



LEICESTER COLLEGE

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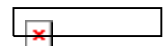
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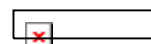
Basic information about the college



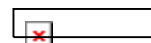
Name of college:	Leicester College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Janice Shiner
Address of college:	Aylestone Road Leicester LE2 7LW

Telephone number:	0116 224 2000
Fax number:	0116 253 2190
Chair of governors:	Michael Switzer
Unique reference number:	131863
Name of reporting inspector:	Philip Pullen HMI
Dates of inspection:	29 October-2 November 2001

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



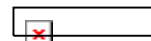
Leicester College is one of the largest further education (FE) colleges in the UK. It was formed in 1999 from the merger of Charles Keene College and Leicester South Fields College. The college operates from seven sites organised into four campuses all within a 1.5 mile radius of Leicester city centre. It offers a broad range of provision covering all 14 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) areas of learning and is accessible to learners aged 16 to 18 and adult learners. This includes substantial community-based provision in adult basic education, English as a second language (ESOL) and continuing education for students with learning difficulties/disabilities (SLDD). Work-based training is offered primarily in construction, engineering, hospitality and catering, hair and beauty and print. Thirteen of the LSC's areas of learning were covered by the inspection.

Leicester city is also served by three sixth form colleges, four schools with sixth forms and an adult education college. There are also approximately 40 training providers within the locality. Achievement levels in the city are low. The proportion of students aged 16 achieving 5 A* to C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was 13% below the national average in 2000/01. The city has an ethnically diverse population. The 1991 census showed that 28% of the population was from minority ethnic groups and this is now expected to have risen to around one third. The basic skills needs of the city are significant. Approximately 20% of the city's population have a basic skills need in literacy, numeracy or both. In addition, the decline in some of the city's traditional industries, such as textiles and footwear, has produced a significant demand for re-training.

In 1999/2000, the college enrolled 28,802 students of which some 78% are aged 19 or over. The majority of students aged 16 to 18 were undertaking full-time programmes while most adults were enrolled on part-time or short courses. The largest areas of provision in 1999/2000 were health and community care at 24%, art and design at 13%, basic education at 12%, science and information communications technology (ICT) at 10% and hotel and catering at 10%.

The purpose of the college, set out in its mission statement, is to meet the education and training needs of individuals and organisations in Leicester, Leicestershire and beyond and to provide the highest quality learning opportunities, encouraging wider participation and increasing levels of achievement.

How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching and the achievements of students are good in 7 of the 15 curriculum areas inspected, satisfactory in 7, and unsatisfactory in business. Students are well supported. Governors set clear strategic objectives for the college and monitor progress towards them closely. Senior managers provide strong leadership. Management of most curriculum areas is effective and has led to improvements in teaching and learning and students' achievements. The college provides an extensive range of courses which meet the diverse needs of the local community. Students' achievements show an upward trend and are above the national average in many levels of study. However, many modern apprentices do not achieve their full qualification. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- strong effective leadership
- effective commitment to inclusive learning and widening participation
- improving pass rates on many courses
- good and extensive community partnerships
- good personal support for students
- rigorous self-assessment process.

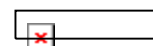
What should be improved

- aspects of curriculum management
- management of work-based training
- delivery of key skills
- use and accuracy of management information

- poor accommodation and access for persons with restricted mobility
- student attendance and retention rates in some curriculum areas.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory. There are good pass rates in General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) physics and GCSE human biology. Pass rates in other science subjects and in GCE A-level mathematics are poor. Retention rates in most subjects are above national averages. Students' progression to higher education (HE) is good. Science laboratories are well equipped. Key skills are not sufficiently developed.
Computing and IT	Satisfactory. Pass rates are good on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) foundation, national diploma and Integrated Business Technology (IBT) 2 courses. Teaching on specialist IT courses is effective, but less so on other courses. Specialist resources and learning materials are good. Part-time teachers lack support.
Construction	Good. Pass rates are good on level 3 courses. There are poor pass rates on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) plumbing. Retention rates are above national averages. Few trainees successfully complete their modern apprenticeships. Much of the teaching is good. Craft-based students acquire good practical skills. Links with employers are effective. Full-time courses are poorly attended.
Engineering	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. Learning materials are good and theory is effectively linked to practical activities. Links with local industry and schools are well established and productive.
Business	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are poor on a significant number of courses. Retention rates are at, or above national averages. The range of professional courses is narrow and retention rates are declining on several courses. Some lessons fail to challenge or engage students. Curriculum management is weak.

Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory. Pass rates on most courses are high. Teaching is well planned. Students benefit from the wide variety of resources to support learning. Internal verification is inadequate. There is insufficient development of key skills.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism and NVQ travel service courses are good. Pass rates and retention rates on the national diploma in sports science course are low. The teaching of practical skills is good. The delivery of key skills is inconsistent. The provision of exercise teacher training is well managed.
Health and childcare	Satisfactory. Pass rates are good and improving on most courses. Courses in childcare meet the needs of local communities and provide access for students from a wide range of backgrounds. The quality of teaching is variable. Much of the accommodation is of poor quality. Library facilities are good.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Pass rates on most courses are good. Retention rates are poor on a few courses. Teaching is well planned and effective, but there are missed opportunities for assessment. Key skills are well linked to occupational areas. Specialist resources are good. Changing facilities for students are inadequate.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Pass rates are generally above national averages. Students achieve high levels of technical ability. There is good quality teaching. Assignments are well designed and challenging. The range of part-time courses is limited. Accommodation for music courses is poor.
Media and print	Good. Pass rates on most courses are good. Teaching is of a high standard. Students are well supported. They generally progress well relative to their prior attainment and develop good levels of skill in practical work. Links with employers are effective. Many students are not punctual in attending lessons.
Humanities (social science)	Satisfactory. Pass rates are inconsistent. Whilst some are above national averages, others are below. Retention rates are poor on two-year courses. Much teaching is stimulating. There is good progression to HE from access courses. Key skills are poorly integrated into courses. Assessment is inconsistent. Students' attendance is poor.
Basic skills	Good. Students' attainments in lessons are high. Retention and attendance rates are above the national average. Teaching is very good with an inclusive approach to addressing the individual needs of learners. Programmes meet the needs of a wide and diverse community. Some learning support is ineffective.
ESOL	Good. Achievement on accredited courses is good. Teaching is often good and innovative. The wide range of provision meets diverse community needs. Management of this complex provision is effective. Individual learning plans are poorly used and student progress reviews are insufficiently rigorous.
Provision for students with learning difficulties/disabilities	Satisfactory. Students with multiple and complex learning difficulties attending community-based courses achieve good standards. Teaching for students with profound disabilities is good, although some other teaching is unsatisfactory. There are strong links with external organisations to widen participation. Initial assessments of students' learning needs vary in quality and some are insufficiently diagnostic.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors set clear strategic objectives and monitor progress closely. Senior managers provide strong leadership. Management roles and responsibilities are clear. Financial management is sound. External partnerships are managed well. The college is very responsive to the local community and has developed a large number of socially inclusive community partnerships. The college has a comprehensive and generally effective self-assessment process. Staff demonstrate good levels of commitment to continuous improvements. Monitoring of action plans is not sufficiently rigorous in some curriculum areas. Management information is not sufficiently reliable. Target setting is well established at college level, but is not used enough at school and course level to improve students' performances.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's approach to inclusion is very good. There is a strong strategic commitment to widening participation in FE and training. Much of the provision enables learners from very diverse and often disadvantaged backgrounds to take part successfully in education and training. Equal opportunities are promoted well. The ethnic make up of the student population closely matches that of the local community.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Students value the advice and guidance they receive from teachers and tutors, particularly on financial and welfare issues. Students at the main campuses and those on full-time courses receive better levels of support than those at outreach centres and work-based trainees and evening-class students. The quality of learning support is variable and is not always promoted positively to students of all abilities as a way of improving their chances of success. There is excellent support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college has produced good tutorial and careers guidance resources. However, the quality of tutorials is variable. The monitoring of the quality of the student support service is insufficiently rigorous.

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

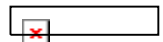
- good supportive teachers

- friendly atmosphere of the college
- quality of personal support services
- good IT and library facilities
- induction and tutorials.

What they feel could be improved

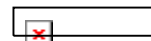
- the timetabling of some lessons
- teaching and assessment of key skills
- car parking
- some aspects of poor accommodation
- limited social and recreational facilities at some campuses.

Other information



The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole



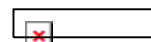
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & 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	61	30	9
19+ and WBL*	68	24	8
Learning 16-18	58	31	11
19+ and WBL*	65	27	8

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

* work-based learning

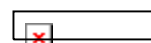
Achievement and standards



1. Data on students' achievements, drawn from individualised student record (ISR) returns to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) for the period 1997 to 2000, were provided by the LSC. The consequences of the college merger during this period have restricted the availability of some data. Some aspects of these data also proved to be unreliable, partly as a result of difficulties in merging the data from the two former colleges. Inspectors used additional data held by the college to help them form their judgements. They checked the data where possible, during the inspection, but some remained unconfirmed and are not included in this report.

2. In 1999/2000, the first full year of Leicester College, students' pass rates were above the national average in many of the levels of study and some had shown an improvement on the previous year. The most significant improvement was in foundation-level pass rates for students aged 16 to 18, with an increase of 11 percentage points over the previous year. Most of the other levels of provision show a continuing upward trend over the period 1997 to 2000, with the exception of level 3 qualifications both for students aged 16 to 18 and adult learners. The performance of students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses remains significantly below the national average. In 1999/2000, the overall retention rate for courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 equalled or exceeded the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 and for adult students. This constitutes a significant increase in retention rates when compared with the combined retention rates for the two parent colleges in 1999.

16-18 year olds

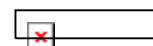


A levels, aged 16 to 18, passed their examinations. This compares with a national average of 73%. Pass rates for GCE Advanced Subsidiary levels (AS levels) were better in 2001, with an overall pass rate of 71%. The college achieved good results for its GNVQ advanced and national diploma courses. In 2000, the pass rates for most of these courses exceeded the national averages. On several national diploma programmes all the students who completed the course in 2000, achieved the qualification. Examples include the national diplomas in construction, childhood studies and performing arts.

4. Students taking GNVQ intermediate and first diploma courses at the college generally do well. In 2000, 76% of students completing their course were successful, with a retention rate of 80%. Pass rates on GCSE courses, however, are significantly below the national average for FE colleges.

5. Overall pass rates on level 1 programmes are significantly above the national average. In 2000, nearly 70% of students completing a level 1 course achieved the qualification. In three of the four curriculum areas offering GNVQ foundation programmes, pass rates are above the national average. Retention rates on level 1 courses are generally good.

Adult learners

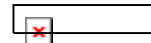


6. Just under half of all GCE A-level students at the college are adults. They generally achieve results that are well below the national averages. In 2000, only 53% of adult learners completing their GCE A-level course obtained a pass grade. However, pass rates on other level 3 programmes, notably national certificate and NVQs, are significantly better. Pass rates on level 1 programmes have steadily risen from a low base, and were significantly above the national average in 2000. Pass rates for level 2 programmes were also above the national average in 1999 and 2000. Short courses leading to qualifications form a large and growing part of the adult provision. Pass rates on these courses have shown a steady increase over the past three years to above the national average. Pass rates are high on accredited courses for adult basic education and ESOL.

7. Significant numbers of modern apprentices leave their programmes without achieving their full qualification. Those who successfully complete their NVQ award often fail to obtain qualifications in key skills. Therefore, the pass rates of advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks are very low across most occupational areas, often less than 15% over a three-year period. Similar retention and pass rates are apparent among foundation modern apprentices. On other work-based programmes, performance is significantly better, particularly for those leading to occupationally specific awards that are delivered over a short period of time. More trainees successfully complete NVQs in the workplace through the college's flexible and day-release provision than under modern apprenticeship programmes.

8. The inspection also identified some features of students' general skills relative to their level of study. Standards of work in lessons were mostly good. In 56% of lessons, attainment was judged to be good or better. However, in 12% of lessons, it was less than satisfactory. Inspectors noted that students in all curriculum areas are generally well motivated. They have well-developed practical and technical skills and their portfolio and assignment work is often of a high standard. Many students work well on their own and take responsibility for their own learning. They make good contributions to class discussion. Attendance at lessons was 78%, which is slightly above the sector average as reported in the FEFC Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1999/2000. However, this overall figure masks unacceptable variations in attendance across different curriculum areas. Attendance was good in basic skills lessons, but poor in science and mathematics, construction, performing arts and humanities. The standard of students' specialist subject work is commented on in detail in Part C of this report.

