

South Trafford College

***This file contains both the November 2001
inspection report and the December 2002
monitoring inspection report***



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Inspection report
SOUTH TRAFFORD COLLEGE

Dates of inspection: 12-16 November 2001

© Crown copyright 2002. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

College inspection reports are available on the OFSTED website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Reference: HMI 408

Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the college	3
Part A: Summary	4
Information about the college	4
How effective is the college?	4
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas	6
How well is the college led and managed?	9
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?	9
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?	9
Students' views of the college	9
Other information	10
Part B: The college as a whole	11
Summary of grades awarded to teaching, learning and attainment by inspectors	11
Achievement and standards	11
Quality of education and training	13
Leadership and management	16
Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas	19
Mathematics and science	19
Business and administration	23
Information communication technology (ICT)	27
Hospitality and catering	31
Leisure and tourism	35
Sports studies	39

Hair and beauty	43
Care and early years	47
Visual and performing arts and creative studies	51
Humanities – social sciences	55
English and communication	59
Modern foreign languages (MFL)	63
Foundation studies	67
Part D: College data	71
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age	71
Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01	71
Table 3: Retention and achievement	72
Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection	73
Notes	74-76

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	South Trafford College
Type of college:	Further Education
Principal:	Dr. Rob Baker
Address of college:	Manchester Road West Timperley Altrincham Cheshire WA14 5PQ
Telephone number:	0161 952 4600
Fax number:	0161 952 4612
Chair of governors:	Malcolm Matravets
Unique reference number:	130519
Name of reporting inspector:	Linda Harwood HMI
Date(s) of inspection:	12-16 November 2001

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

South Trafford College is a medium-sized general further education (FE) college in the borough of Trafford in Greater Manchester. Most of the college's work takes place at its site in Altrincham. The college has also developed significant community-based provision at two local high schools. These two partnership arrangements aim to increase post-16 retention and pass rates. Although the borough contains pockets of deprivation, its southern part is comparatively affluent. The unemployment rate in the borough is about 2%. The proportion of young persons in Trafford who stay on in full-time education after the age of 16, or enter training, is 90%. Minority ethnic groups make up 5% of the population and are mainly in the north of the borough.

South Trafford College operates within a selective educational system and competes with other providers for students. There are a number of schools with sixth forms and FE and sixth form colleges within a 10-mile radius. In Trafford, approximately 35% of 11 year olds are selected for grammar schools and many stay on in these schools after the age of 16. The college aims to widen participation by offering young people a wide choice of courses.

The college mission statement is to "respond to community needs by providing effective, efficient and enjoyable education and training, enabling all to achieve their personal, educational and vocational potential." The college offers a wide range of courses in general, and in particular, in the service sector curriculum and in creative arts. The college sees its role as a provider of help to those school leavers who were not successful through the local selective system. It aims to provide educational opportunities for everyone and sees its general education provision as a key to widening participation.

In 2000/01, the college enrolled over 11,000 students. Just over 2,000 were full-time students and nearly 9,000 were part-time students. Two thirds of the full-time students were aged 16 to 18. More than 90% of students aged over 19 study part time. Two thirds of the students are female.

How effective is the college?

There has been a significant increase in pass rates for both students aged 16 to 18 and those aged over 19 at all levels over the past four years, whilst retention rates have remained steady at around the national average. Inspectors judged the provision to be good in seven curriculum areas and satisfactory in five curriculum areas. Provision in mathematics and science is unsatisfactory.

Key strengths

- wide range of courses to meet local needs
-

-
- specific action to provide courses for learners from deprived areas
 - many enthusiastic and well-motivated students
 - effective academic and pastoral support for students
 - strong industrial links
 - well-resourced specialist accommodation
 - good staff development programme
 - well-supported and effective part-time staff
 - effective measures by management to improve students' performance.

What should be improved

- some dull and unimaginative teaching
- provision for students aged 16 to 18 at level 2
- inconsistencies in the implementation of key skills
- promotion of equal opportunities throughout the college
- extent of staff involvement in the self-assessment process
- some crowded accommodation.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Mathematics and science	Unsatisfactory. Provision in mathematics is better than that in sciences. There are improved retention rates on General Certificate Of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics and sciences courses and on General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) mathematics courses. Retention rates are poor on GCE A-level science courses. Many science lessons are not sufficiently demanding. Quality assurance procedures lack rigour.
Business and administration	Good. Retention and pass rates on full-time General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced business and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) administration level 2 and 3 courses are good. Pass rates on some level 3 courses are low. Some students have been outstandingly successful on the part-time business professional course. Most teaching is good. A broad range of courses provides excellent progression opportunities for students. A particularly good feature are the flexibly arranged administration courses. Leadership and management are strong.
Information communication technology (ICT)	Satisfactory . Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but some lessons do not make enough demands upon the students. Pass rates on short courses in information technology (IT) are at least satisfactory but retention rates on some IT courses are poor. Provision is broad in its range and is arranged flexibly. There are some good resources.
Hospitality and catering	Good. Teaching of practical lessons is good. Assessment planning is outstanding, and assessment is fair. Students receive good support. In some lessons, students are given insufficiently demanding tasks and they make slow progress towards achievement. The section is well managed. Specialist accommodation and resources are good.
Leisure and tourism	Good. There is a broad range of good, well-managed and appropriate courses. Teaching is good or very good. Students attend regularly. Links with industry are well developed and are an important feature of programmes. Pass rates are low on level 1 and 2 courses. Some retention rates are declining.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Sports studies	Satisfactory . There is a broad range of courses and these lead to sports qualifications. Courses are followed mainly by students aged 16 to 18. The college includes a centre of excellence for men’s football and an accredited academy for women’s football. The curriculum area has effective links with local organisations to help students develop practical skills. The retention and pass rates are unsatisfactory on the GCE A-level physical education (PE) course.
Hair and beauty	Good . Students are well motivated, and can work effectively on their own. The range of programmes is broad and appropriate. Students achieve high standards of work on beauty, holistic therapy, sports therapy, theatrical and media make-up courses. Retention and pass rates are good on these courses. Some lessons fail to engage students’ interest. There are excellent resources, which match good commercial standards.
Care and early years	Good . Retention and pass rates are good. Staff support students well and are responsive to their needs. Students attain high standards through group work and individual study. In some lessons, there is too much activity by the teacher and too little by the students.
Visual and performing arts and creative studies	Good . The college offers a wide range of provision in art and design, media, performing arts and creative studies to 16-18 and adult students. Teaching is good. Students achieve high levels of attainment. They carry out demanding and well-designed assignments which cover a range of skills and help them to work effectively on their own.
Humanities – social sciences	Satisfactory . Lessons are well planned. Students value the advice teachers give them. Most teaching is good. There are high pass rates on access courses. The added value factor is low in students’ achievements on the GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS-level) course in psychology. In their feedback on assessment, teachers do not always show how students can improve their work.
English and communication	Satisfactory . There are some very good retention and pass rates. Some excellent teaching develops students’ powers of analysis. Courses are well managed and staff are well qualified. On the GCSE English course, few students take up the additional learning support they need and the pass rate is unsatisfactory. Some teachers’ classroom management is poor. Some assessment feedback does not indicate how students can improve their work.
Modern foreign languages (MFL)	Satisfactory . Those students who finish their course often do well. Far too many students do not finish their language course, however. Pass rates and grades on GCSE courses are high. Students are highly motivated, facilities are good and the range of courses is broad. Most teaching is at least satisfactory and some is good or even excellent.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Foundation studies	<p>Good. There are good progression routes from courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and particularly for adults. Students achieve high standards in their classwork. Many gain appropriate qualifications, enhance their personal skills, and gain in confidence. The standard of teaching is good. Students benefit from work experience and access to main stream vocational training. Provision in basic skills is narrow in scope with some unimaginative teaching. There are developing links with the community.</p>

How well is the college led and managed?

