



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Blackpool Sixth Form College

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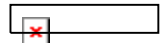
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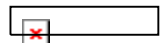
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Basic information about the college

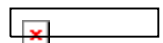


Name of college:	Blackpool Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form
Principal:	Felicity Greeves
Address of college:	Blackpool Old Road Blackpool Lancashire FY3 7LR
Telephone number:	01253 394911
Fax number:	01253 300459
Chair of governors:	The Venerable Colin Williams
Unique reference number:	130744
Name of reporting inspector:	Patrick Geraghty HMI
Dates of inspection:	25-29 April 2005

Part A: Summary



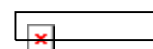
Information about the college



sixth form college to serve the Fylde coast. The college serves an area within a radius of some 20 miles. The local population of 330,000 live either in the denser urban clusters of Blackpool, Lytham St Annes, Thornton, Cleveleys and Fleetwood or in rural towns and villages. Students come predominantly from Blackpool, Poulton and Wyre District, with approximately 46% of students living in Blackpool. The 2004 indices of deprivation show that Blackpool contains areas of significant deprivation, with 40% of the population living in some of the most deprived areas in England. The Blackpool district contains a very low proportion of minority ethnic residents, significantly lower than the Lancashire area and England as a whole: 98.4% of Blackpool residents are classified as white compared to a Lancashire average of 93.4% and a national average of 90.9%. In 2004, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) attainment in Blackpool was significantly below the Lancashire and national average with 36% gaining five or more at grades A* to C. Of the eight mainstream secondary schools seven were below the England average for this indicator. Five of the Blackpool high schools have significantly below average rates of post-16 participation in education and training. Blackpool has 62% of young people aged 16 continuing in full-time education. Post-16 participation remains a significant issue in the Blackpool area.

The college's core activity is the provision of courses and learning opportunities for full-time students aged 16 to 19. Provision for this age group accounts for 99% of all college enrolments, 85% of which are at level 3. Adult provision is part time and accounts for 1% of provision. Courses are offered in 9 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) 14 areas of learning. The largest is humanities which accounts for 38% of all full-time enrolments for students aged 16 to 18; science and mathematics is at 18% and visual and performing arts at 12%. As a result of declining attainment at GCSE in schools in the area, the college is adapting the curriculum to ensure they can cater for a greater number of students needing provision at level 2.

How effective is the college?



The inspection graded the quality of provision in five curriculum areas. Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be good in one and satisfactory in four. There were contributory grades of outstanding for electronics and geography and good for music. The college's main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- good and improving pass rates on many courses

- some excellent specialist facilities

- good support for students

- caring and inclusive environment

- strong governance and strategic vision

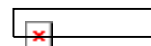
- o outstanding provision in electronics and geography
- o broad enrichment programme.

What should be improved

- o achievements on some courses
- o retention rates on many courses
- o the proportion of very good and outstanding teaching
- o some aspects of quality assurance at curriculum level
- o some cramped accommodation.

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	Good. The contributory grade for electronics is outstanding . There are good pass rates on most courses and outstanding achievements in electronics. Pass rates on GCSE science and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) physics are low and there are

	low retention rates on GCSE and some advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses. There is much good teaching which incorporates good use of information and learning technology (ILT). Management in mathematics is good.
Business and leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high and there is much good teaching on most economics and business courses. Good use is made of ILT to support learning. On several courses, retention rates are low and declining. Some cramped teaching accommodation inhibits teaching and learning. There is insufficient use of external business links on business programmes.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for music is good . There are high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses. On many courses, there are low retention rates or students make insufficient progress. Teaching in music is very good and there is good use of ILT. Outstanding resources in music and dance and stimulating enrichment activities enhance learning significantly. Quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory.
Humanities	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for geography is outstanding . There are high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses and consistently high standards in geography. On some history courses, value added is poor and retention rates are low on several courses. There is a good range of enrichment courses within a developing culture of collaboration and dissemination. Critical analysis of provision in self-assessment is insufficient.
English and modern foreign languages	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on GCE A-level courses. Retention rates on AS-level and GCSE courses are lower, and in some cases significantly lower, than national averages. Some good resources support effective learning. Teaching and learning methods lack enough variety to maintain students' interest.

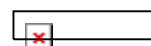
How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has established a strategic agenda for raising standards of achievement for all students. There is a strong ambition to widen participation and to add more applied subjects to the curriculum. Inspectors judged provision to be satisfactory in four curriculum areas and good in one. There is significant variation in the quality of curriculum leadership and management and in student performance. Quality assurance and improvement systems are supported by a well-developed management information system. Communication is effective. There is a strong commitment to equality and diversity and to student support. Governance is strong and a substantial asset to the college. A wide range of staff development opportunities is valued by staff. The college is held in high esteem in the local community where it has established a variety of partnerships and outreach activities. There is effective planning and management of resources. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

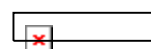
participation, although provision other than at advanced level is still relatively small and underdeveloped. The college has formed good partnerships with a range of local and community organisations. There are particularly good partnerships with local schools that are used to promote participation and to encourage students to progress to further education (FE). There is a wide range of GCE A-level courses in most curriculum areas that meets students' needs. The college has significantly increased participation in education in the local community and recruits many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The college has made a good response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and made appropriate amendments to the equal opportunities policy to meet legal requirements. Progress in implementing the action plan has been good and there are effective procedures for admissions and for ensuring access to facilities and courses. The response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 has been satisfactory. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds in the college is significantly greater than that in the local community. There is good support for students. The promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities is good. Almost all areas of the college have good access for people with restricted mobility.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. Students receive good and impartial information, advice and guidance on entry to the college. Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported in making the transition to college and the additional support they receive with their learning is well managed and effective. Good use is made of information technology (IT) to enhance student monitoring and support. There is good personal and academic support provided through the tutorial system, which includes a well-planned careers education programme and frequent progress reviews. Students make good use of the counselling and other services available to them. Attendance at some tutorials and the quality of target setting in individual learning plans, while improving, show too much variation. The support for young people who are looked after is good and staff are well aware of procedures relating to child protection. The college has well-considered plans to improve the support of students on level 2 courses, including revised initial assessment and tutorial arrangements. There are also plans to address the currently inadequate accommodation for student services in time for the next academic year.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- the caring ethos and sense of student fellowship

- opportunities for enrichment and personal development

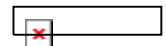
- resources in the library and learning resource centres

- the college's intranet and communication system
- teachers' approachability and subject knowledge.

