



JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

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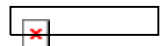
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01](#)

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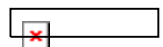
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Basic information about the college



Name of college:	Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Lynne Morris
Address of college:	Balsall Heath Road Highgate Birmingham B12 9DS
Telephone number:	0121 440 4288
Fax number:	0121 440 0798
Chair of governors:	Richard Bate
Unique reference number:	130468
Name of reporting inspector:	Cathy Morgan
Date(s) of inspection:	12-16 November 2001

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

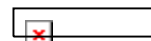


Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College was established in 1983 as part of the reorganisation of secondary and post-16 education by the Local Education Authority (LEA). The college is situated a mile south of Birmingham city centre. Some 60% of students live in the inner-city area and Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College is rated as the college serving the second most deprived community in the country. The student body is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse; 91% of students in the college are from minority ethnic groups.

Currently, 847 students in the 16 to 18 age range are enrolled at the college, the majority on full-time courses at the main site. Some 60% of students speak English as a second language and around 40% of students are assessed as having literacy or numeracy skills at, or below, level 1.

The majority of the 612 adult students are enrolled on part-time foundation level courses which are delivered mainly in local community venues. The main areas of the curriculum that are taught in the community are English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy, numeracy, information technology (IT) and community languages. There is an increasing demand for provision by asylum seekers and those with refugee status.

How effective is the college?



The college provides a wide range of courses and is very responsive and sensitive to the needs of the local community. Partnerships are wide ranging, strong and active. Procedures for admissions, enrolment and induction ensure that students are placed on appropriate courses. The standard of most teaching and learning is good and there are very few unsatisfactory lessons. The college provides a safe, stimulating and welcoming learning environment. Students are well motivated and respond positively to the high expectations set by the college and their teachers. Governors and senior managers provide a clear strategic direction for the college and a firm commitment to achieving high standards of teaching and learning. Staff receive good support from managers and there is a well-managed staff development programme. The college is cost effective and provides good value for money. Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be outstanding in two of the curriculum areas and good in six. None were unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- high standards of teaching and learning
- good retention rates on level 2 courses
- high standards of student work
- strong leadership and effective strategic management

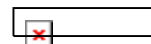
- thorough procedures for assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- excellent promotion of equal opportunities
- responsive and wide-ranging community provision
- thorough pre-entry guidance and effective admissions processes
- good academic and personal support for students
- high level of support for community-based staff.

What should be improved

- unsatisfactory retention and pass rates on some courses
- some poor accommodation
- lack of a comprehensive basic skills strategy
- lack of rigour in identifying and addressing weaknesses in some departments
- management of the college management information system (MIS).

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

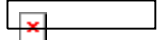


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Mathematics	Good. There is good teaching and pass rates are above the national level. The individual progress of full-time students is reviewed through the setting and thorough monitoring of targets. The provision of good mathematics courses for part-time students has effectively widened participation. There is good use of computers and other resources in and out of the lessons. The provision is well managed.
Biology, chemistry and physics	Good. Pass and retention rates on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses are high. On GCE A-level courses, there is a good level of added value, although pass rates, particularly in chemistry, are low. The quality of teaching is good, marking of work is thorough and students make good progress. There is good accommodation and efficient technical support. The management of the department is very effective.
Business	Outstanding. Excellent teaching in business studies enables students to develop high standards of specialist knowledge, understanding and skills. Students clearly enjoy learning and make excellent progress relative to their prior achievement. There is strong leadership and a sense of purpose that is shared by staff and students, which leads to the fulfilment of individual potential and equality of opportunity.
ICT	Good. Teaching and learning are good and result in high rates of retention and some good pass rates. Specialist resources are of a high standard and teachers have developed and share good learning materials effectively. There are excellent rates of progression to HE.
Performing arts	Good. Many students achieve a very good standard in practical work and have many opportunities to perform. Teaching is demanding; there is effective integration of theory into practical tasks. The poor attendance and lateness of some students impairs the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Progression rates to HE and employment are good.
Humanities	Good. Teaching is good and some students' achievement is of a high standard. Teachers are skilful and experienced; they provide high levels of support to students. In law, psychology and history some achievement is low. The humanities curriculum is enhanced by extension studies.
English and media	Good. Most teaching is good or better. Retention rates are high, as are pass rates in all subjects, apart from GCSE English language. Library resources are very good. Full-time students receive especially good guidance and support from their subject teachers and personal tutors.
Community languages and ESOL	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are high for community languages. Teaching, particularly in the community, is effective and

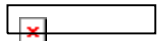
	sensitive to individual students' needs. The quality of ESOL and community languages courses, both in the college and the community, is excellent. Provision widens participation amongst under-represented groups. There is effective partnership with the local and ethnic community.
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How well is the college led and managed?



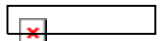
Leadership and management are good. College managers at all levels set a clear direction for their staff. Each of the major weaknesses identified in the last inspection report has been systematically addressed. An outstanding feature of the college now is the promotion and sustaining of equality of opportunity. Retention rates are much improved in most subjects, as are pass rates. Pass and retention rates on some courses, however, remain low. Provision is now good in all curriculum areas and outstanding in two. Most teaching and learning is good. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning and they provide valuable support to enable the college to meet its strategic objectives, particularly those relating to students' achievements. Many aspects of the quality assurance system are now secure but there are still significant operational weaknesses.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's approach to inclusion is outstanding. There is excellent, flexible, and responsive community provision, which takes account of students' prior attainment. The provision of women only classes is a sensitive response to community requests and a good example of widening participation. There are links with local employers, which enable students to gain realistic training and help them to gain employment. The college has effective provision for refugees, asylum seekers and students from abroad. All outreach centres provide childcare and 70% provide appropriate transport to and from the centres. There is comprehensive and informative data on the ethnic and gender groups that comprise the breakdown of the student body. There is effective monitoring of the general achievements of these various groups. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of curricular achievement by the departments. There is excellent social inclusion, as exemplified by ICT classes, where a high proportion of students are females from minority ethnic communities. The planning within many departments and many lessons takes explicit account of students' varied backgrounds and encourages multi-cultural perspectives. Provision and support for students with physical disabilities are good. Staff give positive support to the college's commitment to continuous improvement. Departments provide excellent displays of students' work and other visual material which contribute to the provision of a good learning environment. Advice on progression opportunities is good. Most students leave to go to either HE or to employment. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and topics relating to equal opportunities feature strongly in the tutorial programme and work of curriculum areas. Promotional materials emphasise the range of choice available at the college and through other providers. Guidance notes for tutors require them to advise students about other courses in the locality if their preferred courses are not available at the college. Complaints are thoroughly investigated and responded to quickly.

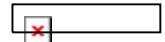
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Students at the main site receive good guidance and support throughout their studies. Pre-enrolment information is thorough and impartial. Students also receive good advice and guidance about the opportunities which the college provides. They are placed on appropriate courses. Entry criteria for courses are clear. Induction arrangements are well organised. The standards set in the college charter suitably emphasise the commitment the college makes to students. Students value the career advice they receive from their teachers and the careers service. Arrangements for careers advice and guidance are not yet established in the community-based provision that takes place away from the main site. The college has good links with a number of universities. Students are taken regularly on visits to universities.

Tutorial arrangements are effective and valued by students. Systems for monitoring attendance are fully established and effective in most departments. Tutors formally review the progress of their students three times a year. Target setting in some departments is not thorough. There are well co-ordinated and effective arrangements to provide support for students who have additional learning needs. Arrangements to support students who have basic skills needs are not yet well established. There is no clear management structure for basic skills nor clear performance targets. Financial support is available to students through the access fund. Students can draw upon effective support for personal issues. An appropriately qualified college counsellor offers a service that has clear procedures and guidelines. The service is efficiently and sensitively monitored. There are a number of college clubs and societies. There is a sports facilities area at the main site. Students also use the adjacent facilities of Birmingham Sports Centre.

