. of starts	32	36	43
		% retention	97	94	98
		% pass rate	94	94	90
GCE A2 chemistry	3	No. of starts	26	24	32
		% retention	100	100	97
		% pass rate	85	88	84
GCE A2 mathematics	3	No. of starts	65	72	74
		% retention	97	96	96
		% pass rate	92	87	96
GCE A2 physics	3	No. of starts	38	28	26
		% retention	92	96	96
		% pass rate	80	78	96

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

Quality of education and training

44. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of ILT to support learning. In mathematics, the use of graph plotting software supports quick revision of parametric equations. Students are able to consult lesson notes on the college's virtual learning environment. For example,

a video clip of reactions of oxides shown in a previous chemistry lesson on periodicity. Technicians provide effective support for teaching. Students are effectively encouraged to ask questions. In advanced mathematics, students enjoy the work and are self-motivated to achieve their target grades. In access to HE lessons, teachers use the experience and knowledge of students to effectively promote lively discussions and stimulate learning.

45. Although most lessons are planned carefully, there is often insufficient attention to the needs of individual students. The most able students are not always presented with sufficiently challenging questions, and weaker students are not always supported in lessons. Students do practical chemistry involving titrations or organic synthesis, but teachers make insufficient use of shorter practical activities to support learning. Delivery of key skills is satisfactory overall, but students receive insufficient help in developing strategies to improve their own performance.

46. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Homework is set regularly. It is marked carefully and discussed in class, but there is often too little written comment and insufficient guidance on how to improve. Tutors use minimum targets to discuss students' progress, but subject teachers do not always use these grades. In GCSE mathematics, the lack of a subject-specific initial assessment and absence of assignment records make it difficult to monitor the progress of different groups.

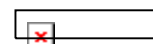
47. Subject support is good. Students benefit from regular workshops, summer term revision lessons, and individual help from teachers. Arrangements for the diagnosis of individual support needs are effective and students are well supported in lessons. Attendance monitoring is thorough and effective for students on advanced courses. It is less effective in GCSE mathematics lessons. Tutors support students well on personal issues, in monitoring academic progress, and in the preparation for application to HE.

48. Laboratories are modern and well equipped. Students have good access to computers, with a wide range of well-used resources on the virtual learning environment. The science preparation room and computer suite are located conveniently in the centre of the laboratory area. Mathematics students can access graph drawing software and a wide range of web-based activities together with past papers and answers. Displays of students' work, attractive posters, and information on famous scientists, mathematical concepts and career opportunities are prominently displayed. Teachers and technicians are well qualified. Library facilities are comprehensive and include mathematics and science books of general interest. The college has a good range of appropriate periodicals.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good progress has been made in identifying areas of concern and working as a team to raise standards. The self-assessment report is thorough and the action plan realistic, though dated. Whilst lesson observation of science teaching has extended across the team, few mathematics lessons have been observed. Quality assurance is not effective for GCSE mathematics and students' performance across groups is not evaluated fully. No comparison is made of incoming and retake GCSE mathematics grades. The proportion of female students in advanced physics lessons is large. The department uses its resources effectively to provide good value for money.

Business, administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GNVQ, AS-level accounting, GCE A-level business studies and AAT level 4 courses

- much good teaching

- good resources that promote independent learning

- effective strategies to widen participation

- very good academic and personal support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level economics and AAT level 3 courses

- uninspiring teaching in a minority of lessons

- ineffective feedback to students.

Scope of provision

50. The college has been successful in increasing and widening participation on business courses. A wide range of courses is available for business and secretarial students to meet a range of individual needs. Progression opportunities for students are good. Full-time courses from level 1 to level 3 are offered to 16 to 18 year olds and part-time short and long courses to adults. The college provides GCSE business studies, and AS-level and GCE A-level courses in economics, business studies and accounting. In addition, the college offers BTEC business foundation and intermediate level vocational courses, AVCE business double award and the private secretary's diploma. There are 184 full-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on one or more of these courses. Some 51 students are enrolled on part-time AAT courses at level 2 to level 4 in the evening. Vocational students benefit from work experience with a number of local employers.

Achievement and standards

51. Many pass rates are consistently high or are improving. Pass rates are high for AS-level accounting, GCE A-level business, GCE A-level economics and AAT level 4. Pass rates for AS-level business studies and the AVCE business double award improved significantly to above the national average in 2004. Pass rates for AS-level economics and AAT level 3 are low and have been

consistently below the national average for the past two years. Retention rates are high on AS-level accounting, AS-level business studies and GCE A-level economics courses.

52. The standard of students' written work and other assignments is generally high. In AS-level economics, the private secretary's diploma and the AVCE business double award, progress of students is very good. However, they make slow progress on the AAT level 3 accounting course. Students on the private secretary's diploma develop very good practical skills. They have a high level of competence in keyboard skills and good knowledge of business administration procedures. Students on business courses develop a good understanding of business practice and current issues. In AS-level economics, students have lively discussions about commercial topics. In AS-level accounting, students learn to construct financial documents such as trading and profit and loss accounts. On the AVCE business courses, students demonstrate a thorough understanding of planning and running a small business.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	46	49	64
		% retention	80	80	91
		% pass rate	89	79	88
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	91	89	107
		% retention	86	89	92
		% pass rate	68	85	95
GCE A2 business studies	3	No. of starts	44	39	45
		% retention	92	92	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	43	43	50
		% retention	91	95	90
		% pass rate	77	68	67
GCE A2 economics	3	No. of starts	29	26	24
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	97	96	96
AVCE business double award	3	No. of starts	36	46	39
		% retention	50	65	74
		% pass rate	78	77	93
AAT accounts	4	No. of starts	*	20	20
		% retention	*	90	85
		% pass rate	*	61	71

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

53. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons are well structured and managed effectively. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to interest students. Lessons are lively and students are eager to contribute. Students work well individually and in small groups to explore business issues and current topics. Learning is regularly checked and well monitored in lessons. Teachers use good links to industry and commercial practices. These provide an appropriate context for students to expand their knowledge and understanding. Teachers create a professional atmosphere which students appreciate, and which encourages good learning. Students benefit from a range of speakers and advisors who visit the college to provide expertise for specific business activities.