Quality of education and training



9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 417 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 64% of these, satisfactory in 27% and less than satisfactory in 9%. Learning was good or better in 62% of lessons, satisfactory in 29% and unsatisfactory in 10%. Teaching and learning for adults was better than for students aged 16 to 18. The teaching in 69% of lessons for adults was good or better, compared with 61% in lessons for students aged 16 to 18. The quality of learning showed a similar pattern. The best teaching and learning were on level 3 courses and the highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning were on level 1 courses.

10. The quality of teaching and learning varies widely between curriculum areas. The best is in basic skills, where the teaching and learning were good or better in 83% of lessons. There is also a high proportion of good teaching and learning in visual and performing arts, construction, media and print. The weakest teaching was in business and in the discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

11. In the lessons which were good or better, careful planning ensured that students undertook stimulating activities which matched their individual needs and interests. Teachers of basic skills were particularly adept in motivating students to learn in this way. In some vocational areas of learning, the theory lessons were closely linked to practical lessons so that they complemented each other. This was particularly evident in engineering and in media and print. Standards of teaching and the quality of learning in practical lessons were high in construction courses. Media and print practical lessons were well designed and stimulating. In engineering, hospitality and catering, and computing, students' learning was helped by a wide variety of good learning materials. Projects and assignment briefs in visual and performing arts were well designed to challenge and motivate students. There was some stimulating teaching in humanities.

12. In unsatisfactory lessons, teachers did not sufficiently match their teaching to the needs of different students. They did not ensure that all students took part in the lesson, too often directing questions to the class as a whole with the result that only the more able or articulate students responded. There was insufficient use of materials designed to cater for students' differing needs. In some cases, written feedback on students' work did not give them sufficient guidance as to how they could improve. Overall, theory lessons were less effective than practical sessions. In the poorer theory lessons, teachers failed to check students' understanding, and the teaching was uninspiring. There was insufficient use of IT in humanities, ESOL, science and mathematics.

13. There is variation in the quality and success in the teaching of key skills. In some curriculum areas, key skills are successfully integrated into other parts of the students' learning programmes and in these instances the programmes work well. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, for example, key skills are well linked to occupational skills. However, in the majority of courses, key skills are not fully integrated into the work in this way. Opportunities for the identification and assessment of key skills are often missed in both work-based training and college courses. Students do not see the key skills element of their programmes as relevant or important.

14. Most teachers have appropriate academic or vocational qualifications. Some 69% have recognised teaching qualifications. The college makes extensive use of teaching staff who are either part time or on fractional contracts. These staff teach over 40% of lessons, but only a small percentage have teaching qualifications. Staff development is closely linked to the college's strategic objectives and staff appraisal. It is well managed and opportunities for staff training are good. An organisational and management development group keeps the needs of the college under review. Since the merger, the college has introduced comprehensive management development programmes for all middle and senior managers. Training is also provided for first-line supervisors. Priorities for staff development include improving the teaching quality and performance of staff, especially their use of IT. However, professional development has yet to have a sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning in some areas. Arrangements for staff to update their

specific subject knowledge and skills are less developed.

15. During the last two years the college has invested significantly in IT facilities. Well-equipped learning resource centres have been established on all four campuses and IT training rooms are available for staff development. Since 1999, the number of computers available on a drop-in basis has increased from 75 to 236. The specification of equipment is high and there is an appropriate replacement policy. Student surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction with the availability of equipment and the level of service provided. However, access to computers is limited or non-existent in many of the outreach centres used by the college. Library facilities at all four campuses are good, with an appropriate range of specialist books, periodicals and CD-ROMs. There are library web pages on the college's intranet that include links to electronic databases, newspapers and dictionaries and a helpful range of support guides for using the library resources. A special library for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties has been established at Leicester Frith Hospital outreach centre.

16. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment report that much of its accommodation is of poor quality. Some classrooms and workshops are cramped and poorly maintained. There is little use of room displays to reinforce learning in some curriculum areas. Accommodation at many outreach centres does not provide a suitable learning environment. Almost a third of the college's accommodation is not accessible by users of wheelchairs. The college has consulted widely with students and staff to develop a comprehensive accommodation strategy to address these issues.

17. Over the past two years the college has introduced a range of policies and procedures covering assessment and verification. The degree to which these have been implemented varies across the college. Assessment is generally well planned, as demonstrated, for example, in the areas of hairdressing, hospitality and print. When questioned in a college survey, 80% of learners expressed satisfaction with assessment-related activity. Most courses employ a broad range of assessment methods, successfully linking theory and practical work. The college is exploring new assessment methods such as peer assessment and self-assessment by learners.

18. The quality of assessment differs across and often within the areas of learning. Well-designed and challenging assessment is found, for example, in print and basic skills lessons. On some courses, assessment is thorough, but on others there is no clear distinction between assessment and teaching. Grading criteria are inadequately explained to students. Some students are unclear about the assessment process. Others receive insufficient formative assessment, and in some areas, assessment is not specifically designed to meet their needs. The college has identified the need to develop assessment further and to share existing good practice. Staff development activity has already taken place and more is planned. The quality of feedback given to students following assessments varies. In sport and leisure and computing and IT for example, some students receive descriptive feedback that does not set new targets. Many work-based trainees have an inadequate understanding of the progress they have made towards their qualifications, often overestimating their progress, particularly in relation to key skills.

19. Most students receive an assessment of their basic skills needs before starting their college programme. The use made of initial assessment results varies. For example, students on ESOL programmes often receive an insufficiently detailed assessment and, when planning learning, little use is made of the information generated. There is very little accreditation of prior learning or achievement. Insufficient use is made of workplace assessment opportunities. There are few work-based assessors for modern apprentices. For most work-based trainees, access to assessment is limited to term times. The pace of assessment is slow on several vocational programmes, for example hair and beauty, print and construction. Students are often demotivated by their apparent lack of progress.

20. Internal verification procedures introduced during 2000/01 are rigorous, but the degree to which procedures are followed is inconsistent between curriculum teams. Where the new arrangements are followed, they are effective and in the areas of construction, visual and performing arts and hairdressing, have resulted in improved assessment. External verifiers' comments are closely monitored and followed up by college managers and curriculum teams. The quality of the monitoring of students' progress varies across the college. Records of assessment are kept within all schools.

Progress is monitored against assessment plans both by course teams and curriculum managers, and used in their development planning. Some documents used to record assessments are poorly completed.

21. The college sends regular progress reports to employers of trainees on most work-based programmes. Employers value this formal feedback. Most schools send reports to students and their parents where appropriate. However, some reports contain little meaningful information.

22. The college provides an extensive range of learning programmes from entry to HE levels. The curriculum spans all the major areas of learning. There are, for example, over 20 GCE A and AS-level subjects, 60 NVQ programmes, ESOL provision operating at 9 different levels and, 8 separate access routes into FE or HE. HE programmes account for over 800 learners; foundation degrees are offered in sciences, engineering and audio technology. Enrolments are now expanding as the new college establishes itself, reversing a declining trend during the previous year. Overall, in 2001, enrolments have grown by 20% from 2000. Significant long-term expansion has occurred in adult basic education where numbers have grown by over 70% during the last four years. In ESOL, there are now nearly 5,000 learners compared to 1,600 in 1997/98.

23. Flexible modes of study are possible in many curriculum areas. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, for example, students can negotiate their learning hours and times according to individual circumstances. Salons are open throughout the year. Practical work can be undertaken during the day, during the evening or at weekends. Many of the NVQ programmes provide flexible entry points throughout the year. Programmes of study, particularly at entry level, can be undertaken on one of the main college sites or at the large number of community locations throughout the city. The employment, education and training access centre, for example, provides a range of introductory courses in six centres across the city.

24. Some gaps in provision remain. There are no vocational programmes in science; the range in business is particularly narrow. The college recognises that for adults returning to learn there has been insufficient progression from entry-level courses, and is developing a new college-wide foundation programme with a variety of vocational options. Recruitment is declining in some vocational areas, for example, media and print. Enrichment activities have been extensively mapped across the college; a new tutorial record form provides space to list the enrichment activities each student takes part in. The range of activities offered varies considerably between the different curriculum schools.

25. The college is very responsive to the local and wider community through the development of a large number of socially inclusive community partnerships. In total, there are links with 131 organisations or institutions. Most are in areas which experience high levels of deprivation. Examples of some innovative partnerships include the link with the city council to provide education and training for over 700 asylum seekers during the last year. A partnership with the private sector to renovate a former convent into a large conference centre is allowing students in construction, crafts trades, interior design and photography to practise their skills in a real commercial environment, resulting in a good quality training facility for community use. Some good contacts exist with employers. The national print-skills centre runs a large number of short, professional, full-cost courses for the industry. In the school of hospitality and catering, links with over 30 companies facilitate the acquisition of NVQs by employees in the work place. Not all employer advisory boards have been active; in business and computing, for example, the first meeting is scheduled, but has yet to take place. Links with local schools provide over 1,600 pupils with 'taster' programmes in different academic and vocational areas; over 30 excluded pupils are being educated at the college. Leicester College is an associate college of De Montfort University; over 400 students study HE programmes accredited by the University.

26. Student support and guidance are well managed and co-ordinated centrally by the student services department. Students value the advice and guidance they receive particularly on financial and welfare issues. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and the various parts of the service work closely together to ensure that the needs of learners are met. The service is well advertised through colourful easily readable leaflets and is clearly signposted throughout the college. There are common procedures and policies across all campuses, but the delivery of the service is less

consistent. Students at the main campuses and those on full-time courses are better served than those at outreach centres and work-based and evening-class students. Evening services have been piloted at the main centres and support staff travel to other sites to meet students on an appointment basis. Childcare support is available for students at the main campuses and those on outreach provision.

27. Senior managers demonstrate their commitment to this area through increased financial support, which has resulted in the appointment of a greater number of support staff. The department is self-critical and is committed to continuous improvement. Detailed reviews of some aspects of the department's work have been undertaken including the interview and admissions process and tutorial and learning support. Further reviews are planned. Action plans have been developed and many improvements put in place. The college seeks to ensure that course advice is accurate and impartial. Changes have been made to the interview and admissions process, which will enable the college to place students on appropriate courses more accurately. This improvement has not yet been evaluated.

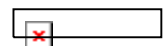
28. All students undertake a Basic Skills Agency (BSA) assessment as part of the selection process. The results of this test are used to identify the courses where additional learning support is needed. Learning support tutors are now timetabled to classes at the start of course. There has been a considerable increase in the availability of learning support in September 2001, and many more students benefit from the service by having their needs identified and met. The quality of learning support is variable: in the best examples learning support tutors work closely with teachers to plan learning activities. Learning support is not positively promoted among students of all abilities as a way of improving their chance of success. Support for students with learning disabilities is excellent. Needs are identified where possible before enrolment. There are strong and effective links with local and national support agencies and many students are being well supported to complete their studies.

29. The college has produced good resources for tutorial and careers guidance which are available to tutors. A series of staff development events have been offered to support staff in the use of these materials and to inform them of changes to the support and guidance arrangements. Attendance at these events has not been compulsory and some staff are not well informed about the developments. The quality of tutorials is variable.

30. An active student liaison team provides sports and social activities, advocacy support and training for student course representatives on the board of governors and other college committees.

31. Monitoring of the quality of the student support service is insufficiently rigorous. The college evaluates improvement through student satisfaction surveys and focus groups, but there is limited use of observation and other data to bring about improvement. As a result the policies and procedures such as attendance and punctuality monitoring are not fully implemented.

Leadership and management



32. Managers and governors have managed the merger of the two colleges well. The principal gives strong leadership. Her views are respected and trusted by staff, governors and the local community. Since its formation in August 1999, the college has increased its student numbers, invested in new resources, developed a well-considered accommodation strategy and improved the performance of its students. Community-based centres provide students who would not have previously considered entering FE with good opportunities to do so. Links with external organisations are extensive. The college has addressed many of the weaknesses identified through inspection of the two former colleges. However, a number of management actions are too recent for their effectiveness to be measured.

33. Communications across the college are good. Six values displayed prominently in each building, steer the way managers and governors work. Staff consider managers to be open, honest and receptive to new ideas. They were encouraged to suggest how new accommodation could best meet the needs of their students. Teamwork between teaching and support staff is well established. For example, a working group of teaching and support staff considered how absenteeism, enrolment and study skills affected retention and pass rates, their findings led to improvements in tutorial processes and the follow up of absences. The principal meets with staff regularly and keeps them well informed about the future direction of the college. Staff value the opportunity to discuss issues informally with her at weekly breakfast meetings. Members of the executive routinely attend school meetings.

34. Part-time staff and those on fractional appointments teach a very high percentage of lessons. The college recognises that many do not receive sufficient support. Communications with these staff are less effective. Arrangements to support their attendance at meetings and other events vary between curriculum areas. The majority do not attend course team meetings. The annual appraisal process does not cover all part-time staff. Some staff cannot easily gain access to college resources.