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

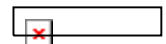
- good personal support and encouragement from teachers
- helpful feedback on progress
- canteen food
- security at the site
- sports facilities
- help with personal problems

- enough freedom, but not too much.

What they feel could be improved

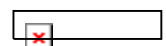
- no student common room
- insufficient access to computers
- some very cold rooms
- some irrelevant key skills activities
- availability of information in the student services office
- toilets.

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	77	21	2
19+ and WBL*	86	5	9
Learning 16-18	72	27	1
19+ and WBL*	86	5	9

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. Overall attendance rates have improved since the last Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspection. In the lessons observed, attendance was 79%, slightly below the 84% average attendance for sixth form college inspections undertaken by the FEFC during 2000. The highest attendance rate was in humanities at 91%, and the lowest was in ESOL and community languages at 67%. In a few curriculum areas, for example, performing arts, IT and humanities, students' lateness, especially in lessons at the start of the day, was poor.

2. Students display good motivation and work well on their own and with others. They are keen to play a full part in lessons and they apply themselves responsibly to their studies. In English, for example, they make perceptive contributions during lessons and in humanities, they respond well to questioning. Students have a good understanding of technical terms but, for some, difficulties in using the English language limit their fluency of expression. Students work well when undertaking practical activities. In performing arts, for example, they display impressive creativity and technical competence and in science, they carry out practical work to a high standard, using scientific equipment confidently and accurately. Students' written course work is usually of a good standard.

3. Compared with the national averages for sixth form colleges, students' retention rates are similar, sometimes higher, for students aged 16 to 18, and higher at levels 2 and 3, lower at level 1, for students over 19. Most pass rates are below national averages with the exception of some GCSE and advanced-level GNVQ courses which are, respectively, above or at the averages. Overall, at GCE A-level and on some GNVQ courses, the actual results are better than the predicted results.

4. The vast majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Most of these students take advanced-level courses. In five out of the last six years to 2001, students' performances at GCE A level have been significantly better than predicted by their GCSE scores. A three-year rolling average analysis for each individual GCE A-level subject shows that out of 22 subjects, students in 6 subjects, biology, mathematics, chemistry, performing arts, physics and accounting, perform significantly better than predicted. These six subjects account for one third of the total number of GCE A-level students who completed their courses in 2001. Only in GCE A-level history and photography have students performed significantly less well. These subjects accounted for only 4% of the students completing in 2001.

5. The overall pass rate for GCE A-level subjects in 2001 was 75%, which is below the national average of 89% for sixth form colleges. A large number of students take GCE A-level general studies. The college's retention and pass rates in this subject are very low and these results

depress the overall GCE A-level pass and retention rates for the college. The overall pass rate, excluding general studies, has improved year on year for the last four years, from 63% in 1998, to 82% in 2001. The overall GCE A-level subject retention rate, excluding general studies, is similar to the national average. When general studies is excluded, the proportion of enrolments which result in the achievement of a GCE A-level qualification has improved steadily over the last four years, from 46% in 1998 to 60% in 2001, a rate which is 6% below the national average. Of the 223 students entered for one or more GCE A-level subjects, 94% passed at least one subject. Of the 144 students entered for two or more subjects, 88% passed at least two subjects.

6. In 2001, students in two of the four advanced GNVQ courses provided by the college performed significantly better than was predicted by their GCSE scores on entry. These subjects, IT, and health and social care, accounted for 61% of the students' completing GNVQ advanced courses. In the other two courses, business, and art and design, students performed as predicted. For courses ending in 2000 and 2001, the overall pass rate has been similar to the national average for students in these groups of courses. The overall retention rate for GNVQ advanced courses in 2001 was similar to the national average. The proportion of students who achieve the qualification compared with the number who started the course was similar to the national average in 2000, and significantly above it in 2001.

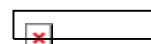
7. Overall pass rates on GNVQ intermediate were similar to the national average in 1999 and 2000 but were well below in 2001. Retention rates, however, have been high, well above the national average in each of these years. The proportion of students achieving the qualification compared with the number starting the course has been significantly above the national average in three of the last four years. In 2001, it was similar to the national average.

8. Significant numbers of students retake GCSE mathematics and English during their time in the college. In mathematics, A to C grades and retention rates have been significantly above national averages in recent years. In English, retention rates are high, but pass rates for grade A to C are consistently below national averages.

9. There are high rates of progression to HE in most of the curriculum areas inspected. In 2000/01, 172 students went to university.

10. For courses ending in the year 2000, the most recent year for which data is available, retention rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 were above the average for sixth form colleges. At level 1 they were below. Pass rates were low at all three levels. Few adult students take GCE A-level subjects. Around 100 adult students take GCSE subjects. The overall retention rate is consistently above national averages but the grouping of grades, whether at A* to C or A* to G, are both consistently below national averages.

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 113 sessions. Some 35% of the teaching and 33% of learning were judged to be very good or excellent. Teaching was best in business studies and community languages. In mathematics, science, ICT and humanities, no teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory and all curriculum area reports highlight good teaching as a strength.

12. All departments produce good schemes of work. Most effectively incorporate aspects of assessment, use of resources and opportunities to integrate key skills into their schemes. Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives which are understood by students. Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects. They take great care to match their teaching methods to the needs of their students. This skill is exemplified by the very thorough way in which complex concepts are broken down into small steps to help students to learn, particularly in business, ICT,

science and mathematics. In biology and physics, simple but innovative practical exercises help students to appreciate difficult concepts. In an ICT lesson, the teacher, who was introducing spreadsheets, interspersed clear explanations with practical exercises, as well as giving encouragement and praise. Progressing step by step, the students remained motivated and worked confidently, despite their inexperience and language differences. Effective use is made of questions during and at the end of lessons to check that students are understanding the work. Good examples are observed in foundation-level business lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and inspiring. They make good use of illustrative material and examples that relate clearly to the prior knowledge and everyday experiences of the students. Teachers are adept at seizing opportunities to improve and extend students' vocabulary and communication skills. In GCE A-level psychology lessons, the teacher regularly introduces the technical language of the subject and then re-uses it effectively during consolidation exercises. In ESOL lessons, the skilful combination of oral and written tasks enables students to improve their use of grammar. Volunteer assistants from the local community provide invaluable language support. Teachers have very good working relationships with their students, encouraging them to ask questions and to seek guidance and support whenever necessary. They provide excellent assistance and support to students on an individual basis. Most whole-class teaching, individual and group work is well managed. Teachers have high expectations of their students. The standard of students' behaviour is exceptionally high. However, especially during the first lesson in the morning, learning is often disrupted by the late arrival of students.

13. In a few lessons, students were unresponsive and lacked any enthusiasm for the work. Sometimes the learning opportunities which the teacher presented and the resources that were used did not match the various levels of ability in the class. There were no clear objectives in these lessons and students became confused and then bored.

14. Teaching staff are well qualified. All are either graduates or hold an appropriate professional qualification. Some community-based teachers possess several higher degrees. Only two teachers currently do not possess at least an initial teaching certificate. Technician support is good in science, but the performing arts area lacks a specialist technician. The community-based provision has insufficient IT technical support. Professional development is planned in the context of individual appraisal, departmental review and the strategic priorities of the college, for example, in relation to Curriculum 2000. A staff development committee meets termly and successfully oversees the implementation of the staff development policy and the associated action plan. The quality of community-based provision is effectively monitored and community-based teachers are well supported and able to address their professional development needs.

15. The college has established a safe and welcoming environment for students. All public display areas have attractive pictures, work by students, photographs and case studies of previous students. These displays offer positive models for current and prospective students to aspire to. The fabric of the building is old and in some places is not weatherproof. The heating system is ineffective in some rooms. Good use is made of most spaces, particularly the open areas adjacent to the lifts and main staircases; these are used sensibly by students as quiet study areas. All teaching areas are accessible to students in wheelchairs. The college has well-developed plans to build on a new site near its present site in 2004.

