



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College

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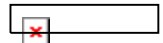
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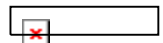
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Basic information about the college

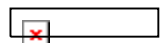


Name of college:	Barrow-in-Furness
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Ed Elvish
Address of college:	Rating Lane Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA13 9LE
Telephone number:	01229 828377
Fax number:	01229 836874
Chair of governors:	Derek Lyon
Unique reference number:	130637
Name of reporting inspector:	Josephine Nowacki HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 April 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



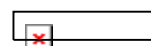
Cumbria and occupies a single site to the north of the town. Over the decade to 2001, the total population of Barrow-in-Furness declined by 1.4%. The population under the age of 30 fell by 14%. The area suffers from significant deprivation. Economic indicators of disadvantage rank the town in the bottom 20% of all local authorities. The college's catchment area includes large, sparsely populated rural areas and urban areas, some with high levels of social deprivation. Four of Barrow's six secondary schools generate below average general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results (grades A* to C). The proportion of school leavers continuing in full-time education in the Barrow borough district is 72%, which is the same as the national average.

Students are recruited from six 11 to 16 partner schools in Barrow-in-Furness, two rural 11 to 16 schools at Coniston and Cartmel and from 11 to 18 schools at Ulverston and Millom. There is an increasing number of students from the independent sector and from further afield in the South Lakes area.

The college's core business is full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18. The college offers 32 general certificate of education (GCE) subjects and three advanced vocational certificates of education (AVCE). Approximately 80% of the students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on to advanced level courses. GCSE courses are available in 12 subjects, including mathematics and English. Students can take general national vocational qualification courses (GNVQ) at intermediate level in information and communications technology (ICT) and health and social care. The number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 has declined from 826 in 2003/04 to around 800 in 2004/05. About 50 adult students are enrolled on the daytime courses and study alongside students aged 16 to 18. A few GCE and GCSE subjects and some courses related to the care industry may be studied by distance learning methods. There is a small and growing provision for adult basic skills. The college is the lead partner in the area's 14 to 16 Increased Flexibility (IF) programme. Some 100 year 10 and 11 pupils attend courses at the college.

The college's mission statement is 'to provide education which is of high quality and sensitive to the needs of the community and the aspirations of individual students'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching and learning and students' achievements to be outstanding in one curriculum area and good in four. A contributory grade of outstanding was awarded in mathematics.

Key strengths

- high pass rates

- high retention rates on advanced level courses

- students achieving above predicted grades at GCE A level

- much good teaching

- enthusiastic and confident students
- effective support for students
- good organisation and integration of key skills
- extensive individual support for students from subject teachers
- good environment and resources for learning
- provision for students aged 14 to 16
- effective collaboration with local partners.

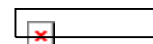
What should be improved

- insufficient challenge and variety in the teaching in a few curriculum areas
- student action planning to help students to improve their performance
- the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning
- the rigour of quality assurance in a few curriculum areas
- the sharing of good practice across curriculum areas
- some cramped teaching accommodation

- access to management information
- liaison between the governors' quality committee and the full corporation.

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

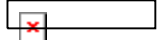


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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 mathematics is outstanding . Retention rates are high in all GCE A-level and GCSE subjects. Most teaching is good or better. Students are well supported. There is a good range of learning resources and specialist equipment for all subjects. Science accommodation is good. Leadership and management of mathematics are good and satisfactory in science.
Business and information and communications technology	Good. Pass and retention rates on most courses are high. Value added is very good in business studies. Lessons are well planned and managed. In a minority of lessons, there is insufficient challenge and variety. Resources and support for students are very good. Too much reliance is placed on informal management practice.
Social sciences including health and social care	Good. Pass rates are high on health and social care courses. In advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) psychology, the pass rate is below the national average. Much of the teaching is good. In a few lessons, insufficient account is taken of the range of students' abilities. Resources to support learning are good. Effective use is made of ILT. Student support is good. Leadership and management of the area are good.
Humanities	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are high. Value added is good in most subjects. Teachers are very committed. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching materials are excellent and are used very effectively in the teaching. Support for students, both formal and informal, is very good. There is a clear leadership and management focus on improvements in teaching and learning. Best practice is shared effectively. Lines of communication are clear.
English, media studies and modern foreign languages	Good. Pass rates are high in most subjects. Learning is good, and students' attainment in lessons is high. Value added is good in English and French. Written feedback on students' work is helpful. Teaching is

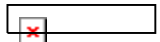
	very good in modern foreign languages. Not all students are sufficiently included or challenged in some English lessons. Student support is good.
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How well is the college led and managed?



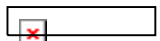
Leadership and management are good. The style of management is open and managers are accessible. Students' achievements have improved and are above the national average for sixth form colleges. There is good communication between staff at all levels. Curriculum management is mainly good. Key skills provision is effectively managed. In some faculties, the monitoring of students' progress is insufficiently systematic. Quality assurance systems are focused and coherent and are effectively monitored at senior management level. Some course action plans are insufficiently detailed and rigorous. Staff development is well organised and integrated with quality improvement systems. The annual equal opportunities report analyses recruitment, retention and pass rates at college level. There is little attempt to address equal opportunities issues in course reviews or schemes of work. The college is financially well managed and gives good value for money. Governors use their wide range of expertise to make a valuable contribution to the development of the college, but some lack detailed knowledge of key strengths and weaknesses.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The college is committed to meeting the needs of the local community. It maintains a non-selective admissions policy in almost all areas of provision. Links with local schools are very effective and often result in the recruitment of students who had not considered progression to further education (FE). A distance learning programme in some GCSE and GCE A-level subjects is provided for students who find it difficult to attend full-time courses. Adults successfully work alongside students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses in the college. There is a small but growing provision for adult basic skills education. A strong academic and social ethos, fostered by the college, enables students and staff to work together with a shared sense of purpose and mutual respect. The college has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and an action plan for improvement is included in the overall college development plan. There is good analysis of data by race and gender at senior management level. Such data are insufficiently analysed at faculty level. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in lessons and tutorials. The college is compliant with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Access to the college for students with restricted mobility is good.