35. Individual management roles and responsibilities are clear, although college policies and procedures are not always implemented, nor compliance monitored. In many areas, effective curriculum management has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements. However, teachers of similar subjects do not always communicate well with each other or share good practice. In most programme areas, modern apprenticeship training is poorly managed and co-ordinated. There is little work-based assessment and trainee reviews lack rigour. The management of the business curriculum area is poor.

36. External partnerships are well managed. A project co-ordinator visits all outreach centres to ensure compliance with the college's quality assurance arrangements. However, management responsibilities for partnership provision are complex. Some centres operate in relative isolation, with few links between their staff and those based at the college's sites. This limits the sharing of materials, ideas and best practice.

37. The annual self-assessment process is comprehensive. Each course team and support service department produces a detailed report that includes progress against the previous year's action plan. Managers validate each report. Governors also attend some validation events. The grades awarded by the college in its self-assessment report are sound and staff at all levels of the college are committed to continuous improvements through a self-critical culture. Views of students and staff are sought wherever possible and carefully analysed. For example, a staff survey and a twice-yearly culture survey instituted at the time of the merger are now used to benchmark the quality of communications across the college. Some areas of the support service use staff surveys to receive feedback on the quality of their services. In 2001, 70 students were trained by the student liaison team to act as representatives on course teams. The college introduced an employers' survey for the first time in 2001, but it does not survey the views of parents. A panel led by the principal and the director of quality, formally review curriculum and support areas causing concern. Action plans are produced and external consultants are used where poor grades are awarded. However, although all teams review progress against their action plans at least three times during the year, the monitoring is not rigorous in all areas.

38. Lesson observation to help identify an individual's training needs as part of staff appraisal is well established. However, the system does not cover all staff regularly, or include learning on employers' premises. The outcomes of lesson observations are not sufficiently used to identify and improve the quality of teaching for different types of qualification, level or age of students, nor are they used to share good teaching practice across the college. Lesson observations do not inform judgements about the quality of tutorial support.

39. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The college is strongly committed to widening participation in FE and training. The ethnicity of the student population and the staff profile reflect that of the community. Data are being increasingly used to inform effectively developments. The college has successfully developed provision for asylum seekers; in 2000/01, over 700 enrolled.

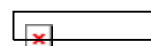
Many curriculum areas run school-link programmes and several provide for disaffected students. The college has devised courses in mendhi for local Asian women and a programme for travelling showmen. Curriculum areas are required to identify how they have amended their provision to take into account cultural diversity. However, only new staff must attend awareness raising sessions. Some college literature is not accessible in relevant community languages.

40. Management information data are not sufficiently reliable, partly because of problems in merging data from the two former colleges. Inspectors were unable to rely on some of the data provided. Data held by curriculum teams often differs from that held centrally. Many of the achievement data for work-based trainees were inaccurate. Programme teams cannot always easily obtain regular, prompt and accurate reports on attendance, retention rates and achievement by course. Some managers do not make full use of the reports and data available. Target setting is well established at college and faculty level, but is not used sufficiently at school and course levels to improve students' performance.

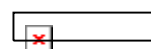
41. Governors work well with managers to set clear strategic objectives. They monitor progress towards the objectives closely. To help themselves understand the educational performance of the college individual governors observe internal reviews and self-assessment validation. Governors spend a considerable amount of time attending corporation meetings and attending college events, such as awards ceremonies and student productions. They receive detailed reports on charter compliance, the views of students and staff and the performance of external partnerships. However, although governors receive a large amount of information on the college's performance, they acknowledge the need to improve their understanding of community issues and the work of individual curriculum areas.

42. Financial management is sound. Operational plans are carefully costed. Budget holders receive regular reports on income and expenditure. Teachers' workloads are carefully monitored to ensure they use their time efficiently. The college is introducing systems to ensure the efficient deployment of resources, but is not yet able to determine whether individual courses offer good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good team management
- well-equipped science provision
- good student progression

- effective use of workshops to support individual needs.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on some courses
- insufficient development of key skills
- some poor attendance
- insufficient learning material for students to work independently.

Scope of provision

43. There is a broad range of academic courses at intermediate and advanced level in science and mathematics. Students can study GCSE and GCE A and AS-level biology, human biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics both full-time and part-time. GCE A-level sciences are provided through one-year intensive courses or two-year courses with GCE AS-level examinations at the end of the first year. GCE A-level human biology and mathematics courses are offered in the evening. GCE AS-level mathematics is a popular choice as an additional subject for many students. City and Guilds numeracy is also provided. There are science access courses and extended degree programmes offering adults progression to HE. However, there are no vocational science courses. Over 200 students study for GCSE qualifications and over 70 students study one or more advanced courses. In response to local demand, the college runs courses for young Muslim women.

Achievement and standards

44. Retention rates in most subjects are consistently above the national average. The pass rate on GCE A-level physics is well above the national average, but is significantly below in chemistry and biology. In GCE A-level physics and human biology, few students achieve high grades. Pass rates in GCSE human biology are good, but they are poor in other science subjects. In 2000, only approximately a quarter of GCSE mathematics students achieved a grade C or above, but this had improved significantly in 2001. The pass rate in GCSE mathematics is now about the average for general FE colleges. There has been a similar improvement in physics, and the number of students studying GCSE physics has also increased. Most students taking City and Guilds numeracy, access and foundation courses are successful. Pass rates in the new GCE AS-level examinations in summer 2001, were poor in mathematics and physics.

45. Students are attentive and take notes in lessons, but many have limited ability in critical evaluation, planning and study skills. Little use is made of value added data to help students improve their standard of work. There is little integration of application of number and other key skills into students' academic subjects, and attendance at separate key skills lessons is poor. Overall attendance on science and mathematics courses is 75%, well below the college target.

There are some very small classes. Progression to HE is good. Over 90% of successful students aged 16 to 18 progress to degrees in science-related subjects or employment. Most mature students completing access programmes progress to HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
City and Guilds numeracy	1	No. of starts	71	85	89
		% retention	88	87	94
		% pass rate	100	98	98
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	343	282	220
		% retention	84	56	78
		% pass rate	18	27	27
GCSE human biology	2	No. of starts	63	47	44
		% retention	70	59	75
		% pass rate	39	56	48
GCE A-level mathematics 1 year	3	No. of starts	58	78	33
		% retention	86	73	70
		% pass rate	14	22	48
GCE A-level chemistry 1 year	3	No. of starts	14	20	16
		% retention	79	65	88
		% pass rate	45	69	57
GCE A-level biology 1 year	3	No. of starts	34	22	16
		% retention	91	67	94
		% pass rate	73	64	57

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

Quality of education and training

46. Teachers prepare detailed schemes of work, which show links between topics, homework tasks and opportunities for key skills development. The majority of lessons are satisfactory or better. In most lessons, teachers give clear explanations and set appropriate tasks. In the good lessons, students participate in a variety of short and focused activities. They learn effectively through much group work and discussion. In a biology lesson, students studying diffusion predicted how a dye would diffuse in water and then planned a simple experiment to test their ideas. They shared their observations with each other. In a physics lesson, students working together designed an experiment to measure the effect of radiation on a photosensitive surface. They worked well and productively together with the teacher needing to make only occasional suggestions to help them to make progress. In the poorer lessons, the tasks set do not interest and motivate the students. They are not sufficiently challenging. In one poor lesson, students were copying from the overhead projector, they failed to listen to the teacher's instructions and therefore were unable to complete the experiments. Many teachers use questioning techniques which do not allow students to develop their ideas or learn from other students. In many lessons, checks on students' understanding are not systematic. Sometimes teachers fail to adjust the level of work to suit the different abilities of the students in the group. Many of the poorer lessons lack variety to sustain the students' interest. In some, little attention is paid to developing the broader key skills in communication and problem solving. Little use is made of IT in lessons and few opportunities are taken to integrate the

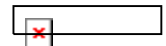
development of key skills. Key skills are delivered in separate lessons and seen by many students as irrelevant. Teachers systematically set and mark homework. Some of the written feedback on students' marked work lacks sufficient detail to help them to improve. Effective use is made of workshops to support individual students' needs. They attend workshops where teachers encourage them and work with them to overcome their particular weaknesses in mathematics or science. The workshops contain some useful learning materials. However, there is not enough material and IT software to cover all topics, or to support students who wish to study on their own.

47. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and take part in regular professional development. They are developing skills in the use of IT in the delivery of the curriculum. There is good technical support. Both theory and practical science is taught in well-equipped laboratories. The seating is uncomfortable for long theory lessons. Some mathematics lessons are taught in classrooms which are poorly equipped with no access to IT, practical equipment or useful wall displays.

Leadership and management

48. Curriculum management has improved. The school is rigorous in its self-assessment. It has an effective action plan to address the weaknesses identified. Part of this action has been to introduce training for staff to use IT within the curriculum. There is effective teamwork and sharing of good practice. Improvements are evident in the increased pass rates in GCSE mathematics. New staff receive a comprehensive induction. There is effective internal verification on those courses where it is a requirement of the awarding body.

Computing and IT



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on GNVQ foundation, national diploma and IBT 2 courses
- effective teaching on most specialist computer programming courses
- good specialist resources and learning materials
- good student progression through a wide range of available courses
- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on GNVQ advanced ICT
- insufficient account taken of the range of abilities within groups of learners
- some uninspiring lessons
- insufficient use made of initial diagnostic testing for key skills
- lack of support of part-time teachers.

Scope of provision

49. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time computing and IT courses. Enrolments on many courses increased in the current year after a declining trend over the previous three years. Full-time provision includes: GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses in IT; the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in ICT; the national diploma in computing and an access to HE course in IT. Part-time provision includes the European computer driving licence (ECDL), computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), visual basic, advanced Internet; and e-commerce and computing for beginners. Part-time courses are delivered both in the college and at several outreach centres in the community.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates on many full-time computing courses are good. For example, the GNVQ foundation IT and the national diploma in computing had pass rates of 85% and 93% respectively in 2000, and pass rates on the City and Guilds 7261 course have been significantly higher than national averages for the last two years. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced IT course, however, are poor. Retention rates for the GNVQ foundation course and for most part-time courses are good.

51. Many students have well-developed practical skills. Almost all demonstrate competent use of the Internet to research projects and assignments. Students are able to work well at their own pace from workbooks and from tasks set by teachers. Many students progress to higher-level courses within college. For example, in 2000, 75% of GNVQ foundation students advanced to the intermediate course. Students progress through a wide range of available courses and access to free courses at outreach centres increases participation. Some of the project work produced by full-time students is imaginative in content. In a few classes, students were eating and drinking at their workstations despite clear warning notices in every room asking them not to.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and IT, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	40	55	31
		% retention	63	82	90

		% pass rate	44	53	85
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	*	508	273
		% retention	*	79	84
		% pass rate	*	57	69
IBT 2 short	2	No. of starts	240	452	322
		% retention	93	91	94
		% pass rate	53	62	67
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	19	72	48
		% retention	95	79	79
		% pass rate	28	64	62
GNVQ advanced IT	3	No. of starts	*	48	**
		% retention	*	88	**
		% pass rate	*	61	69
National Diploma in computing	3	No. of starts	69	65	**
		% retention	84	77	**
		% pass rate	87	69	93

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

* data unavailable

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

52. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. The teaching and learning on most specialist programming courses are good. Teachers often use examples from their own industrial experience to illustrate lessons, which is especially beneficial to vocational students. In one lesson, a teacher clearly demonstrated the need for maintaining programmers' test logs based on his experiences with a large software development company. In most lessons, teachers give good clear explanations of programming concepts and terminology. In a communications skills lesson, the students were asked to construct a crossword grid using computer-related technical terms and to make up clues as explanations. Teachers facilitate learning well during lessons where students are involved in project work or in using workbooks. However, in many lessons, teachers do not take into account the wide range of the students' abilities. Often, the same exercise is set for the whole class and students who are already familiar with the topic achieve little. Some lessons are uninspiring and suffer from a lack of variety in teaching styles. The brighter students find some lessons boring. Some students are not able to plan their time effectively over the year as they do not receive assignment schedules. Frequently there is insufficient written feedback on students' work for them to know how to improve. Whilst in some courses all staff are involved in internal verification activities each term, on others, verification of assignment briefs and assessments is left until the end. This lack of consistency has led to a significant problem remaining undetected for one cohort of students.

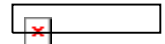
53. All students undertake a basic skills test and a diagnostic key skills test at the beginning of their studies. The results of these tests do not inform individual learning plans. Support workers are available in some sessions where there is an identified need. However, individual students are not aware of the role of central learning support services and how to use them. Support in key skills does not always meet individual needs. Some group tutorials are not effective. Reviews recorded during individual tutorials are frequently too brief and do not set action plans with clear targets for achievement. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are not regularly informed about their progress.