54. In a minority of lessons, teaching is uninspiring and fails to involve or interest all students. Teachers talk too much and students do not always develop their confidence and communication skills through discussion. In a few lessons, there is little variety in the teaching and teachers do not always take account of the individual learning needs of all students. Students familiar with the topic often become bored and do not make the best use of their time. Teachers do not always exploit opportunities to use ILT to support the teaching and learning process.

55. On most courses, homework is set regularly and the results recorded. Marked work is returned promptly. Written feedback to students for vocational course assignments is generally good and is sufficiently detailed. However, on other courses it often lacks detail and does not make clear how the student could improve, or what steps are necessary to obtain better grades. Tutors often set weekly targets which are monitored effectively. Internal verification procedures are good. In lessons, teachers sometimes rely too much on general verbal feedback on assessments which is not always specific to individual students' work. Students cannot easily identify exactly what they need to do to improve and, in a minority of lessons, they become bored.

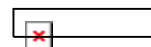
56. Academic and personal support are very good and are valued by students. Tutors and teachers are flexible and make themselves available outside timetabled hours. Links with the college's careers staff are well developed. They give good advice and guidance on progression into HE, training or employment. Students are helped to identify opportunities relevant to the qualifications and skills they have gained at the college. Punctuality is poor in a few lessons. The college's initial assessment arrangements for students aged 16 to 18 are very good. Prompt and appropriate learning support is provided. Little assessment of adult students' support needs and learning styles takes place prior to courses. The principles of equal opportunities are introduced to students at induction, and reinforced through teaching. For example, students' assignments often promote equality of opportunity.

57. Good resources promote independent learning and are well used by students. A wide range of textbooks is available in the library to support vocational, practical and business topics. Business journals, magazines and copies of specialist newspapers are available that students can use to study the performance of companies. Students are provided with a personal copy of a textbook at the start of the course. The virtual learning environment is well used by students both in the college and at home. A good range of business information documents, tasks, class presentations, website links, and other useful information is available to support learning. Information is updated regularly. Students have good access to computers. Teaching staff in the business faculty have relevant teaching qualifications. Many have attended external courses to keep up to date with programme requirements. However, most teachers do not have recent industrial experience.

Leadership and management

58. Leadership and management of the business faculty are good. There is a strong commitment to improvement. Since the last inspection, effective strategies have been put in place to improve retention rates and develop more curriculum links with employers. Staff teams meet regularly. Informal meetings and communications take place daily. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Staff are appraised annually and developmental needs are identified. Staff identify and attend suitable professional development events between appraisals. Most business staff have not had recent industrial experience to update their knowledge of current business practice. Staff are well supported by managers. Communication between all staff in the department is very good. Staff contribute to strategic developments. There are few opportunities for staff to work with, and share good practice with, other faculty teams within the college.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates in AS-level ICT
- excellent accommodation for IT key skills
- very effective monitoring of students' progress
- successful initiatives to widen community adult participation
- effective improvements to underperforming courses.

Weaknesses

- low pass rate on AS-level computing
- low and declining retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate in IT course between 2002 and 2004
- low attendance in IT key skills lessons
- insufficient attention to meeting the needs of all students in lessons
- computing accommodation restricts theory teaching.

Scope of provision

59. SEEVIC college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses. Students have the opportunity to follow a good range of level 3 courses, and initiatives to widen adult participation have been successful. At advanced level, students are enrolled on AS-level and GCE A-level ICT and computing and AVCE ICT single and double award courses. The college offers a GNVQ intermediate IT course. The college offers flexible opportunities for part-time study of ICT. It has worked closely with a range of local providers to offer basic ICT courses in three community venues where there are high levels of deprivation. About 350 adult students are enrolled on a range of courses from introductory Learndirect modules to City and Guilds e-qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Many students study for individual units of the e-qualification. There are currently 175 full-time and 383 part-time students. All the full-time students and three of the part-time students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

60. The pass rate in AS-level ICT is very high. The pass rate of the AVCE double award in IT course is very high, although retention rates are low. Students on the AS-level computing course make poor progress and, while the retention rate has risen, the pass rate has declined to well below the national average. The change to modular units on part-time courses has been accompanied by a significant improvement in retention and pass rates. The college's own data indicate that the performance on the GNVQ intermediate IT course has recently improved significantly.