What they feel could be improved

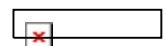
- the availability of car parking spaces
- crowded social spaces
- some unsuitable teaching rooms
- the price of food in the dining area.

Other information

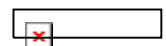


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must 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



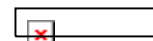
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



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	70	29	1
Learning 16-18	62	36	2

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

Achievement and standards



1. The standards of students' achievements are satisfactory overall, but improving. The majority of students at the college are aged 16 to 18 and enrolled on AS-level, GCE A-level and vocational certificate of education (VCE) courses. Adult numbers now represent only 1% of enrolments.

16 to 18 year olds

2. In 2004, the pass rate on GCE A-level courses was 97% and the overall pass rate for level 3 courses was 88% compared to 83% in 2003. Pass rates for level 3 courses have just been below national averages for the last three years. Pass rates are significantly above national averages in, for example, the following AS-level subjects: biology, chemistry, business, economics, media, geography, and sociology. Some subjects continue to record pass rates below the national average, for example, in GCE A-level physics, and AS-level art. Pass rates and value added are consistently high and above national averages in electronics and geography. At level 2, pass rates in 2004 were significantly above the national average in GCSE mathematics at 76% and GCSE English language at 69%.

3. The college retention rate at level 3 in 2004 was 87%. The retention rate at level 3 was just below national averages in 2003 and 2004. Some areas have impressively improved their retention rates for example, AS-level electronics, and GCE A-level physics, geography and history. However, a significant minority of subjects continue to have retention rates below national averages, for example, in AS-level business studies, economics, law, psychology, English literature and French.

4. The college uses national indicators of value added to assess its own performance. Students make satisfactory progress, regardless of their starting points. The grades students achieve in comparison with grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores are particularly impressive in AS-level electronics, biology, economics, business studies, music technology, geography, religious studies, sociology, English language and Spanish. At GCE A level there are high value added scores in electronics, human biology, economics, art (combined, painting and textiles), ancient history, geography, further mathematics and politics. A significant minority of courses have very low value added scores, for example, in English literature, GCE A-level Spanish, history, physical education, and AS-level art, film studies and media.

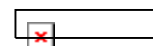
5. Inspectors judged that students' attainment was good or better in 57% of the lessons observed. Students bring a sense of enjoyment and inquisitiveness to their work. When working independently, they demonstrate well-developed research skills. In science, students make good progress in lessons, produce work of high quality and demonstrate good analytical skills. The standard of student practical work is good in art and music. In humanities, students acquire new knowledge to a good standard and are provided with opportunities to improve investigative, analytical and evaluative skills. Essays contain well-reasoned arguments and coursework is methodically organised. In AS-level and GCE A-level English language, students are encouraged to use linguistic terminology and do so with increasing confidence.

6. Attendance during the inspection was 85% which is similar to the national average for sixth form colleges. It was highest in science and mathematics at 88% and lowest in English and modern foreign languages at 83%.

Adult learners

7. There were 68 enrolments of adult students in 2004, the majority on level 3 courses. At this level, pass rates were satisfactory, but retention rates were below the national average.

Quality of education and training



8. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 69 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 70% of these, satisfactory in 29% and unsatisfactory in 1%. Teaching was very good or better in 24% of lessons observed. Learning was good or better in 62% of lessons observed, satisfactory in 36% and unsatisfactory in 2%.

9. The better lessons are characterised by thorough preparation with a wide range of teaching strategies used. Learning materials are well prepared. Lessons are planned to enable students of differing abilities and learning styles to develop their skills. Varied activities include verbal exposition, questioning, pair work and group activities which effectively engage and stimulate students in their learning. Teachers make effective use of questioning to confirm student understanding, set further challenges, establish appropriate extension tasks, and ensure that resources suit the learning objectives. There is good rapport between staff and students. Students are well prepared for external examinations through the regular use of testing and practise examination questions. Good use is made of ILT to support learning. There is particularly effective use of ILT in science and mathematics, business and visual and performing arts. In science and business, there is good use of e-learning.

10. Lessons graded satisfactory are distinguished from the good and better by a lack of student involvement and appropriate pace. Few checks on learning take place and lessons are too teacher centred. Group work is less skilfully organised. Students are not challenged to evaluate and develop their ideas and teachers are less critical of the standard of work produced. ILT is not sufficiently embedded into teaching and learning. There is insufficient reference to extended reading and visual stimulus. In some lessons, lateness disrupts teaching and learning.

11. Staff are well qualified and have good specialist knowledge. Some 95% of teachers are graduates and 96% of full-time teachers hold teaching qualifications. As part of a comprehensive induction, new staff are helped by a mentor and receive frequent performance reviews with their line manager. The well-established annual appraisal system includes an assessment of training needs. Staff development is well managed and has focused effectively on building IT skills and developing the curriculum and student support.

12. The college has a well-managed programme of accommodation improvement. All parts of the college are accessible to people with mobility difficulties, although access to the main social areas requires students in wheelchairs to take an outside route to avoid stairs. Teaching accommodation is adequate overall, although there are some excellent specialist facilities, for example, in music and dance. Some classrooms are too small for the number of students that occupy them, limiting the range of teaching methods. The college has good sport facilities which include a sports hall and gymnasium. Staff and students work in a safe and clean environment. The well-used learning resource centres and library are spacious, well equipped, effectively managed and provide a pleasant working environment. Effective support is available in these centres for students who require help. Significant external funding has enabled the college to have a ratio of computers to students of 1:5. All staff have laptop computers. There is very good use made of the college's IT resources and services by students and staff.