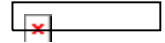
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good. Pre-course guidance procedures are comprehensive. Enrolment and induction are very effective in facilitating the transition from school to college. Students are well supported in their studies and value the help they receive from teachers outside of their lessons. There are appropriate arrangements for the initial assessment of level 2 students with literacy and numeracy needs, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. These students receive good

thoroughly identified. All students have access to a wide range of effective personal, welfare and financial advice from specialist staff at the college. Information on careers, and progression to FE or higher education (HE) is comprehensive.

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

- being treated like adults

- the wide range of subjects

- easy access to computers

- good resources, including the virtual learning environment

- good academic and pastoral support

- friendly, approachable staff

- teachers' high expectations of students

- improvements in the refectory.

What they feel could be improved

- some uninteresting tutorials

- long breaks between timetabled sessions

- some overcrowded lessons

- parking availability on or near the campus

- opening hours in the refectory

- extra-curricular activities beyond sport

- variety of teaching methods.

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

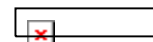
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
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Teaching 16-18	71	26	3
Learning 16-18	71	26	3

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. In the following paragraphs, college pass rates are compared with national averages for similar colleges, that is all sixth form colleges. At the time of the inspection, national averages for 2004 were not available. College pass rates for 2004 are compared with national averages for 2003.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Success rates at level 2 are very good. They have been significantly above national averages in the years 2002 to 2004. Success rates on advanced level courses are satisfactory. In 2002, they were below national averages. In 2003, they improved to close to the national average. In 2004, level 3 success rates were above the national average for sixth form colleges.

3. Retention rates at level 3 are good. At level 2, they were good in 2002 and 2003 and satisfactory in 2004. In the period 2002 to 2004, overall retention rates for level 3 courses were at, or around, the national average. The retention rate on advanced level vocational courses was significantly below the national average in 2003, but improved in 2004 to be close to the average. For AS-level and GCE A-level subjects, retention rates have been consistently close to the high national average. Retention rates on level 2 courses were well above the average in 2002 and 2003 and were close to the average in 2004.

4. Pass rates are high. Pass rates at level 3 have been close to the national average in the three years to 2004. GCE A-level pass rates have been close to the national average in the three years to 2004. AS-level pass rates were below average in 2002 and improved to the average in 2003 and 2004. Pass rates for advanced vocational courses were well above the average in 2002 and fell to the average in 2003 and 2004.

5. GCSE higher-grade (A* to C) pass rates fluctuate. They were below average in 2002 and 2004 and close to the average in 2003. Pass rates on intermediate GNVQ courses have improved significantly in the three years to 2004. In 2002, they were close to the average and were well above average in 2003 and 2004.

6. Value added analysis for the years 2003 and 2004 shows that, overall, students perform well at GCE A level compared with the grades predicted by their GCSE performance. For the three years to 2004, students taking GCE A-level business studies, geology and mathematics have consistently achieved higher grades than would be expected from their GCSE results. In GCE A-level physics, art, and German, students have consistently achieved lower grades than expected. Value added data for 2004 show improvement in GCE A-level ICT and psychology, with students achieving the grades expected in 2004.

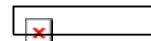
7. Progression to HE is good. An increasing proportion of students leaving college with advanced-level qualifications progress to HE. In 2004, some 67% of full-time second-year students took up HE places, representing a 5% increase on the previous year.

8. Students are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Many make good progress from the time they join the college. Standards of students' work are high. In mathematics, students show high-level

problem-solving skills; students in business studies and social sciences have well-developed analytical skills. The standard of written work is high in humanities and English. Students in modern foreign language lessons make very good progress and are confident in the use of the language they are learning.

9. At the last inspection in 2000, the overall attendance rate was 76%. It was 88% during the current inspection which is slightly above the average for sixth form colleges of 86%.

Quality of education and training



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 76 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 71% of lessons, satisfactory in 26% and less than satisfactory in 3%. The figures for learning are similar. The proportion of good or better teaching is below the sixth form average of 74%. The proportion of satisfactory teaching is slightly above the national sixth form average of 22%. In science, mathematics, and humanities, the proportion of very good and excellent teaching was high. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in science, mathematics, humanities, social science health and social care and modern foreign languages.

11. Schemes of work are clear and provide a good structure to the teaching. Lessons are carefully planned. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. Most use a good variety of methods to engage students in learning. In the best lessons, teachers take care to acknowledge students' prior learning. Clear learning objectives are set and reviewed regularly through skilful questioning. In nearly all subjects, group work is used effectively so that students help each other to learn. For example, in one health and social care lesson, students working in groups identified nutritional requirements and diet for a particular age group. Students then changed groups and presented their findings to each other. In areas other than modern foreign languages, the use of ILT is not well established. In a few lessons, teaching is less effective. In these lessons, teachers fail to use a wide enough range of methods to challenge and extend all students. Teachers do not plan for the full range of ability of the students. In a few lessons, teachers spend too much time talking and do not give students sufficient opportunity to participate in discussion. In areas other than modern foreign languages, the use of ILT is not well established. The college's virtual learning environment is established, but not all curriculum areas make good use of it.

12. The accommodation, located on a pleasant rural site, is excellent. It is well maintained and provides a very good learning environment and good access for students with restricted mobility. Since the last inspection, a new teaching block has been added to the existing building. This and other modifications to the accommodation have successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The extensive use of wall display enhances the environment and provides a strong sense of subject identity. The library is of appropriate size and provides ample space for quiet study. The library stock is satisfactory and is augmented by class sets of texts. Classrooms are well furnished, and well equipped. Student social areas are pleasant and sufficiently spacious. A few classrooms are too small for the numbers of students using them.

13. Specialist equipment and learning resources are of good quality. About a quarter of the classrooms have electronic whiteboards and half have data projectors. Students' access to computers and the Internet are good. The information technology (IT) centre is spacious and a further five computer rooms provide access both for teaching and drop-in use. The computers are modern and networked. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Nearly all have a relevant degree and 94% have a teaching qualification.