Management is good. The college is well led and ably managed at all levels. Governors carry out their responsibilities in overseeing the strategic direction of the college and its performance. Priority has been given to improving teaching and raising the level of students' achievements. Pass rates at all levels and for students of all ages have improved, and most are above the national average. Quality assurance, self-assessment and business planning frameworks are well developed, but they are not applied consistently. Courses and programmes are well managed in most sections of the college. Insufficient priority is given to improving the pass rates of students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses to ensure that all staff and students understand the importance of equality of opportunity and that the college policy on equal opportunities is fully implemented.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's approach to inclusion is good. It offers a wide range of courses at different levels in most of its curriculum areas to young people and adults from the local area, including a number of young people under the age of 16, some of whom have been excluded from school. The college has developed strong outreach provision in areas of relative disadvantage and is making progress in widening participation to include adults from groups under-represented in FE. It pays attention to the needs of individuals through its tutorial system. Students feel well supported and valued as individuals. Although small, the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is greater in the college than in the local community.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Teachers provide good support for students. There is an appropriate range of personal and pastoral support services provided by individual tutors and the college student services, including the counsellor and the student liaison officer. Tutorials for both groups and individual students are planned carefully and are carried out well. Tutorials are an integral part of the processes for the monitoring and assessment of students' performance. Some tutors, however, are unclear of their role in relation to part-time students and students over the age of 19. There is a successful induction programme and an effective careers advice and guidance service.

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

- pleasant environment
 - college's social life
-

-
- freedom and the respect accorded to them
 - range of enrichment activities
 - realism of the simulated commercial facilities in some areas
 - knowledge and experience of staff
 - friendly and helpful staff
 - wide choice of courses.

What they feel could be improved

- overcrowding in the refectory and common room
- lack of parking in and around the main college campus
- additional costs of materials on some courses
- cancellation of classes when teachers are absent on courses
- difficulty of printing from computers.

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, learning and attainment 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	60	34	6
19+ and WBL*	69	23	7
Learning 16–18	57	35	7.5
19+ and WBL	67	25.5	7.5

Key: Inspectors grade three aspects of lessons: teaching, learning and attainment. 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. The college's data indicate that many students performed well in 2001. South Trafford College provides a broad range of vocational courses and in addition it offers a wide range of general education programmes, including GCE A/AS level, GCSE and access to higher education (HE) courses. There is no work-based learning. The college recruits students of all ages. In 2000/01, 54% of students were over the age of 19 and 46% were students aged 16 to 18.

2. Overall, retention rates are stable and the majority of students complete their courses. In 2001, retention rates at level 1 were just below the national average. At level 2, the retention rates are in line with national averages, although they fell in 2001 for students aged over 19. At level 3, retention rates are in line with national averages. On short courses, retention rates have fallen for both age groups in the three years to 2001 and they are below the national average.

3. There have been significant improvements in students' pass rates over the last four years. At most levels, the pass rates are above the national average, and in some cases, significantly above. There has been an upward trend in students' pass rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 for all age groups. The pass rates of students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses remain below the national average. The pass rates of older students on courses at levels 1 and 3, rose above the national average in 2000 and they are now significantly above it. In 2001, the pass rates of older students on courses at level 2 were above the national average.

4. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about students' achievements and the standards reached on particular courses.

16–18 year olds

5. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 who take GCE A-level courses have risen in the three years to 2000. In 1999/2000, pass rates averaged 68%, compared with a national average of 73%. The average point score for students entered for two or more GCE A levels or the GCE AS-level equivalent, is 8.4. This is well below the national average of 18.5 and the Trafford Local Education Authority (LEA) figure of 22.1. These figures reflect the selective nature of education in the borough. The college does not have any systematic scheme for comparing students' final examination performance with the GCSE grade students had when they started their course in order to identify the extent of the value added to their achievements. A pilot scheme to cover GCE AS level, the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and GNVQ intermediate courses were introduced in 2000/01. Students are now set minimum grades to achieve. Value added analysis of students' GCE AS-level examination results in 2001 showed that few students had achieved grades which represented a significant achievement for them in light of their GCSE grades.

6. The majority of students enrolled on GNVQ /AVCE programmes are aged 16 to 18. In 1999/2000, the pass rate for the 200 students enrolled on level 3 courses was 84% which is above the national average. In 2001, however, the average point score of students taking these courses was 11.1, which is below the national average.

7. Only a small proportion of students who take NVQ courses at levels 1, 2 and 3, are aged 16 to 18. Level 2 courses attract the largest number of students. On these courses, retention rates have risen from 57% in 1998 to 82% in 2000. In the same period, pass rates have risen from 44% to 67% and they are now above the national average.

8. The college offers a range of GCSE courses. Many students take GCSE English and/or mathematics for a second time. In 1999/2000, the retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 on the GCSE course was 68% and the proportion of students who obtained grade C or above was 33%, below the national average of 37%. The pass rate on the GCSE mathematics course has risen but on the GCSE English course, it has fallen. On GNVQ courses at intermediate level, the retention and pass rates are in line with the national average.

9. Pass rates for younger students on level 1 courses have improved significantly over the last three years and retention rates have remained steady. The pass rates of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Nearly all these students progress to further courses.

Adult learners

10. Pass rates for adult learners are good on most courses. The pass rates for adult students on GCE A-level courses have improved over the three years to 2000, from 42% to

63% and are now above the national average. A high proportion of the students who complete the access to HE course are successful in gaining a place on a degree course.

11. Students on hospitality and catering and on beauty and holistic therapy courses are able to demonstrate a high level of practical skill. In 2000, retention rates of adult students on NVQ level 3 courses were good at 85%. Pass rates are improving but in 2000, they averaged only 47%, well below the national average. Both retention and pass rates of adult students on NVQ level 2 courses are above the national average.

12. Adult students are more successful on GCSE courses than students aged 16 to 18. Their retention rates are higher and, in general, they achieve higher grades than the younger students. In 2000, the average retention rate for adults on GCSE courses was 74% and the proportion who achieved grade C or above was 68%. Both the retention and pass rates for adults on GCSE courses are above the national average.

13. Pass rates on level 1 courses have risen significantly each year. They reached 94% in 2001, well above the national average of 69%. On NVQ level 1 courses, retention rates have fallen from 89% in 1998 to 53% in 2000. Pass rates are rising. In 2000, they reached 71%, in line with the national average.

Quality of education and training

14. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 227 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 64% of these and unsatisfactory in 6.6%. Teaching is particularly good on leisure and tourism, business and administration, hospitality and catering, visual and performing arts and creative studies, and foundation programmes. All the teaching was satisfactory or better on hair and beauty, English, business, care and early years, visual and performing arts, and creative studies courses. On mathematics and science courses, however, there is a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Overall, there is more good or very good teaching on courses for students over the age of 19 than on courses for students aged 16 to 18. Teaching is better and learners' attainment is higher on level 1 and 3 courses than on courses at level 2.