13. The suitability and rigour of assessment are good. All students are screened on entry using a variety of assessments, the results of which inform students' additional support. Teachers are well aware of the learning needs of individuals in their classes and of how they can help students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. On entry to the college, students are allocated target minimum grades which are regarded as a baseline that they are expected to rise above. Students gain a clear view of their progress in termly reviews against these targets. Parents receive frequent information about students' progress and attendance. Students' progress is assessed regularly and frequently both in class and through their work outside lessons. Marking of students' coursework is carried out to awarding body standards. Individual curriculum areas have developed their own assessment policies. In electronics, the assessment of students' work is outstanding and motivates students to do well. Using a computer-based system students enter their assessed work from college or home and receive immediate feedback. Currently there is no routine assessment of all students' key skills levels. As part of the college's Skills for Life strategy planned for September 2005, initial assessment processes have been appropriately revised, and will include an assessment of students' preferred learning styles.

14. The college provides an extensive range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Timetabling of the curriculum allows for students to study combinations of subjects that meet their needs and interests. Curriculum areas are gradually introducing elements of vocational study into the curriculum in response to requests from partner high schools and to the local LSC review of provision. The programme of study at level 2 is being expanded to widen participation and provide a curriculum more suited to the needs of students studying at this level. There is a small adult provision.

15. The wide range of well-attended enrichment activities significantly enhances students' motivation and experience. Over 40 sports teams and activity clubs provide competitive and recreational activity at convenient times. Large numbers of students are involved in the community service project in a range of community settings. There is good subject-specific enrichment including visits, presentations, competitions and field trips that stimulate interest and learning.

16. The college is implementing its Skills for Life strategy to ensure that all students develop their literacy, numeracy and IT competence to level 2. Pass rates on level 3 key skills are low. Although students are timetabled for support for developing level 3 key skills, few students complete their portfolios or the external tests. There are some links with industry and employers, mainly providing visits and careers information. Involvement with employers to meet more appropriately the needs of industry is still in the early stages of development. Work experience is only taken up by very small numbers. There are well-established, effective links with partner schools, although the college does not currently provide programmes for school pupils aged 14 to 16.

17. The quality of information, advice and guidance for students is good. The college's liaison team works closely with partner high schools to provide the impartial information that school pupils require to make choices about FE. Visits to college enable young people to experience the college ethos and to take part in lessons, including in unfamiliar subjects. The college organises a guidance service following GCSE results, individual and small group interviews and subject specialist advice on enrolment. The recently appointed progression mentor works with school pupils who may find the progression to FE or training difficult. Promotional leaflets and the prospectus encourage applications from young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. During the five-week induction period, students focus appropriately on time management and organisational skills.

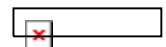
18. Careers education and guidance is effectively integrated into the tutorial programme. Information on higher education (HE) and employment is widely available on the college's intranet. A good range of career events take place, including presentations by local employers and universities. There is good support for those preparing applications to HE. The proportion of students applying to and gaining places on HE courses is rising. Support for those entering employment is improving. Job seekers are supported through the use of career workbooks. All students can have an interview with a Connexions personal advisor on request, and interviews are routinely arranged for those considering employment. Students on level 2 courses follow a careers programme designed for their particular needs, although many do not progress to FE at the college.

19. The provision of additional support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well

managed and effective. The impact of such support is monitored closely. Learning support staff work well as a team and between them have a wide range of specialist expertise. Support for students with limited mobility, sensory impairments, English as an additional language and dyslexia has enabled them to participate fully in college life and to progress successfully to FE and HE. Additional learning support needs are identified through a number of processes including: the pre-entry application form; self-referral; general and subject-specific screening during induction; and referral by tutors. The college provides for a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities, although approximately one in five students at level 2 who had been identified as requiring support with their learning chose to decline it this year.

20. Students have good access to relevant, effective support on personal issues. There is a good range of welfare services, and students are making increasing use of the counselling and chaplaincy services. The college has made significant improvements to the tutorial system since the previous inspection, with a strong emphasis on individual tutorials. There are frequent reviews of progress, although there are examples of ineffective target setting and follow-up in individual learning plans. Attendance at tutorials overall is satisfactory, but there is too much variation in attendance rates. In 2003, the college successfully introduced electronic registration enabling better monitoring of attendance and punctuality. The college has well-considered plans for introducing revised arrangements for the support of level 2 students in September 2005. The college's child protection arrangements are effective. Staff are well aware of the procedures for referral of issues raised by students. The college has responded very well to the needs of young people in public care. There are good plans to address the deficiencies in the management structure and accommodation for student services, which currently inhibit further integration of services.

Leadership and management



21. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection in 1998, the number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 has increased by 25% and the pass rate on GCE A-level courses has risen to 97%. There is greater awareness of the importance of good leadership, management, teamwork and quality assurance processes. The college has maintained strong financial management while investing in new buildings. Governors, staff and students enjoy their membership of the college. The college has a good reputation in the community which it serves. The college's self-assessment report rightly acknowledges that retention rates and some aspects of curriculum management remain areas of concern. Although success rates have improved significantly in recent years, in 2004 they were below the national average.

22. The recently appointed principal has established a clear strategic and operational agenda for raising standards and this is beginning to have an impact on management structures and student performance. The principal has high aspirations for the college. Senior management promote an open style of leadership in which teamwork is given high priority. There is a clear structure of line management and accountability and developing roles for middle management. Communication within the college is effective. Staff and students are well informed through a comprehensive intranet and communications system, and through staff bulletins and monthly briefings. There are many committees and panels, including a management forum, to which staff and students contribute effectively.

23. The college has recently reviewed its mission which emphasises the pursuit of excellence and lifelong skills in a supportive environment. A caring ethos and the needs of students are at the heart of the college's endeavours. The three-year strategic development plan and the strategic aims and objectives for 2004/05 were conceived following wide consultation, including with external stakeholders. The aims and objectives, which are subject to half-yearly monitoring reviews, are succinctly expressed and there is a strong sense of ownership by governors and staff. Key strategic aims are equality and diversity, the enhancement of standards, widening participation, curricular breadth and the professional development of staff.