16. The college has invested heavily in high specification networked computers which have access to the Internet. There is a good ratio of 1 computer to 4.5 students. Where computers are available within departments, staff and students make good use of them in lessons and during independent study. Lack of access to computers in performing arts and at some community venues prevents effective use of ILT in lessons. The open learning centre provides a stimulating environment for students. Students receive an informative induction into the use of the college network and the intranet from knowledgeable, courteous staff. Students make good use of these facilities which become overcrowded at peak times. Most departments have created informative websites which are hosted on the college intranet. Students make increasing use of these resources and of others which are available on the Internet to develop their independent learning skills. In some departments, ILT is used effectively to promote learning, for example, the imaginative use of an interactive whiteboard in physics. Most teaching rooms have sufficient resources and are well matched to the size of teaching groups. In ICT, however, rooms are badly designed and college-

based community language classes are often cramped. The library is small but has a good range of books and other texts. Library staff have worked well with teachers to create subject-based library induction assignments. There are a number of helpful leaflets giving information in a range of languages about subject-specific and general library resources, for example the Internet, CD-ROMs and effective research methods.

17. Assessment of students' work is thorough. Teachers give informative, appropriately detailed feedback which enables students to improve the standard of written and practical work. There is a clearly defined homework policy, which gives specific time scales for the marking and returning of work to students. Students confirm that these time scales are adhered to and that the feedback they receive is helpful and constructive. Marking is generally of a good standard, although in psychology, students are confused by the different grading methods. Target minimum grades are carefully negotiated with students and form the basis of progress reviews. This approach works particularly well for GCE A-level students but the process is less well established for students on vocational programmes. Target setting lacks rigour in some departments, for example, in performing arts and English. Students' targets are rather vague and do not enable students to identify their priorities for development sufficiently clearly. In most departments, student feedback is included in detailed and informative records, which identify the outcomes of discussions with students about their attendance, punctuality, effort, grades, and targets. Students at risk of underachieving are identified early in their time at the college and effective additional support, including valuable specialist workshops, is provided at various times during the week. Reviews of progress and target setting are not consistently undertaken with part-time students. There are good examples of effective use of assessment in course planning. In humanities, schemes of work include assessment plans and, in many lessons, teachers make valuable use of examiners' reports and assessment criteria to improve students' performance in examinations.

18. All students' key skills in ICT, communication and numeracy are assessed at induction. There is good integration of work on key skills into assignments on vocational programmes. Some quality assurance systems are not sufficiently thorough and whilst internal verification procedures for vocational courses are effective, opportunities for cross marking of students work are not consistently taken in all departments. A good level of additional support is provided for students in application of number. However, the college recognises that too few students are receiving support for communication skills.

19. Group and individual tutorials take place on a weekly basis and thorough records are kept of the outcomes of tutorial sessions. The college timetable is suspended for two full days in both November and March for a full review of students' progress.

20. The college's response to the needs and interests of students is outstanding, especially to students from minority ethnic communities. There is a broad range of programmes and courses both on the main site and at thirteen outreach centres. There are good promotional materials and supplementary leaflets informing potential students of the choices on offer. Information leaflets in a range of languages are available at various points in the college, the library and learning centre. In many lessons, careful attention is paid to the use of appropriate illustrations which appeal to students' own experiences and are used to strengthen their learning. The choice of syllabus in religious studies attracts large numbers of Muslim students because it covers Islam and philosophy. The college provides for many students who wish to repeat courses in order to achieve higher grades.

21. There is excellent, flexible, responsive and well-informed community provision, which takes account of students' need. For example, women only classes are a sensitive response to community requests. Classes for ESOL and community languages are often taught by highly qualified staff speaking the native language of the students, some of whom travel long distances to attend the lessons. Both ESOL and community languages are designed to meet the diverse personal and academic needs of the students. There are effective links with local employers which enable students to secure appropriate training in preparation for employment. The provision for students in the community is wide ranging and wholly appropriate.

22. The college is aware that it has an important part to play in widening participation, which

includes increasing the numbers from under-represented groups who attend universities. In 2001, 172 students entered university. There are many examples in business studies of progression from foundation level to HE and to management-level employment. In ICT, 64 students from minority ethnic communities progressed to HE in 2001; a high proportion were females. Almost 90% of GCE A-level mathematics students progress to HE.

23. There is a good range of general and specialist enrichment opportunities. Activities that include sports, performing arts and Islamic studies are highly regarded by students. Course tutors also provide external visits to broaden students' experience and enhance their personal development. Recent trips have included visits to a local Hindu temple, a local car plant and the Birmingham Jazz festival. Photography students, who won a prize to attend the racism conference in Durban, have created an excellent display of their experiences. In business, good use is made of work experience at foundation and intermediate levels.

24. Students' interests are reflected, and their achievements celebrated throughout the college. Students' artwork and multi-cultural displays reflecting the interests of students abound throughout the buildings. There is a highly regarded presentation evening, well attended by staff and local dignitaries, where achievement of all kinds, by students of different ages working at many different levels is celebrated and rewarded with certificates. Such occasions help to increase students' aspirations and belief in their potential.

25. The course portfolio is under constant review, and sound decisions are made about course provision. In some instances, resource constraints prevent the delivery of courses, such as ICT at foundation level. New courses are developed in response to demand, for example, GCE Advanced Subsidiary-level (GCE AS-level) film studies, which was introduced in 2001. The college collaborates effectively with a local FE college to extend the range of advanced-level subjects on offer, for example, the full range of GCE A-level mathematics options is available across the two colleges. The plan is for the sixth form college to concentrate on GCE A levels and for all students studying GCE AS levels to transfer to the sixth form college for their GCE A-level courses next year.

26. Senior managers are receptive and responsive to feedback from students, whose views are regularly sought through questionnaires. However, there is insufficient collection of student feedback in ICT. There is an active student council with representatives from each full-time group.

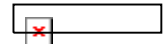
27. Students at the main site receive good guidance and support throughout their studies. Guidance notes for tutors require them to advise students about other courses in the locality if their preferred course is not available at the college. There are good links with feeder schools through regular visits and taster days which enable potential students to meet teachers and sample learning activities. Induction arrangements are well organised and emphasise the college's commitment to students. Students receive valuable careers advice from their teachers and the local careers service. The college also arranges visits to universities by students and Year 10 and Year 11 pupils from local schools. Arrangements for careers advice and guidance are not yet established in the community-based provision.

28. Tutorial arrangements are well managed, effective and valued by students. An electronic register system enables tutors to respond quickly to unexplained absence or poor attendance. Tutors formally review the progress of their students three times a year. The review process establishes further progress targets for students. Generally, these targets are clear and precise, but in some cases they are too general and as a result, unhelpful to students. These reviews lead on to reports to parents who value the feedback they receive from the college. The tutorial programme includes personal, social and academic development. Similar tutorial packs are informative and tutors receive clear guidance about their role. Tutorial arrangements are not yet established in the community-based provision. There are effective arrangements to provide help for students with physical disabilities. The college recently provided very effective support to a deaf student; members of the tutor group were taught how to use sign language and course texts were revised. Arrangements to support students who have basic skills needs are not yet well established. There is no clear management structure for basic skills nor any clear performance targets. All students are assessed for their basic skills needs through an initial test and interview. As a result, 126 students were identified as being at or below entry level for literacy. Most were not yet receiving specialist

individual support at the time of the inspection.

29. Financial support is available to students through the access fund. The average retention rate of students in receipt of access funds in 2000/01 was 95.8%. The student services office has rather brief opening hours and an unsuitable location for students who are wanting to discuss private matters. Students have effective access to support on personal issues. An appropriately qualified college counsellor offers a service that has clear procedures and guidelines. The service is effectively and sensitively monitored. There are a number of active clubs and societies. Sports facilities are available at the main site and students also use the adjacent facilities of the Birmingham Sports Centre.