54. Computer hardware and software have been updated to meet industrial standards and programming and web development software have recently been acquired. Students have good access to computer rooms and a new room has recently been equipped in response to increased enrolments. Currently, no user areas are available on the network for students to save their work, necessitating the continual use of floppy disks. There are too few data projectors to allow staff and students to make electronic presentations and demonstrations.

Leadership and management

55. The curriculum area is well managed. Regular team meetings are held, and action is minuted. However, there are large numbers of part-time staff within the school and some are not briefed effectively for the sessions they teach. Action plans, arising from the school and course self-assessment process, contain strategies for improvement and are monitored regularly: pass and retention rates have recently improved. However, insufficient attention is paid to the quality of teaching, learning and support for the individual learner.

Construction



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on level 3 courses
- high levels of retention
- much good teaching
- high standards of students' practical work
- good student portfolios
- productive employer links.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in plumbing
- low attendance rates on full-time courses
- poor written feedback on students' work
- poor achievement on modern apprenticeships.

Scope of provision

56. The college offers a broad range of construction courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These include craft and technician courses and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. Specialist provision includes NVQs in gas installation, wood machining and flooring. The college is a designated Unibond centre of excellence. It is used to train industry-based staff in floor-covering techniques. Students can attend for full-time, day or block release and evening courses. In 2001, the college enrolled over 1,600 students on construction courses, of which 410 study full-time. There are 170 work-based trainees on modern apprenticeships.

Achievement and standards

57. Pass rates on level 3 courses are good. They are particularly high on both technician and carpentry and joinery courses. Pass rates for the GNVQ foundation built environment course improved significantly in 2000. However, pass rates for NVQ plumbing are poor and well below national averages. Few trainees successfully complete their modern apprenticeships. Retention rates on most courses are good and consistently above national averages. Students produce good quality practical work. For example, students working mostly independently on a new first year carpentry and joinery course were able to produce work to accurate tolerances, well above the expected level for the stage of the course. In painting and decorating, students work on a range of practical activities in wallpaper hanging, surface preparation and finishes. All display high levels of skill while working on their tasks. New plumbing students accurately produced a pipe work assembly free from defect, and then tested the product to industrial standards. Standards of students' work in portfolios are also high. They are often well presented and contain well-drawn and annotated sketches enhanced by the use of IT. The attendance rate of 59% on full-time courses is poor and well below the national average.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation in built environment	1	No. of starts	74	163	150
		% retention	76	87	97
		% pass rate	25	24	61
NVQ plumbing	2	No. of starts	66	49	18
		% retention	91	80	83
		% pass rate	35	59	23

City and Guilds 2360 in electrical installation part 2	2	No. of starts	48	59	59
		% retention	85	92	90
		% pass rate	45	63	56
NVQ painting and decorating	2	No. of starts	20	11	9
		% retention	100	55	89
		% pass rate	55	67	89
National diploma and certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	**	30	**
		% retention	**	83	**
		% pass rate	**	90	100
NVQ wood occupation	3	No. of starts	46	44	**
		% retention	87	95	**
		% pass rate	75	95	82

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

58. Most teaching is good or very good. Some 74% of lessons were good or better. None was less than satisfactory. Lesson plans and schemes of work are well designed and meet course requirements. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of students' industrial experience to illustrate important points and promote discussion. Good reference is made to relevant codes of practice, British standards and technical journals. Teachers check students' understanding regularly. The standard of practical work is generally good. Realistic practical projects are set, students work to industrial standards and they are encouraged to observe safe working practices. During lessons, students receive good individual guidance from teachers, who maintain their interest and help them to make progress. In some of the weaker theory lessons, the pace is too slow. Teachers do not always take sufficient account of the different abilities of the students in the group. They do not check regularly whether all students have understood. In one lesson, the teacher spent too much time explaining the main purpose of the activity. At the end of the lesson, some students had not produced what was required, while the work of others was incorrect. Some of the assignments on the national diploma course are too easy. They do not provide tasks which require students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge at an appropriate standard for the level of the course. The quality of marking of assignments is variable. Teachers sometimes apply different criteria for grading. Teachers' comments and feedback to students on their written work are insufficiently detailed to help them to improve their performance. The poorest examples of assessed portfolio work only contain a series of ticks with few summary comments.

59. There are strong links between college staff and employers. Students undertaking work experience benefit from these strong links. For example, full-time construction students are working on a major refurbishment project involving a charitable organisation and a main contractor. Through these arrangements, students gain reliable experience of real work activities. Although employers on work-based programmes provide a wide range of training opportunities for skills development in the workplace, their understanding of NVQ requirements is poor. Few employers are aware that assessment can take place at work. Work-based training programmes are not successful.

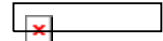
60. All full-time students have an induction which effectively introduces them to the college and their courses. Tutorial support for full-time students is good and students appreciate the support they are given. Recently, tutorials have been introduced for part-time students, but it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

61. Teachers are well qualified. They have relevant prior industrial experience. However, too few undertake industrial updating. Technical support is not always adequate. The construction area has a range of workshops, a laboratory and adequate computing facilities providing access to specialist software. The workshops have sufficient materials and equipment. The library has adequate books for construction crafts but too few suitable texts for the national diploma courses.

Leadership and management

62. Construction provision in the college is well managed. Self-assessment is rigorous. Issues raised are acted upon and progress is monitored. Students attend regular course team meetings to express views about the quality of the teaching and learning. There is insufficient sharing of good practice. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of work-based learning are inadequate. There is little co-ordination of on and off-the-job training.

Engineering



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory (grade 4)

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- good progression through a wide range of courses
- effective targeting of community and industrial groups and schools
- good linking of theory and practical activities in lessons
- high quality learning material
- effective use of computer-based software packages in electronics.

Weaknesses

- failure to check students' understanding in many theory lessons

- poor achievements for work-based trainees
- inadequate work-based reviews.

Scope of provision

63. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. Manufacturing courses include fabrication and welding, production engineering and hydraulics. There are automotive engineering courses in vehicle maintenance, body repair, paint refinishing and auto electronics. Electrical and electronics courses include computer systems engineering, computer maintenance and access to HE. There are 55 modern apprentices on work-based training programmes. The school has productive and well-established links with local industry and schools. It has developed an engineering programme for Year 11 pupils, and there is a course designed to encourage girls into engineering. Year 9 girls from four schools attend the college for an intensive engineering experience. There is an ongoing training programme in engineering maintenance for the staff of a large food manufacturer. For FE teachers nationally, the college provides a residential automotive electronics summer school.

Achievement and standards

64. Three quarters of engineering courses have pass rates which exceed national averages. Pass rates at level 1 and level 3 are variable but frequently exceed national averages. A number of courses at level 2 exceed the national averages by a very substantial margin. The City and Guilds level 1 course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has a high pass rate and some of these students progress onto motor vehicle courses. Retention rates at all levels have generally exceeded national averages. Most students are well motivated and enjoy their studies. They are effective in taking responsibility for their own learning and develop good practical skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
City and Guilds 2010 basic engineering	1	No. of starts	41	55	19
		% retention	76	82	74
		% pass rate	94	97	85
GNVQ intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	16	17	12
		% retention	88	71	100
		% pass rate	58	50	70
City and Guilds 2290 welding/fabricating	2	No. of starts	22	31	15
		% retention	95	77	100
		% pass rate	86	77	80
City and Guilds 2280 production engineering	2	No. of starts	17	44	17
		% retention	88	95	94
		% pass rate	86	93	80

National certificate mechanical engineering	3	No. of starts	39	35	36
		% retention	85	89	92
		% pass rate	73	92	93
City and Guilds 3810 motor vehicle	3	No. of starts	16	11	17
		% retention	81	73	94
		% pass rate	77	75	63

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

Quality of education and training

65. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed. Lessons are well organised. Teachers prepare good quality support materials pitched at an appropriate level. Theory and practical activities are well linked. This engages the students' interest and helps them to learn by putting theory into practice. In one electronics lesson, students discussed motor control circuits. They were then supplied with circuit boards, each one of which had a different fault for the students to find. Some electronic engineering students were given an integrated assignment where they had to determine circuit values through calculation by practical means and by computer simulation. On completion, they produced a typed report and gave a presentation using PowerPoint. Key skills form an integral part of assignments. Teachers offer helpful, specific support for individual students during lessons. In many lessons, however, insufficient use is made of targeted questioning to check whether the students understand the topics. Some lesson objectives are too ambitious and the work set is at an inappropriate level. Assignments do not always cater for the extremely wide range of academic ability of the students in the group.

66. The college's engineering schools are linked to ten local secondary schools via video conferencing. Two-dimensional and three-dimensional components are designed in the schools using a computer-aided design package and downloaded to the college manufacturing centre where the component is produced. Full-time students undertake work experience. Enrichment activities are sometimes available. Some students visited Russia to take part in an international engineering competition.

67. Work-based trainees receive good practical tuition when they attend college on a day-release basis. Modern apprentices are visited regularly at the workplace by a training support officer who carries out reviews of progress. Records of these reviews contain insufficient details of trainees' progress and fail to identify what needs to be done for the apprentice to improve. All assessments for trainees on NVQ level 3 courses are carried out at the workplace. A good range of assessment methods is used, including direct observation, photographs and witness testimonies. However, there is little or no co-ordination between the assessors' visits and those by the training support officer. Internal verification processes are poor. Employers have little knowledge of NVQs and assessment procedures.

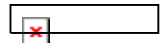
68. Students receive regular tutorial support. Students find their tutors helpful and friendly. Tutors keep good records of tutorial activity and students' progress. However, setting targets to improve students' achievements is limited. A large number of students need additional learning support to help them to achieve. Learning support assistants are used effectively in lessons to provide help for those identified as needing it.

69. Teachers are suitably experienced and qualified. Many are multi-skilled. Students benefit from using an excellent, new motor vehicle body and paint workshop which replicates current industrial standards. The college provides two fully equipped motor vehicle workshops and a range of laboratories and classrooms; computer software for investigation of electronic circuit performance; good hydraulic and pneumatic equipment and a modern video conference link. The resources for mechanical engineering are adequate although some of the equipment is old. Some resources, however, are poor and are inadequately maintained.

Leadership and management

70. College-based courses are well managed. A positive approach, and effective targeting of the provision, has widened participation in engineering for groups traditionally under-represented in FE. Opportunities have also been created to assist local industries to increase the skills base of their workforces. The modern apprenticeship programme is poorly managed. Responsibilities for the management of the work-based programmes are unclear. On these programmes, equal opportunities in the workplace are not monitored and quality assurance procedures are not effective.

Business



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and advanced business courses
- good and improving retention rates on some courses
- effective support for students
- good support materials for learners.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on a significant number of courses
- lessons that fail to challenge or engage students
- lack of work placement for NVQ level 2 and 3 accounting students
- ineffective internal verification

- weak curriculum management
- narrow range of professional courses
- declining provision in several areas.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers full-time courses in business at GNVQ foundation and intermediate levels, together with an AVCE at level 3. There are accounting courses at levels 2 to 4 and an access to HE business programme. The college's provision in accounting is large, with programmes delivered on a full-time, part-time and evening basis. However, the range of professional courses available is very narrow and is not meeting the needs identified in an analysis of local business skills shortages. Within the administration programme both full-time and part-time recruitment has declined significantly over the last three years.

Achievement and standards

72. Achievement at many levels in business has been consistently poor. During the period 1997 to 1999 there have been poor pass rates in the access to business, supervisory management and accounting courses. However, in 2000, pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and GNVQ advanced business improved to above national averages. Retention rates have also improved on the advanced programme, and on courses in book-keeping, computerised accounts, GCSE accounts and the college's access to business course. There have been consistently high retention rates on the NVQ accounting level 3 programme. The full-time NVQ accounting programmes do not provide students with work placements, resulting in difficulties in generating appropriate portfolio evidence for the qualification. Some part-time NVQ accounting students also lack applied skills as a result of their limited opportunities for work experience.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	15	34	37
		% retention	47	85	68
		% pass rate	86	66	96
NVQ administration 1 year	2	No. of starts	131	81	78
		% retention	73	84	74
		% pass rate	71	72	52
NVQ foundation accounting	2	No. of starts	12	63	66
		% retention	75	77	77
		% pass rate	22	61	51
NVQ intermediate	3	No. of starts	106	66	50

accounting 1 year		% retention	84	85	92
		% pass rate	28	31	33
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	62	69	**
		% retention	73	86	**
		% pass rate	50	56	95
Access to HE (business)	3	No. of starts	26	33	29
		% retention	69	61	83
		% pass rate	72	90	57

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

** data not reliable

Quality of education and training

73. There is some poor and unsatisfactory teaching on accounting and GNVQ courses. Teaching is often dull and uninspiring; it lacks sufficient pace and variety to sustain the interest of all learners. In one lesson, more able students had to wait up to 20 minutes for the whole group to complete set work before they could continue their learning. In another, students with personal experience of the advantages and disadvantages of sole trader operations saw this being totally unrecognised by the teacher. Business administration lessons are well structured; teachers use a variety of teaching techniques which sustain students' interest and motivation. There is active student participation in all administration and most GNVQ lessons through discussions and the teachers' use of questions. In other lessons, both in accounting and key skills, there were insufficient checks on students' learning. In better lessons, teachers have high expectations of all learners, and use learning materials that address ethnic diversity. For instance, in one lesson, the teacher prepared an activity requiring students to prepare a series of invoices for different business customers reflecting the significant Asian business community within the City of Leicester. In one AVCE lesson, good use was made of advisors from Young Enterprise to develop students' interest and enthusiasm. Links with schools and colleges in mainland Europe are good. GNVQ, AVCE and administration learners receive good verbal and written feedback during lessons and in tutorials. Detailed marking of grammar and punctuation is provided on all students' written work in administration. Internal verification is ineffective on accounting and key skills programmes.