14. Homework is set regularly and marked promptly and fairly. In most areas, the detail of the written feedback allows students to identify what they need to do to improve their performance. In a minority of cases, the marking on student work is perfunctory, consisting largely of ticks and with only limited written feedback. Some teachers rely too much on oral comments on students' work.

15. Assessment is closely matched to the requirements of examination bodies. There is no whole-college assessment policy to guide teachers on minimum standards or good practice. Faculties have developed their own systems for internal moderation and verification of students' work. The quality of these systems varies. For example, in GNVQ ICT, the internal verification procedure is too informal and not adequately recorded. Minimum target grades, based largely on students' prior attainment, are used to help monitor progress. Twice a year, students have individual review meetings with each of their teachers to discuss progress against minimum target grades. Most students value these discussions highly and find them useful. In a few cases, students are unclear about the basis for their minimum target grades and find them de-motivating. Some progress review documents vary in quality and rigour.

16. The two FE colleges in the area have reached an informal agreement about which courses are offered at each institution. The curriculum offered at the sixth form college consists primarily of a wide range of academic level 3 courses and a more narrow range of advanced vocational subjects and courses at level 2. Other than in health and social care, there are few opportunities to combine academic and vocational courses.

17. Adult students may enrol on those subjects which are provided during the daytime. Courses leading to qualifications in health and social care are provided for some employees working in care homes. A range of courses leading to basic skills qualifications is provided to employees, primarily in the care industry and to members of the community. About 200 students enrolled on to these qualifications in 2003/04.

18. In addition to their main programme of study, full-time advanced level students are required to work towards key skills qualifications, study for an AS-level qualification in general studies in their first year and, as an optional extra, choose from a range of enrichment activities such as sport, cultural activities, work experience and other activities such as an engineering challenge and the Duke of Edinburgh award. The optional nature of these activities and the lack of a Wednesday afternoon free from timetabled teaching mean that the take up is patchy.

19. The college works closely with the Cumbria Business Education Council to provide a wide ranging programme of work experience. The number of students who undertake work experience has increased markedly: over 210 undertook work experience in 2004. The extent to which each GCE subject provides enrichment opportunities is variable. In some, such as business, humanities, geography and health and social care, there are good opportunities, for example, to undertake foreign visits and field trips, and listen to external speakers.

20. The college is committed to improving the standard of students' key skills. A well conceived and managed programme is provided to deliver this commitment. Key skills in IT are provided through discrete lessons. Application of number and communications at levels 1 and 2 are integrated into GCSE mathematics and GCSE English, respectively. Key skills in communication at level 3 are taught through the tutorial programme. Students also compile a portfolio from assignment work undertaken in their AS-level and GCE A-level study and in general studies. The degree to which GCE A-level assignments have been tailored to meet the requirements of the communications portfolio varies between subjects. In some subjects, such as GCE A-level history, the full portfolio can be developed from history assignments. Key skills achievements are improving rapidly and are generally above national averages.

21. The general studies programme is well managed. All AS-level students are required to take a one hour lesson taught by their tutor. Centrally devised schemes of work, lesson plans and learning materials help teachers teach to a consistent standard. The course is subject to the normal college quality assurance procedures. The teaching team meet regularly with the general studies co-ordinator. General studies pass rates have improved markedly in the three years to 2004, from 85% to 93% at AS level and 91% to 95% at GCE A level. Students on average achieve GCE grades that are better than those predicted by their attainment at GCSE. Students speak highly of the general studies provision.

22. The college is the lead partner in the IF programme funded to provide vocational provision to school pupils at Key Stage 4. Courses in health and social care and provision for pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities are provided by the sixth form college. Partner schools have a high regard generally for the quality of the provision in the college and the open and supportive way in which the college works with its partners.

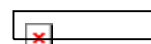
23. Pre-course advice and guidance procedures are clear and comprehensive. Pupils in feeder schools from Year 9 onwards develop a good understanding of the opportunities offered by the college. Link tutors from the college provide an important point of contact for pupils and ensure a smooth transition from school to college. A well-planned programme of careers advice days, parents' evenings, and 'taster' days in Years 10 and 11, supported by an attractive and informative prospectus, provide good information on college courses. Induction is effective in introducing students to the college and their courses. All students receive a handbook which clearly explains their rights and responsibilities.

24. Students receive good subject support, through the extensive help provided by teachers. Students greatly value this subject support. Additionally, all students aged 16 to 18 have a group tutorial twice a week. The quality of group tutorials is satisfactory. There are examples of good practice, such as lessons giving students advice on money management, but in other tutorials less valuable use is made of the time. Equality and diversity issues are not sufficiently well promoted through the tutorial programme.

25. Additional learning support is well managed and effective. A diagnostic assessment of learning needs in literacy and numeracy is given to all level 2 students and to level 3 students who are re-sitting a GCSE qualification in English or mathematics. Some subject teachers may also refer their students for additional support. The progress of these students is not consistently recorded. The needs of students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities are identified prior to joining the college. These students receive good support.

26. Student services work effectively with the local Connexions service to offer personal guidance and support on a range of issues such as housing, travel, finances, health matters and careers advice and guidance. A college chaplain, partly funded by the local diocese, provides support and opportunities for students' spiritual and moral development. Governors have approved policies related to Safeguarding Children in Education, and the college has made good progress in setting up appropriate procedures.

Leadership and management



27. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection, the building of a new teaching block and the extension of social space for students have significantly improved the learning environment. The IT infrastructure and capability have been dramatically enhanced as a result of sustained investment. Success rates at level 2 have been significantly above national averages for three years and there has been a slow but gradual improvement in level 3 success rates, which in 2004 were above the national average for sixth form colleges. There has been a slight decline in full-time enrolments in the last three years and while the college has extended its curriculum into part-time and distance learning for adults, provision at level 2 remains narrow and no level 1 courses are available for full-time students.

28. The principal and senior management team have created an ethos which is welcoming, secure and purposeful. Staff enjoy working at the college and share a strong commitment to providing unstinting support for students. Management of key skills is very effective and well thought through. Leadership of the curriculum is mainly good. Staff teams work in a friendly, supportive and effective manner. Sharing of good practice takes place regularly within many faculties. In a few curriculum areas, quality improvement plans are not monitored with equal rigour.