Leadership and management



30. Leadership and management across the college are good. College managers at all levels set a clear direction for their staff. Each of the major weaknesses identified in the last inspection report has been systematically addressed and some, such as the teaching of mathematics and the monitoring of equal opportunities, now represent important strengths. Many of the targets for the most important performance indicators show significant improvement. Retention rates are much improved and achievements, as measured by value added performances, have been impressive in five of the last six years, although students' pass rates on some courses are still too low. Financial management is sound. The college works closely with its community partners. Value for money indicators are good.

31. Provision is good in all curriculum areas and outstanding in two. The overall quality of teaching and learning is also good. The college staff development policy and programme has been of benefit to many staff and has contributed to the confidence with which the college has coped with curriculum changes and developments, including its successful introduction of Curriculum 2000.

32. Identified priorities, such as the college's community outreach work, IT and key skills initiatives have been appropriately supported by the appointment of co-ordinators to lead these developments. The leadership and management of all curriculum areas are invariably sound and often good. Most courses are carefully planned. Learning resources are shared and schemes of work regularly updated. Course teams in most curriculum areas meet regularly to review courses, monitor attendance and achievement, and report on trends and the extent to which targets are met.

33. Most aspects of the quality assurance system have been redeveloped. The college recognises, in the self-assessment report, the need to further improve some aspects of quality assurance activities. The tracking of the destinations of those students who do not go to university is inadequate. In some curriculum areas, the annual departmental reviews, self-assessment and lesson observations are not sufficiently thorough, nor are the outcomes used systematically. Attendance rates, although improved since the last inspection, are not yet consistently good. The persistent lateness of a minority of students to a few lessons disturbs the teaching and reduces the quality of learning.

34. The appointment of a manager for quality assurance activities for the community outreach work, together with more effective line management arrangements, have led to significantly improved teaching of community-based courses. Value added measures are widely used across the college in the review of achievement and contribute to target setting. Where the value added analysis shows a deteriorating trend in achievement in a particular subject, senior managers and heads of department pursue the reasons carefully. In several cases, this scrutiny has led to changes in choice of syllabus and examination board in the search for improvement.

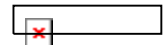
35. An outstanding feature of the college is the promotion and sustaining of equal opportunities. Cultural diversity is widely celebrated both within the curriculum and through the extensive

community-centred enrichment programme. The acts of terror in the United States on 11 September 2001 and their aftermath provided the college community with exceptionally challenging circumstances to which it responded superbly. In the weeks that followed, staff provided sensitive and timely leadership and support to all involved with the college through a variety of formal and informal networks. In its approach and actions the college was able to rely upon the effective policies and practices that form the basis of day-to-day college life and which, in turn, reflect its mission statement and fundamental aims. The contribution the college has made to promoting and sustaining good race relations in the local community and beyond is exceptional.

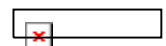
36. There is a sensitive awareness of gender-related issues and there are numerous examples of them being tackled effectively. The college has been particularly successful in supporting young Muslim female students through their courses. Many now progress to non-traditional subjects such as science, mathematics and engineering in further education (FE) and HE. The college readily accommodates the small number of students with physical disabilities.

37. The college is well supported by its governing body. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning and they undertake their responsibilities positively. They provide effective support over a wide range of curriculum, financial and management matters. The link between working groups and the full governing body is good, and governors understand and exercise well their individual and collective responsibilities. For example, through close scrutiny of value added data and other performance measures, the governing body has constructively monitored the extent to which the college meets its strategic objectives, particularly those relating to students' achievements. Governors operate within a sound framework for governance and monitor financial performance appropriately.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Mathematics



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on intermediate-level courses
- good teaching
- strong and effective team leadership
- effective widening of participation

- thorough monitoring of students' progress
- good use made of specialist resources.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics.

Scope of provision

38. Mathematics courses are studied by over 300 students in the college and by over 60 adults from the nearby community. Courses include GCSE, GCE A and AS-level mathematics, and numeracy at various levels. There are good progression routes from entry-level numeracy through to advanced level. Over 80 students who are mainly full-time between the ages of 16 and 19, study GCE AS-level mathematics. Students can study advanced mathematics modules in pure, mechanics and statistics and have the additional opportunity to gain a GCE AS level in further mathematics. Most full-time students follow a key skills course in the application of number.

Achievement and standards

39. Students on GCSE mathematics, numeracy and application of number courses achieve pass rates which are significantly above the national average for similar colleges. The pass rate in GCE A-level mathematics has been declining between 1999 and 2000 and is below the national average, although 60% of the students who pass advanced mathematics achieve high grades. The college's value added data show that, over a number of years, most advanced mathematics students perform better than their GCSE entry grades would predict. In GCSE, almost all students achieve at least one grade higher than their entry grades after one year of study. Most full-time students develop effective application of number skills. The students produce a high standard of written work and demonstrate good oral and study skills. The retention rate in GCSE mathematics is good, at over 90%, and at advanced level is comparable to the rate in similar colleges. In the part-time courses, the retention rate of mature students is comparable with the rates of full-time students. Over 90% of the successful advanced-level mathematics students progress to HE to study degree subjects which make use of their mathematical studies.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Mathematics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Associated Examining Board (AEB) numeracy	2	No. of starts	350	263	238
		% retention	93	89	93
		% pass rate	100	86	93
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	182	154	184
		% retention	87	92	78
		% pass rate	52	45	55

GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	32	37	53
		% retention	91	73	68
		% pass rate	96	82	61

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

40. Most teaching was judged as good or better and all lessons were at least satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, students work in groups, use computers well and take appropriate care with their written work. Teachers give clear explanations and regularly check students' understanding through the use of open questioning. Students undertake their studies with enthusiasm and are encouraged to produce written work that shows the logical steps in solving problems and to check the reasonableness of their answers. In one lesson, students were developing their critical and evaluative skills. They worked in pairs to solve simultaneous equations and used a graphing software package to determine whether their solution was reasonable. Students make good use of computers outside lesson time to strengthen their understanding of mathematics. In one lesson, students were given a series of short, focused tasks which successfully developed their understanding of linear regression. In a numeracy lesson, students effectively used practical work to develop their understanding of the properties of triangles before undertaking abstract calculations using Pythagoras' theorem. At an outreach centre, Asian women are able to study at a level suited to their ability and, in addition to improving their understanding of number, they make good progress in written and oral skills. Teachers use puzzles, books, computers and number games that interest and engage students and help to build their self-confidence.

41. Schemes of work are appropriately detailed and specify assessment points and opportunities for work on key skills. All homework is carefully marked, corrections are annotated and written feedback is often given which helps the students' to improve. All full-time students have target achievement grades. The teachers keep accurate records of students' performances and use these successfully in reviews of students' progress. Mature students with low numeracy skills, working in an outreach centre, effectively monitored their own progress through the use of a spreadsheet designed by the teacher which uses symbols, rather than numerical scores, to record the development of number skills. In application of number lessons, students worked on applications which were appropriate to their main programmes of study and teachers set tasks which suited the needs of individual students.

42. Teachers provide good support for students who are having difficulty with their work through weekly workshops to which students can drop-in or to which they are referred. This support helps students to make good progress in their mathematics lessons.

43. Students make good use of the library, a learning centre, computer rooms and quiet study areas to learn outside lessons. Students use the available resources effectively but there is insufficient software, video and other resources to support all topics within the curriculum.

44. The college works effectively with another local college to share learning resources and professional development, and engages in joint training sessions. This collaboration provides opportunities for students to progress from GCE AS level to GCE A level in the range of mathematics courses offered across two colleges.