24. Inspectors judged that provision is satisfactory in four curriculum areas and good in one, with leadership and management in one curriculum area being unsatisfactory. Some examination results and value added outcomes are good. However, there is not enough consistency of performance and there are significant examples of poor retention rates and low value added outcomes. During the past year, the college has developed a rigorous system of lesson observations. There is good use of ILT in teaching, but the college recognises that in order to increase further the proportion of good or better teaching, in some areas classroom practice will need to become more imaginative and diverse. Staff are aware of the importance of sharing good practice. In this context, the evolution of curriculum areas which include a cluster of subjects is an important development.

25. The college has a well-developed management information system which is used extensively to gather and disseminate performance data. The college has identified the specific data required in respect of each of the college's four strategic aims. Throughout their time in the college, an electronic file for individual students is maintained to which staff add a comprehensive range of performance data. The importance of leadership and management of the curriculum is well recognised, although there remain significant variations and inconsistencies in the quality of implementation. Curriculum areas present their annual self-assessment report to a panel which includes an external advisor. Such reports are variable in quality. The college has recognised that its method of calculating students' pass rates for these reports was not rigorous enough, and has now introduced a more suitable method. Action plans, including targets, are produced for the succeeding year, which are reviewed each half-year with the principal and the deputy principal.

26. Strong commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in the college's priorities and in the principal's chairing of the Equality and Diversity Committee whose membership includes governor and student representation. All departments use equality and diversity impact measures and are aware of the importance of performance indicators for students living in disadvantaged areas. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than in the local community. Students show awareness of equality and diversity issues. Some take part in a 'Levellers Group' which takes a specific interest in this area and organises events to raise students' awareness. The college has responded effectively to the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and to SENDA legislation. The college's disability statement is published in an easily accessible pamphlet. Complaints are systematically recorded and acted upon.

27. Governance of the college is strong. The concerns identified at the 1998 inspection have been effectively addressed. Members of the corporation bring a wide range of skills and experience to their responsibilities. They are well informed about the performance of the college and play a significant leadership role in the college's strategic planning and in the monitoring of aims, objectives and risk management. While supportive of management, they hold the principal and other managers accountable and expect underperformance to be addressed effectively. There is strong commitment to addressing equality and diversity issues. The working of the committee structure ensures effective strategic debate and consideration of performance, the latter being considered initially by the strategic planning and standards committee. Governors monitor their own performance conscientiously. They undertake regular training and induction arrangements for new governors are effective.

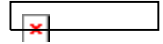
28. Staff participate well in the wide range of staff development opportunities, which reflect college priorities and address issues identified through quality assurance processes. A large number of staff benefit from professional training away from the college site. There is a strong emphasis on leadership and management skills for middle managers. Staff appraisal is effective in identifying development needs. The college recently achieved Investor in People status.

29. The college is held in high esteem in the local community where it has established a variety of partnerships and outreach activities. Stakeholders are appreciative of the quality of the student experience and welcome its strong commitment to widening participation and increased curricular diversity. The college is an active member of the Federation of Blackpool Schools and Colleges and is involved in an Aimhigher project with the University of Central Lancashire.

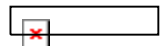
30. There is effective financial planning and management of resources. The college has held the LSC's strongest financial category for a number of years and consistently provides the local LSC

with timely and accurate data returns. Resource allocation is based appropriately on a mixture of formula and bidding. In recent years, there has been significant investment in some excellent new buildings without the need to borrow capital funding. Further developments are planned. Overall, the college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**
The contributory grade for electronics is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses at AS level and GCE A level, and GCSE mathematics

- outstanding provision in electronics

- much good teaching

- good use of ILT in teaching and learning

- well co-ordinated management of mathematics.

Weaknesses

- low and often declining retention rates on GCSE and some AS-level courses

- low pass rates on GCSE science and GCE A-level physics courses.

Scope of provision

31. There are approximately 950 students on science and mathematics courses, with the majority studying at advanced level. AS levels and GCE A levels are offered in biology, chemistry, physics, electronics, human biology, mathematics and further mathematics. GCSE courses are available in mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

32. Pass rates are high on most AS-level and GCE A-level courses. In 2004, pass rates were above national averages on AS-level biology, chemistry, mathematics and human biology courses. On GCE A-level courses, pass rates were high with several subjects achieving 100%. In addition, the GCSE mathematics pass rate was well above the national average. Higher-grade pass rates are at or above the national average. For most advanced level courses, students perform at or above the level expected based on their entry qualifications.

33. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level electronics are outstanding and have been well above national averages for the past three years. The proportion of students achieving high grades is excellent, with 68% for AS level and 88% for GCE A level achieving grades A or B in 2004. In physics, there have been low pass rates on both AS-level and GCE A-level courses for the past two years. Pass rates have also been consistently low in GCSE science, at 34% in 2004.

34. In 2004, the retention rate was low on AS-level biology, chemistry, physics and human biology courses. Retention rates have remained low and declining in several subjects. Retention rates on GCSE mathematics and science courses are poor with only 73% of students completing in 2004.

35. Students make good progress in lessons and the work produced is of high quality. At advanced level, they use technical terms appropriately. Across science subjects, their practical skills are good. The number of students who progress to HE in related courses is good.