74. Tutorial provision for students is generally good. The provision of additional learning support is inconsistent. All full-time and substantial part-time learners undertake initial diagnostic testing for literacy and numeracy, but the data obtained are not always used effectively to address their learning needs. Effective individual tracking on administration programmes has resulted in some level 2 administration students being transferred to the level 1 course. The college recognises the need to improve its arrangements for reporting sponsored students' progress to employers.

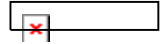
75. All programmes lack commercial and industrial updating for full-time teachers. Appropriate staff development has been carried out recently within the administration team in order to deliver the new NVQ standards. Teaching rooms are adequate, but can be untidy and uncomfortable in the evenings, where class sizes are large and ventilation is inadequate. Rooms used for GNVQ and AVCE programmes are drab and lack wall displays to reinforce learning. The library contains reference copies of course textbooks, a comprehensive and current range of annual reports and good Internet resources for business.

Leadership and management

76. There are weaknesses in programme management. Provision within the programme area is split between three schools resulting in a lack of coherence in planning the curriculum. There is little target setting to address the low pass rates on several courses. However, progress has been made

in addressing areas of weakness identified in a college internal review undertaken in March 2001. The administration team has also responded well to a critical external verifier's report and has produced an action plan to address the major weaknesses. Some of these had already been put into place at the time of inspection.

Hospitality and catering



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory (grade 3)

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- well-planned teaching
- extensive and varied practical resources to support learning
- good opportunities for students to progress and gain additional qualifications
- good support for learners.

Weaknesses

- inadequate internal verification
- insufficient development of key skills
- insufficient use of work-based assessors
- lack of occupational focus in training agency reviews.

Scope of provision

77. The college offers a wide range of hospitality and catering courses both for full-time and part-time students and for work-based trainees. Arrangements are in place for students to attend courses at times to suit their individual needs. Provision includes: NVQs at levels 1 to 3; the AVCE in hospitality and catering; and courses in bakery, cake decoration, sugarcraft and those leading to licensed trade qualifications. There are also a variety of short courses specifically designed to meet the needs of employers. School-links programmes are well established enabling successful progression of pupils into college. The college also provides education and training in hospitality and catering for school pupils who have been excluded from mainstream education. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that courses aimed at the ethnically diverse population in Leicester are underdeveloped.

Achievement and standards

78. Pass rates for most courses in catering and hospitality are above the national average. However, the pass rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks are low. The majority of full-time students also gain awards in addition to their main qualification. All students, for example, achieve a basic hygiene certificate. Retention rates are generally at or above the national averages. The students' portfolios are comprehensive, although several lack variety in the manner in which evidence is recorded. Students acquire good practical skills and are able to take responsibility for their own learning. In practical restaurant production and service lessons, students have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They work well together in teams and display good social skills when dealing with customers. Students' progression is good. Most go on to gain relevant employment in industry or continue into HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate hospitality and catering	2	No. of starts	17	11	11
		% retention	67	80	89
		% pass rate	70	75	75
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	57	116	44
		% retention	87	70	93
		% pass rate	96	93	97
NVQ serving food and drink	2	No. of starts	28	57	21
		% retention	75	63	90
		% pass rate	65	63	74
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	No. of starts	33	32	19
		% retention	97	78	95
		% pass rate	67	88	89
National licensee's certificate	3	No. of starts	*	32	69
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	84	72

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

** course not offered*

Quality of education and training

79. Most teaching is good. Inspectors observed no unsatisfactory lessons. Schemes of work are well prepared and lessons are carefully planned. Teachers make good use of their own industrial knowledge and experience to enhance their teaching. In a practical sugarcraft lesson, the teacher organised activities very effectively to ensure that students undertaking different levels of study were all engaged in learning. He used photographs of previous work to help students gain ideas, and provided good levels of support for students working on individual tasks. A pastry production lesson for NVQ catering craft students, was well organised and enabled students to produce goods for sale in the restaurant. The students evaluated their own work and responded positively and enthusiastically throughout the lesson. In a minority of lessons, teachers make insufficient checks on students' learning. Assignments are well designed, vocationally relevant and contain clear assessment criteria. Students are given a schedule which indicates when assignments are to be set, submitted and returned. A few marked assignments do not contain sufficient written comments to inform students of how to improve their performance. The practical assessment of NVQs is thorough, although most assessments are by observation and questioning with little use made of alternative methods, such as witness statements. Internal verification is inadequate and mostly takes place towards the end of the programmes.

80. Work-based trainees are employed in a variety of different establishments within the catering, hospitality, bakery and food manufacturing industries. Most are trained and assessed in the workplace. Assessors arrange the timing of their visits well, to enable them to gather evidence of modern apprentices' competence in the full range of tasks which they carry out at work. However, the low numbers of work-based assessors prevent trainees from progressing more quickly. The teaching of key skills for trainees on modern apprenticeship programmes is inconsistent. Most trainees have poor awareness and understanding of key skills which are not integrated into the vocational training programme for those attending college. College staff provide good support for work-based trainees. They often visit them out of normal office hours and at weekends. Modern apprentice trainees are also visited every 12 weeks for reviews by the college training agency staff. Most of these reviews lack occupational focus as they are not carried out by vocational specialists.

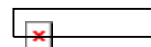
81. Students speak highly of the tutorial support they receive. Attendance and achievement are closely monitored by tutors and effective action is taken when students under perform. Students' experiences are improved by the well-established industrial links and the variety of visits organised to exhibitions and hotels. There is an annual exchange visit to France. Functions undertaken by the college, both on and off the premises, also help to improve students' skills and knowledge of the industry and provide additional opportunities for assessment.

82. Teachers are well qualified. Several have recent industrial experience and others take opportunities to update their skills. There is a wide variety of specialist practical resources. Kitchens, restaurants and bakery facilities provide students with good experience and are generally well equipped. Some equipment in the production kitchen, whilst appropriate, does not fully reflect industrial standards. Small equipment for cake decoration is poor. General teaching rooms are of a satisfactory standard, although some are inappropriate for the size of group or for the subject being taught. The learning resource centre and library contain adequate supplies of specialist books and journals and provide good access to computers and the Internet.

Leadership and management

83. The school of hospitality and catering is well managed. Staff meetings are held regularly and appropriate action is taken to remedy issues which arise. Course teams, which include student representatives, meet each term and actions agreed at meetings are regularly followed up. Target setting within the school lacks rigour. Staff appraisals are effective and ensure that continuous professional development takes place. Lesson observations are regularly undertaken and inform staff appraisal records. The school self-assessment report was detailed and in most cases accurately reflected the area's strengths and weaknesses.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism and NVQ travel services courses
- good teaching of practical skills
- well-managed courses for teachers of exercise and fitness
- highly qualified teachers with wide ranging vocational expertise.

Weaknesses

- low pass and retention rates on the national diploma in sports science
- poor schemes of work and lesson planning in college-based provision
- inconsistency in the teaching and co-ordination of key skills
- poor feedback on students' written work in sport and leisure.

Scope of provision

84. The college offers a broad range of courses in sport, leisure and tourism. Full-time provision includes an introduction to sport course, first and national diplomas in sport, GNVQ foundation and intermediate in leisure and tourism, and AVCEs in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism. Part-time provision includes the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) primary certificate, and courses for resort representatives, airfares and ticketing courses. The college also has a substantial and well-established national franchise contract with the London-central Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) for the delivery of part-time courses in exercise and fitness teaching. Similar

courses are also offered through the college department, East Midlands and Pennine Training, across an area ranging from Bedford in the south to Liverpool and Grimsby in the north.

Achievement and standards

85. Students are generally responsive, well motivated and enjoy their studies. They work productively together during lessons. Students' practical skills are well developed. In their written work, they are able to apply theoretical principles to practical situations effectively. The pass rates on GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism and NVQ travel services at levels 2 and 3 are good and above national averages. Pass rates on the national diploma in sports science, however, are consistently below the national benchmark, averaging only 78% over the period 1998 to 2000. Students' achievements in key skills are low. Retention rates for most courses are near or above the national averages. There is a high retention rate for exercise teaching courses. Retention rates on the national diploma in sports science are below the national average.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
First diploma sport science	2	No. of starts	10	12	33
		% retention	90	75	79
		% pass rate	56	100	78
NVQ travel services	2	No. of starts	22	24	20
		% retention	68	96	95
		% pass rate	100	70	95
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	27	28	26
		% retention	70	68	88
		% pass rate	69	61	95
National diploma sport science	3	No. of starts	33	41	40
		% retention	79	56	68
		% pass rate	79	77	80
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	21	19	20
		% retention	95	58	95
		% pass rate	78	100	94
NVQ travel services	3	No. of starts	21	18	23
		% retention	86	100	91
		% pass rate	83	61	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

Quality of education and training

86. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. There is good teaching in practical lessons, especially on exercise teaching courses. Teachers use their expertise and recent vocational experiences to motivate students through the regular application of theory to current practice. They use an appropriate variety of teaching styles and regularly praise and encourage students for their achievements. Good attention is paid to health and safety factors related to exercise. In an exercise to music lesson, the teacher used a very relaxed, informal style and gave clear descriptions with good analogies to illustrate key points. Good use was made of paired work to enable students to

learn in a non-threatening way, with no fear of being exposed to criticism. In a few lessons, planning was poor with a lack of suitable work for the different abilities of students and insufficient activities for them to undertake. In travel courses, some stimulus material was out of date. Teachers' feedback on students' written work in sport and leisure courses is often too descriptive and does not inform students sufficiently about how they could improve the quality of their work. In travel courses, the feedback is more effective and there is a well-established monitoring and tracking system.

87. The teaching of key skills is inconsistent. A systematic screening process is in place to determine key skill levels, but the identified support needs are not always provided, particularly at level 3. Some key skills lessons contain little variation in the tasks set for students with different levels of ability, and the lesson content lacks vocational application. In level 2 lessons in application of number for sports courses, however, material and assessments are vocationally relevant and support is available for students' learning.

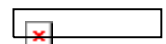
88. Tutorial support is good. In one tutorial for the football course, students covered ethical issues using recent, real life scenarios that stimulated discussion and challenged the students' ideas. Target setting for students' progress in sports and leisure courses is not sufficiently challenging. Students with disabilities are well supported.

89. Teachers are well qualified. Sports teachers regularly seek additional qualifications to further their knowledge and skills. Accommodation is adequate with a sports hall, a fitness suite and a dance studio that doubles as a classroom, enabling theory lessons to be applied to practice. A travel shop provides travel and tourism students with work experience and enables well-managed assessment to take place. The library stock is good with a wide range of appropriate texts that are extensively used and appreciated by students.

Leadership and management

90. The provision is well managed. There is a good team ethos. Course teams meet regularly and team members contribute effectively to decision making. There is particularly effective management of the YMCA franchised provision in exercise teaching. Detailed quality assurance systems are in place for this provision involving at least four teacher observations a year. The feedback and action plans enable managers to recognise training needs and to raise the quality of teaching and learning. The development of attendance monitoring and internal moderation procedures for college-based courses demonstrate a commitment to improvement. Course reviews are thorough and include a detailed self-assessment report and action plan. Lesson observations used for teacher appraisal are inadequate: only half the full-time teachers have been observed and no observations have been carried out of part-time teachers for sport and leisure courses.

Health and childcare



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

Strengths

- good and improving pass rates on most full-time courses
- well-prepared and appropriate learning resources

- good links between theory and practice on part-time courses
- well-stocked library
- effective assessment of students' work
- courses providing access and progression to students from a wide range of backgrounds.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in part-time level 3 courses in care
- some poorly planned lessons
- poor quality accommodation
- insufficient individual progress reviews for students
- no systematic arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

91. Courses in health and childcare are delivered by two schools in the college, both located at the Bede Island campus. The school of early childhood development offers a wide range of full-time and part-time childcare provision including national certificate and diploma courses in childcare and education, the national diploma in childhood studies, and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diplomas and certificates in early years and childcare and education. The college has responded well to the needs of the local community. For example, it has successfully introduced intensive courses in childcare for mature students. Over 100 students also attend childcare courses at outreach centres in a range of locations. These courses provide access to students from widely diverse backgrounds. Provision in the school of health and social care is less extensive. It includes the GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in health and social care and an access to HE course for the caring professions. However, less emphasis has been placed on analysing

community needs and collaborating with the local community to run courses. Some courses previously offered by the school have failed to recruit this year.