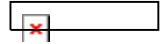
45. The mathematics teachers are well qualified and experienced, and several are members of local or national mathematical associations. They have valuable contact with local universities which benefits the students, some of whom take part in university mathematics extension programmes.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are effective. In meetings, teachers discuss curriculum-planning

issues in addition to administrative details. The preparation of the self-assessment report is undertaken by all teaching staff and managers. The team sets its own challenging targets and develops an action plan in consultation with senior managers. The teachers take students' views into account when reviewing courses. There is effective teamwork and sharing of good practice.

Biology, chemistry and physics



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on GCSE courses
- high value added scores on GCE A-level courses
- good progression to HE
- good teaching
- good specialist accommodation
- through monitoring of students' progress
- highly effective management of the department.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rate on GCE A-level courses
- low pass rate in GCE A-level chemistry

Scope of provision

47. The college provides GCSE and GCE A and AS-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics to full-time students aged 16 to 18 and students aged over 19. Currently, there are 120 students taking GCSE, 171 taking GCE AS level and 107 taking GCE A-level courses. Over 10% of those enrolled are mature students. The number of students taking both GCSE and GCE A-level courses has grown slightly since the previous inspection. There are no part-time courses for adults.

Achievement and standards

48. Between 1999 and 2001, students' rates on GCSE courses have been high and above the national averages for sixth form colleges. More than 50% of students gained the higher grades. At GCE A level, while pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 are well below the averages for sixth form colleges, they are good in relation to the students' prior attainment; there is a high level of added value in all three science subjects. The proportion of students who complete GCSE courses is above the national average, but at GCE A level, it has been falling steadily and is now low. Retention rates are high in GCSE biology, physics and chemistry. A substantial proportion of the students studying science progress to HE. Students are able to carry out practical work to a high standard. They use equipment such as microscopes, electrical meters and balances with care and accuracy. Written work is generally good and students have a high level of understanding of scientific terminology. Some students, for whom English is a second language, encounter difficulty in expressing themselves fluently both in written work and orally.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Biology, chemistry and physics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE biology	2	No. of starts	53	44	44
		% retention	84	93	91
		% pass rate	40	52	50
GCSE chemistry	2	No. of starts	22	26	24
		% retention	95	88	92
		% pass rate	68	57	64
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	25	14	21
		% retention	100	100	66
		% pass rate	80	77	78
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	35	47	52
		% retention	91	73	52
		% pass rate	73	70	63

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

49. All of the teaching is at least satisfactory and most is good or better. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are clear. Teachers are very effective at breaking down complex scientific concepts into small, readily assimilated pieces, thus helping the students to learn. For example, in a chemistry lesson on the formation of co-valent bonds, the concept of the double bond was reached by building on the concepts of ions, electron sharing and atomic number. Teachers have high expectations of their students and provide them with a good range of activities that is carefully

matched to their needs. For example, in a biology lesson, students investigated the effect of diffusion by the use of a simple experiment with permeable tubing and sucrose solution. In physics, very good use is made of ICT. In a physics lesson, the teacher made effective use of an interactive whiteboard to illustrate what happens when materials are taken beyond the elastic limit. There is good use of well chosen practical investigations that are soundly managed and carried out safely. In a chemistry lesson on re-crystallisation, students dissolved materials, filtered and then re-crystallised them, handling all the materials using safe techniques.

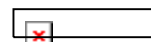
50. The marking of students' work is very thorough and students are provided with appropriately detailed feedback on how to improve their work. Their progress is rigorously monitored and half-termly assessment tests are meticulously graded against examination criteria. Reviews of progress relating to students' target grades are effective and students speak very highly of the help and support that teachers provide for them on an individual basis.

51. The teaching staff are well qualified and experienced, and the technicians efficiently support their work. Technician support is good and contributes significantly to the success of practical work. Technicians ensure that practical apparatus and materials are readily available for students in class practicals. There is ample laboratory accommodation which is well furnished and serviced, and is fully accessible to students with physical disabilities. One laboratory is equipped with an interactive whiteboard, and computers are available, but while these resources are well used in physics, insufficient use is made of them in biology and chemistry.

Leadership and management

52. The department is led effectively. There is a clear sense of purpose underpinned by good course guides, schemes of work and policies. There is an effective monitoring programme to promote good teaching. It incorporates lesson observations, regular examination of coursework and interviews with students. The department is thus fully aware of the priorities for improvement. The management of the department is very effective. There is a sound assessment system. The teachers respond effectively to identified weaknesses, for example, by providing additional classes in mathematics for chemistry students. The organisation of classes is well managed, for example, students on a GCSE biology course who have a limited command of English, are placed in a group with a teacher specialising in English as an additional language.

Business



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

Strengths

- consistently high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- high proportion of excellent lessons
- high standard of students' oral and written work

- effective development of students' personal and key skills
- excellent support for individual students
- coherent provision for progression from foundation level to HE
- strong leadership and effective course management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCSE business studies.

Scope of provision

53. The college offers a range of business courses to students in the 16 to 18 age range. Vocational courses in business are available from foundation level to advanced level. Courses at GCE A and AS level in business studies and accounts are provided in addition to GCSE business studies.

Achievement and standards

54. Students' pass rates are outstanding in GCE A and AS-level business studies and accounts. Examination pass rates on GCE A-level business studies have been at 100% in 2000 and 2001. Pass rates in GNVQ advanced business have improved during the same period and are around the national averages for sixth form colleges. Retention and pass rates in foundation-level business are very high in comparison with those of similar colleges. Pass rates in GCSE business are below national averages and the pass rate for the GNVQ intermediate in 2001 was disappointing, having been at 100% in 1999 and 2000.

55. The levels of competence of work on basic and key skills among students starting business courses are generally low, particularly at foundation level. The department gives a high priority to the subsequent development of these skills and the progress made by students in these areas is excellent, particularly in application of number. The standard of written work is outstanding. Students also respond and discuss very well during lessons, apply themselves seriously to tasks set and behave responsibly. In conversation, they speak positively about their education and take considerable pride in their progress.

56. There are high rates of internal progression from foundation to advanced-level business courses and a high proportion of these students progress to HE. The department provides good displays of case studies demonstrating former students' successful progression from foundation to degree level and subsequent successful employment in business. These displays motivate students currently studying at the college.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Business, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation business	1	No. of starts	20	21	26
		% retention	85	90	92
		% pass rate	87	61	83
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	33	30	23
		% retention	91	60	78
		% pass rate	100	100	44
GCE A-level accounts	3	No. of starts	13	14	14
		% retention	100	55	64
		% pass rate	100	86	89
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	16	21	36
		% retention	82	71	61
		% pass rate	69	80	82
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	15	22	18
		% retention	67	67	64
		% pass rate	80	100	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

57. Most teaching is good and a high proportion is outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and confident. They deploy a wide repertoire of teaching skills and methods. Lessons are well planned and include effective ways of helping students to learn and of checking that they understand the work. Learning activities are effectively designed to allow students of different abilities to work at an appropriate pace and level. In most cases, students make excellent progress within individual lessons and throughout the programmes of study. In one excellent lesson, a GNVQ foundation-level group studied personnel recruitment and selection. The lesson was extremely well planned to include stimulating, enjoyable and demanding exercises. The teacher ran a good discussion amongst students about equality of opportunity which was effectively managed to ensure that students of all abilities joined in. Students developed a deeper understanding of the importance of selection criteria and were able to see themselves more clearly from the perspective of potential employers.

58. Students are diligent and the supportive and stimulating learning environment enables them to gain in confidence. The atmosphere within classes is outstandingly positive. Students have a high level of commitment to their learning which is shared by their teachers. Good attention is paid to the development of skills of communication and application of number and the techniques needed for success in public examinations. Numerical skills are well integrated into vocational lessons as well as taught effectively in discrete classes. Lessons at foundation and intermediate level are particularly effective in extending students' general and business vocabulary. Students on these courses make good use of their work-experience programme. Lack of access to ICT and the Internet during lessons prevents students from fully developing their research and information handling skills. The teaching of key skills is particularly effective. In a successful application of number lesson, the basic rules of arithmetic were learned within an appropriate business context and subsequently applied within a vocational lesson. Tutorials are well organised and sensitively conducted to ensure that every student reviews progress and updates targets, and is offered appropriate support and firm guidance where necessary.