29. Staff are kept well informed by a daily briefing, a weekly bulletin and the college intranet. The

committee structure has recently been restructured. The heads of faculty meeting has become an effective vehicle for sharing good practice and head of faculty representation at the weekly senior management team meeting has improved two way communication. Heads of faculty also attend course team meetings. The consultative and open style of management is recognised and valued by staff. They are encouraged to join working groups which help formulate policy. Termly whole staff meetings now break up into small discussion groups increasing the number of staff who contribute. Some committees, such as the full management team, have not established a distinct purpose. The principal and deputy principal meet frequently and informally as the 'Principalship' and have the responsibility for overall strategic planning and management. These discussions are not, however, recorded.

30. Quality improvement systems are clear and work effectively. All staff are involved in the processes. There is a simple framework for course evaluations with assessment criteria set against the common inspection framework. Central information services provide a one page summary of key data, including results of surveys of students' views and lesson observation grades which teams are required to analyse. There are many examples of excellent action plans which are formally reviewed half way through the academic year and monthly faculty meetings have as a standard agenda item comprising a requirement to review action plans. A member of the senior management team meets regularly with heads of faculty to review progress. The head of teaching and learning gives support to course teams, where necessary. Some action plans lack sufficient detail and some heads of faculty fail to monitor progress systematically. A minority of course reviews are not sufficiently self-critical and fail to produce effective strategies to improve performance. All teachers are observed and graded by a small team of observers once a year. Additionally, they have an ungraded observation, which focuses on developmental issues undertaken by several heads of faculty. The individual lesson observations are not analysed to produce a set of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning across the faculties.

31. Staff development is well organised and effective and plays an important part in the quality improvement processes. A comprehensive annual training plan is generated from individual, faculty and college targets and action plans. The head of professional development works closely with heads of faculty, the quality team and the ILT co-ordinator, when developing the plan. Staff are encouraged and supported in furthering their professional development. The programme gives appropriate attention to improving teaching and learning, including the use of ILT. Training activities are formally evaluated, both at the time of the event and three months later to ensure that agreed actions have been completed and to assess the impact of the training. A review of staff development activities is published annually. Staff are appraised annually by their line manager and an individual professional development plan is agreed. Appraisal focuses strongly on students' achievements, but insufficiently on the quality of teaching.

32. Both through its own initiatives and by entering into local partnerships, the college is committed to improving both local staying-on rates post-16 and progression rates to HE. The college commissioned the 'Furness Progression Project' to identify barriers to local young people continuing with their education. Unusually for a sixth form college, it is the lead college in the local IF programme. The principal chairs the Furness steering group of the Cumbria Pathfinder Initiative. Through Pathfinder, the college has been able to offer local schools access to the facilities of its virtual learning environment.

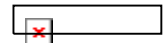
33. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. Separate statements are published for staff and students. The college is compliant with the requirements of SENDA. The equal opportunities committee monitors the implementation of the policy and produces a detailed annual report which analyses recruitment, retention and pass rates. It also identifies action points which are included in the college's development plan. There is little systematic analysis by gender or ethnicity at course level or any expectation, by the college, of references to be made to equal opportunities issues in schemes of work or in lesson observation.

34. The management of IT and information systems has improved significantly since the last inspection. Returns are accurate and timely. Reports are produced which underpin the self-assessment process and inform the decision making processes. Only a limited amount of student data is easily accessible online to staff.

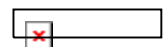
35. Governors understand their responsibilities and are committed to the college's mission. They contribute a wide range of skills and played a key role in the recent successful building project. Regular training is given based on an audit of skills and needs. There is no formal process of self-assessment. Much of their work is carried out effectively through committees. Governors have a good understanding of the workings of the value added systems. Those who are not on the quality improvement and standards committee lack a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

36. The college gives good value for money. It is financially strong and retains its category A financial status awarded by the LSC. Attendance and retention rates are improving and are above national averages. Overall, students achieve grades that are as good or better than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Governors and senior managers receive regular detailed financial reports which enable them to plan confidently. The recent major building programme was well managed and completed on time and under budget. The college has failed to meet funding targets twice over the last three years, but cautious and careful budgeting has resulted in regular operating surpluses.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Contributory grade for mathematics is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses

- high pass rates on most courses

- much good teaching

- good range of learning resources and specialist equipment

- good support for students

- well-managed mathematics provision.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate in AS-level human biology and AS-level physics
- low pass rates in GCSE human physiology and health and in AS-level physics
- failure of teachers in a minority of lessons to meet the needs of all students.

Scope of provision

37. The college offers AS level and GCE A level in biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics and physics. Provision in GCE human biology has recently been discontinued. GCSEs are offered in chemistry, human physiology and health, and physics. GCSE mathematics is available to students who have not previously achieved a grade C or better in the subject. It can be studied as a daytime or evening course. Free standing mathematics units are offered to support GCE students in other subjects such as physics. The faculty has a few distance learning students studying GCSE and GCE mathematics. There are a small number of adult basic skills courses in numeracy. Key skills in application of number are taught within the GCSE mathematics course. At the time of the inspection, approximately 369 students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on to science courses. The number of enrolments in mathematics was 243.

Achievement and standards

38. Retention rates are good in all GCE A-level and GCSE subjects. In AS-level human biology and AS-level physics retention rates are low, falling below the national average in two of the last three years.

39. Students of mathematics make very good progress and achieve well. Pass rates are high in GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics and a significant proportion of students gain A and B grades. Examination grades are higher in AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics than predicted on the basis of students' GCSE attainment.

40. Achievements in science subjects are good overall, but more variable than in mathematics. For example, pass rates are high in GCSE physics; in GCSE human physiology and health they are low. In AS-level chemistry and geology, pass rates are high. They are below national averages in AS-level human biology and in physics. Pass rates in all GCE A-level subjects have improved and in most were above national averages last year. Pass rates are high in GCE A-level biology, chemistry and geology. In GCE A-level chemistry and geology and in AS-level geology, a high proportion of students achieve higher, A and B, grades. GCE A-level students of chemistry and geology achieve grades which are better than those predicted by their GCSE attainment. In physics, GCE grades are lower than predicted.