Achievement and standards

92. Students are generally attentive in lessons. They work diligently and are responsive to teachers' questions. Many are able to make good links with their previous learning and to draw upon their experiences on work placement. Pass rates on most courses are above the national average, sometimes significantly so. Full-time courses show consistent improvement in pass rates. For example, the pass rate on the CACHE diploma in nursery nursing improved from 61% in 1998, to 96% in 2000. Retention rates on one-year full-time courses also show consistent improvement. Part-time courses are less successful. Pass rates on the national certificate in caring, for example, fell from 100% in 1999, to 70% in 2000, significantly below the national average. In 2000, no students on the NVQ in care at level 3 achieved the award. Students on some courses achieve high standards. In 2000, 74% of the students achieving the GNVQ intermediate award passed with merit or distinction, as did 24% of the students achieving the GNVQ advanced award.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and childcare, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
NVQ childcare and education	2	No. of starts	19	27	39
		% retention	84	85	97
		% pass rate	63	83	71
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	35	55	46
		% retention	80	80	85
		% pass rate	75	84	85
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	83	69	52
		% retention	88	78	85
		% pass rate	71	81	84
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	142	102	**
		% retention	92	72	**
		% pass rate	61	85	96
National certificate in caring	3	No. of starts	0	14	**
		% retention	0	36	**
		% pass rate	0	100	70
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	44	53	**
		% retention	77	77	**
		% pass rate	50	95	93

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

93. The quality of teaching is variable. In the better lessons, teaching is well planned and the learning resources are well prepared. Teachers make good use of a range of learning materials,

including high quality handouts and overhead projector transparencies. They encourage students to contribute examples from their workplace to illustrate theoretical topics and share ideas. Many teachers use a range of effective techniques to check students' progress and extend their learning. In a lesson for hospital play specialists, students were asked to consider the meaning of, and practical issues relating to, ethics and confidentiality. The teacher facilitated the discussion in a non-judgemental and skilful manner and students were given the opportunity to extend their views and understanding. The lesson was suitably challenging for the students, because it confronted their working practice with applicable theory. Weaker lessons are poorly planned and managed. No learning outcomes are specified and inappropriate methods are used. In one large class of over 20 students of varying ability levels, the teacher used information giving as the main method throughout. It was interspersed with undirected questions to which few students responded. Towards the end of the lesson, students' attention drifted and they did not carry out the tasks set. Some teachers rely heavily on worksheets and these are often not adapted to the needs of the particular students in the group.

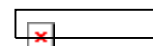
94. Students value their tutorial support. They find their individual progress reviews helpful. However, these do not occur frequently enough to keep students fully informed of their progress. Students are not receiving enough tuition in the key skills of IT and application of number. In some cases, their progress is hindered by the poor links between key skills materials and the vocational content of their courses.

95. Most teachers have appropriate technical qualifications and relevant experience in the industry, though the experience of some is dated. Much of the accommodation at the Bede Island campus is of poor quality. Access to upper storeys is difficult for students with mobility impairment. Classrooms are generally well equipped but tend to be noisy. Teachers and students have made improvements in most of them by putting up high quality displays of students' work. The library is well stocked with appropriate and up-to-date books and journals. The learning resource centre has a good number of computers, but opening hours are restricted.

Leadership and management

96. Communication between teachers and managers is good. Course team leaders are fully involved in setting targets for recruitment, attendance and pass and retention rates. However, course teams are hindered in monitoring the performance of their courses against set targets and national averages by inadequacies in the college's management information. Course review and evaluation are too infrequent to have impact on current courses. The evaluation report is not produced until the end of the year. Staff, including part-time teachers, are generally kept well informed and supported. However, insufficient attention is given to helping teachers develop more effective techniques in teaching and learning. Part-time teachers are infrequently observed in lessons. There are no systematic arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory (grade 3)

Strengths

- good pass rates on most programmes

- well-planned and effective teaching
- good integration of key skills into courses
- specialist courses to meet multicultural needs
- good specialist resources
- flexible course provision.

Weaknesses

- missed opportunities for practical assessments
- insufficient tutorial support for part-time learners
- poor retention rates on some programmes
- inappropriate changing facilities for students.

Scope of provision

97. There are approximately 470 students enrolled on full-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Full-time provision includes hairdressing, beauty therapy, holistic therapies, and theatrical makeup. Part-time courses have attracted over 800 enrolments and include reflexology, Indian head massage, threading, and men's hair cutting. Approximately 54 trainees are undertaking modern apprenticeships. Specialist courses have been developed to meet the needs of the multicultural community. In 2000, the school introduced a hairdressing and beauty therapy course planned specifically for a group of Asian learners. Other courses introduced in response to community needs include Indian head massage and mendhi. These courses are well subscribed. Programmes are organised flexibly to meet individual needs. Adult learners can choose to attend the college on a full-time basis, over two years, or 'fast-track' by completing the same course in one year. There are courses which start later in the morning and finish mid afternoon to accommodate those with family commitments. Students can also choose to attend for practical classes on Saturdays. They are able

to change their regular day of attendance to join an alternative group if necessary.

Achievement and standards

98. Pass rates are good and are generally above the national average. In 2001, all students who completed their courses in NVQ level 2 beauty therapy and NVQ level 3 hairdressing achieved the qualification. There were also good results in short courses including Indian head massage, wig making and mendhi. The college's self-assessment acknowledges that there are poor retention rates on some courses. For example, the retention rates for the NVQ level 2 beauty therapy two-year programme were significantly below the national average in 2001.

99. Students work well together in practical lessons. In one key skills lesson using IT, more experienced students spontaneously assisted and advised their less able colleagues. Theatrical makeup students regularly record their practical skills by photographing their work and are keen to have examples of their work displayed in their specialist room. Students demonstrate a high level of professionalism in their appearance within all programmes. Some students achieve considerable success in national competitions. Work-based trainees understand assessment standards. They take responsibility for their own assessments in lessons and are able to progress at a rate to suit their abilities.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1998 to 1999

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
NVQ level 1 hairdressing	1	No. of starts	*	*	13
		% retention	*	*	69
		% pass rate	*	*	79
NVQ level 2 hairdressing (1 year)	2	No. of starts	38	29	97
		% retention	68	76	76
		% pass rate	28	59	89
NVQ level 2 beauty therapy (1 year)	2	No. of starts	7	53	84
		% retention	29	81	74
		% pass rate	50	57	91
NVQ level 2 beauty therapy (2 year)	2	No. of starts	**	91	16
		% retention	**	71	81
		% pass rate	**	65	54
Indian head massage (1 year)	2	No. of starts	16	33	45
		% retention	100	100	84
		% pass rate	63	88	95
NVQ level 3 hairdressing (1 year)	3	No. of starts	7	20	40
		% retention	100	55	80
		% pass rate	100	55	48
National diploma beauty	3	No. of starts	7	16	17
		% retention	86	88	94
		% pass rate	83	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

* data not available

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

100. Most teaching is good or very good. Teachers work well together to ensure a co-ordinated approach between subjects, and this aids students' understanding. The best lessons are characterised by stimulating teaching, with students benefiting from the enthusiasm of highly motivated teachers. Students find the linking of theory and practice helpful in enabling them to remember complex techniques, particularly when the information is presented in interesting and memorable ways. In one holistic therapy lesson, students' knowledge of anatomy and physiology was tested by painting muscles on the model and giving their names and actions prior to commencing the massage. Good learning booklets are used well on all courses to promote students' research. Classroom management is generally good, although, in some of the larger groups occasional lapses in student attention are not always promptly dealt with by teachers. Internal verification is well co-ordinated for both college-based and work-based provision. Opportunities for assessment are missed on both full-time and part-time courses. Current second-year students are now starting to undertake assessments; minimal assessments were undertaken in the first year.

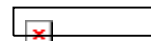
101. Key skills are integrated into the core activities of full-time hairdressing, foundation modern apprenticeship and beauty therapy courses. Some staff recently gained qualifications in order to teach and assess key skills. Regular key skills meetings have specialist speakers to guide staff in the designing of course materials drawing upon their occupational knowledge. Students are strongly encouraged to develop good interpersonal skills necessary in their chosen work. They have good access to the Internet and use the information gained to complete assignments. There is good enrichment of students' experiences through visits to events such as the 'Clothes Show' and various national beauty exhibitions. Beauty students also have an overnight visit to a prestigious health hydro. Tutorial support is good for full-time students. Tutors keep good records of planned actions. However, part-time students have no timetabled tutorials and receive only minimal support on an ad hoc basis.

102. Staff are well qualified and many seek to update regularly their commercial skills. Beauty and hairdressing salons are designed to imitate a real work environment. In addition, students and trainees have the opportunity to gain experience in one of the college's three commercial salons, located throughout the city. The accommodation and equipment, particularly in beauty salons, are of a high standard and good commercial products are used in treatments. The college salons are serviced by a central reception area which has two full-time receptionists who train and assess the students. There are inappropriate changing facilities for students. The room provided is situated two floors from the salons, with the key held at the main college reception. Students prefer not to make this journey choosing to change in the female toilets and this, in turn, causes inconvenience to others.

Leadership and management

103. Leadership and management of courses are good. Course teams work well together. Quality assurance procedures are monitored effectively across the school. Regular team meetings are held to address issues such as action planning, student issues, retention rates, pass rates and internal verification. Staff from other centres, including salons with work-based trainees, attend meetings on a regular basis to ensure equality of provision. Staff appraisal is carried out for all staff on a regular basis. Teachers also participate in a peer observation scheme to share good practice and to help new members of staff.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- high pass rates on most courses
- high levels of skill and and technical ability in students' work
- well-designed and challenging assignments
- strong leadership at course level
- well-integrated technician and supervisor support
- strong vocational focus on full-time courses.

Weaknesses

- limited range of part-time provision
- inconsistent support for part-time students
- poor accommodation for music.

Scope of provision

104. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses in visual and performing arts. Visual arts covers foundation, intermediate and advanced GNVQ, and GCE A and AS levels. There is also a

pre-degree foundation course. Performing arts includes Open College Network (OCN) courses in contemporary music at levels 2 and 3, a first diploma in performing arts, and national diplomas in dance and drama. The range of part-time provision is limited and enrolment on part-time courses has fallen significantly. Two community-based performing arts projects have partnership links with the college but little provision is designed specifically to reflect the ethnic diversity of the local population.

Achievement and standards

105. Pass rates on both visual and performing arts courses are generally high. GNVQ intermediate and pre-degree foundation art and design, and GCE A-level fine art are well above national averages. Retention rates on most courses are satisfactory. Many students progress to HE, and a number of performing arts students have developed professional careers in the industry.

106. Most students are enthusiastic and committed. Their work demonstrates high levels of skill and technical ability and some is outstanding. The excellent relationships established between teachers and students result in a creative working environment. Students compile visually arresting records of their independent research in their notebooks and sketchbooks. They then use these to enrich their assignments in fine art and in craft areas. In one lesson, first diploma students imaginatively blended script, props and movement in staged scenes from 'Macbeth'. One GNVQ foundation art and design student cleverly interpreted a project brief based on the American pop art movement by producing a sophisticated three-dimensional portrait image involving paper engineering. Students use technical language fluently and effectively and take an active part in discussions. Students' attendance in visual arts is good but poor in performing arts. In a few lessons, a minority of students were not fully engaged in learning.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	28	25	15
		% retention	75	88	80
		% pass rate	71	59	92
First diploma performing arts	2	No. of starts	23	19	21
		% retention	85	61	90
		% pass rate	82	100	68
GCE A-level fine art (1 year)	3	No. of starts	55	92	37
		% retention	84	62	92
		% pass rate	70	85	85
GCE A-level textiles (1 year)	3	No. of starts	36	27	18
		% retention	83	74	100
		% pass rate	60	95	88
Pre-degree foundation in art and design	3	No. of starts	*	42	55
		% retention	*	88	89
		% pass rate	*	89	98
National diploma performing arts	3	No. of starts	26	29	**
		% retention	69	55	**
		% pass rate	78	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

* course not running

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

107. The quality of teaching is good. Some 83% of lessons were good or better. In both visual and performing arts, schemes of work and lesson plans are particularly well constructed. They include assessment schedules so that students know what work they have to produce and when it is required. Teachers use a broad range of teaching styles to create stimulating lessons. Students are presented with appropriate challenges to help them to learn. They respond enthusiastically and are absorbed in their study. Questioning is used particularly effectively to test and review previous learning. Teachers use their knowledge and expertise well to make links between the topics being explored. They help the students to learn and understand by giving real examples. In particular, several very practical and informative lessons in 20th century music history, commedia del arte, dance improvisation, three-dimensional design and jewellery inspired students to learn. Technician support is used well in practical lessons. In drama lessons, a range of sound, lighting, video and props are used creatively. A ceramics technician works imaginatively and supportively with school-link pupils. Students can study independently in visual arts, supported by supervisors outside lesson time.