15. Teachers display good knowledge of their subjects and have vocational expertise. Most lesson plans are particularly good. These set out relevant and stimulating learning activities which excite and sustain the students' interest. Some plans, however, focus more on what the teacher should do rather than on what the students should achieve. In a few but significant instances, the students worked at too slow a pace or were not given sufficiently demanding tasks. In the best lessons, teachers elicited confident and carefully considered responses from their students. They took account of the different needs of students in their groups and they regularly checked and strengthened learning and understanding. A notable feature of many lessons was the genuine interest and impressive enthusiasm of students. Relationships between teachers and students are good and students appreciate the respect they are accorded by their tutors.

16. All teaching staff are suitably experienced and appropriately qualified and 91% have teaching qualifications. In most curriculum areas, priority is given to helping staff keep their professional knowledge up to date. Staff benefit from an effective programme for the updating of their industrial and commercial expertise. Part-time teachers who are often practitioners working in specialist fields make valuable contributions to the teaching on many courses. Some 21% of teaching staff are employed by an agency, a proportion that has reduced by a third in one year.

17. In recent years, the college has developed its specialist accommodation. Sports studies, leisure and travel, and hair and beauty have excellent practical facilities in new buildings. The college's hair and beauty salon and the travel bureau reflect good commercial standards. Hospitality and catering have good practical resources in older buildings. Most classrooms are satisfactory or good. Most are well equipped and offer a pleasant working environment. The main campus is crowded and there is a shortage of space in some areas. A few classes are taught in rooms which are too small for the number of students. The students complain about overcrowding in the refectory and common room. These communal areas and some classrooms are untidy and poorly maintained. Computer rooms are small and tightly packed with students. The new buildings have been designed to ensure ease of access by students with mobility difficulties. Some other parts of the college are not easily accessible to wheelchair users.

18. There are enough computers for students. They are accessible early and late each day and during the weekend. The computers give access to the Internet but students have difficulty in obtaining print outs quickly. Some staff do not have convenient access to computers and are not able to communicate easily by e-mail with each other and students about, for example, work and assignments. There are few learning programmes available to students on software, which they can use on their own with a computer.

19. The arrangements for the assessment of students' work and monitoring of students' progress are good across all curriculum areas and in hospitality and catering, they are outstanding. The college's internal inspection procedures aim to ensure that assessment is fair and rigorous and the reports of internal and external verifiers testify that it is. Overall, students speak positively of the way they are assessed. They recognise the value of assessment in helping them improve the standards of their work and in raising their aspirations. Teachers mark students' work promptly and thoroughly. Most provide constructive feedback on ways in which students can improve the quality of their work and make progress towards achieving their qualification. The feedback from some teachers, however, does not include enough constructive criticism and the comments do not reflect the grade awarded. Many assignments are well designed and challenge students to apply their knowledge and use all their skills and initiative. Homework, a feature of both full-time and part-time courses, is often set carefully and helps students to consolidate classwork and extend their learning. There is good additional learning support for those students who need it. The retention rates of students receiving additional learning support have improved significantly over the last two years.

-
20. Key skills are taught well in some curriculum areas but not in others. On media studies courses, the use of key skills is integral to assignment work. Students on English and communications courses, however, have a poor understanding of key skills. In humanities, students are unclear about the purpose of the key skills workshops. A wide range of enrichment activities is offered throughout the college, but few students take up the opportunity to participate in these.
21. The college offers a broad range of courses appropriate to the needs of both young people and adults in its local community. A strong feature of provision is the focus on preparing young people for HE or employment in the service sector. The college has identified pockets of deprivation within south Trafford and aims to attract people from them, in liaison with the local authority. Work with schools also aims to help those in disadvantaged areas. Increasingly, staff from the college make contact with pupils at an early stage of their school career, to identify and help those who are disaffected with education. For example, a scheme has been established to enable 20 students in Year 10 to sample several different curriculum areas at the college. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low but is slightly higher than the proportion of persons from these groups in the local community. The college has extended its marketing to adjacent areas of Manchester, with the aim of increasing the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups.
22. Specialist courses have been developed to meet the needs of local service sector employers and their employees. These include courses for ground-handling staff at the nearby airport and language courses for aircraft cabin crew. The links with employers are strong in hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism and social and childcare. They are less strong in the hair and beauty sector.
23. The college is committed to widening participation and is developing appropriate outreach provision. For example, in the Partington area, it offers basic skills provision and other courses for adults from groups under-represented in FE. In partnership with other agencies, the college is helping in the social and economic regeneration of some areas. For example, the college is co-operating with a local housing association to provide a painting and decorating course which helps residents to improve their homes.
24. Following the appointment of a full-time senior tutor, the college has recently reviewed and strengthened its arrangements for the support and guidance of both students aged 16 to 18 and 19+ students. Guidance and support are given sensitively and meet the needs of individuals. The tutorial system is thorough and comprehensive. Both full-time and part-time students are given student handbooks and course booklets published by curriculum areas. Tutorial support for both groups and individuals is carefully planned and implemented well. Tutorial support is an integral part of the processes for the assessment of students' work and the monitoring of students' progress. The tutorial arrangements are valued by students and tutors alike. Some tutors, however, are unclear of their role in respect of tutorial support for part-time students over 19. The college has taken measures to address students' absenteeism and lack of punctuality. 'Motivational interviews' have been introduced recently
-

and are proving successful as a means of improving the attendance record and performance of some previously disaffected students.

25. Students receive a good induction to the college. During this, they are given a test in order to identify their needs for additional learning support. Some students, however, such as those on GCSE English courses, do not receive the additional learning support they need and make slow progress. A few students have not been given the initial test at all and no subsequent action has been taken to find out if they need any additional learning support.

26. Students speak highly of the good personal and pastoral support provided by their individual tutors and the college student services, including the counsellor and the student liaison officer. The college careers service offers good, impartial support to existing and potential students, and often to others who have no direct connection with the college.

Leadership and management

27. Leadership and management are good. The college has a clear sense of purpose. The mission and strategic aims are well understood by staff. Priority is given to improving retention rates and pass rates and the quality of teaching and learning. Many pass rates on courses at all levels and for students of all ages have improved during the last four years. Recruitment of students aged 16 to 18 has increased. The college has reduced its franchised and distance learning provision and the recruitment of adult students has decreased. There is a well-structured business planning process. The business plans drawn up by each section relate to the college's strategic aims. Targets are set for retention and pass rates. In some areas, the objectives set are insufficiently specific and progress towards achieving them is not easy to monitor. Some targets are unrealistic. Together with the staff concerned, a senior manager carries out termly reviews of progress towards meeting objectives and targets. Managers and staff have access to the college management information system, which provides a range of reports. Managers have confidence in the information available.

28. Lines of communication within the college are good. Staff feel well informed about what is happening in the college and they find managers both approachable and easy to confront. The senior management team consists of the principal, vice-principal and four directors, two of whom are responsible for the teaching sections. Another director is responsible for standards and student support. Well-organised meetings take place at all levels. Directors meet weekly with section managers and middle managers meet monthly with the senior management team. Staff are briefed on issues emerging from the senior management team at section meetings. Directors attend section meetings on a quarterly basis. Most meetings are minuted carefully. Staff receive a fortnightly newsletter and information is available to them on the college's intranet. Some new team leaders are not clear about their role.

29. There is a good appraisal system. Staff have an annual appraisal with their manager, at which their performance is reviewed, objectives are agreed and training needs identified. Findings from observations of teaching are taken into account during appraisals. Staff have many opportunities to undertake training. When requesting staff development, staff must

show how the training they want will help the college to meet its priorities and they must explain what benefits they will receive from it. Part-time staff are included in the appraisal process. Agency staff, however, are not included although the college will enable them to receive training. Part-time staff are paid to attend meetings. Some staff have not been appraised for over a year. Action agreed during appraisals is not always carried out.