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	118	150	157
		% retention	76	81	73
		% pass rate	48	43	76
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	147	170
		% retention	*	89	91
		% pass rate	*	76	86
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	61	95
		% retention	*	87	87
		% pass rate	*	77	96
AS-level electronics	3	No. of starts	*	41	48
		% retention	*	83	90
		% pass rate	*	97	98
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	*	148	127
		% retention	*	82	80
		% pass rate	*	80	90

GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	41	34	26
		% retention	98	97	100
		% pass rate	98	88	88
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	46	38	44
		% retention	93	97	97
		% pass rate	88	100	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

36. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are carefully planned, with a wide range of teaching methods used. For example, in one lesson, the teacher explained the production of the action potential in the nervous system through a mixture of media clips on the interactive whiteboard. This was developed further through students producing a Mexican wave to demonstrate the direction and production of the potential. Students then worked on gapped handouts before answering examination questions on the topic. The lesson concluded with a quick check on what each student had learned. In an electronics lesson, students investigated the use of a transistor as a switch. All students worked confidently on either simulation activities or prototype circuit building. Students have their own toolbox of equipment for building and designing circuits both in and out of lessons. The extensive resources used were of excellent quality and enabled effective learning. In weaker lessons, few checks on learning take place and are overly dominated by the teacher. In all practical lessons, students work with due regard for health and safety.

37. The staff in science and mathematics are experienced and well qualified. Technical support is good. Accommodation is adequate, but mathematics rooms are too small for the number of students using them and laboratory facilities are in need of refurbishment. The use of ILT within teaching and learning is good, with students having access to a wide range of resources through the college intranet. Each subject has a full range of resources available, including teaching materials, teacher-produced video files, online tests and discussion boards. These are used extensively by students and teachers both in and out of lessons. The increased use of ILT within science and mathematics teaching has improved through the work of three ILT champions within the area. In many lessons, high-quality teaching resources are used. In electronics, these are being developed and piloted in conjunction with the awarding body and a supporting company.

38. Assessment is effective in science and mathematics. Teachers use value added data with students to monitor their performance and review progress. Within electronics, there is an excellent online system of assessment that requires students to undertake regular tests and submit these to the teacher. These are used to monitor performance and understanding and quickly identify specific areas for improvement. All coursework meets awarding body requirements in full. Homework is set on a regular basis; marking and commentary are effective. There is regular use of testing taking place within lessons and frequent use of examination material.

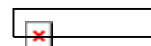
39. There are strong working relationships between staff and students, with students well prepared for progression on to university. Additional support is provided in all subjects. There are drop-in workshops available at lunchtimes, timetabled revision sessions, and GCE AS-level mathematics students who achieved grade C at GCSE mathematics have an extra weekly lesson to support them. Students value the informal support given to them by their teachers.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and good in mathematics where the provision is co-ordinated effectively and there is clear direction. Separate heads of department manage the science provision. There is too much variation between science departments in the

application of quality assurance processes and not enough opportunity to discuss common issues such as curriculum development. Within each department, there is good teamwork, with effective sharing of resources and good practice. Regular, minuted meetings take place, but responsibility or timescales for actions are not always clear. Some action plans within science are weak and do not sufficiently address identified weaknesses. For example, the low retention rate on level 2 courses has not improved significantly. Equality of opportunity is good, with teachers aware of individual students' needs.

Business and leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most economics and business courses
- much good teaching on economics and business courses
- good use of ILT to support learning.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates on several courses
- insufficient use of external business links on business programmes
- some cramped teaching accommodation.

Scope of provision

41. The curriculum area offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in business studies, economics and law and GCE A-level accounting. In addition, there are GCSE courses in business studies and travel and tourism and adult education evening courses in law and book-keeping. There are currently 392 students studying AS-level and GCE A-level programmes, 53 following GCSE programmes and 35 adult education students.

Achievement and standards

42. There were high pass rates on most courses in 2004. On GCE A-level business studies and economics courses, the pass rate was 100%. Pass rates on all AS-level courses were above the national average in the same year. Passes at high grades were significantly above the national average on GCE A-level economics, AS-level economics and AS-level business studies courses in 2003 and 2004. There has been good achievement in relation to prior learning on AS-level and GCE A-level economics and business studies courses in the last three years.

43. There are low and declining retention rates on several business courses. The retention rates on all AS-level courses and GCSE business studies were significantly below national averages in 2004 and showed a declining trend from 2003. There has been no improvement in retention rates on most AS-level courses this year.

44. The standard of work produced by students is good and most students attain their learning goals in lessons. Business and economics students are developing the ability to analyse data and show good understanding of business concepts and terminology.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	*	83	121
		% retention	*	94	83
		% pass rate	*	96	97
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	*	47	57
		% retention	*	87	77
		% pass rate	*	100	98
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	*	101	117
		% retention	*	87	75
		% pass rate	*	92	99
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	36	58	55
		% retention	94	91	93
		% pass rate	94	98	100
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	21	14	30
		% retention	95	100	97
		% pass rate	95	86	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

45. There is much good teaching on economics and business studies courses. Lessons are planned carefully and relate to clear schemes of work. Lesson plans include references to provision for students of different abilities, although the extent to which lessons take account of these factors is not consistently good. In the best lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to confirm that students understand. They make good use of computer presentations with supporting high-quality materials that contain topical materials. Varied activities including exposition, questioning, and group activities effectively engage and stimulate students. In some lessons, students are too passive or the pace is too slow. There is poor punctuality in some lessons and in some instances the teacher does not adequately challenge this.

46. There is good use of ILT to support learning. Teachers make effective use of ILT in economics and business lessons to explain concepts and enrich the students' learning experience. Both teachers and students make effective use of the college's intranet. Teachers make available learning materials that students can access remotely and coursework is both set and submitted through this medium. There is insufficient use of external business links on business programmes and contacts with local businesses are insufficiently developed. There is no work experience programme and students do not benefit from this opportunity to experience current business practice and awareness of the commercial world. In lessons, little use is made of students' part-time work experience to develop their understanding of the business curriculum.

47. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and regularly attend subject-related training events. All have teaching qualifications and some have relevant industrial experience. There are relevant and imaginative wall displays in base rooms and corridors. Some business accommodation is cramped and inadequate for larger classes, limiting the range of methods that teachers can use. Library resources are satisfactory and additional resources are held in base rooms. Teachers produce high-quality, relevant and topical learning materials which reinforce learning effectively. Open access ILT resources are good and students make good use of these for research.