108. Assignments are designed with a strongly vocational focus to challenge and stimulate students' creativity. In performing arts, assignments result in many performances being staged at a range of venues in and around Leicester. Students' work is well presented and assessed in line with national standards. The quality of assessment is assured through rigorous internal verification and cross-marking. Teachers provide students with feedback on their work, which is generally supportive and informative. In a few instances, feedback lacks significant constructive guidance about how students might improve.

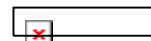
109. Tutorial support is well structured. Tutorials are used to help track and monitor students' progress, but inconsistent use is made of individual learning plans, and some target setting for improving students' performance is poor. Students find that teachers and tutors are approachable and supportive; they receive well-informed careers and HE advice.

110. Teachers have a wide range of knowledge, skills and professional expertise. Accommodation for visual arts, dance and drama is well designed. Art and design studios are light, clean and spacious. Drama and dance studios are very well designed and equipped to provide a first-rate environment for rehearsals and performances. The music accommodation is distant from the main body of performing arts provision. It is cramped, and poorly adapted for the subject and maintained. There is no access for students with restricted mobility. Learning materials in all areas are suitable and well stocked. The library provision is particularly comprehensive.

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are strong, particularly at course and team level. Most full-time programmes are well designed. Regular, well co-ordinated course meetings take place. Students are encouraged to serve as representatives at course team planning meetings and the on academic board. Self-assessment is rigorous. Performing arts is particularly reliant on part-time teachers who are effectively deployed, although, the level of support they receive is inconsistent.

Media and print



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory (grade 3)

Strengths

- broad range of provision meeting students' needs and interests
- good pass rates on most courses
- good level of skills in practical work
- well-structured and stimulating practical lessons
- excellent IT and printing facilities
- effective links with employers.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rates in GCE A-level and NVQ courses
- insufficient checking of learning in many theory lessons
- much poor student punctuality.

Scope of provision

112. The college provides a wide range of programmes in media and printing, including a GNVQ intermediate in media, a first diploma in printing and national diplomas in printing, photography, media and graphic design. There are GCE A levels in graphics, media and film studies and an NVQ level 2 in graphic design. Over 300 students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on full-time vocational

courses. Over 500 adult students attend vocational study programmes, including short courses for industry. There are 48 modern apprentices in printing.

Achievement and standards

113. Pass rates on most courses are good. The four national diplomas, in printing, graphics, media and photography have consistently high and improving pass rates. The intermediate GNVQ in media also has a very high pass rate while that for the first diploma in printing is close to the national average. However, pass rates are below national averages in GCE A level and the NVQ level 2 and 3 in printing. In 1999/2000 the retention rate was close to the national average on most programmes but significantly higher for GNVQ intermediate and first diploma courses. Two thirds of the trainees expected to complete the modern apprenticeship in 2000 did so successfully.

114. Students develop good levels of skill in most practical work. Craftsmanship in bookbinding is excellent. In photography, images are well chosen and produced. There is sensitive drawing in graphic design. Students produce a good range of rough designs before progressing to their finished work; they exploit the opportunities provided by assignments to select their own varied subject matter and undertake sound personal research in preparation for it. There is good progression from the national diplomas in media and printing to related employment. Many students enter the courses with poor key skills but their work, particularly in communication and IT, shows that they make rapid progress. The work of modern apprentices in off-the-job key skills lessons is careful and accurate.

A sample of retention and pass rates in media and print, 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate and first diploma courses	2	No. of starts	63	62	54
		% retention	75	93	91
		% pass rate	80	73	86
NVQ printing	2	No. of starts	67	92	56
		% retention	**	**	**
		% pass rate	48	91	74
GCE A-level courses	3	No. of starts	57	98	50
		% retention	**	**	72
		% pass rate	79	72	73
National diploma courses	3	No. of starts	96	127	127
		% retention	**	**	**
		% pass rate	81	90	99

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

115. Teaching was good or better in over two thirds of the lessons. Practical skills are particularly well taught. Teachers inspire students with a desire to achieve high levels of practical skills. Courses and lessons are planned thoroughly. In many lessons, theory is linked with skill development so that students can understand the principles of what they do. For example, media students were required to make a radio advertisement. The teacher clearly explained the principles

of such advertisements and helped the students to analyse recorded examples. The students were then given a structured process for beginning to script an advert of their own. The students were interested and involved and produced work of a good standard. Key skills development is partially integrated into practical work which helps to motivate students to acquire such skills whilst developing their practical skills. Teachers plan lessons carefully so that students progress through a series of tasks which build on one another and they are able to master the skill effectively. Teachers set practical tasks which successfully generate students' enthusiasm. This approach motivates them to produce work of high quality. Graphics students, for example, are taught to draw in a variety of styles and media from which they produce a range of sensitive work. Teachers use their extensive industrial experience to explain to students how their developing skills can be applied. They give demonstrations of their own skills which set students excellent examples of the quality of work to which they should aspire. Theory teaching is often punctuated with examples to which students can relate to help them to develop interest in complex subjects. For example, a £10 note was passed around a class of printing students learning about paper quality. However, in too many theory lessons, teachers often give information without sufficiently checking that students understand. There was poor punctuality in many lessons, causing the teacher to repeat work.

116. Pre-course induction and assignment briefings give students a clear understanding of the learning objectives and assessment needs of their course. Students are helped to develop individual learning plans on the basis of an initial testing of their abilities. Learning plans are discussed weekly in tutorials so that students are able to progress in their work with confidence. Additional subject tutorials are given if a student needs extra help in some practical aspects. Assignments are set which help students to develop the ability to work well on their own. They promote equality of opportunity by enabling individuals to approach the subject in their own way. Teachers frequently assess students' work and provide constructive criticism both verbally and in writing. They clarify for students what they need to do to ensure that their work reached examination standard.

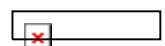
117. There is a satisfactory modern apprentices scheme in printing. The college makes a thorough assessment of a company's suitability and provides a good handbook for employers. Employers have a good understanding of the need for trainees to develop and they record appropriate competencies at work. Trainees are supported by workplace mentors who assist in identifying and recording evidence. Evidence for key skill competence is not collected from routine workplace activity. The provision lacks the flexibility for trainees to start full training at any time. The college provides good quality off-the-job training in vocational and key skills.

118. Clean modern accommodation encourages students to develop a professional approach to work. Students are helped in achieving work of industrial standard by the quality of equipment in workshops. There are particularly fine resources in printing and IT, partly provided by the national printing skills centre, which forms part of the school. Facilities in other courses are adequate. Additional digital equipment is needed in media and photography.

Leadership and management

119. Good leadership at school and course level ensures that courses are well managed. Students' views are regularly sought and acted upon. Self-assessment is rigorous. Course teams develop action plans which improve students' learning. One example of improvement was the better mapping and monitoring of key skills. Managers have been successful in creating partnerships with industry which benefit students. For example, there is an increasingly effective partnership with employers on the modern apprenticeship programme.

Humanities (social science)



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

Strengths

- teaching encouraging analytical thinking
- provision successfully widening participation
- good progression from the access to HE course.

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and retention rates
- deficiencies in the arrangements for acquiring key skills
- lack of consistent assessment practices.

Scope of provision

120. The inspection covered GCSE and GCE A and AS-level courses in sociology, psychology and the humanities access to HE course for adult students. Most students take sociology and psychology as part of a combination with other subjects. At the time of inspection there were 64 students taking GCSEs and over 160 attending GCE A and AS-level courses in sociology and psychology. These students are mainly aged 16 to 18. There were 80 adult students on the access to HE course. In addition to college-based provision, courses are also offered at outreach centres in the community. These courses successfully encourage people who might find it difficult to attend college to study. For example, an access course is delivered at a venue on a local housing estate. Students include single teenage parents, ex-offenders, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult returners. The college also runs GCSE and GCE A and AS-level courses for Muslim female students at the Leicester Islamic Academy.

Achievement and standards

121. Achievement in social science subjects is inconsistent. Pass rates for GCE A-level sociology and GCSE psychology are above national averages. Recent pass rates for GCE AS levels are good, particularly in sociology. However, pass rates for GCE A-level psychology and the access to HE course are low and below national averages. Retention rates are poor in both GCSE and GCE A-level psychology, but above the national average for one-year GCE A-level courses. There is good progression to HE for students who complete access courses.

122. Students learn to work well both independently and collaboratively in pairs or small groups. They also acquire confidence in expressing themselves orally. Most participate effectively in debates and are able to put forward a reasoned argument. In one lesson, sociology students analysed newspaper articles providing different interpretations of pressure groups as opposed to

political parties. They were able to discuss their ideas confidently with one another and then formulate an argument to report back to the whole group. In another sociology class, students became engrossed in determining the link between stress and the social influences on health and well being. Student attendance at some lessons is poor.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities (social sciences), 1998 to 2000

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1998	1999	2000
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	31	31	27
		% retention	71	58	56
		% pass rate	24	59	58
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	19	20	19
		% retention	63	70	68
		% pass rate	58	79	44
GCE A-level psychology (1 year)	3	No. of starts	38	34	30
		% retention	76	65	80
		% pass rate	46	73	57
GCE A-level sociology (1 year)	3	No. of starts	30	19	19
		% retention	67	84	95
		% pass rate	50	56	78
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	105	89	84
		% retention	73	80	75
		% pass rate	68	58	75

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000).

Quality of education and training

123. Much of the teaching is stimulating and engages the attention and interest of students. Teachers have a good rapport with students and are able to use informative personal anecdotes, often humorous, to help students to understand and remember difficult concepts. They begin lessons by explaining the topic clearly and in a way which quickly gains the attention of the students, for example, by the use of topical current affairs and magazine or newspaper articles. Often the students are then organised into pairs or small groups. They are given additional information to analyse for themselves whilst the teacher circulates to check on understanding. Time is spent developing useful learning techniques such as brainstorming, creating spider diagrams and prioritising ideas and actions. Teachers emphasise the need for students to formulate a clear and logical argument supported by evidence. Teachers are effective in stimulating debate. However, sometimes they allow a few students to dominate the discussion to the exclusion of others. Much of the teaching on the access course is well designed to prepare students for university. English literature modules are effectively presented through textual analysis, genre exploration and character development. The understanding of the play 'Top Girls' was enhanced by a visit to see a production of the play. The students then had to submit two different critical reviews of the production, conveying two different views about its effectiveness. Handouts and worksheets are of a good standard. For the GCSE students, weekly workshops are available so that students can have individual tuition on aspects of the subjects which they are finding difficult. Access students also have individual weekly tutorials during which tutors help them monitor and review their own progress effectively. Written work is marked and returned promptly, normally within a week. The assessment of students' work is inconsistent. Some teachers give students very clear advice and guidance about how to tackle written assignments. They share the marking criteria with the

students. When they mark the work they annotate it in detail so that students understand the reasons for the grade they have been awarded and how to improve their work in future. However, other teachers make few specific or helpful comments. The justification for some of the grading is unclear.

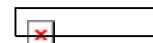
124. Students appreciate the formal and informal, personal and academic support which they receive from teachers and tutors. However, the weekly group tutorials for GCE and GCSE students are not well regarded. Where appropriate, parents are kept informed about students' progress. There are deficiencies in the arrangements for acquiring key skills. Where opportunities for the assessment of key skills are identified, these do not always reflect the level of the course or the experience of the students.

125. Teachers are well qualified. They promote good relationships with their students. Accommodation is of a good standard and provides a satisfactory learning environment. The use of ICT is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

126. Courses are well managed. Through self-assessment, some weaknesses have been identified and positive improvements made. For example, the conversion of part-time teaching hours into permanent appointments has consolidated the course teams and strengthened course delivery. Staff are encouraged to attend development activities. However, insufficient attention is paid to the inconsistent pass rates and the poor attendance and retention rates. The quality of the community-based provision is inadequately monitored.

Basic skills



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

Strengths

- wide ranging, responsive and flexible provision in the community
- very good teaching in adult basic education
- effective management in adult basic education
- learning that challenges and motivates students in adult basic education.

Weaknesses

- some ineffective learning support

- poor accommodation and resources in some community venues.