61. Adult students demonstrate good progress in lessons. Many complete tasks to a high standard and students are proud of their work. On advanced courses, students are able to explain the logic of complex spreadsheet and database functions. Most students use the skills they have developed on outreach IT courses in their personal or professional lives and many now work in IT. Full-time computing and ICT students have a good practical understanding of the software they are using and are competent and confident in its use. For example, some first year AVCE students develop websites for local primary schools. Most students are well motivated and are able to work independently and at their own pace. Portfolios of work are well organised and contain vocationally relevant assessments. Punctuality and attendance on most courses are satisfactory but, in key skills IT lessons, they are poor. Students' work in lessons is often disrupted by students arriving late.

62.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Certificate for IT users	1	No. of starts	*	490	426
		% retention	*	50	82
		% pass rate	*	60	74
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	34	37	31
		% retention	79	76	71
		% pass rate	100	82	73
AVCE (double award) ICT	3	No. of starts	40	42	61
		% retention	65	71	50
		% pass rate	100	93	100
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	142	142	149
		% retention	80	85	85

		% pass rate	95	92	94
GCE A2 ICT	3	No. of starts	46	74	84
		% retention	91	93	90
		% pass rate	90	91	96
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	77	73	73
		% retention	79	85	95
		% pass rate	72	63	57
GCE A2 computing	3	No. of starts	33	25	23
		% retention	94	96	100
		% pass rate	61	88	91

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

63. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are usually well planned with a variety of activities, but are not always responsive to the needs of individual students. Teachers intervene well to solve problems, but do not always plan extension material for the more able students. Teachers demonstrate sound classroom management using a mixture of firmness and good humour but, although students remain occupied, they could often complete tasks quicker than they do. Students are interested and motivated. They work well together and respond well to questions. Teachers have a sound range of technical skills, a good knowledge of their subjects, and make good use of the limited range of teaching aids. Where available, data projectors are used well to support teaching and learning. Students are able to work quickly and effectively. For example, in an AVCE lesson where the introduction had taken longer than expected, students produced good powerpoint presentations in less than 10 minutes and demonstrated them to the rest of the group with skill and confidence. On part-time courses, most learning is through individual study which is supported by a range of workbooks, CD-ROMs, and online learning packs. In the best lessons, teachers make use of small group teaching to explain basic IT principles. In some rooms, the range of teaching techniques which teachers can use is limited by the layout.

64. Assessment and monitoring practices are good. Assessments are marked accurately and an appropriate number are internally validated. Students' work is monitored and tracked very effectively on full-time courses. Support assistants (facilitators) are used well to follow up problems and reduce the demands on teachers. Good verbal and written feedback is given to students to help them improve the quality of their coursework. There is some good use of data, but assessment information, including the analysis of performance of different groups of students, is rarely used to guide course and programme development.

65. Support for students' personal and academic needs is good. Open evenings and induction lessons are valued by students and enable them to verify that they are on the appropriate course for their needs. Individual learning needs are diagnosed accurately and students have access to effective additional support throughout their studies. Students have effective support to help them complete their course, including access to specialist support services. Guidance and support are sensitive to factors such as gender, race and ethnicity.

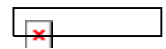
66. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Good professional development contributes to their effectiveness. The operating systems and applications software used meet current industrial standards, and the hardware available is adequate for the courses taught. Teaching space for IT key skills is excellent. It is large, spacious, flexible and well used. Whilst accommodation for computing provides a suitable setting for practical work, most computer rooms lack the flexibility required to

deliver theory work efficiently and effectively. For example, space for work which does not involve the use of computers is limited. Some areas are not equipped with fixed data projectors or interactive whiteboards. Good technical support ensures that all students can participate fully in their courses. The three outreach centres are well equipped and provide a pleasant and spacious environment for learning.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership is good. Management of the programme area is satisfactory. There is a clear focus on raising teachers' effectiveness through a programme of continuous professional development. Underperforming courses are identified and reviewed and the process is effective. For example, the performance of students in GCE A2 computing has improved significantly during this process. Course team leaders keep their course files up to date and the annual course reviews have action plans for improvement. However, quality assurance and management decisions are rarely based on a full analysis of the available data. Support provision is well integrated into courses; the facilitators have very good IT skills and their work is valued by both teachers and students. The promotion of equal opportunities is good and lessons use good non-stereotypical examples to reinforce learning.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- very good accommodation in sport

- good assessment practices

- good management of curriculum development.

Weaknesses

- consistently low pass rates on short courses

- insufficient use of ICT in sports theory teaching.

Scope of provision

68. Courses are provided at levels 2 and 3 in travel and tourism and sport. They include AS-level and GCE A-level physical education, national and first diplomas in sport and exercise science and an NVQ in sport and recreation. The college offers a first diploma in travel and tourism, AVCE single and double awards in travel and tourism, and air cabin crew qualifications. It offers a range of short courses in sports coaching and leadership, and professional courses in exercise instruction and football coaching. Courses are run at the main college site and at the training establishments of partner organisations. These include local health and fitness clubs, leisure centres, schools and football centres. CoVE status, in sport and leisure, was achieved in 2002. There are 1,195 students in total, of whom 677 are full time and 518 part time. About two thirds of students are male.

Achievement and standards

69. Pass rates are high on many courses. For example, the pass rates for AS-level sports games and recreation and GCE A-level physical education have been consistently high for the last three years. Pass rates on the intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism and first diploma in sports science courses are consistently above the national average. However, pass rates on short courses are consistently low. For example, on the community sports leader award, it has not risen above 25% for the last three years. Pass rates are low on the higher sports leaders award and in GCSE travel and tourism. Retention rates are satisfactory overall.