41. The standards achieved by students in lessons are frequently high. The more able students demonstrate a good grasp of mathematical or scientific principles. They have good recall of previous learning and are able to apply this appropriately to new situations. Many students demonstrate well-

developed problem-solving abilities. Most students have a positive attitude to their work and are keen to learn.

42. Students' progression to HE is generally good. A significant number of students who study GCE A-level science and mathematics subjects progress to mathematics or science related degree courses.

43. During inspection, attendance in science and mathematics was very good at 95%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics (grades A to C)	2	No. of starts	147	131	154
		% retention	88	86	81
		% pass rate	47	64	58
GCSE human physiology and health (grades A to C)	2	No. of starts	36	39	46
		% retention	83	97	85
		% pass rate	47	34	41
AS-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	11	11	20
		% retention	64	100	85
		% pass rate	86	100	82
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	73	80	73
		% retention	88	95	88
		% pass rate	88	87	76
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	53	40	38
		% retention	87	90	76
		% pass rate	78	78	59
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	44	66	61
		% retention	98	98	93
		% pass rate	98	97	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	36	48	48
		% retention	94	100	100
		% pass rate	94	100	98

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

Quality of education and training

44. Most teaching in mathematics and science is good or better. Most teachers plan their lessons well and use a suitably wide variety of methods, including question and answer techniques, work in pairs and groups and practical work. In an outstanding geology lesson, students worked collaboratively in groups to arrange a number of statement cards to describe the formation of coal. Students' working in pairs in a GCE A-level further mathematics lesson, enjoyed devising solutions to problems involving the association of hyperbolic functions with their graphical representation. In other lessons, the teacher arranged the groups by ability, successfully helping all students to learn appropriate geological terminology. In the less effective lessons, there is insufficient variety of activities to address the wide range of students' abilities. Practical work is well organised. Technical

support is good.

45. Teachers are well qualified in their subject areas. There is a good range of learning resources and specialist equipment for all subjects. In biology, chemistry and physics, students have well-designed and easy-to-use course booklets aimed at developing independent learning skills. Science laboratories are well appointed. Some mathematics teaching rooms are too small for the numbers of students that use them, inhibiting the range of teaching methods that can be used. Students have good access to computers.

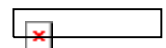
46. Assessment of students' work is carried out effectively. Homework and subject tests are set regularly and returned promptly. Most teachers make comments on how students can improve their work. The helpfulness of these comments varies widely and in some cases, comments are too brief to be helpful. Students are set minimum target grades for each of their subjects based on previous achievement. Progress is monitored twice a year and compared with these target grades.

47. Guidance and support are good. Students benefit from a wide range of systems for providing help with their studies. Teachers are readily available outside lessons and give good individual help when required. Mathematics workshops are held four times a week to provide students with extra help. Drop-in sessions are available in other subjects. Students' attendance at these sessions and the progress they made are not monitored sufficiently rigorously.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management in mathematics are good and in science they are satisfactory. In mathematics, there are regular meetings and the minutes contain clear action points, the implementation of which is rigorously monitored. Staff work closely together and maintain a strong focus on improving students' achievements. In science, there is insufficient rigour in setting and monitoring actions for improvement. Resources in science and mathematics are managed effectively. There is effective sharing of good practice in teaching and learning amongst all staff. Commitment to educational inclusion is strong. Some students with low entry qualifications are accepted on to both science and mathematics courses given specially designed support, and achieve GCE grades which are better than those predicted by their GCSE attainment.

Business and information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses

- high value added in business studies

- many well-planned and managed lessons

- very good learning resources
- rigorous assessment and feedback to students
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass and retention rates in AS-level accounting
- insufficient challenge and variety in a minority of lessons
- too much reliance on informal management practice.

Scope of provision

49. At level 2, the college offers GCSE business communication systems and GNVQ intermediate ICT. Provision at level 3 includes AS levels and GCE A levels in business studies, accounting, computing and in ICT. The only advanced-level vocational course is AVCE ICT. Key skills IT at level 2 and level 3 is available to all students who do not already possess an equivalent qualification in this subject. Approximately 227 students aged 16 to 18 and seven adult students are enrolled on business and IT courses. In addition, approximately 402 students follow key skills IT courses. The majority of students attend full-time courses on the college campus. Distance learning courses are offered in business studies and accounting. The numbers on these courses are small.

Achievement and standards

50. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. Pass rates in GCE A-level business studies, and accounting and AS-level computing are high; 100% in each subject in both 2003 and 2004. The proportion of high-grade, A to B, passes is consistently outstanding in AS-level and GCE A-level business studies. Many students achieve pass grades which are better than those predicted by their GCSE scores. Pass rates for AS-level accounting were well below the national average for the three years to 2004.

51. Retention rates in GCE A-level business studies have been close to 100% in the three years to 2004 and consistently exceed the national average. In 2002 and 2003, retention rates were satisfactory in AS-level accounting and high in GCE A-level accounting. Retention rates in AS-level and in GCE A-level accounting fell below the national average in 2004

52. The standard of students' work is good. Students at both level 2 and level 3 are well motivated and develop good communication and analytical skills. They use up-to-date business terminology and understand complex decision-making methods. In lessons, many students work effectively in

pairs or groups to share ideas, and develop presentations for the rest of the class. For example, in one lesson, GCSE business communication systems students efficiently revised different aspects of human resources using the Internet and their own notes, and prepared powerpoint presentations which they clearly explained to the rest of their group. AVCE ICT students successfully worked together to share their findings on the range and cost of devices to help people with mobility problems. Attendance in the lessons observed was 85% which is close to the national average. Students were punctual.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ ICT	2	No. of starts	27	20	27
		% retention	89	85	85
		% pass rate	63	100	87
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	35	24	34
		% retention	89	83	68
		% pass rate	58	55	57
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	46	69	70
		% retention	91	83	87
		% pass rate	95	88	93
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	19	14	14
		% retention	89	100	86
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	102	90	65
		% retention	80	86	85
		% pass rate	67	84	80
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	30	31	40
		% retention	100	100	98
		% pass rate	93	100	100
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	60	36	35
		% retention	97	86	97
		% pass rate	76	68	94