Scope of provision

127. Basic skills provision is delivered through the school of adult basic education and through the learning development team who provide literacy and numeracy support to students whilst they are taking courses across the full range of the college provision. In 2000/01, the school catered for 1,932 adult students in 90 venues in the community. The learning development team supported 629 individual students who required additional help with literacy or numeracy. The college is actively involved in partnerships which increase learning opportunities for adults. There is a large family learning programme, which is offered in 50 primary schools throughout Leicestershire and for which an innovative curriculum has been developed. It links the adult curriculum to the content of the literacy and numeracy in schools. Parents' lessons are planned and delivered to match the lessons taught to their children so that they can use what they have learnt to help their children.

Achievement and standards

128. Students in adult basic education are exceptionally well motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. They work hard in lessons and make good progress. The majority achieve the qualification for which they are studying. Retention rates are good and above the national average. There is high attendance in lessons. For students receiving additional support for literacy and numeracy, well-planned and effective individual support from tutors ensures that most make good progress. However, the impact of learning support on retention rates and pass rates has not been formally evaluated. The use of initial assessment in adult basic education is inconsistent. Where it is used effectively, the initial assessment provides a good basis for designing an appropriate individual learning programme for each student. However, this is not always done well.

Quality of education and training

129. The standard of teaching on adult basic education courses is exceptionally high. Some 52% of lessons were very good or outstanding. Only 2% of lessons were unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and take account of each learner's needs. All students have individual learning plans which are reviewed and updated regularly. The teaching methods used take account of the different abilities of the students in each group. Teachers challenge them to do their best. All students are included in the learning by teachers, ensuring that the content of lessons matches the individual needs of all the learners. In a basic literacy class, a student was making excellent progress in reading street names, a critical skill which he needed to acquire to do his job properly. In another lesson, a student was transferring a well-written account of his holiday onto a computer in order to send it to a friend. Lessons are well structured and an appropriate pace is set so that interest is maintained and the students learn effectively. Teachers use a good range of appropriate resources to interest students and enhance their learning. However, IT is not used creatively in many lessons.

130. For learners identified as needing additional help in literacy and numeracy, support is provided by a team of specialist tutors. On-course learning support has been introduced recently: learning development tutors go into the vocational lessons to support learners during the lesson. This joint approach works well when the learning development tutor and the vocational teacher have liaised effectively and planned the lesson carefully so that they work together in a complementary way. In some cases, however, joint planning does not take place and learning development tutors are not issued with schemes of work or plans for the vocational lessons which they are supporting. This lack of co-ordination leads to support being unplanned and ineffective. Learning support provided by the learning development team is valued by the students. Support for students with dyslexia is good.

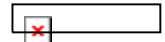
131. Part-time teachers teach most of the work in adult basic education. They are well trained and

hold appropriate qualifications in basic skills. Promoting inclusive learning is a major feature of the provision. Teachers show real awareness and sensitivity in addressing equal opportunities issues. However, in some outreach centres physical access to basic skills provision is difficult for those with restricted mobility. There is some unsuitable accommodation for adult learners, especially in family learning centres, where adults are required to use child-sized furniture. Some high quality resources are used in the delivery of adult basic education and learning development. There are well-written paper-based resources designed to meet individual student's needs in both literacy and numeracy. However, some community centres have little or no IT equipment, which restricts learning opportunities. Learning development is well staffed.

Leadership and management

132. The management of the school of adult basic education is very good. The head of school and team of organisers work well together. Communication is good. Part-time teachers are kept well informed of developments in a variety of ways including personal correspondence and bulletins. There are termly staff meetings for both full-time and part-time teachers. These meetings focus on issues of curriculum development and quality improvement. A strategy and action plan have been developed for the teaching of basic skills across the college, although not all actions have yet been implemented. There is a clear commitment to improving standards and developing a range of learning opportunities for adults. The self-assessment report is rigorous and highlights the majority of strengths and weaknesses. Staff development is easily available and many staff take up opportunities for further training and updating.

ESOL



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

Strengths

- wide range of provision that meets diverse community needs
- good and often innovative teaching
- good achievement on entry-level courses
- effective management across a large and complex provision
- highly committed teachers with a broad range of specialisms
- clear progression routes.

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- insufficiently rigorous progress reviews
- some unsatisfactory teaching.

Scope of provision

133. The college has a large and complex ESOL programme which meets a diverse range of students' needs. In addition to the provision offered at the college's Abbey Park and Bede Island campuses, courses are provided in over 40 venues across the city. The programme is organised from four separate centres and managed centrally from the college's Abbey Park campus. Courses are available at nine different levels, including courses with vocational skills, such as NVQ in business administration and community care for bilingual learners. There is also growing provision for asylum seekers. The college is very responsive to changing circumstances, with new courses being set up as needs are identified. Provision is particularly responsive to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and a full-time member of staff is dedicated to working with these students.

Achievement and standards

134. Achievement by students on accredited courses is good and often above the national averages for this area of provision. In 1999/2000, for example, the pass rate on Pitman basic was 99%, and for the OCN entry level was 93%. The percentage of students entered for external accreditation increased significantly in 2000/01. For example, the number of students entered for Pitman basic increased from 97 in 1999/2000, to 190 in 2000/01. There is good progression for many students across the range of ESOL qualifications offered by the college and an increasing number of students are able to improve on their vocational skills alongside their language development. For example, all students on the community care course for bilingual learners had progressed from part-time ESOL classes. Achievement of students not undertaking external accreditation is more difficult to measure, since individual learning plans are not always used effectively to set challenging learning goals.

Quality of education and training

135. Most teaching is good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and some are clearly linked to the new national draft curriculum for ESOL. Teachers use an effective and appropriate variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual students. Very lively and innovative teaching enabled students to learn from and support each other during paired and group work and to develop confidence in using oral communication skills. Teachers' skilful use of repetition helps students to build on concepts introduced in previous lessons and aids their acquisition of grammatical structures. In an entry-level ESOL lesson held in a Chinese community centre, the teacher made good use of the surroundings to illustrate the use of prepositions. Students worked in pairs on tasks which enabled them to practise and integrate skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Some lessons, however, are poorly planned and lack clear aims and objectives. In these lessons, there is an over-reliance on the use of worksheets and opportunities are missed to develop oral skills using students' relevant experiences.

136. There are deficiencies in the completion of many individual learning plans. They often lack detail, and do not make explicit the language structures to be acquired. As a consequence, reviews of students' progress are not focused and do not enable them to evaluate their progress effectively. Assessed work often lacks sufficient detail to enable students to understand how their performance could be improved. No internal verification procedure is in place for non-accredited courses to ensure the consistent quality of provision.

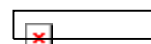
137. Support for students is generally good. The personal counselling service offered for refugees and asylum seekers enables help to be given on wider issues, such as housing. Tutorials are valued by full-time students, but there is insufficient tutorial support for part-time students. Good advice and guidance are provided for community-based students. The range of courses available and the good advice and guidance enable them to gain access to clear progression routes.

138. Teachers are highly committed, and have specialist qualifications in teaching ESOL. They are recruited from very varied backgrounds and nationalities, and speak a wide range of languages. Students benefit from the positive role models they provide. Teaching rooms are generally good on main sites, but some community-based classes are taught in venues where accommodation is cramped. However, such venues often provide a welcoming atmosphere which is conducive to learning, and where students feel comfortable. Generally the learning environments lack visual stimuli. There is poor integration of ICT into language teaching, and little software to promote independent learning.

Leadership and management

139. The school is well managed. The college's senior management team is strongly committed to this curriculum area. Additional staffing has been made available in response to the growth in student numbers, and this has enabled the college to extend the range of provision on offer. Effective curriculum management in the community by area co-ordinators enables the college to respond effectively to changing circumstances. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity: this is reflected in the college's policies and in students' views that they are both valued and respected. Course team members contribute effectively to self-assessment and course planning, successfully identifying both strengths and weaknesses. Curriculum management procedures are standardised across all sites. Implementation at course team level varies considerably. Quality assurance procedures are not consistently applied.

Provision for students with learning difficulties/disabilities



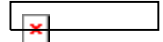
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- provision for learners with a wide range of difficulties and/or disabilities
- strong and effective links with external organisations to widen participation
- effective teaching for profoundly disabled students

- good pastoral support for students.

Weaknesses



- some ineffective initial assessment
- poor lesson planning to meet the needs of individual learners
- unsatisfactory aspects of teaching in some lessons.

Scope of provision

140. The college has a wide range of programmes designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with multiple and profound disabilities, people experiencing mental health difficulties, people on the autistic spectrum and people who live in long-stay hospitals. Well-developed links with the National Autistic Society and other external agencies, such as the local health authority and social services, enable the college to effectively extend its provision to benefit a wider range of learners in the local community. There are currently 195 full-time and 518 part-time students attending programmes in the college or at 24 community locations including a local hospital. Programmes are offered in ways that enable students to follow a range of options. Provision starts at pre-entry level and students can progress through a variety of courses to entry level. The programmes also provide access to some level 1 courses in the college, for example in motor vehicle engineering. Other provision is designed to enable students to lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

Achievement and standards

141. Students with multiple and complex learning difficulties attending community-based courses achieve well. The use of appropriate learning support enables them to learn effectively and to progress to programmes based in the college. Many profoundly disabled students progress in small, but meaningful steps towards well-defined learning outcomes that allow them to live more independent lives. In other programmes, students progress to full-time or part-time courses, or prepare successfully for supported employment or other work. Many programmes also include externally accredited units and modules and allow students to achieve OCN and City and Guilds awards. Retention rates are good. Attendance is very good, although punctuality is affected adversely by those students relying on external transport agencies.

Quality of education and training

142. The quality of teaching is variable. Teaching is good for profoundly disabled students where lessons are well planned and based on the particular needs of individual learners. These lessons successfully extend students' learning by helping them to develop new skills. Other teaching is less well planned and does not take sufficient account of the needs of individual learners. Teachers rely

too much on whole group activities that fail to engage the interest of students and leave them passive and unchallenged. Some lesson activities are inappropriate. For example, in a number of lessons, students spent time copying, writing or using worksheets when they could not read them and did not understand why they were completing the task. In the better lessons, activities are practical and demanding, enabling students to succeed in their learning either individually or within the group. For example, in a drama lesson students were developing individual choices through group activities involving the exploration of sound and movement.

143. In practical lessons, some teachers successfully integrate the skills of communication and application of number into other learning tasks for those students who are able to benefit from them. In other lessons, students carry out additional work which is not relevant to their learning needs at the expense of developing more relevant practical and life skills. For those students who can benefit there are good opportunities for sheltered work experience. Other students take part in a residential learning activity to develop their living and personal skills. The college operates a good joint programme with a special school where students divide their time between school and college.

144. Students with multiple and complex learning difficulties attending community locations undergo effective initial assessment at pre-entry level. The initial action plans for profoundly disabled learners identify realistic overall targets with limited, but significant goals against which individual progress can be assessed. However, initial assessments for other students vary in quality and are insufficiently diagnostic. They are often a list of subjects to be studied rather than individualised learning goals to be achieved.

145. The best assessment of learning is recorded by photographic and written records, including witness statements of learners' achievements. In the most carefully designed courses, learning and achievement are recorded regularly and reviewed with the students. In some courses, however, students spend too much time producing written or other paper-based evidence. Students' progress is assessed in regular review weeks. Full-time students have a comprehensive annual review. Tutors provide good pastoral support to students. All students are entitled to a tutorial each term, but additional tutorials take place to address any student difficulties or to record success in their learning. Communication between the college, parents and carers is good and includes a rapid follow up of any absenteeism.

Leadership and management

146. The planning and management of provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities good. Equality of opportunity and increased access to learning are demonstrated in the day-to-day management. Communication between members of staff is good. Part-time teachers are kept well informed and course teams meet regularly. The recently formed additional needs group includes students and external agencies and helps to identify the learning needs of disabled learners within the college. Quality assurance procedures do not pay enough attention to students' views on the quality of their experience. Internal lesson observations do not sufficiently inform managers of the quality of teaching and learning. An ICT strategy is not yet fully developed for this curriculum area.

Part D: College data

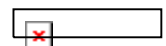
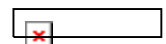


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	25.9	20.8
2	44.3	31.3
3	16.3	9.1
4/5	0.4	1.9
Other	13.1	36.9
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	2,897	3,834	12
Agriculture	4	32	0
Construction	702	1,026	3
Engineering	783	1,453	4
Business	502	2,766	6
Hotel and catering	2,875	9,355	21
Health and community care	2,005	10,152	21
Art and design	1,125	1,805	5
Humanities	4,565	3,496	14
Basic education	1,023	7,245	14
Total	16,481	41,164	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 3: 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)	71	25	4	125

Level 2 (intermediate)	59	31	10	155
Level 1 (foundation)	64	23	13	47
Other sessions	64	25	11	90
Totals	64	27	9	417

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