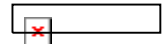
59. Students' work is marked and returned promptly, and gives suitably detailed and constructive

feedback. Teachers correct spelling, suggest improvements to grammar and syntax and indicate other improvements necessary to achieve higher grades. Work in portfolios is of a good standard relative to qualifications and where summative assessment is involved, grading decisions are sound. There are high expectations for attendance and punctuality, and well-established systems for monitoring them that are effective in maintaining high standards.

Leadership and management

60. There is strong leadership within the business area. Course management is effective and morale is high within a cohesive team of teachers who share a common understanding of priorities and values, and clearly communicate them to students. It is this shared approach which underlies the high level of enthusiasm and commitment brought to their work by teachers which in turn enthuses students and builds their own confidence and self-esteem. Students understand and largely share the values of the department. The level of awareness of issues concerning equality of opportunity amongst staff and students is outstanding.

Information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- good retention rates on all full-time courses
- good teaching
- good specialist resources and learning materials
- effective integration of key skills within vocational assignments
- good progression to HE.

Weaknesses

- lack of thorough action planning
- cramped layout and unsuitable furnishings in IT rooms.

Scope of provision

61. The full-time courses include GCE A and AS levels in computing and ICT. The college provides the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in ICT and GCSE in IT. There are a number of courses for adults run successfully in many locations within the community. These courses include integrated business technology at stage 2 (IBT 2) and stage 3 (IBT 3) and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT). Courses are socially inclusive and take account of the community needs. There is an unusually high number of females on full-time computing courses.

Achievement and standards

62. Retention rates on all full-time computing and IT courses are good. The pass rate on GNVQ advanced IT in 2001 is above the national average for sixth form colleges. The GCE A-level computing pass rate has improved significantly and is now comparable with the national average pass rates. The GCSE IT pass rate for high achievers improved to 40% in 2001. The pass rates on the GNVQ IT intermediate course were well above national averages until 2001, when they dropped considerably following the introduction of a new syllabus.

63. Many students have well-developed practical skills. Students are able to work well at their preferred pace on tasks set by teachers. Practical projects are well presented. Good examples of sample work are displayed in computer rooms. The progression of students to university is high and last year around 90% of level 3 students progressed to computer-related courses in HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in ICT, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	352	206	*
		% retention	82	81	*
		% pass rate	63	44	*
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	25	22	35
		% retention	100	95	91
		% pass rate	100	81	63
GNVQ advanced IT	3	No. of starts	15	16	41
		% retention	80	100	85
		% pass rate	100	75	86
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	37	33	41
		% retention	80	74	80
		% pass rate	64	62	82

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

*data not available

Quality of education and training

64. Teaching is satisfactory or better; a high proportion is very good. Schemes of work and assessments are well planned by the course teams. In practical sessions, students use the resources with skill and confidence, and enthusiastic teachers encourage them. In one lesson, the

students extended their understanding of low-level programming through the use of well-designed simulation software. In community venues, teachers ensure that lessons match the learning needs of adult students. One CLAIT lesson in the community took place within a mosque, where an enthusiastic teacher successfully accommodated the range of students' ability and developed the use of spreadsheets effectively. Despite language barriers, the students made good progress in a short time. Teachers give good verbal and written feedback to students to ensure that they know how to improve their work.

65. Computer hardware and software in the college and at community venues is good. All students have access to the Internet. These resources have made an effective contribution to students' learning and achievement. Students have access to a wide range of good paper-based and electronic learning materials covering the use of a variety of software packages. Computer rooms in the college and some community locations are poorly designed, and computers are too close together for students to be able to work comfortably. The furniture is often old and not suitable for computer workstations. Trailing computer cables present a safety hazard. There are too few data projectors to allow staff and students to make electronic presentations and demonstrations.

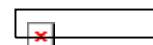
66. The library book stock is sufficient and up to date but there are too few computer journals. This restricts students' research to an over-reliance on the Internet. Staff are suitably qualified and there has been considerable staff development activity during the last year in technical and curriculum areas.

67. Assessment of students' work is carried out fairly. Effective written feedback on students' work ensures they know what to do to improve. There are thorough internal verification procedures to ensure consistency in assessment. GNVQ intermediate IT students receive three language support sessions each week. Key skills assessment is well integrated into the vocational assignments and there is good co-operation between key skills and subject teachers. For example, one vocational assignment requires the students to design a questionnaire, which involves the tutor for key skills communication course helping students with the construction of the questions, and the tutor for the key skills course in the application of number helping students with numerical analysis. Students' progress is carefully monitored and parents are regularly informed, where appropriate. Staff take particular care to ensure that individual students' needs are addressed and students value this approach. Some students persistently arrive late in the early morning.

Leadership and management

68. The area is well managed. There is clear direction and a strong emphasis on improving students' learning experience. However, there are insufficient opportunities for feedback from students during their programmes. The staff work well together and share resources and good practice effectively. Part-time staff are involved in all aspects of the department's work and are appraised and observed. Course meetings are held regularly; the agenda includes the production and monitoring of action plans. The monitoring of action plans for the self-assessment is insufficiently thorough.

Performing arts



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

Strengths

- good retention rates

- good teaching
- high standard of practical work
- good progression to HE and employment
- valuable partnership with local performing arts industry
- wide variety of performance venues.

Weaknesses

- low attendance and late arrival at some lessons
- some unsatisfactory accommodation
- lack of integration of ICT in teaching.

Scope of provision

69. Currently, 162 students study in the performing arts department. Dance, performing arts and theatre studies courses are available at GCE A and AS level. Both dance and drama are offered at GCSE. The association acting diploma is offered as part-time evening provision.

Achievement and standards

70. Retention rates are good on all courses, and above the national average for sixth form colleges. Pass rates in GCE A-level dance and performing arts, and theatre and dramatic arts are around the national averages. Pass rates in GCSE dance have declined significantly from 100% in 1999. Students' skills of critical evaluation and analysis are of a good standard. Written work, however, is not well presented and is not given sufficient thought. Most students achieve high standards of practical work. Many students work above the level expected, often displaying impressive standards of creativity and technical competence. A high proportion of students progress to established HE courses, drama or dance schools and employment within the arts industry.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Performing arts, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level performing arts	3	No. of starts	29	18	24
		% retention	74	94	83
		% pass rate	100	87	96
GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts	3	No. of starts	21	16	14
		% retention	65	92	82
		% pass rate	100	83	93

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

71. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers are especially effective at integrating theory into practical work. Teaching is demanding and appropriately linked to course requirements. Staff improve their teaching by making very good use of the specialist resources available to them. Students benefit from committed and competent staff, visiting artists and workshops with professional companies. Verbal feedback to students from teachers and from their peers is constructive and aids improvement in performance. Written assessments link closely to coursework requirements. Students find the course handbooks useful and informative. Project briefs are well designed and include clear objectives, guidelines and assessment criteria. Key skills sessions effectively support the development of students' specialist coursework. Students' progress is effectively monitored through the tutorial system and there are termly reviews. Targets are negotiated with students but are sometimes too vague to lead to improvement. Practical tasks are regularly assessed and monitored, and students are kept well informed about their progress. This approach is less well developed for students' written tasks and the department has introduced new procedures to improve the monitoring and recording process.

72. Students benefit greatly from regular visits to theatrical venues. Good workshops, led by visiting artists, enrich students' learning programmes. This breadth of enrichment has a very positive impact on the students' learning. Students have many opportunities to perform their work. There is a regular programme of productions, which provides the chance to demonstrate the very good skills they have acquired to a variety of audiences at the college and in local community venues. Specific performance evenings for parents are effective and enable them to view students' work and talk to specialist staff.