48. There is a departmental assessment policy and assessment is planned so as not to overburden students. Homework is set regularly and marked promptly. In most cases it is returned with clear and constructive comments which are valued by students, but in some instances written feedback is not enough to give students a clear idea of their progress. The links between the curriculum and the development of key skills are inadequate. There is little reference to key skills in schemes of work and lesson plans and students have little awareness of them.

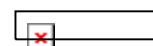
49. There is a good range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses, but no full-time vocational provision at either level 2 or level 3. At level 2, students can follow GCSE courses in business studies or travel and tourism, but currently do not have the opportunity to follow a vocational route with the potential to progress further. There are plans to address this for the intake in September 2005. Similarly, at level 3, students' choice is currently confined to the academic pathway.

50. Academic and pastoral support for students are good. There is strong subject support for students. Teachers make particular efforts to give individual support to students, both in and out of lessons. Targets for improvement are set and regularly reviewed. Additional support is provided for students both inside and outside of lessons and there is good co-operation between teaching staff and learning support staff. Attendance and progress are carefully monitored in lessons and underperformance against predicted targets is acted on swiftly.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is a strong culture of collaboration. Communications are good. Both the curriculum manager and the teaching team have high aspirations and demonstrate strong commitment to raising standards. Regular curriculum area and departmental meetings are held which are minuted and lead to the production of realistic and developmental action plans. Course reviews in business studies and economics are both detailed and evaluative. Students' views on the quality of their experience are systematically collected and inform course planning. The self-assessment report was comprehensive, realistic and identified most of the strengths of the provision but underestimated some of the weaknesses. The area's action plan to improve retention rates in 2004/05 has not had any significant impact.

Visual and performing arts and media



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**
The contributory grade for music is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses in most subjects
- very good teaching in music
- good use of ILT to support learning
- outstanding resources in music and dance
- stimulating enrichment activities enhancing learning.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on several courses
- insufficient progress made by many students
- ineffective quality assurance.

Scope of provision

52. The area offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art, graphics, textiles, dance, theatre studies, film studies, media studies, music and music technology. There is a small amount of level 2 provision in GCSE media studies. At the time of the inspection, 762 students were enrolled on courses across the curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

53. There are high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses, with 100% achievement in all subjects except art. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level art courses are significantly below the national averages. In the majority of subjects, value added scores declined in 2004, and some were low. There are low retention rates on several courses, particularly GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level media, and AS-level film and theatre studies. The standard of students' practical work is good in art and music although some performance skills have yet to be more developed. Several students successfully progress to prestigious national HE institutions. Attendance is generally good, but in some lessons there is poor punctuality.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art	3	No. of starts	*	115	119
		% retention	*	83	83
		% pass rate	*	59	71
AS-level media	3	No. of starts	*	102	130
		% retention	*	89	85
		% pass rate	*	89	100
AS-level theatre studies	3	No. of starts	*	47	65
		% retention	*	91	91
		% pass rate	*	95	86
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	66	71	75
		% retention	89	93	91
		% pass rate	93	92	81
GCE A-level theatre studies	3	No. of starts	30	27	35
		% retention	90	96	94
		% pass rate	96	100	100
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	149	70	63
		% retention	94	97	87
		% pass rate	97	100	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching is good in most subjects. All teachers demonstrate a very good command of their subject. In many lessons, teachers make particularly effective use of ILT to support their teaching and enhance the students' learning. In one media lesson good use was made of powerpoint presentations with helpful accompanying hand-outs that students were able to annotate as the lesson progressed. Many teachers use methods to ensure that students take part. In film studies, the teacher deliberately interrupted the narrative of James Cameron's *Aliens* to ensure that students were noting the pertinent technical aspects that they were required to analyse. Students are expected to work collaboratively and be responsible for their own learning and that of their peers. Teaching in music is particularly good where many demands are made of students who respond with concentration and enjoyment. They are able to apply good specialist knowledge and vocabulary. In one life drawing lesson, students demonstrated appropriate maturity and worked with focus. In weaker lessons, teachers do not have expectations which are high enough and some students do not make sufficient progress.

55. The new resources for music and dance are outstanding. The main recital area is of high quality and acoustically perfect. Students have access to a wide range of instruments and industry-standard ILT equipment. The dance studio is well equipped with a long mirrored wall, integral sound system and sprung floor. Some rooms in media and art are cramped, but all have visually stimulating displays and are well maintained. Teachers are well qualified and most have appropriate teaching qualifications and those that do not are currently acquiring them. Many of the art staff are current practitioners. Students have ready access to a wide range of equipment and technical facilities. The learning resource centre is well stocked with relevant publications, films and ILT for drop-in use and

the layout of the furniture encourages group project work.

56. Assessment methods and standards are good. Students' practical work both in class and in coursework is mostly of a high standard. In academic tutorials, students' progress against target grades is monitored using well-designed review and guidance sheets. External examiners confirm that grading is accurate and that the awarding bodies' requirements are met. Work is marked quickly and returned with helpful advice on how to improve. Students know what is required of them in order to improve.

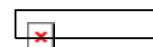
57. The range of provision is satisfactory. Though confined to academic pathways, the range of subjects available at AS level and GCE A level is appropriate to meet student demand. Enrichment activities are excellent. Extensive and stimulating trips to galleries take place and the value of the visits is reflected in the work of students. Residential trips to London and New York for music students are organised regularly. Textile students visit exhibitions in Harrogate and media/film students are taken to recordings at Granada studios and specialist film screenings. Though only recently appointed, the theatre studies staff regularly arrange theatre visits both locally and further a field. Current practitioners in art and design are regularly invited to talk to students.

58. Support for students is good. Students value the efforts made on their behalf by their tutors. Individual learning needs are identified on entry and appropriate support offered, although students do not always take it up. Most teachers recognise individual learning styles and integrate these into lesson plans. There are regular reviews and students are kept informed of their progress. Parents' evenings and written reports underpin support. Students confirm that advice and guidance for progression to HE are very good. Absence is electronically recorded and used to inform appropriate support.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Managers are able and gifted teachers, but some are uncertain about their additional responsibilities and they are not assisted by having a significant teaching and extra curricular commitment. There is insufficient consistency of standards in teaching and learning within the curriculum area and good practice is not always being shared. The implementation of quality assurance procedures lacks co-ordination across the area. The internal lesson observations are insufficiently rigorous and do not reflect judgements made by inspectors. Self-assessment is lacking in the critical analysis of provision.