30. There is a well-organised and thorough system of internal inspection, which in addition to course review and the monitoring of business plans, forms the main component of the college's quality assurance system. A college team carries out internal inspections of each section every year. Staff from other colleges are invited to help with internal inspection with the aim of ensuring that judgements are objective and that the inspection process has rigour. Internal inspection leads to reports. Sections are then required to produce an action plan and the appropriate director reviews its implementation. The college's franchise partner is also subject to the full internal inspection process. In many areas, however, staff rely heavily on the findings from internal inspections and are not sufficiently involved in the college's self-assessment process. Lesson observations form part of the internal inspection process, but some teachers' lessons are not inspected. In some areas, more lesson observations are carried out than in others and staff are observed by their section managers and their colleagues.

31. Governors are involved in the self-assessment process and study all internal reports. The views of staff and students about the college and its provision are gathered regularly through the use of questionnaires. Responses to these are taken into account in self-assessment. Complaints are investigated but there is no central recording of action taken on them. Action to gather the views of employers has only been instigated recently. Inspectors agreed with 10 out of 13 grades awarded by the college for its curriculum areas. They graded one curriculum area higher, and two curriculum areas lower than the college did. Inspectors mainly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but found some of the statements of strengths vague and that evidence to substantiate some judgements was lacking.

32. The college's mission statement refers to "responding to community needs" and "enabling all to achieve their personal, educational and vocational potential." Managers are clear about the implications of the mission statement for their role in widening participation. The college aims to attract and meet the needs of people from areas of deprivation in the borough. It is working with other organisations to provide post-16 education which meets the needs of all learners, whatever their background, circumstances and ability. There are appropriate policies and procedures covering equality of opportunity and the college has recently appointed a senior manager with responsibility for equal opportunities. The self-assessment report identified as a weakness, a lack of promotion of equal opportunities in the college. The recently established equal opportunities committee has identified improvements needed to rectify this weakness. For example, it has recommended that reports on diversity available through the management information system should be taken into account in the business planning process. The college has set a target of ensuring that all schemes of work identify how to develop students' understanding of diversity. When observing teaching, staff have to identify the extent to which teaching materials promote equal opportunities.

Teaching staff have recently attended awareness raising training, but support staff have yet to be trained. The college produces a report on equal opportunities each year.

33. Governors have considered the college's strategic plan carefully. They are appropriately involved in determining the college's strategic direction. Governors on the curriculum and quality committee monitor the college's performance and report back on it to the corporation. This monitoring is comprehensive and thorough. The principal also updates governors on the college's performance. There are, however, no governors whose employment has been in education. The board has recently instigated a skills audit to identify governors' training needs and gaps in expertise. A search for new governors is now taking place. Governors last monitored their own performance in 1999.

34. There is careful monitoring of expenditure and the college currently expects to achieve its funding targets. Teaching sections and service areas receive delegated budgets. Directors hold monthly meetings to check income and expenditure. Teaching staff budgets are delegated to section managers and these are well controlled. Staff are deployed effectively. In some areas, many are part time and some are unable to play a full part in the planning, organisation and development of courses. The college is gradually increasing the number of fractional appointments to remedy this weakness. The self-assessment report identified that no one has overall responsibility for co-ordinating key skills or basic skills provision. Responsibility for key skills and basic skills was dispersed across the college. New staff appointments have been made to improve the organisation of key skills and basic skills provision. The teaching of key skills, however, is still carried out more systematically and effectively in some curriculum areas than in others. Statistics show that there is high usage of rooms and that the average staff:student ratio in classes is 12:1.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Mathematics and science

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

Strengths

- improved retention rates in GCSE sciences, mathematics and GCE A-level mathematics
- effectiveness of GCSE mathematics teaching in helping students work by themselves
- well-resourced laboratories with good technical support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCSE sciences
- poor and declining retention rates on some GCE A-level science courses
- ineffective teaching in some lessons
- insufficient action planning by students to improve their performance
- poor attendance and lack of punctuality on the part of students on GCSE courses
- no internal verification or standardisation of assessment methods.

Scope of provision

35. The college offers a number of GCSE and GCE A-level science and mathematics courses. Students wishing to join a GCSE mathematics course take achievement in numeracy tests to determine whether they should follow a course at foundation or intermediate level. The GCE AS-level provision delivered in the evening responds to local interests and needs. As part of a LEA project, GCSE mathematics classes include young people who have been excluded from school. The section is involved in a local family numeracy project. However, the range of science courses is narrow, particularly at level 2.

Achievement and standards

36. Retention rates are satisfactory on GCSE courses. On mathematics and science courses, it is at or above the national average for general FE colleges. On GCE A-level 2-year courses, with the exception of mathematics, retention rates are significantly below the national average. Overall, only a small proportion of students are completing their programmes successfully. In 2001, pass rates on the one-year course in human biology and the two-year courses in biology, chemistry and mathematics were high. Some students,

however, take longer than two years to complete their course. In 2000/01, retention and pass rates on GCE AS-level courses were low.

37. In their work in mathematics and science, students demonstrate a sound grasp of techniques appropriate to the level of their course. They are able to use terminology correctly and can talk about their subjects with confidence. Some students do not attend GCSE lessons regularly or do not arrive for them on time.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics (intermediate/higher)	2	No. of starts	425	220	158
		% retention	75	67	75
		% pass rate	32	35	42
GCSE sciences	2	No. of starts	54	34	67
		% retention	50	71	75
		% pass rate	44	47	40
GCE A-level mathematics (pure and applied) (2 years)	3	No. of starts	37	30	33
		% retention	57	57	67
		% pass rate	60	50	80
GCE A-level biology (2 years)	3	No. of starts	9	15	15
		% retention	78	67	60
		% pass rate	50	100	100
GCE A-level chemistry (2 years)	3	No. of starts	12	12	18
		% retention	67	83	56
		% pass rate	88	88	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level human biology	3	No. of starts	40	29	13
		% retention	50	55	54
		% pass rate	41	71	60

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

Quality of education and training

38. Much of the teaching in this curriculum area is satisfactory or good, but there was also some unsatisfactory teaching. Grades awarded by inspectors were in line with those given by the college through its internal inspection process. The best lessons were well planned. Teachers used resources effectively to structure the session and they set students inspiring work. Students responded enthusiastically and worked hard. During the lesson support was provided for learners with particular needs, such as those who needed help with basic skills. In some of the weaker lessons, the teacher talked too much and the students did little. Students lost interest and did not learn much. Schemes of work for courses lacked detail and most specified what the teacher should do rather than what the students should learn.

39. Students' work is marked carefully and returned promptly, but some teachers mark more thoroughly than others. There is no internal verification of assessments to ensure that all teachers use the same assessment criteria when marking work. Some teachers fail to provide comments on the assignment cover sheets on how students may improve their work.

40. Teachers in the mathematics and science section are appropriately qualified and the vast majority of full-time and most part-time staff have a teaching qualification. Whilst all full-time staff have attended recent staff development training, many part-time staff have not. In general, accommodation and resources are generally good. Classrooms, however, contain little display material, such as students' work, to give them a subject identity and accord recognition to students' achievements. Laboratories are well resourced with books, videos and CD-ROMs. Technical support is available and risk assessments are carried out for all practical work undertaken. In the resource centre, a range of books, examination papers and electronic journals are available for all students in the section. Additional resources for students' use are also available in subject-based rooms.