70. Students demonstrate good knowledge, understanding and skills. Written work often demonstrates good skills of critical analysis and evaluation. In sport practical lessons, students successfully apply coaching and leadership skills in the management of groups. In tourism lessons, well-motivated students carry out independent research. Retention rates for CoVE students are satisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE travel and tourism	2	No. of starts	19	19	19
		% retention	84	79	79
		% pass rate	81	73	53
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	15	15	16
		% retention	93	73	94
		% pass rate	93	100	87
First diploma sport science	2	No. of starts	39	29	20
		% retention	67	83	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Community sports leader award	2	No. of starts	110	92	96
		% retention	72	80	94
		% pass rate	25	11	20
Hanson higher sport leaders award	2	No. of starts	46	59	57
		% retention	100	61	98
		% pass rate	37	14	18

AS-level sports, games and recreation	3	No. of starts	62	68	88
		% retention	87	84	91
		% pass rate	100	100	96
AVCE double award in travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	21	24	22
		% retention	52	58	68
		% pass rate	100	100	87

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

Quality of education and training

71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All lessons have written plans and objectives that are shared with students and reviewed at the end of lessons. Many lessons have a variety of activities that stimulate learning. The most successful lessons have creative and imaginative teaching. For example, one teacher changed his shirt and put on an 'old' shirt and sunglasses to reinforce the nature of some specialist language. Another asked students to walk and jog a floor plan of the layout of the anatomy of the heart to reinforce the understanding of how blood flows through the chambers. In a few lessons, team teaching is used successfully to share the differing expertise of teachers and stimulate students.

72. In the less effective lessons, students do not contribute enough. Opportunities for students to benefit from pair or group work are not always used. Occasionally, specialist accommodation is not used to best effect or to vary teaching styles. Safe working practices are not adhered to in a few practical sport lessons. For example, students wore jeans and jewellery during practical activities. Lesson objectives are not always clear and plans do not always cater for all students. Opportunities to use ILT are sometimes missed in sport theory lessons. For example, work involving motion used photographs rather than moving images.

73. Assessment practice is good. The college's virtual learning environment is used effectively to monitor, record and assess students' performance. Students benefit from immediate feedback on their performance. Homework is set and marked on the virtual learning environment in GCE A-level lessons. In addition, assignment briefs, timetables and past grades are recorded for students' reference. Portfolio building exercises effectively record progress on the NVQ in sport and recreation. Clear instructions are given to direct students to the materials that they need to add. The use of predicted grades and target setting is effective and regular. Tracking systems are used effectively in tutorials and provide students with information about their progress. CoVE students in partner organisations do not have access to the virtual learning environment. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements.

74. Support for students is very good. Additional staff provide individual help for students in lessons. For example, in one lesson, students with hearing impairments were supported effectively. In another, handouts were modified to meet the needs of students with dyslexia. Academic support is good. Teachers are aware of the individual support needs of their students and plan for them accordingly. Tutorials take place regularly and focus on the issues which are essential to success. Students on vocational programmes have daily tutorials. Contact with parents is good. Students' attendance is monitored effectively.

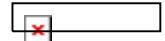
75. Accommodation in sport is very good. Access to specialist laboratories provides good opportunities for experimental work. Good sports hall and fitness centre facilities provide high-quality simulated work environments. Classrooms are well equipped and a number have digital projectors. The facilities at partner organisations are very good. Fitness and exercise facilities are of a high quality and exceed industry minimum standards in the CoVE partners. For example, one club has a full range of resistance and free weights equipment, large numbers of new cycles, treadmills and rowing machines, a treatment suite and swimming pool. Learning materials are often limited. For example, acetate images are poor and dated. Staff qualifications are satisfactory. Those who do not

hold a teaching qualification are working towards one. Library resources are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are good. The faculty has expanded significantly in recent years, and this process has been well managed. New teaching staff are well supported. There has been significant development of new courses associated with the CoVE. Actions have been taken to address consistently low pass rates on short courses. However, it is too soon for these to have had significant effects. The college produces an annual operating plan for the CoVE with appropriate targets. Communication between the CoVE partners and the college is good with effective regular meetings. Self-assessment reports are detailed and are sufficiently self-critical. All teachers are observed and the observations are used as part of a biannual appraisal. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on full-time courses
- much good teaching
- very good accommodation and resources to support learning
- productive and extensive partnership arrangements
- outstanding personal and subject support for individual students
- very good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- poor time management in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

77. A range of full-time provision provides progression opportunities in early years and health and social care. There are currently 149 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 8 part-time students aged over 19 enrolled on courses in social care and early years. Students aged 16 to 18 attend full-time courses in health and social care and early years, while adult students undertake NVQs in early years care and education. Courses are available at levels 2 and 3 in health and social care and early years. The college offers a vocationally related enrichment programme of visits and visiting speakers as well as the opportunity to take first aid as an additional vocational qualification. A wide range of work experience opportunities supports college studies, including placements in local schools, private day nurseries, and hospitals. Productive links have been established with SureStart, the early years development partnership and Anglia Polytechnic University.

Achievement and standards

78. Pass and retention rates are very high on full-time courses. Pass rates on health and social care courses have been well above national averages for three years and pass rates on the national diploma in early years are high. Retention rates on level 3 full-time courses are high and were significantly above national averages in 2003/04. The pass rate in NVQ early years care and education has improved and was just above the national average in 2003/04. The college's own data indicate that recent strategies to improve retention rates have resulted in significant improvements. Students are not always punctual.