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

Quality of education and training

53. Lessons are well planned and managed and form part of detailed schemes of work. In the best lessons, teachers make imaginative and effective use of a good variety of teaching methods to successfully stimulate learning and understanding. A domino game was used very successfully in one lesson to develop students' understanding of human resources. In other lessons, computer crosswords and quizzes are used as interesting revision tools. Extension activities are available for students working at a faster pace. In another lesson, students were organised into groups, mixed by gender and ability, and gave each other good support and encouragement. In a minority of less successful lessons, there is insufficient challenge and variety and too much exposition by the teacher. In some IT workshops, poor management of students leads to missed targets for

completion of work. The use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning is not always well established. There are few learning materials placed on the virtual learning environment and only a small number of teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards.

54. Staff are well qualified and some are examiners. Learning resources are very good. Teachers have prepared excellent and easy to use handbooks, detailed study packs and exemplars of coursework to help students structure their work and revision. Access to computers is very good.

55. The assessment of students' work is thorough. Assignments meet the requirements of awarding bodies and marking is fair. Students are given detailed and effective written feedback including actions required for improvement. Parents and students receive detailed progress reports twice a year.

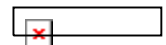
56. Opportunities for subject-related enrichment are good. Business students take part in the Young Enterprise scheme and visit a variety of different types of businesses. A yearly development day, involving local and national businesses provides students with the opportunity to simulate real business activity, such as product design and advertising. Students in ICT and computing frequently use the work of local businesses as a basis for coursework.

57. Pastoral and academic support for students are good. There is effective tutorial support to provide advice and guidance on careers and applications to university. Academic support is provided formally and informally both inside and outside lessons. There are open access workshops in ICT and accounting. Extra revision lessons are available in all subjects. Teachers devote considerable amounts of personal time outside lessons to help students' academic progress.

Leadership and management

58. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams give priority to improving students' achievement. Most teachers regularly attend training events by awarding bodies for the development of their subject expertise. There is effective support for new teachers. Management information systems have improved and effective use is made of the electronic registration system to monitor and follow-up students' attendance. The implementation and monitoring of most quality assurance procedures are insufficiently systematic or rigorous. There is too much reliance on informal management practice. For example, too little is done to analyse data and to set clear written targets for improvement and insufficient attention is paid to addressing weaknesses identified through lesson observation.

Social sciences including health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in health and social care

- effective teaching and learning

- good resources

- good support for students

- strong team spirit and sharing of good practice.

Weaknesses

- underachievement in AS-level psychology

- insufficient account taken of the range of abilities of students in a few lessons.

Scope of provision

59. The college offers AS levels and GCE A levels in sociology, psychology and religious studies, a GCSE in sociology and AVCE and intermediate GNVQ courses in health and social care. There are currently 358 students on these courses of whom 226 are studying at AS level and GCE A level and 132 are studying health and social care. Almost all are full-time students aged 16 to 18. There is a programme of distance learning for vocational courses including basic food hygiene, essential care practice and safe handling of medicines. The college has developed an effective partnership with local schools and offers the GCSE in health and social care to students aged 14 to 16.

Achievement and standards

60. Pass rates are very high on health and social care courses. In 2004, the pass rate for the GNVQ intermediate and AVCE courses was 100%, significantly above the national average. Pass rates on the GCE A-level psychology course have improved since 2002 and in 2004 were above national averages. In 2004, the pass rate for AS-level psychology was 79%, a decline from the previous year and below national averages. The percentage of high grades is small in AS-level psychology. Value added data for 2004 shows that students on AS-level psychology achieved lower grades than predicted from their GCSE results. Retention rates are generally satisfactory. On a few courses, such as the GNVQ intermediate and the GCSE course, retention rates declined to below the national averages in 2004. Overall attendance in the lessons observed was high at 90%.

61. The standard of students' work is good. Many students produce a high standard of written work that demonstrates a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject. In most lessons, students discuss and debate issues in a confident manner. For example, in one lesson, sociology students analysed and evaluated data on gender differences in educational achievement. They then discussed their conclusions and challenged those found in the media. Students on AVCE courses develop good group working and presentational skills. For example, in one lesson, students took on the role of a research ethics committee in a hospital and discussed and presented their conclusions on a number of case studies. Many second-year students, in both social sciences and health and social care, progress to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	*	17	17
		% retention	*	88	85
		% pass rate	*	80	100
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	122	110	107
		% retention	80	81	84
		% pass rate	59	92	79
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	74	68	59
		% retention	81	90	88
		% pass rate	85	93	79
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	30	40	47
		% retention	87	93	96
		% pass rate	85	95	98
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	35	39	27
		% retention	100	95	100
		% pass rate	97	97	93

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

62. Much of the teaching is well planned and effective. In the better lessons, teachers use a wide range of tasks and activities to stimulate students and engage their interest. Particularly effective is the use of group work and role play. In a psychology lesson, students took on the role of participants in the Milgram experiment on obedience and authority and were then able to debate and analyse the ethics of this type of research. In a few lessons, insufficient account is taken of the range of abilities of students. Some students are insufficiently engaged in the learning process and quickly become bored. Other students find it difficult to keep up with the pace of the lesson, to complete tasks or to become fully involved in group and class discussions.

63. Resources are good. Classrooms provide a stimulating learning environment and display up-to-date news and information. For example, in a religious studies room, articles about the Pope were displayed the day after his election. Handouts and study packs are of good quality. A wide range of reference materials is available in the library. ILT is used effectively. Good learning materials are being developed for the virtual learning environment, especially in health and social care.

64. Assessment is satisfactory. Internal moderation of assignments is good and the requirements of awarding bodies are met. Homework is set frequently and marked and returned promptly. Marking is of a good standard and most teachers provide detailed written comments and clear guidance on how students can improve their work. In a minority of cases, feedback is too brief. The monitoring of students' progress against targets is not consistently thorough.