Humanities



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**
The contributory grade for geography is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high achievement levels on most GCE A-level courses

- consistently high standards in geography

- well-equipped accommodation which promotes good teaching and learning

- extensive range of curriculum-related enrichment activity

- a culture of collaboration and dissemination of good practice.

Weaknesses

- achievement on some history courses below predictions based on prior qualifications

- low retention rates on several courses

- inadequate reference to the development of learning skills in lesson planning and schemes of work

- insufficient critical analysis of provision in self-assessment.

Scope of provision

60. The humanities area offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in ancient history, geography, history, politics, psychology, religious studies and sociology. There are part-time GCE courses for adults in psychology and sociology. GCSE courses are provided in geography, sociology and social sciences. Psychology and sociology account for half of the students in this curriculum area. At the time of inspection, there were approximately 850 students.

Achievement and standards

61. Over the past three years, most pass rates have been at or above national averages. On GCE A level courses, excellent results have been maintained in most subjects. In 2004, in psychology and history, the pass rates and the rate of students achieving high grades fell to well below national averages. On AS-level courses, most pass rates over the past two years were above the national average. In 2004, students in history and ancient history achieved less well and the rate of high-grade pass rates in these subjects was well below the national average. There are good and improving trends on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in sociology and religious studies. Consistently outstanding standards are reached in geography on all courses. Pass rates and high grade rates are significantly higher than the national average and students achieve well above their predicted grades.

62. The retention rate of students on most GCE A-level humanities courses is high, but below the national average in psychology and sociology. On AS-level courses, retention rates in 2004 fell below the figures for 2003 in all but history. In psychology, only two thirds of those starting the course completed it.

63. Students acquire new knowledge to a good standard. Students are provided with opportunities to improve investigative, analytical and evaluative skills. Oral communication skills are less well developed. Some students have difficulty with technical terminology. Students' written work is generally good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE geography	2	No. of starts	17	23	19
		% retention	71	83	79
		% pass rate	33	63	73
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	*	49	67
		% retention	*	69	67
		% pass rate	*	88	89
AS-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	*	42	45
		% retention	*	93	84
		% pass rate	*	90	97
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	*	100	173
		% retention	*	86	82
		% pass rate	*	94	96
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	64	59	44
		% retention	98	98	100
		% pass rate	100	97	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	30	21	32
		% retention	100	95	100
		% pass rate	83	100	97
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	58	62	72
		% retention	90	94	92
		% pass rate	92	91	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

64. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons have clear objectives and are managed efficiently. In most lessons, students advance their ability to investigate, evaluate and analyse information. In geography, where students have access to a good variety of source material, there is evidence of cross referencing. This was effective in a lesson in which students investigated the impact of foreign investment in United Kingdom industries. Previous learning is consolidated and subject matter is well covered. Students work hard and maintain a good level of interest. Adult students on a fast-track GCE A-level sociology course were well motivated and acquired good understanding of Becker's theory on deviancy. In a very diverse GCSE geography group which contained a significant number of students with learning difficulties, very effective strategies were employed to sustain interest. This included intensive one-to-one guidance. Good use is made of ILT to support learning in geography and the social sciences. In sociology, for example, good use of a film extract on deviancy using the interactive whiteboard was very effective.

65. In the weaker lessons, there is too much reliance on teacher input. Group and paired work is not always effective. The development of learning skills is rarely identified as an intended outcome in lesson plans. Questioning exercises are frequently used to check understanding, but rarely promote dialogue between students or probe deeply enough. There is insufficient reference to extended reading and visual stimulus. Development of students' communication skills is inconsistent.

66. Resources to support teaching and learning are of a very good standard. Well-qualified staff are deployed effectively. There is a dedicated block of new rooms with work areas and meeting rooms. Flexible seating arrangements provide opportunities for different teaching and learning methodologies. There are stimulating wall displays of students' work and visual stimulus material to reinforce learning. Good links are maintained with the learning resources centre. Paper-based resources such as student workbooks are well produced.

67. Students' progress is assessed and monitored methodically. Targets, based on initial assessments and predictions from prior qualifications, are used to measure progress. As a result of student reviews, individual learning plans are agreed. Subject tutorials are timetabled to bolster student progress. Regular assignments are set and marked using examination board criteria. Feedback on marked work varies in quality. Grades for work are carefully recorded against minimum target grades and effectively integrated into monitoring and assessment activity. Preparation for examinations is thorough.

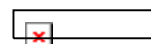
68. There is a good range of AS-level and GCE A-level provision for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Numbers on AS-level courses have increased over the past three years. At GCSE, provision is shrinking. Over the past three years, only geography has sustained provision with any success. In recent years, there has been an extensive range of curriculum-related activity which has enriched the learning experience in geography, politics, sociology and psychology.

69. There is a culture of care and support throughout the curriculum area. Timetabled lunchtime subject tutorials are available on a voluntary basis. Attempts are made to identify students who are underperforming and these are encouraged to attend. In addition, teachers respond to students' individual learning needs on demand. Staff keep each other informed about students at risk through the college's messaging system. Students comment favourably on the scope of electronic-based help and guidance to supplement this provision.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is increasing collaboration between subject leaders and best practices are discussed and disseminated. Open styles of management have produced a good ethos. All staff are part of the decision-making process and are aware of college policies. Leadership in geography is very effective. In psychology, fresh initiatives are leading to improvements in retention rates. The implementation of quality assurance procedures is inconsistent across subjects. For example, assessment policies vary between subjects. Critical analysis of provision is inadequate and some judgements lack appropriate evidence.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- good resources supporting effective learning.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AS-level and GCSE courses
- teaching and learning methods lacking sufficient variety.