79. The standard of work produced in lessons is very 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 the national curriculum, students could state how introducing stories, games and circle time could develop pupils' language skills. Some key skills assessment is integrated into the vocational programme. For example, in an early years lesson, the marking of students' presentation skills was clearly linked to key skills development. Progression to further study or employment is very good. In 2003/04, 100% of early years students progressed to higher study or vocationally relevant employment.

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 course	1	No. of starts	*	*	91
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	98
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	19	21	16
		% retention	100	100	81
		% pass rate	95	100	92
BTEC first diploma early years	2	No. of starts	*	*	16
		% retention	*	*	88
		% pass rate	*	*	100
AVCE health and social care double award	3	No. of starts	16	12	20
		% retention	56	75	85
		% pass rate	100	100	100
BTEC national diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	21	17	31
		% retention	95	71	87

		% pass rate	100	100	93
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	*	12	10
		% retention	*	75	90
		% pass rate	*	33	67

**course did not run*

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

Quality of education and training

80. Much teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and purposeful with clear aims and objectives which are shared with students. Teachers use a variety of methods including case studies, role plays, visits and visiting speakers. For example, early years students visit a farm to see how this can be used in children's social, technological and geographical development. Teachers identify preferred learning styles and modify their teaching methods to suit students' specific learning needs. They involve students in a range of activities which provide opportunities for the development of skills as well as knowledge of theory. In a health and social care lesson on promoting independence and autonomy, students role played carer and client effectively. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not tell students how long they have to complete tasks and opportunities to develop time management skills are missed. Students work, or are placed, in a range of different organisations and are able to share their experiences with each other in lessons to broaden their learning. Students use their work experience in lessons. For example, in an early years lesson, they discussed their placements' differing policies on the labelling and tagging of babies' bottles each morning.

81. Assessment of students' work is very good. Work is marked carefully and regularly and 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 in lessons to assess students' understanding. Assessment of written work in lessons is good. Marked homework is returned promptly. Assessment in the workplace is comprehensive. Initial assessment is thorough and quickly identifies students requiring additional support. Initial assessment results are discussed with students to determine their support needs, and learning support assistants and communicators are used effectively in class to assist students with dyslexia, those requiring assistance with assignments or study skills, and those with visual impairments. Some students attend additional support lessons outside timetabled lessons. Parents are informed of students' progress at parents' evenings and communication with parents is good. Punctuality and attendance have improved recently.

82. Support and guidance for students are of a very high standard. The high-quality prospectus details the range of courses on offer and the thorough interview procedure ensures that students' individual needs and career aspirations are taken into account. The induction programme enables students to settle quickly and there are good arrangements for those who start late. Personal and academic targets are set and carefully monitored. Actions to improve performance are identified by students and teachers. Students appreciate the support they receive. Careers advice is good and includes contributions from employers and representatives from local universities.

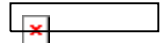
83. Teachers are well qualified vocationally and all have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Some have recent, relevant industrial experience and use good examples from their professional and personal experience to help students learn effectively. For example, in a health and social care lesson, the teacher related how social services allocate resources for care of the elderly. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively in lessons and there are useful displays in classrooms and corridors. A very wide 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 babies. The library is well stocked with a range of texts and periodicals. Accommodation is excellent and includes two specialist practical rooms for childcare. Many classrooms have a range of IT facilities. The adjacent dedicated computer suite is used extensively by students to access the virtual learning environment for research, to access notes and assignment briefs, and to complete

assignment work.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are very good. Communication within the team and with managers is purposeful and professional. The link governor takes an interest in the department. The comprehensive meeting structure ensures coverage of curriculum and development issues. Effective strategies are in place to improve retention and pass rates. Performance data are analysed and used in forward planning. Quality assurance is robust and focuses on raising standards in teaching and learning. Continuing professional development is encouraged. The self-assessment process is rigorous and accurate. All course teams are involved fully in identifying areas for development and drawing up appropriate plans to effect improvements. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted and firmly embedded in practice.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- high standards of practical work

- good teaching of practical skills

- excellent enrichment programme

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on vocational courses

- failure to meet the needs of all students in lessons.

Scope of provision

85. The college offers a range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses in visual arts, performing arts, media and music. Vocational provision is offered at intermediate level in GNVQ media, and at advanced level on the national diploma in performing arts. AVCE double awards in art and design are also available. There are 285 students enrolled across the curriculum area. Of these, the majority are full time, aged 16 to 18, and enrolled on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in visual art and media. Students' learning is enhanced through a wide range of activities such as trips abroad, workshops with artists and touring work in the locality that broaden learners understanding and experience of the industry.

Achievement and standards

86. Pass rates are high on many courses. For example, on GCE A-level art and design and GCE A-level film courses, they have been consistently high for the last three years. Though the number of students taking the courses is low, pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in media and the national diploma in performing arts have been 100% for the last three years. Retention rates are generally below the national averages on vocational courses. For example, in the national diploma in performing arts course, though improving, they have been significantly below the national average for the last three years. For the large number of students on the AS-level art studies course, retention and pass rates are just above the national averages.