41. All students, including those who join the course after the start of the academic year, receive a comprehensive induction programme. The programme covers all the facilities available to the students in the college. The induction process helps students to settle into the courses and understand what they need to do to be successful. The needs of students for additional learning support are identified through initial assessment. However, there is no rigorous method of tracking whether students in science and mathematics are receiving this

support. Students wishing to follow a GCSE mathematics course take numeracy tests and their results in these indicate which level of course would be most appropriate for them. Staff make some use of value-added analysis to determine the extent of students' progress and achievements. Students on GCE AS and A-level courses are given target grades to achieve and these are determined on the basis of their GCSE point score and current performance. Personal tutors meet with students to review their progress towards meeting their target grades. This review process, however, lacks rigour. The monitoring of students' progress is not thorough enough to ensure the identification of students who are not working to the best of their ability. Students are not required to draw up action plans for improving their work.

Leadership and management

42. The section manager is aware of some of the weaknesses in the provision and is taking action to address them. Issues highlighted in the internal inspection process are being addressed. Following value-added analysis, the entry requirements for students wishing to follow GCE AS courses have been made more demanding. Targets are set for recruitment quotas, retention and pass rates and progress towards reaching these is monitored. Policies and procedures for improving retention and pass rates are not implemented thoroughly by all staff. For example, some staff take insufficient action on students' lateness and absenteeism. There is insufficient planning to improve teaching and help students learn more effectively. Key skills are not taught as an integral part of all courses across the curriculum area.

Business and administration

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on GNVQ advanced business course
- high retention and pass rates on NVQ administration courses at levels 2 and 3
- outstanding success of students on some part-time professional courses
- good teaching in most lessons
- broad range of courses with good progression opportunities
- regular review and rigorous evaluation of courses.

Weaknesses

- below-average retention rates on text and word processing courses
- low pass rates on some level 3 courses
- insufficiently demanding learning activities in some lessons
- narrow range of IT-based learning materials.

Scope of provision

43. The college offers a broad range of courses in business, management and administration, with good progression opportunities. Administration and single subject secretarial courses from levels 1 to 3 are offered at the college's main site and students may join these at any time. Courses leading to an NVQ in administration at level 2 and word and text processing are also provided at the nearby Partington Adult Study Centre. An appropriate range of full-time business studies and part-time management and professional courses are also offered from levels 1 to 4 and above. There are currently 207 students aged 16 to 18 and 16 adults on full-time courses. In addition, there are 454 adult students on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

44. Pass rates are high on most courses in this curriculum area. Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ advanced business course are excellent. They have improved steadily over the last three years, and are well above the national average. Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate business course have remained slightly above the national average. Retention and pass rates on NVQ administration level 2 and level 3 courses have shown

significant improvement in the last two years, and in 2001 the pass rates were outstanding. Pass rates on some professional courses are outstanding. For example, the pass rate on the certificate in personnel practice course has been 100% in each of the last three years. In 2001, a student on the Chartered Institute of Marketing diploma course achieved the highest mark worldwide on the case-study paper. Retention rates on text and word processing courses at all levels have consistently been slightly below the average. There are low pass rates on some level 3 courses, including GCE A-level business and Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) NVQ level 3 accounting courses. Retention rates and pass rates on other courses are satisfactory. The standard of students' work in lessons and in students' portfolios is good. Most students are motivated and responsive, and eager to learn. Students attend regularly. Many students on business and management courses and on administration courses progress to further or higher education or employment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Text processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	128	105	113
		% retention	75	78	76
		% pass rate	34	84	78
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	12	18	17
		% retention	83	83	76
		% pass rate	100	100	69
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	20	13	17
		% retention	78	58	88
		% pass rate	50	57	92
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	55	64	33
		% retention	69	82	91
		% pass rate	96	78	96
Word processing stage 3	3	No. of starts	17	23	21
		% retention	82	86	86
		% pass rate	43	84	89

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	22	20	14
		% retention	82	95	86
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

45. Teaching is good in most lessons and at least satisfactory in the rest. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons carefully. Schemes of work are well structured, with coherent assignment programmes and clear reference to activities and intended learning outcomes. Most teachers use an effective combination of group and individual work. Students are highly motivated and take a keen interest in their work. In most lessons, students were confident, articulate and responsive. In an outstanding lesson on the Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma course the teacher had prepared some detailed and informative case study materials which raised challenging questions for students to discuss in small groups. In their discussions, the students demonstrated maturity, advanced critical thinking and evaluative skills. In some lessons, teachers made too few demands of the students and failed to ensure they met the learning needs of individual students. Key skills are not a fully integral part of the business curriculum. Students do not develop key skills through learning activities in lessons and assignments.

46. Assessments are recorded carefully. Most assessment is carried out regularly and is thorough. All teachers use the same methods to assess students working towards a particular qualification. Some of the feedback teachers give students on their assignment work is not detailed enough or is over generous with praise. The initial assessment of students is carried out well. There are effective arrangements for students to draw up individual action plans and review their implementation.

47. There are suitable arrangements to introduce students to the college. Induction procedures for students on part-time secretarial and administration courses are effective. A good tutorial system has been developed for both students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. On some part-time programmes, such as the AAT NVQ level 3 accounting course, course teams have introduced timetabled tutorial activities. In tutorials, students receive appropriate careers education and satisfactory guidance and support. In some instances, however, tutorial activity is undemanding for the students and lacks a clear purpose.

48. Teaching staff are well qualified and suitably experienced, and have good knowledge of their subject. Priority is given to staff development. Record of staff training activities, including those carried out recently, are well maintained. Computer facilities are satisfactory. There are, however, few learning materials in the form of software which

students can use by themselves on a computer. The college has made slow progress in developing an intranet to enable students to work on their own in this way. Most teaching rooms are well equipped and appropriately furnished, and provide a pleasant learning environment. The classroom used by NVQ level 2 administration students has little equipment or learning materials, and is drab and uninspiring. Most learning materials are up to date and well presented and they help students to work effectively on their own. Some handouts, however, are poorly presented and their content is outdated.

Leadership and management

49. Two curriculum sections have responsibility for business and administration provision. They are both well organised and ably managed. Clear direction is provided by both section managers. There are thorough quality assurance arrangements, with systematic target setting, course review and evaluation, and action planning. The record of course reviews, in some cases contain extremely detailed commentaries on performance. Action plans have been drawn up to improve some low retention and pass rates. The self-assessment report draws almost exclusively on the findings from internal inspection and teaching and support staff have little involvement in the self-assessment process.

Information communication technology (ICT)

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on short IT courses
- good retention and pass rates on the GNVQ advanced-level course
- broad and appropriate range of courses with flexible arrangements for attendance
- good course materials written for use in workshops.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on the GCE A-level IT course
- low retention rates on professional development award long courses
- insufficient provision of work experience
- some dull and undemanding lessons.

Scope of provision

50. There is a good range of provision in computing and IT for full-time and part-time students. The GNVQ IT foundation course was introduced in response to identified need. There has been a management decision to keep class sizes small with the aim of maintaining the good quality of provision. The section also offers GNVQ IT programmes at intermediate and advanced levels. These full-time courses mainly cater for students aged 16 to 18. The college offers a number of short courses in IT, including City and Guilds 4248/4242 courses and those leading to professional development awards up to level 3. These courses are mainly intended for students over the age of 19. There are currently 176 16-18 year olds and 28 adults on full-time college courses. Of the 1,512 part-time students currently enrolled on courses in this curriculum area, 81% are over 19. The short IT courses are available during the day and the evening both at the main site and as part of the community provision and they are timetabled flexibly to meet students' needs.