Scope of provision

71. The English department offers GCSE English, AS-level and GCE A-level English language and AS-level and GCE A-level English literature. The modern foreign languages department offers French and German at AS level and GCE A level, and Spanish at GCSE, AS level and GCE A level. There is a small provision, currently of 86 enrolments, of preliminary and foundation courses available in the evenings in each of the languages. Total enrolments in this area at the time of the inspection were 777.

Achievement and standards

72. Pass rates in English language and literature and modern foreign languages on GCE A-level courses are generally high, and pass rates on AS-level English literature are mostly at the national average. GCSE English pass rates at A* to C are improving and were significantly above national averages in 2004. Students taking GCE A-level English language achieved well in 2002 to 2004, as did those taking GCE A-level Spanish in 2002 and 2003. By contrast, the achievement of students on AS-level and GCE A-level English literature courses is significantly lower than would have been expected when compared to their results at GCSE. Retention rates on most AS-level courses are lower than national averages.

73. The standard of achievement in lessons is satisfactory or better. Most students approach their learning seriously. In AS-level and GCE A-level English language, students are encouraged to use linguistic terminology and do so with increasing confidence. In modern foreign languages at level 3, students develop their grammar skills and vocabulary effectively. Independent critical writing is underdeveloped.

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 language	2	No. of starts	96	90	116
		% retention	78	73	73
		% pass rate	51	53	69
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	*	113	120
		% retention	*	90	79
		% pass rate	*	92	98
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	*	34	41
		% retention	*	82	73

		% pass rate	*	96	87
AS-level German	3	No. of starts	*	18	27
		% retention	*	89	85
		% pass rate	*	88	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	82	101	106
		% retention	100	98	88
		% pass rate	100	99	96
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	66	94	65
		% retention	94	96	95
		% pass rate	98	99	97
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	23	24	18
		% retention	100	88	94
		% pass rate	100	100	94

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

74. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory or better. The most successful lessons are those with a significant amount of planned student activity. In one AS-level French lesson, students had been learning media vocabulary. One student took the role of journalist asking the questions whilst the other answered. The teacher was able to assess students' learning of the vocabulary and the students were able to use new vocabulary in their responses, and gain a sense of success from being able to reply fluently to the questions. Learning is best when teachers use group work to allow students to share and test ideas and there are clear benefits for students' enjoyment, confidence and articulation. Staff have created some excellent resources for use by students studying English language at AS level and GCE A level.

75. In the weaker lessons, teaching is overly directed by the teacher. Students do not take a full part in tasks. Plenary sessions tend to be slowly paced and repetitive. ILT is not used in the classroom to support teaching in either English or modern foreign language sessions. Teachers too often slow the pace of learning by laboriously writing material on the whiteboard which could have been previously prepared.

76. Staff are well qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. Many staff have additional experience as examiners. Accommodation is satisfactory and there are extensive displays of students' work in classrooms and the corridors close by. The library facilities are good and there is a close relationship between the departments and the library to decide on the acquisition and deletion of stock. Modern foreign language students make effective use of the listening exercises that are available on the college's intranet.

77. Written work is marked accurately in accordance with examination board criteria. Comments on written work are copious and direct the students effectively to areas that need development. The assessment of learning within lessons is more variable. Staff respond intuitively to their perceptions of the needs of individuals and classes, but there is insufficient documenting of how learning needs will be met.

78. Academic tutorials are provided to support students who are having problems with written work and for specific texts in literature, or units in language. Use made of subject tutorials is inconsistent; one timetabled session had been used by only one student in a term. In modern foreign languages, students are directed to attend some sessions. One tutorial session is devoted to coaching gifted

students. Generally, students appreciate the support they receive outside the classroom. Students particularly value help they get with their coursework.

79. There are developing links between the modern foreign language department and local schools. The head of department has joined a teachers' panel working with languages staff from local schools, and others are involved in initiatives to encourage Year 9 students to opt for languages at GCSE. Departments offer subject enrichments, including a debating society and work experience abroad, some film trips and visits to conferences.

Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been a focus on improving retention rates across the department, although with only limited effectiveness on AS-level courses. Low attendance rates remain an issue within this area. Team working is a strength of the departments, and there is a good working atmosphere between staff and managers. Moderation of coursework and oral work is effectively managed in both areas. There is more collaborative working within the departments. Communications are effective.

Part D: College data

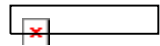
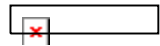


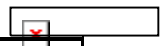
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2004/05



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	0
2	8	0
3	92	100
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2005

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



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,128	0	16
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0

Engineering, technology and manufacture	227	0	3
Business administration, management and professional	321	0	5
Information and communication technology	763	0	11
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	229	0	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	47	0	1
Visual and performing arts and media	762	0	11
Humanities	2,366	68	35
English, languages and communication	1,027	0	15
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Total	6,870	68	100

Source: provided by the college in 2005

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
1	Starters excluding transfers	82	27	15	94	62	**
	Retention rate %	59	67	53	63	73	**
	National average %	75	83	*	72	73	*
	Pass rate %	96	83	33	51	58	**
	National average %	75	72	*	73	75	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	507	529	556	41	106	**
	Retention rate %	75	78	70	59	57	**
	National average %	81	81	*	70	69	*
	Pass rate %	95	95	98	63	67	**
	National average %	84	86	*	70	74	*
3	Starters excluding	2,430	4,583	5,102	69	58	38

	transfers						
	Retention rate %	78	88	87	64	74	68
	National average %	89	90	*	72	73	*
	Pass rate %	86	83	88	52	65	77
	National average %	87	88	*	73	77	*

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2002 to 2003: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2004.

2. College rates for 2000/02 to 2003/04: College ISR.

*data unavailable

** fewer than 15 students enrolled.

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)	72	26	2	58
Level 2 (intermediate)	60	40	0	10
Level 1 (foundation)	0	100	0	1
Other sessions	0	0	0	0
Totals	70	29	1	69

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