87. Students develop good technical skills. Students' practical skills are well developed in music, visual art and graphics. They produce work that is imaginative and creative. In textiles, students use a range of materials to produce innovative work. In graphics, students experiment with mixed media to present high-quality designs. Students' background knowledge and skills are well developed. In visual arts and media, for example, students become effective and highly motivated independent learners. In media, they complete innovative posters using graphics software, and skilfully manipulate images to enhance the essential message. Poor attendance and punctuality have adversely affected the development of group project work, particularly in music and performing arts.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate media: communication and production	2	No. of starts	10	15	15
		% retention	90	87	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level art studies	3	No. of starts	112	168	185
		% retention	84	85	88
		% pass rate	86	87	96
AS-level music technology	3	No. of starts	24	27	39
		% retention	54	96	82
		% pass rate	77	62	97
GCE A-level film studies	3	No. of starts	15	14	35
		% retention	100	93	97
		% pass rate	93	100	100
AVCE (double award) in media: communication and production	3	No. of starts	17	12	23
		% retention	53	75	65
		% pass rate	100	100	100

National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	11	19	20
		% retention	45	53	70
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

88. Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, teaching is inspiring and students are encouraged to experiment in their work. The pace is brisk and the range of tasks set is imaginative. In a GCE A-level textiles lesson, students were encouraged to explore different mediums. They were highly motivated and animated, and produced creative ideas. The teaching of practical skills is good. In performing arts, teaching is energetic and focused, and teachers enthusiastically strive for high standards of both performance and music composition. Graphics students are encouraged to gather exciting material and display work of a high standard for their final exam projects. Students make good use of the virtual learning environment to progress with coursework. ICT is integrated very well with some lessons. For example, in an AS-level dance lesson, students viewed their own compositions and notation through a laptop. In a few theory lessons, teaching is uninspiring. These lessons are not well planned, and students have little change of activity. Teachers make too few demands on students and questioning is not used to promote understanding or check learning.

89. Overall, assessment is good though practice is inconsistent across the faculty. Assessment and monitoring of progress are integrated into students' work. In visual arts and media, assessments are marked thoroughly and students are clear about what they need to do to improve. Grading is usually accurate and targets are set and monitored on a regular basis. Assessment practices are less well developed in performing arts and music where procedures lack consistency and rigour. However, informal feedback by peers and tutors is valuable and leads to improvements in performing arts rehearsals.

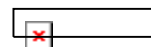
90. Support for students is good. They value the support they receive from their tutors on academic and personal issues. Teachers are responsive to the needs of students. The identification of individual learning needs is accurate and comprehensive. However, teachers are occasionally unaware of these needs and they are not always reflected in lesson plans. Students are set minimum target grades, but are not always encouraged to strive beyond them. Induction activities are well chosen to introduce students to the style and pace of the work at the college. Group tutorials are not always effective, although students value one-to-one support.

91. Resources are good and students make good use of the well-equipped theatre venue and an integrated media suite. Music studios are too small with insufficient specialist equipment for the number of students enrolled on these courses. Accommodation for visual arts is custom built to a high standard. Lighting is good and the space available is versatile and fully equipped with industry-standard IT facilities and a video editing suite. On occasion, however, learning is disturbed by the noise of neighbouring lessons through the open-plan workshops. Teachers are well qualified and some have valuable industrial experience. Students make good use of the virtual learning environment, which they can access from home computers. The library is well stocked with books and periodicals.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Courses are well managed in many areas. However, curriculum management in performing arts is ineffective. The self-assessment report for music is insufficiently detailed and lacks clear actions and measurable outcomes. Communication is good. The sharing of good practice is widespread, and staff development meets needs identified from the teaching observation scheme. However, the outcomes of individual teaching observations are often insufficiently detailed to indicate where improvements are necessary. Teachers value their yearly performance reviews.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates at AS level and GCE A level

- very high standards of students' work

- high retention rates on many courses

- much very good and some outstanding teaching

- innovative and successful assessment and monitoring of students' progress

- wide range of course provision

- very good leadership and management of the curriculum area.

Weaknesses

- low standards of students' achievements on a few AS-level courses compared to their prior attainment.

Scope of provision

93. On the main college site, the provision in humanities includes an extensive range of subjects at AS level and GCE A level including general studies which is taken by all students. GCSE psychology and Institute of Legal Executives introduction to legal studies are also offered. Most of the 359 students of humanities are full time and aged 16 to 18, with very few part-time students on level 3 courses. There are several groups of adult students on the access to HE course taking level 3 modules in sociology, psychology or English literature. The provision allows good combinations of

subjects for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students aiming to improve their qualifications or progress to HE.

Achievement and standards

94. Pass rates in most subjects are consistently high. Many have been at, or above, the national averages over a three-year period to 2004. The college's own data indicate significant recent improvement in AS-level psychology. The proportion of higher grades in GCE A level is at, or above, the national averages in most subjects. Overall pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level philosophy are low and have not improved in recent years. Students demonstrate excellent or very good progress in most subjects. For example, added value is excellent in government and politics, history, and psychology. However, it is poor in geography and philosophy. Retention rates are generally high. Attendance is high and students are punctual. Students' written work is of a high standard. GCE A-level coursework is very good and includes a wide range of topics chosen by the students, well researched and presented using IT to achieve good grades. Students use and value the college's virtual learning environment for humanities, recently available on the college intranet. Those working at home are able to access the virtual learning environment and make good progress. Students are keen to participate in discussions in their lessons. They respond well to questions and make good oral contributions both at AS level and GCE A level. Students demonstrate evaluative skills and apply them effectively to new material presented in lessons. They work collaboratively and show respect for each other's views.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	19	20	24
		% retention	79	80	67
		% pass rate	60	56	69
AS-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	20	32	28
		% retention	85	84	82
		% pass rate	100	93	100
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	195	240	292
		% retention	86	86	90
		% pass rate	72	84	78
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	26	23	30
		% retention	100	91	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	31	42	50
		% retention	100	98	94
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	85	93	128
		% retention	96	96	97
		% pass rate	98	99	98