Achievement and standards

51. Pass rates have improved on most courses over the last three years. The pass rates on short IT courses have improved substantially and are now well above the national average. Students on part-time introductory IT courses do well and many progress on to the next level. Both retention and pass rates on the GNVQ advanced level course are high in 2001. Although pass rates have improved on the GCE A-level IT course, these remain well below national average. Overall, retention rates vary considerably. Whilst some are good and

improving, such as those on the GNVQ advanced course, others are below the national average. Some retention rates, such as those on the professional development one-year course, are declining. Retention rates on the City and Guilds 4242 course have fluctuated a great deal.

52. The standard of most students' work is high. Students' work is marked carefully and students receive constructive feedback on their performances. Assignments are set at an appropriate level and are broken down into manageable tasks.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Information communication technology (ICT), 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 4242	1	No. of starts	1273	101	648
		% retention	76	61	79
		% pass rate	60	90	100
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	25	25	37
		% retention	60	84	81
		% pass rate	60	52	*
GNVQ advanced IT	3	No. of starts	29	31	36
		% retention	76	77	92
		% pass rate	90	77	88
GCE A-level IT	3	No. of starts	19	34	11
		% retention	84	74	82
		% pass rate	44	50	71
Professional development award short	X	No. of starts	424	138	214
		% retention	90	86	74
		% pass rate	20	67	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Professional development award long	X	No. of starts	738	153	425
		% retention	93	75	66
		% pass rate	25	82	98

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

* data not available from awarding body

Quality of education and training

53. Teaching in computing and IT is satisfactory or good. Teachers are well qualified and know their subjects well. In a foundation GNVQ lesson on using a spreadsheet, students worked well together to solve software problems and worked purposefully, finding out relevant information from a variety of sources. In workshops, teachers use good workbooks. They give good support to individual students, but in larger groups, students are sometimes waiting for attention. Students attending the IT workshops receive appropriate guidance and advice about courses and progression routes available to them. Most of the teaching in the workshops is satisfactory but students are given only a narrow range of learning activities. Overall, students spend a disproportionate amount of time on workbooks and they do not learn by themselves using learning materials on the computer. Most students respond well in lessons and they have a good rapport with their teachers. In a few lessons, students were not given sufficiently demanding activities and they made little progress. For example, a lesson on questionnaire design on an advanced level course was insufficiently demanding for some students in the group at that stage in their programme. Many students have a good understanding of the software packages they use. Students are encouraged to use the Internet for research both in class and outside class. Full-time students have insufficient IT-related work experience. Many are not familiar with current business practice.

54. The college has good specialist IT resources covered by a three-year replacement policy. The college computer network provides students with access to the Internet. Students are assigned space on the network for storage of their files and are encouraged to set up an e-mail account. Technicians look after the network well but printing from the system is slow. The specialist computer rooms are pleasant and well equipped with projectors, screens, and whiteboards. However, a few IT classrooms are too small for the groups using them.

55. Course assignment schedules are well planned. The assignment briefs are clear and assignments are broken down into small, manageable tasks. Students are aware of the standards requiring a pass, merit or distinction, respectively. All assignments have feedback sheets, which are completed by the tutor. Feedback is thorough and constructive and indicates what students need to do to improve their work. There is insufficient monitoring of students' progress in workshop sessions. Students are responsible for completing their own

progress records. Some complete them more thoroughly than others and others progress too slowly. The staff:student ratio in the workshops is generous and students benefit from it.

56. During induction, the needs of students for additional learning support are identified. Where appropriate, these are met effectively through the provision of learning support during lessons. Students' attendance is monitored and followed up by teachers. If students are considered to be at risk because of their poor attendance, they are invited to a motivational interview with one of the ten tutors within the college who have received training on how to carry out such an interview. There is a good induction programme in the workshop to cater for students starting at any time throughout the year. There is low attendance at some key skills sessions.

Leadership and management

57. Management of computing courses is satisfactory. Most courses are well planned. There are good schemes of work and effective processes for internal verification. Targets for staff teams are drawn from the section business plan and progress towards reaching these is monitored. Subject teachers in the section are insufficiently involved in producing the self-assessment report, which is heavily dependent on the internal inspection process. Communication within the section is good. There are regular and effective section and team meetings.

Hospitality and catering

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

Strengths

- excellent pass rate in 2000/01
- good teaching in practical lessons
- good practical skills of students
- well-equipped specialist areas
- exceptionally good assessment practices
- particularly good enrichment activities
- effective learning support
- good course management.

Weaknesses

- failure of many students to achieve level 2 qualifications by target date
- some insufficiently demanding theory lessons.

Scope of provision

58. The college provides an appropriate range of courses in hospitality and catering for full-time and part-time students. There are good progression routes for students from level 1 to level 3. Where appropriate, students who have obtained qualifications at level 3 can progress to courses leading to qualifications at level 4. There is a range of short courses to meet the needs of individuals, organisations and businesses. The section provides good pre-vocational courses for students with learning and behavioural difficulties.

Achievement and standards

59. Pass rates in 2000/01 on courses at all levels are excellent and have improved substantially since the previous year. Short courses in basic and intermediate hygiene have had pass rates at or above the national average over the past three years. Retention rates on NVQ in hospitality and catering at level 2 and level 3 are in line with the national average. Although retention rates on courses at level 1 have improved since 1999/2000, they are still slightly below the national average. A significant number of students, and particularly those on level 2 courses, failed to achieve their qualification by the target date. These students were allowed to work towards their qualification after the target date had passed.

60. Most students work well on their own, particularly in practical lessons. They also work equally well together in groups. Students help one another. A successful 'pairing' system is particularly effective, and all students appreciate the benefits this provides. Students are punctual and attendance is just above the national average. Staff give excellent demonstrations, particularly in their teaching in kitchen areas. Students demonstrate good practical skills and pay particular attention to ensuring their work is of a high standard. Most are enthusiastic about their course and have clear career goals. Students working in the restaurant area demonstrate good practical and social skills.

61. The college arranges a wide range of very good enrichment activities. Students organise trips and visits to exhibitions. Many students have helped produce food for a local television company's filming sets. Many students enter into national competitions. They do well in these and their success is reported in the local media. Recently, students have worked in collaboration with a television chef.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ catering and hospitality	1	No. of starts	65	54	50
		% retention	66	61	72
		% pass rate	68	55	91
NVQ catering and hospitality	2	No. of starts	67	60	77
		% retention	85	82	82
		% pass rate	61	77	100
NVQ catering and hospitality	3	No. of starts	15	9	22
		% retention	73	89	68
		% pass rate	40	67	100

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

Quality of education and training

62. Both practical and theory lessons are well planned and are successful in developing the knowledge and skills of students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. In practical lessons, the teaching is good and in some instances, it is very good. Students develop good practical skills. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. They update this professional knowledge and industrial experience regularly. For example, one member of staff received

special training in order to help a student who had been successful at level 3, undertake work at level 4. There are three good specialist food and drink service areas, all open to the public. These areas provide students with a realistic and demanding work environment in which they can develop and practise skills and be assessed. The opening times and the numbers of customers are comparable to those of a commercial enterprise. One excellent lesson for students with severe learning difficulties was imaginatively and very well planned to ensure that all students played a full part in the learning activities. The teacher used photographs of the food prepared by the students to help them recall details of their work and all students built a file of evidence.

63. Theory lessons are mostly satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers challenge the students to think and use their skills to the full and they excite and retain the students' interest. Some theory lessons, however, do not make enough demands of the students. In these lessons, the teachers fail to make the necessary changes to the learning activity, even though it is plain that the students are bored and are learning little. In some instances, teachers fail to relate the lesson to the students' own experience sufficiently. The teaching of key skills is an integral part of the curriculum. Hospitality staff teach key skills with help from IT staff.