65. Health and social care students benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities. For example, students make visits to hospitals, nurseries and care homes. There are also regular visiting speakers. Work experience is well planned and integrated successfully with health and social care courses.

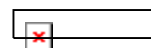
66. Support for students is good. Subject support is provided through group workshops or individual

tutorials. Health and social care students are given additional sessions for portfolio planning and completion. Many teachers give freely of their time to help students outside of normal lesson times. Learning support assistants are used effectively in class to support students with physical and learning disabilities. Support for students on distance learning courses is very good.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are good. The supportive approach, collectively provided by the teachers, creates a good climate for learning. Observations of teaching are used effectively to share good practice. An extensive staff development programme focuses strongly on improving teaching, learning and attainment. Communication is good across the faculty. All staff are involved in the planning process. Curriculum meetings are frequent and regular. Subject course reviews, lesson observations and student feedback underpin strongly the self-assessment. The action plan which results from self-assessment does not adequately address the weaknesses and as a consequence, strategies to remedy them are not identified clearly enough. Equal opportunities are actively promoted within the curriculum; in social and health care staff work closely with school colleagues to try and increase the participation of male students.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most courses

- high added value on most GCE A-level courses

- much very good teaching

- excellent learning resources

- good academic and pastoral support

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level geography in 2004
- insufficient written feedback on some marked work.

Scope of provision

68. Some 447 students are studying humanities subjects, which is one of the largest areas in the college. Law, medieval and modern history, geography, and government and politics are offered at GCE A level. The largest subject in terms of recruitment is law, with 217 students aged 16 to 18. Government and politics, with 29 students is the smallest. No provision is offered at levels 1 or 2.

Achievement and standards

69. Achievements are very good. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. For example, in the two years to 2004, 42 of the 43 students who enrolled on GCE A-level geography passed the qualification and 91 of the 92 who enrolled on GCE A-level history passed. Value added data are good on most courses and are very good in law and AS-level government and politics. Pass rates were low in AS-level geography in 2004. Value added in this subject was also low this year.

70. Students' level of attainment in lessons and in their written work is high. Their oral responses are of a high standard. They are frequently able to make connections to prior learning and show good understanding of examination objectives and the demands of the course specification. Teachers have high expectations about attendance, punctuality and the quality of work, which are realised by the students.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	47	27	42
		% retention	87	89	90
		% pass rate	85	100	74
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	69	72	82
		% retention	88	92	93
		% pass rate	82	98	97
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	97	114	124
		% retention	90	92	86
		% pass rate	91	86	94
AS-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	19	13	13
		% retention	79	85	92
		% pass rate	73	82	100
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	22	27	16
		% retention	100	100	94
		% pass rate	95	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	42	40	52

		% retention	95	95	98
		% pass rate	93	100	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	56	65	81
		% retention	95	92	96
		% pass rate	96	97	97

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

Quality of education and training

71. Teaching is very good in all subjects. It is outstanding in law. Lessons are thoroughly prepared. Planning effectively ensures that all students are challenged and supported. Short activities are used well to recapitulate and reinforce learning at the beginning and end of lessons. Consequently, students settle down quickly and remain interested and engaged to the very end of the time allowed. Teachers often use imaginative means to contextualise learning. In one AS-level geography lesson on the eco-system of the rainforest, the teacher recreated the atmospheric conditions with the aid of a fan heater, a water spray, a recording of the sounds of a rainforest and well-produced overhead projector images. The students were enthralled and immediately settled to working enthusiastically and productively.

72. In a lesson in law, the teacher gave several physical demonstrations of the differences between burglary and theft. These elicited thoughtful, observations and questions from students. In an exciting AS-level history lesson exploring the extent to which Ferdinand and Isabella united Spain, the teacher skilfully incorporated the teaching of content and skills. Students first separated slips of paper which had a series of factors demonstrating unity from those which worked against unity and then deepened their knowledge and understanding by ranking them in order, separating the thematic strands and identifying the most important factors which they were then called upon to justify. Checks on understanding and the consolidation of learning are strong features of the lessons.

73. Teaching materials are excellent. They facilitate imaginative teaching and impact positively on the quality of the learning. For example, in law and in history, the use of thoughtfully designed templates helps students to record their findings in a structured way and encourages them to make differentiated responses to the graded tasks. Where ILT is used in lessons, it is used well. The overall use of ILT, however, is underdeveloped. Subject base rooms are decorated with stimulating displays and student presentations. A minority of lessons take place in overcrowded conditions.

74. Opportunities for enrichment are excellent. There is an annual trip to Borrowdale for geographers. Last year, they went to Chamonix and this year they plan to go to Borneo. Law, history and government and politics students make an annual trip to Strasbourg. Visiting speakers are also a feature of the department. Key skills are integrated well into history and law so that students are able to build an entire communications portfolio.

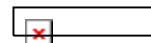
75. There are clear and effective systems for the support of students. Students know who to contact if they have a problem with either work or personal issues and feel supported and valued. Students who are deemed to be vulnerable are quickly identified and referrals by subject lecturers are encouraged and made at any stage during the course. The support arrangements include extra help from teachers and personal tutors on specific revision strategies. Teachers provide excellent informal support, and students are highly appreciative of this. There is rigorous monitoring of students whose attendance is unacceptable.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management of the area are good. There is a clear and sustained focus on improving students' achievement. Faculty meetings pay close attention to teaching and learning, and student support and have succeeded in improving retention and pass rates and maintaining good

attendance and punctuality. Outcomes of lessons observations are discussed and good practice in teaching and learning is shared.

English, media studies and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high achievement in most subjects
- good learning and attainment
- good teaching in modern foreign languages and media studies
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient variety and challenge in GCE English lessons
- weaknesses in the quality assurance of teaching in English.

Scope of provision

77. The college offers full-time courses at AS level and GCE A level, including English language, English literature, media studies and film studies. AS-level film studies is a new and popular course. Full-time provision in modern foreign languages consists of AS-level and GCE A-level French, Spanish and German, and GCSE Spanish and Italian. A small number of students follow GCSEs in Spanish and Italian in the evening. All full-time students without a level 2 qualification in English are expected to take GCSE English combined with key skills communication at level 2. Some 455 students are taking media, English language or literature courses and 83 are studying modern foreign languages.