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

Quality of education and training

95. Most teaching is good or better. The most successful lessons are well planned, effectively

resourced, and carefully structured. Subject specialists have selected a good range of modules which best meet the needs and interests of their students. For example, history students follow units on the growth of Irish nationalism in the twentieth century and the development of anti-Semitism in Europe. In sociology, psychology and other subjects, there are many aspects of the curriculum which deal with ethics and issues relating to stereotyping, discrimination, race and gender. In general studies, there are modules relating to inclusion, asylum and race which require students to develop a good knowledge and understanding of current policies in relation to equality and diversity. Good working relationships between staff and students are established quickly in lessons and students are encouraged to work in groups or pairs. Teachers adopt effective strategies to ensure that students make effective progress in acquiring knowledge and developing their critical skills through completing tasks in lessons. Handouts are well designed, and handbooks actively promote skills development in the evaluation of sources and conceptual analysis. In one outstanding psychology lesson on deconditioning therapies, the teacher gave graphic examples of recent therapies and treatments. Animated discussion followed, and the teacher made good checks on the use and understanding of technical terms and closely evaluated the effectiveness of classical treatments. There is a good range of enrichment activities based on external contacts, visiting speakers and groups. Students value the geology expedition to Sicily where they explore volcanic rocks and collect samples.

96. Assessment is innovative and successful with a focus on the acquisition of practical and analytical skills related to each discipline. For example, geography GCE A-level students are assessed on their development of map interpretation skills and the graphical presentation of climate data. Homework is regularly set, completed to deadlines, and marked with detailed comments. Students who fail to meet the deadlines and fall behind with their assessments are quickly identified by their teachers and monitored by their tutors. The virtual learning environment contains subject areas which include lesson and assignment briefs, assessment schedules, and grids in which students can enter their results and get immediate feedback on progress towards their target grades.

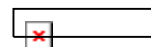
97. Support for students is very good. All students undergo initial evaluation for learning support needs. Students in need of additional learning support receive prompt help and make progress. Access to support on personal issues is good. Students benefit from effective careers and HE application guidance. The faculty has good links with feeder schools and offers good transition support. Regular taster days enable prospective students to make appropriate course choices. Adult students on access courses are well supported. Teachers give freely of their time and students appreciate the support they receive. Support for students with hearing impairments is good. Students do not always value group tutorials, however, they do value the individual support they receive from tutors. Students' progress is monitored effectively and all students are set target grades. Students are usually clear what steps they should take to improve.

98. Resources are very good. Staff are well qualified and all either have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. The virtual learning environment is comprehensive and well used, however, some courses have not yet fully developed this resource. Library book and periodical stocks are good. Students have good access to computers and use them effectively. Teachers in the social sciences have good access to ILT and IT. However, this is not the case in the older teaching rooms. The humanities courses do not have an accessible IT resource base near to their classrooms.

Leadership and management

99. Leadership and curriculum management are very good across the faculties for humanities subjects. Communication is good. Courses at subject level are well planned and well managed. Members of subject teams work together effectively and make efficient use of resources. Humanities subjects are located in one faculty, social sciences in another. Documentation of schemes of work, lesson plans, and records of students' progress in relation to target grades are good. Subject teachers meet regularly in teams. Minutes record discussions and actions on curriculum developments, examination and assessment requirements and staff development. Self-assessment reports are the result of consultation with the departments and with staff. Although generally accurate, action plans are not always sufficiently detailed. Progress to improve the performance of philosophy has been slow. The lesson observation scheme is effective in assessing the quality of teaching and learning.

English, languages and communications



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- high retention rates on GCE A-level courses

- much good teaching

- good individual support for students in GCSE English lessons

- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of students in a minority of lessons.

- insufficient resources for ILT in classrooms.

Scope of provision

100. The curriculum area has 717 full-time students, all but one aged 16 to 18. The largest course is GCSE English, with 205 students. A total of 422 students are enrolled on AS levels or GCE A levels in English language, English language and literature, or English literature. The number of students taking courses in modern foreign languages is smaller. There are 68 students enrolled on French, German and Spanish at AS level or GCE A level. Small numbers of students take courses in business French or business Spanish at entry level or level 2. The college does not offer part-time provision.

Achievement and standards

101. Pass and retention rates are high on GCE A-level courses in English and modern foreign

languages. For example, in German and Spanish, all students passed in 2004 and, in English language and English literature, pass rates were 98% and 96% respectively. In the same year, all students were retained on GCE A-level courses in English language, English language and literature, French, German and Spanish. However, on AS-level courses, retention rates overall were lower and students performed less well. All students on AS-level English literature and AS-level Spanish courses passed. Pass rates in AS-level English language and literature have fallen to below the national average. The pass rate for the large number of students taking English GCSE has improved consistently over the last three years and, in 2004, was above the low national average for this subject. Numbers on this course increased significantly in the same period.