64. The assessment process is exceptionally good. Planning for assessment is outstanding. Assessment plans are updated regularly, either in lessons or at tutorials. Plans are recorded most carefully. Students keep a copy of the plans in their portfolios. All staff contribute to the planning process and students can add to or amend plans at any time. All students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve their qualifications. Students are allowed to change the way food is prepared in order that they may acquire particular competences they need to demonstrate in order to complete a specific NVQ unit. For example, one student in the production kitchen had arranged with the teacher for the planned method of cooking the dish to be changed so that he could complete a unit. Students keep a log of those tasks they have completed each day and they can be assessed at any time that they request it. Assessment is rigorous. Portfolios contain detailed evidence of assessment. Theory in the portfolios is carefully marked and sufficient, relevant feedback on the quality of assessed work is recorded. Excellent records give a clear overview of how much progress students have made. Internal verification systems are satisfactory. Assignment briefs are good and it is clear what is required of students. Students' work is marked promptly and on most feedback it is detailed and constructive. Teachers are careful to correct spelling errors. In a few instances, students do not receive enough feedback on their assignment work or it does not identify how students may improve it.

65. Some resources used in theory teaching are outstanding, and most are satisfactory. There is a small stock of books in the learning centre but some of these are out of date and they are used much by students. Food production areas are well equipped and up to date. Some accommodation used for theory lessons is less than satisfactory.

66. Students are set demanding targets and their progress towards reaching them is monitored regularly. Most students are able to meet these targets. Effective support is given to students who are failing to meet them. Some students make arrangements with teachers to

attend college in their own time in order to develop and practise their skills. There is a rigorous and effective system for monitoring non-attendance and punctuality. Students' employers and the parents of students aged 16 to 18 are informed when their employee or child has been continually absent from, or late for, lessons. Tutorial support is highly effective. Some students benefit from additional learning support and this is recorded and monitored. In a few instances, staff do not receive the results of students' initial tests promptly and there is a delay in arranging additional learning support for some students.

Leadership and management

67. The section is well managed and course teams are well organised. Members of teams share good practice. Course reviews are thorough and involve all staff. Actions identified are acted upon quickly and effectively. Realistic targets are set and progress towards reaching them is monitored. There is efficient and effective use and management of specialist resources.

Leisure and tourism

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

Strengths

- very high pass rates on level 3 courses
- consistently well-planned and well-managed lessons
- very good attendance at most lessons
- excellent links with the travel industry
- very good support for students
- effective curriculum management with good communication between staff.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on level 1 and level 2 courses
- declining retention rates on most courses.

Scope of provision

68. The college offers a broad range of courses in leisure and tourism at levels 1, 2 and 3 to meet the needs of students and employers in the area. The range covers GNVQ courses at levels 1 and 2, AVCE travel and tourism, Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC) and fares and ticketing courses. A recent addition to the curriculum is the airport operations course which includes a Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) intermediate certificate course in retail travel operations and a Servisair certificate in passenger handling. The college is amongst the first in the country to offer the new Edexcel preparation for cabin crew course for 18+ students. Courses are run by a team of six full-time and seven part-time staff. Alongside their full-time courses, students are able to study for additional qualifications and to go on overseas visits. Courses are well planned and offer students excellent progression routes through the different levels, to employment and to HE. There are particularly strong links with the industry, for example at Manchester airport where some students work with trainers from the industry on check in and boarding. These students have good prospects of obtaining employment in the industry. There are 166 students aged 16 to 18 and 26 students over the age of 19 on full-time courses and 14 students aged 16 to 18 and 35 over the age of 19 on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

69. Some pass rates on level 3 courses, are well above the national average. In 2000/01, the pass rate on the GNVQ advanced in leisure and tourism course was 88%, with 68% of

students achieving high grades. Pass rates on air fares and ticketing course at level 2, and ABTAC primary courses are well above the national average, and the rate on the ABTAC course increased by 26% in 2000/01. Although there is an upward trend in the pass rate for GNVQ at foundation level, it is still below the national average. The pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was unsatisfactory in 2000/01. In 2000/01, retention rates declined on some courses, for example, the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses. Employment prospects for students are very good. For example, 7 of the 18 cabin crew students obtained jobs with airlines last year. The standard of students' written work is good and is often above that required of them at their particular stage on their course. Course files are well organised. In lessons, students' contributions are thoughtful and perceptive. The work in students' portfolios is of a high standard.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	No. of starts	13	13	11
		% retention	77	69	64
		% pass rate	40	56	57
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	25	39	34
		% retention	68	77	68
		% pass rate	65	73	39
ABTAC primary	2	No. of starts	97	66	54
		% retention	75	80	74
		% pass rate	23	57	83
Air fares and ticketing level 2 chameleon	3	No. of starts	11	12	9
		% retention	100	92	78
		% pass rate	73	91	100
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	52	45	42
		% retention	73	73	83
		% pass rate	84	93	88

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Advanced certificate in overseas reservation operations	3	No. of starts	11	14	11
		% retention	91	86	53
		% pass rate	90	92	100

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

Quality of education and training

70. Teaching in this curriculum area is very good indeed. Of the lessons seen by inspectors, a high proportion were judged to be good or very good and only one lesson was judged to be less than satisfactory. Teaching by both full-time and part-time staff is extremely good. Lessons are well managed. Teachers give students tasks which excite and sustain their interest. They use a variety of appropriate methods to motivate the students and challenge them to use their skills to the full. In many lessons, teachers give individual students different tasks to suit their abilities and all students are fully engaged in these. Students attend regularly, they respond well and work diligently. Role play and group work are well managed and have clear and specific aims. The good working relationships between staff and students in the classroom help to create a stimulating and productive learning environment.

71. Very effective use is made of the expertise of part-time specialists who teach the vocational aspects of the courses. For example, on the cabin crew course, the students work with trainers for a full day each week and dress in uniform to the standards of the industry. Staff are well qualified and between them they have a good range of professional expertise and can relate theory to practice effectively. The classrooms provide a pleasant learning environment and a travel agency on site is a useful resource where students can gain work experience.

72. Staff give students help and support with their work. They provide them with detailed feedback on their performance regularly. Teachers adapt their teaching methods to meet the different needs of students. They give those students who need it, extra help both during and outside lessons. Students with English as their second language have been able to progress from a level 2 to a level 3 course. Access funds are used to provide financial support for students who wish to go on overseas visits. Students across the programmes spoke highly of the help and support they received from the staff in the leisure and tourism section.

Leadership and management

73. The section is well managed and there is good communication between team leaders, section managers and tutors. Quality assurance processes are effective. Staff team

meetings are held regularly. They are minuted and action points are stated clearly. Team leaders manage their courses effectively and they meet regularly with the section manager. The section leader has been fully involved in recent course developments. Students benefit from the financial assistance the industry gives the college to run this course. The industry provides transport to and from the airport each week for the students and also pays for the services of the trainer at the airport.

Sports studies

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on foundation and intermediate uniformed services courses
- good support for individual students
- successful initiatives to promote football training for men and women
- rich and diverse range of courses leading to additional qualifications
- good specialist equipment and resources.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on the GCE A-level PE course
- some unsatisfactory teaching on vocational courses
- insufficient resources in the learning centre
- insufficient rigour in course reviews.