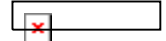
73. Students' lateness and poor attendance in some lessons is detrimental to the quality of teaching and learning, particularly when assessed group work is taking place. On some occasions, fewer than 50% of students are present at the start of the lesson. Specialist teachers provide additional support for students. One student with English as a second language has benefited greatly from receiving additional support. As a very competent and talented performer, this student has improved her level of English and can now read dance notation very well. Teachers provide accurate and up-to-date careers advice to students. Students' progression rates from GCE AS level to GCE A level are good. Courses are delivered in two specialist and well-equipped teaching spaces. The dance studio is spacious and students make excellent use of the mirrors during technique class and composition. The leak in the roof of the dance studio, however, adversely affects the teaching of dance and has implications for health and safety. All the performing arts teaching spaces cannot be properly heated and there is too little rehearsal space for students. Students have little opportunity to develop technical skills. General rather than specialist technicians provide support for productions.

74. The library is well resourced and has a good collection of books, journals and video material. There is a lack of integration of ICT within the curriculum. There are no computers in any of the specialist performing arts teaching rooms and students make inefficient use of IT within their work.

Leadership and management

75. The team has regular meetings. Staff reviews are completed regularly and are effective in identifying training needs. Teachers make good use of internal and regional training events which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Students' views are gathered regularly and contribute to the annual self-assessment process. Some aspects of self-assessment lack sufficient detail and targets lack rigour.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high retention rates in history and religious studies
- high pass rates in religious studies and psychology
- good teaching
- effective monitoring of students' learning
- good individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in law and psychology
- low pass rates in law and history
- inadequate range of activities for mixed-ability classes.

Scope of provision

76. Provision in humanities includes psychology, sociology and law at GCE A level and GCSE, and GCE A levels in religious studies and history. Most students are aged 16 to 18, and are studying full time. Syllabus choices in religious studies and sociology are made carefully and are appropriate to the local community. In religious studies, the choice of papers in Islam and the philosophy of religion are particularly well chosen. In the sociology curriculum, examples and illustrative material draws effectively on the experiences of the students from minority ethnic groups. Students particularly value the opportunity to combine humanities GCE A level and GCSE courses with GCE A levels in a range of community languages such as Urdu, Arabic and Bengali.

Achievement and standards

77. Students' written work is of a good standard. Coursework in most GCE A levels is good, although little of it is word processed. Students' oral contributions in class are good: they are keen to participate in discussions and respond well to questions. Students are confident in the use of technical terminology in their subjects, and their ability to sustain abstract thinking is good. Attendance in lessons is good. Some students are not punctual but lateness is appropriately managed by teachers. Students' retention and pass rates vary significantly. There are high retention rates in history and religious studies, but retention rates in law and psychology fall below the national average for sixth form colleges. Pass rates for students in religious studies and psychology have been high in two of the last three years. In sociology, pass rates are satisfactory, but in law, pass rates are significantly below national averages. Value added analysis indicates that students' pass rates, based on their GCSE scores, are as predicted.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Humanities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	74	68	54
		% retention	80	71	65
		% pass rate	97	67	89
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	32	31	33
		% retention	81	63	70
		% pass rate	81	65	94
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	20	28	30
		% retention	65	75	63
		% pass rate	29	65	68

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

78. Teaching in most lessons is good or better. Schemes of work are suitably detailed and include extensive references to assessment and resources. Lessons are well planned to include an appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods, and classes maintain a suitable pace and momentum. In a GCE AS-level sociology lesson on national identity, the teacher's sensitivity enabled students to draw effectively on their own experiences and all examples of languages, food, rituals and symbols were from Bangladesh and Pakistan. The lesson was well structured and carefully organised to include a good discussion about the National Front and British Nationalism. Learning resources are used effectively and students make good use of the additional resources available on the college intranet. Teachers question students skilfully to check that they are understanding the work. In most lessons, learning activities were not sufficiently structured to enable the most and least able students to achieve at their own level.

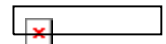
79. Students are diligent and well motivated. They speak highly of the individual support and encouragement that they receive from teachers. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and possess a good knowledge of their subjects. They display a keen awareness of individual students' strengths and weaknesses. Students' work is carefully assessed, and thorough marking shows students how to improve their performance. There are tri-annual subject review days at which teachers monitor and record students' progress. Teachers make valuable reference to the demands of the examination and assessment regime, and frequent use is made of examiners' reports to guide students on exam preparation.

80. The humanities curriculum is enhanced by extension studies and some students also take advantage of the opportunity for mentoring, by students from local universities. There is effective liaison with the library. A delegated book budget enables appropriate texts to be bought for the library. Students are also given at least one textbook for use at home for each subject they study.

Leadership and management

81. Subject teachers in humanities meet regularly as a team. Minutes record discussion and actions on curriculum development, examination and assessment requirements and staff development. Part-time staff are not always able to attend these meetings. The department's self-assessment report is the result of wide consultation in the department, as are the targets associated with the action plan. Little use is made of the peer lesson observation programme, in either self-assessment or in other quality assurance processes. The teaching load carried by heads of department makes it difficult for them to fully discharge the range of responsibilities delegated to them for quality assurance activities, resources and curriculum issues.

English and media



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- good retention rates on all courses
- some good teaching
- wide range of enrichment activities
- very good library resources.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rate in GCSE English language.

Scope of provision

82. There is a good range of provision which primarily meets the needs of full-time students aged 16 to 18. GCE A and AS-level courses are offered in English language and literature, English literature and media studies. GCE AS-level film studies has been introduced this year. GCSEs are offered in English language, English literature and media studies. A communicative English skills course was introduced last year for students who require a pre-GCSE level English course.

Achievement and standards

83. Retention rates in all subjects are close to, or better than, the national averages for sixth form colleges. In GCE A-level and GCSE English literature, the retention rates have been above the national averages for the last three years. Most pass rates are good. The pass rates in GCE A-level and GCSE media studies, and in GCSE English literature, were all above the national averages in 2001. The pass rate in GCSE English language has been consistently below the national average, and is particularly low for students aged 19 and over.

84. The standard of students' work is good. Students approach written and practical tasks with thought and application, and generally organise and present their work well. There is evidence of steady development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. Students on GCE A and AS-level courses have good note-taking and essay-writing skills. In most lessons, students work well both individually and in pairs or groups, and make thoughtful and perceptive contributions to discussion.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and media, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	144	155	179
		% retention	84	86	87
		% pass rate	49	44	31
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	39	30	41
		% retention	76	87	71
		% pass rate	71	77	93
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	31	31	30
		% retention	93	90	90
		% pass rate	92	63	89
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	22	29	27
		% retention	81	80	81
		% pass rate	93	90	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

85. All courses are well planned; there are detailed and appropriate schemes of work. Most teaching is good and lessons are carefully prepared. Teachers make effective use of a range of techniques to involve students in lessons and to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. Effective lessons are carefully structured to ensure that all students in the group are able to develop and consolidate their learning as they engage in the various tasks and activities. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students and of their strengths and weaknesses, and adjust their approach to individual students accordingly. Many students have English as their second or third language. Teachers use language sensitively and frequently check that students understand difficult words or terms in lessons. Teachers make effective use of relevant and helpful paper-based learning material and other resources.

86. Teachers assess students' work carefully and accurately, and provide written comments to encourage them and help them improve. Internal moderation of students' coursework is thorough and effective. All the teachers in the curriculum area are well qualified. Relationships between teachers and students are friendly and respectful, and students speak highly of the help and support that they receive from their teachers and tutors. Well-organised induction programmes, including an especially effective introduction to the use of the college library, enable students to settle quickly into the college and their courses. All full-time students are timetabled for three tutorial meetings a week. This arrangement allows for frequent one-to-one meetings with their tutors, in addition to the individual reviews of progress which take place every six weeks. Students needing additional learning support receive benefit from help either from their subject teachers, or centrally on a one-to-one basis from other specialist teachers. There are no formal tutorial arrangements for the part-time evening class students.