102. The standard of students' written work is high in English. Students acquire and demonstrate good research skills. In the best examples, students show high levels of understanding of language or literature. Useful glossaries of technical terms give students a good specialist vocabulary with which to describe linguistic or literary effects. However, a few essays are poorly argued, with unconvincing or irrelevant points. Language students cope well in conversation with native speakers. For example, in one business Spanish lesson, students skilfully carried out a dialogue about holidays, responding well to questions and appreciating jokes. In AS-level German and Spanish, students demonstrate confidence in speaking and listening.

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	121	132	205
		% retention	78	79	79
		% pass rate	45	48	58
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	63	58	127
		% retention	78	90	92
		% pass rate	98	88	88
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	92	85	90
		% retention	90	93	89
		% pass rate	96	96	100
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	33	24	29
		% retention	73	75	93
		% pass rate	71	72	74
GCE A2 English language	3	No. of starts	35	51	51
		% retention	94	90	100
		% pass rate	100	100	98
GCE A2 English literature	3	No. of starts	38	53	49
		% retention	97	96	94
		% pass rate	97	100	96

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

Quality of education and training

103. Much teaching is good or very good. In the best lessons, teachers use many short focused activities. For example, in a GCSE English lesson, the teacher broke a writing task down into manageable stages, first listing some suitable adjectives to describe a scene, then putting them into suitable sentences of descriptive writing. These lessons have a brisk pace, moving students on from

one activity to another. Lesson planning is good. In the best AS-level and GCE A-level lessons, wider skills are developed as an integral part of the work. Students are challenged to explore ideas for themselves, working together and discussing issues fully. In a GCSE English lesson, students responded well to the need to define abstractions like 'culture' and 'tradition'. Many lessons have an appropriate emphasis on examination requirements. For example, in one English lesson the teacher skilfully explained how students could maximise marks gained. In AS-level German, students practised skills and clearly gained confidence by going methodically through a past examination paper, with the teacher advising them how to tackle each part. English teachers make imaginative use of laptops for short tasks within lessons.

104. In the minority of less successful lessons, teachers do not encourage students to contribute or work collaboratively. These lessons are not well planned and do not cater for the needs of all students. The learning of more able students is not stretched. In a few language lessons, there is insufficient use of the target language.

105. Assessment policies are good, but their application is inconsistent. For example, in English, most teachers give helpful and relevant guidance on how to improve work. However, on some assignments feedback is insufficiently detailed and students are not clear about how to improve. In AS-level Spanish, teachers give substantial written feedback. Assignment briefs are detailed, and students have clear guidance on what is necessary to achieve good grades. Students understand the significance of minimum target grades which tutors set them. They are appreciative of tutors' guidance. Assessments meet awarding body requirements. Teachers often check each other's marking. Homework is set regularly and returned promptly.

106. Support for students is very good. All full-time students receive an initial screening for individual support needs. Where identified, these needs are supported promptly. Individual support in lessons is very effective. Teachers are aware of the individual learning needs of their students. Most personal tutorial records are detailed and students are clear about the steps they need to take to improve. However, in a minority of examples these lack sufficient useful detail. Students value the support given by personal tutors. Many teachers give freely of their time outside of timetabled hours. Academic support is good. Students are aware of the comprehensive support and specialist expertise available within the college. Attendance is monitored effectively and poor punctuality is challenged appropriately.

107. Modern foreign languages is located in temporary accommodation with limited ILT and other teaching facilities. Students have good access to computers within the college and they make good use of the college's virtual learning environment. The library is well stocked with books and periodicals. Staff are well qualified and appropriately experienced. All have a teaching qualification.

Leadership and management

108. Leadership and management are good. Managers and teaching teams have successfully developed action plans to address underperformance of courses over the last three years. Staff work well together and communication is good. Self-assessment reviews are extensive and realistic. They are sufficiently critical and contain clear and realistic targets. There has been successful staff development, especially in teaching and learning. Lesson observations and peer observations are sufficiently critical in their judgements, and good practice is shared. For example, large increases in the numbers of students on GCSE courses have been managed effectively so that students are well supported and pass rates have improved.

Part D: College data

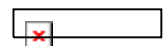


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	6	56
2	19	17
3	74	22
4/5	0	3
Other	1	2
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2004/05

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,015	29	9
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	93	1	1
Business administration, management and professional	819	205	9
Information and communication technology	1,582	317	16
Retailing, customer service and transportation	56	2	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	748	308	9
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	9	0
Health, social care and public services	326	11	3
Visual and performing arts and media	1,076	20	9
Humanities	2,422	43	21
English, languages and communication	2,293	11	20
Foundation programmes	237	25	2
Total	10,667	981	100*

*figures are rounded and do not total 100

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
1	Starters excluding transfers	228	347	357	31	55	544
	Retention rate %	84	82	87	100	95	54
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	92	92	77	61	92	62
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	503	681	777	62	216	61
	Retention rate %	77	81	74	73	73	67
	National average %	80	82	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	83	79	74	89	71	90
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,618	4,240	4,868	119	186	112
	Retention rate %	82	87	88	77	77	73
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	86	85	86	91	67	63
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	1	0	35	9	19	28
	Retention rate %	100	*	89	67	74	82
	National average %	*	*	*	*	*	70
	Pass rate %	100	*	100	50	43	57
	National average %	228	347	357	31	55	544

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 2004.

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)	77	22	1	106
Level 2 (intermediate)	48	40	12	25
Level 1 (foundation)	0	0	0	0
Other sessions	67	17	16	6
Totals	71	25	4	137

© Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced verbatim without adaptation, and the source and date of publication are stated.
 Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