Achievement and standards

78. Most pass rates are high. Pass rates in GCSE Spanish, AS-level English language, AS-level German and GCE A-level English literature are consistently above the national average. In 2004, all

59 students who completed GCE courses in modern foreign languages passed them. Retention rates are satisfactory or better on all courses. They are consistently high in GCE A-level English language, GCE A-level media studies and AS-level German. In 2004, retention rates on modern foreign language courses at AS level and GCE A level were close to the national average. Students make good progress in comparison to their prior achievements on advanced-level courses in English and French. Pass rates in AS-level media studies and higher-grade (A to C) pass rates in GCSE English were below the national average in 2003 and 2004.

79. Students' written work is of a high standard. They plan their work well and most meet the deadlines for completion. Their folders are well organised and contain material from a suitable variety of sources. Most students' contributions in class are good; they are usually accurate and often show independent thought. Students in modern foreign language lessons make very good progress. These students have a good understanding of the language they are learning and are able to act on instruction and to provide accurate answers, both oral and written. Most students use appropriate advanced level terminology with confidence. A minority of students are insufficiently confident to contribute to whole-class discussion.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English (grades A to C)	2	No. of starts	74	66	78
		% retention	81	85	85
		% pass rate	62	43	42
GCSE Spanish (grades A to C)	2	No. of starts	22	20	16
		% retention	68	100	81
		% pass rate	73	75	77
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	98	118	90
		% retention	90	92	90
		% pass rate	95	100	95
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	70	42	91
		% retention	84	90	92
		% pass rate	86	92	99
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	85	88	66
		% retention	87	91	80
		% pass rate	95	86	89
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	60	60	82
		% retention	98	95	98
		% pass rate	100	96	99
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	37	35	28
		% retention	100	94	93
		% pass rate	97	100	100
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	46	55	55
		% retention	100	98	98
		% pass rate	100	98	94

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

Quality of education and training

80. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are very good in modern foreign language lessons and in media studies. Schemes of work show a clear progression of topics, resources and assessment goals. Modern foreign language and media studies teachers make good use of multimedia. Especially effective is the use of the French Internet news programme Voila, and, in media studies, the use of DVD to present scenes from television programmes and films. These stimulate discussion and work of a high level. Students use advanced technical terminology with confidence. In a Spanish advanced oral practice lesson, the level, depth and range of student contribution was exceptionally good. Grammar is effectively taught in modern foreign language lessons and there is particularly good use of the language being taught by teachers. There is good attention to the literary and linguistic analysis of texts in English. Teachers of English make little use of the interactive whiteboard. Some whiteboard writing is hard to read. In some lessons, there is insufficient discussion. In one lesson, for example, one-word only answers were required and with little attempt to develop the responses. In some lessons, poor use is made of time with the result that the planned content is not completely covered.

81. Much learning takes place outside the lessons, encouraged by the excellent informal support given by teachers at all times. Students are free to make appointments to see teachers at any time and support is always willingly given. Students greatly value this help. Lesson plans contain useful information of students' personal and academic problems and this is used by teachers to plan their teaching methods.

82. Assessment is used well to further students' learning. Marking is clearly linked to the criteria set by the awarding bodies and students know and understand what they must do to perform well. Internal assessments are accurate and give appropriate encouragement. Homework is set regularly and returned promptly. Feedback on written assignments is detailed and thorough, and clearly shows what is needed to improve. Students are set targets and most find this motivating. Progress reviews are detailed and constructive. Teachers know their students well and are aware of any problems which may affect their progress.

83. Resources are very good. There is good provision of relevant texts, magazines and videos. Up-to-date magazines are used by teachers and students. Students speak very highly of the accessibility of computers. The teaching rooms are well equipped with televisions, videos and overhead projectors. Classrooms are mostly of an appropriate size. A few are too small for the size of some classes so that the teacher can only circulate with difficulty. Computer-based materials are well developed in modern foreign languages, but less so in English. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject; many have higher degrees and all have teaching qualifications.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Courses are well managed. Teachers see their managers as supportive and approachable and communication between managers and teachers is effective. Teachers have a genuine commitment to improving student achievement. Monthly meetings are held and minuted appropriately. Detailed analyses of results and course evaluations are contained in course reviews. Discussion of best practice in teaching and learning is a regular item on modern foreign languages' agendas. In the English and media faculty, such discussions are informal. Within this same faculty, observations of teaching and learning are perceived as useful and supportive, but have not succeeded in eliminating some weak elements of the teaching. Insufficient attention is given to some policies, for example, student attendance and aspects of equality of opportunity.

Part D: College data

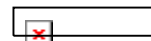
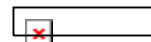


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	1	45
2	20	27
3	79	19
4/5	0	0
Other	0	9
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	950	175	21
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	43	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	173	25	4
Information and communication technology	578	0	11
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	129	210	6
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	93	48	3
Visual and performing arts and media	311	0	6
Humanities	1,163	41	23
English, languages and communication	1,196	44	24
Foundation programmes	0	49	1

Total	4,636	592	100
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Source: provided by the college in 2005

* fewer than 15 enrolments

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
2	Starters excluding transfers	357	356	441	138	65	39
	Retention rate %	87	89	80	81	72	69
	National average %	82	81	81	70	69	69
	Pass rate %	93	97	95	63	87	85
	National average %	84	86	86	70	74	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,768	2,802	2,791	163	105	100
	Retention rate %	89	91	91	66	74	59
	National average %	89	90	90	72	80	73
	Pass rate %	83	88	91	60	82	93
	National average %	87	88	88	73	77	77
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	25	*	*
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	84	*	*
	National average %	**	**	**	**	**	**
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	81	*	*
	National average %	**	**	**	**	**	**

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

Sources of information:

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

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

** national average data not available

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)	74	23	3	62
Level 2 (intermediate)	62	38	0	13
Level 1 (foundation)	0	0	0	0
Other sessions	0	100	0	1
Totals	71	26	3	76

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