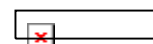
87. The college library has a very good collection of resources to support the full range of English and media courses. The book collection is extensive, and includes a large fiction section. There is also a good selection of relevant journals, audio and videotapes, and CD-ROMs. Students are encouraged to make use of the Internet, and are provided with lists of relevant websites. The college intranet contains informative material for English literature but there is little to support English language and media studies. Students are encouraged to word process their coursework, particularly where drafting is required. Technical equipment to support media courses is adequate, and technician support is good. Classroom accommodation for English and media studies is satisfactory.

88. All full-time GCE A and AS-level students are required to attend key skills lessons. There is little integration of key skills into English courses and students do not value their key skills communication lessons. A strength of the English and media studies provision is the enrichment of the curriculum by the regular visits arranged for the students to plays and other relevant events.

Leadership and management

89. The curriculum area is well managed. Teachers work closely together and there are regular and frequent departmental meetings. College policies are fully implemented. Self-assessment involves all the staff, is thorough and accurate, and actions taken as a result have led to improvements. Teachers regularly attend training events.

Community languages and ESOL



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates in community languages
- good teaching
- extensive provision for community needs
- excellent standard of students' written work in community languages
- imaginative development of IT-based resources for language learners
- highly qualified teachers.

Weaknesses

- some cramped teaching accommodation
- inadequate access to learning and IT resources in the community.

Scope of provision

90. The college provides a broad range of daytime, evening and weekend ESOL and community language courses on the main site and at many local community venues. The college has a strong commitment to develop and build upon its links with the local community: students come from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds and age groups. Target groups, such as women from minority ethnic groups who would not normally attend college, are able to attend courses run only for women, which are available at all levels. Arabic, Bengali and Urdu courses are offered from pre-GCSE level to GCE A level, in addition to the bilingual certificate in Arabic. A range of ESOL courses is provided to suit the needs of students in the community and those in need of language support within their full-time programme.

Achievement and standards

91. Pass rates on all community language courses are high and have been so for the past three years. Pass rates in Bengali and Urdu are now well above the national average. Retention rates for community language courses are also consistently high. Many students on community language courses are well-motivated native language speakers and their oral and written work is of a very high standard. Students perform particularly well in the Pitmans spoken exam, where the most recent pass rate was high, at 87%, and many students gained first-class awards. ESOL students

work towards the AEB literacy tests, Pitman ESOL and Cambridge EFR exams. Some recent pass rates, between 1999 and 2001, have shown significant improvement; rates have reached 100% in GCE A-level Bengali and AEB literacy. The range of courses available enables students to progress from pre-GCSE to GCE A level.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Community languages and ESOL, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
AEB literacy ESOL	Entry, 1 and 2	No. of starts	133	126	*
		% retention	90	98	*
		% pass rate	98	28	*
ICET ESOL	Entry	No. of starts	33	72	*
		% retention	91	46	*
		% pass rate	76	53	*
GCSE Bengali	2	No. of starts	25	25	30
		% retention	76	100	90
		% pass rate	94	71	81
GCE A-level Arabic	3	No. of starts	27	18	21
		% retention	81	67	81
		% pass rate	75	82	80
GCE A-level Urdu	3	No. of starts	26	33	16
		% retention	85	91	100
		% pass rate	95	63	95

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

*data not available

Quality of education and training

92. Most lessons were good or better and some were outstanding. The standard of teaching at the community venues is particularly high. In the most effective lessons, extremely committed teachers make good use of appropriately detailed lesson plans, which include clear learning objectives. Teachers in these lessons are enthusiastic and provide excellent learning opportunities for students to develop their oral and written language skills. A range of teaching methods is employed and good use is made of the resources available to engage and elicit a lively response from students during lessons. Schemes of work are designed to match course requirements whilst also identifying opportunities to meet individual students' needs. In one excellent lesson, a carefully devised activity involving a jazz chant enabled students to improve their understanding of the inter-relationship between intonation and meaning in a very enjoyable way. In another excellent lesson, the teacher made effective use of external speakers from the health service to consolidate language skills relating to diet and healthy eating. Teachers use a range of realistic and authentic resources in lessons. In an ESOL class, students were able to use travel brochures to stimulate their writing of postcards and widen their use of vocabulary. In a GCE A-level Urdu lesson, the teacher effectively supplemented the reading and critical analysis of an Urdu novel through the planned use of a television adaptation. Students extended their understanding of the culture and the society portrayed in the literary text.

93. Teachers are hardworking and very committed to their students. Most are highly qualified, native

speakers of community languages. The ethnic diversity of the teachers provides positive role models for students. There is very good use of bilingual classroom assistants to support learning in Arabic lessons at community venues.

94. A stimulating multicultural learning environment is provided for students through the excellent, colourful wall displays, which include cards, posters and artefacts from different countries and cultures. Rooms used for college-based ESOL lessons are of a good size. Accommodation for community language courses is cramped, and overcrowding in lessons inhibits some activities.

95. Teaching staff have worked with partners to produce a successful commercial standard CD-ROM for use in the teaching of ESOL courses. The resource is written in English, Arabic, Bengali and Urdu and is soon to be piloted nationally as part of the university for industry 'LearnDirect' provision. Teachers and students in the community have little access to IT and the range of teaching resources at some venues is inadequate.

Leadership and management

96. The community language and ESOL provision is well managed. Managers, teachers and community groups work effectively together as a team to meet the challenge of delivering the rapidly expanding provision. They ensure courses are responsive to the specific requirements of the community and provide for specific language needs. This approach has enabled the department to provide relevant courses for the increasing number of students who are asylum seekers. Quality assurance arrangements are not consistent across the department and although communication is good, there is insufficient sharing of good practice. All teachers contribute significantly to the strengthening links between the college and the local community.

Part D: College data

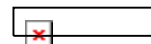
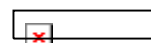


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	2.2	52.5
2	29.6	39.8
3	68.2	7.7
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in spring 2001

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/2001

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	981	398	35
Agriculture	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	25	0	0
Business	247	12	7
Hotel and catering	0	0	0
Health and community care	107	18	3
Art and design	126	3	3
Humanities	1,337	150	38
Basic education	0	556	14
Total	2,823	1,137	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001

Table 3:

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000
1	Starters excluding transfers	567	659	395	705	703	579
	Retention rate (%)	85	92	92	81	77	74
	National average (%)	78	81	82	72	69	74
	Pass rate (%)	63	87	77	33	84	50
	National average (%)	69	71	77	67	75	76
2	Starters excluding transfers	845	716	692	305	200	217
	Retention rate (%)	84	87	87	83	83	83
	National average (%)	79	80	82	71	71	75
	Pass rate (%)	74	97	82	45	91	59
	National average (%)	84	85	82	75	77	77
3	Starters excluding transfers	905	734	844	232	205	169
	Retention rate (%)	68	79	69	66	70	72
	National average (%)	77	78	80	62	65	69

	Pass rate (%)	55	86	75	56	85	55
	National average (%)	86	85	85	69	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	21	7	36	9	3	7
	Retention rate (%)	38	100	61	56	**	29
	National average (%)	89	*	*	75	71	*
	Pass rate (%)	50	50	68	20	*	50
	National average (%)	96	*	*	74	67	*
All short	Starters excluding transfers	220	279	149	431	2,118	1,839
	Retention rate (%)	90	98	99	94	98	99
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	67	95	81	34	96	90
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is General FE and Tertiary colleges/Sixth Form colleges).

* data unavailable

** too few starters to provide a valid calculation

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

2. College rates for 1997/98 - 1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

3. College rates for 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	73.8	22.9	3.3	61
Level 2 (intermediate)	83.9	12.9	3.2	31
Level 1 (foundation)	81.8	9.1	9.1	11

Other sessions	90.0	10.0	0	10
Totals	78.8	17.7	3.5	113

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