Scope of provision

74. The college offers a wide range of courses in PE, sports science and preparation for public services from foundation to advanced level courses. They include GCE A level, first and national diplomas and NVQ courses. Progression routes are good. A range of additional courses are provided to meet the needs of the industry and students. These courses include those leading to the City and Guilds progression awards at level 1 and 2, and community sports leaders award, play leaders award and GCSE PE. The college has established one of the first Football Association (FA) accredited women's football academies in the country together with a FA recognised centre of excellence for men's football. The women's academy provides the progression route for aspiring football players who have reached the age of 16. In addition, students at the academy complete a full-time college course to gain qualifications which will stand them in good stead in case their aspirations to pursue a career in football do not materialise. Course provision is directed at the 16-18 age group and there is no specific provision for students over 19.

Achievement and standards

75. At level 1, there are excellent pass rates on the public services course and improving pass rates on the NVQ course. At level 2 there are high pass rates on the uniformed services course and there have been significant improvements in pass rates on the BTEC first diploma

course. Although there have been improvements in the pass rates on NVQ level 2 courses, pass rates remain below the national average. Pass rates on the GCE A-level PE course are low. There are declining retention rates on a number of courses. On the GCE A-level PE course retention rates are poor. In the last two years almost half the students have failed to complete their course. Students on the GCE A-level PE course are not attaining the standards expected of them in the light of their prior achievement, and only a small proportion of them achieve grade C or above. In 2000/01, the pass rate on the GCE AS-level course was only 47%. Students' written work is satisfactory. Assignments are well presented. In their assignment work, some students demonstrate that they have good research skills and can use IT competently.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Uniform services preparation foundation	1	No. of starts	13	17	15
		% retention	100	94	86
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ sport and recreation	1	No. of starts	56	22	24
		% retention	100	41	87
		% pass rate	**	56	83
NVQ activity leadership	2	No. of starts	*	22	46
		% retention	*	82	72
		% pass rate	*	67	74
BTEC first diploma sport science	2	No. of starts	15	16	10
		% retention	77	69	30
		% pass rate	60	73	100
GCE A-level PE	3	No. of starts	74	67	34
		% retention	82	55	56
		% pass rate	71	70	58

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
BTEC national diploma sport science	3	No. of starts	17	36	27
		% retention	56	65	78
		% pass rate	83	82	88

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

*course did not run

** data unavailable

Quality of education and training

76. The quality of teaching is extremely variable. Most practical lessons are well planned and well taught. Students are encouraged to take a lead role in some lessons, taking charge of the warm up or a short practice session. The quality of feedback and analysis in practical lessons is particularly good. There is less good teaching in theory lessons. However, in a GCE A-level bio-mechanics lesson, the tutor skilfully developed the theme of elasticity through a series of short experiments with a range of sporting objects. The students were very well motivated and demonstrated excellent skills of analysis and critical thinking. In contrast, in some other theory lessons, the range of learning activities was narrow and students did no more than complete gapped handouts and copy down notes read out by the teacher. Too often, teachers use activities which do not reflect the range of abilities within the group and do not sufficiently challenge the more able students. Students are given the opportunity to undertake work experience as part of their course. NVQ students have a weekly work placement where they can develop their coaching skills in a realistic setting. On the uniformed services courses, students develop team-building skills, improve their fitness and learn about working conditions in the forces through visits and residential.

77. There is insufficient teaching of key skills on courses. Many tutors are not clear how they teach key skills as an integral part of course programmes. In 2000/01, no students achieved certification in key skills.

78. There is some excellent marking of students' work especially on their GCE AS/A-level PE, and sport science courses. The marking gives students clear guidance on how to improve their work and good prompts on where they can carry out additional research. Most assignment briefs are clear and students are made aware of the standard required to receive a pass, merit or distinction. Assessment scheduling is poor. Students do not have an overall assessment plan for their course. NVQ students and sport science students have work placements. While they are on work placements, however, NVQ students do not receive enough assessment and are only visited twice by an assessor. Many placements are in schools and only a few placements in a commercial setting are available to students. There

are few links with employers and there is no employer representative on any of the course committees.

79. Teachers are appropriately qualified. Good use is made of part-time vocational expertise. Part-time teachers have broad and substantial industrial experience and they draw upon this in their teaching. The sports department has a good range of specialist facilities on the main campus in the sports barn and these include a new sports hall and fitness suite. In addition, the department has excellent links with local facilities which the students may use, and these include a hockey club, an outdoor activity centre and three local football clubs. The college's learning centre has insufficient books, videos and journals on sports studies, and particularly for football students. Journals do not meet the needs of all students. There are few learning packages or study materials which sport students can use with a computer or study on their own.

80. There is a good support for students through weekly group tutorials and monthly one-to-one interviews. Students' progress is reviewed in one-to-one sessions. Students receive a copy of the record of their progress review.

Leadership and management

81. Communication between staff in the school is very good. Course teams work closely together and there are regular team and section meetings. The business planning process is fundamentally sound. There are however, weaknesses in the monitoring of the implementation of the business plan. The business plans do not build on the strengths of former plans from year to year. Course review and self-assessment are not sufficiently rigorous. Issues such as retention, students' achievements, attendance, students' views, progression and assessment are inadequately addressed in review meetings.

Hair and beauty

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most programmes
- good standard of skills development in beauty and holistic therapies
- well-motivated and autonomous learners
- broad and appropriate range of programmes
- excellent resources of good commercial standard.

Weaknesses

- some dull and undemanding lessons
- lateness for some lessons on the part of the students
- undemanding individual learning plans for students.

Scope of provision

82. The college offers a broad range of courses leading to NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1, 2 and 3 and in beauty therapy from foundation level to level 3. The range of complementary therapy and related courses includes holistic therapies and sports therapy, reflexology, aromatherapy and Indian head massage. There are currently 144 students aged 16 to 18 and 135 adults on full-time college courses. Of the 655 part-time students currently enrolled, 88% are over 19. The inspection covered a franchise beauty school in the city centre.

Achievement and standards

83. Retention and pass rates on beauty therapy courses at levels 2 and 3 are above the national average. The pass rate on hairdressing level 1 courses has improved steadily over the last 3 years and on hairdressing level 2 courses it has improved significantly. Retention rates on both these programmes have also improved and are now in line with the national average. Some second-year, day-release students, most of whom have spent time in the hairdressing industry, are scheduled to complete their learning programme over an extended two-year period. The standard of written and practical work on beauty courses is good. Practical work in beauty, sport, media makeup and holistic therapy is of a commercial standard. In a few lessons on hairdressing courses, students' attainment was not satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	61	54	52
		% retention	73	71	74
		% pass rate	79	88	100
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	31	56	24
		% retention	57	96	79
		% pass rate	17	52	80
NVQ beauty	2	No. of starts	73	55	75
		% retention	70	90	86
		% pass rate	80	91	95
NVQ hairdressing	3	No. of starts	7	12	13
		% retention	43	82	62
		% pass rate	67	56	50
Reflexology	3	No. of starts	91	97	92
		% retention	89	89	88
		% pass rate	80	93	100
Body massage certificate	3	No. of starts	187	136	151
		% retention	83	86	88
		% pass rate	70	88	88
NVQ beauty	3	No. of starts	24	24	26
		% retention	92	96	96
		% pass rate	91	100	83

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

Quality of education and training

84. Teaching in this curriculum area is satisfactory or good. Some of the best lessons were on beauty, holistic therapy, sport and theatrical and media make-up courses. In these areas, students display real interest and maturity. They organise and manage their own work stations effectively without supervision. Teachers continuously check students' learning and understanding during lessons. Teachers offer sensitive and supportive guidance where appropriate in practical sessions. Students are extremely well motivated and have a keen interest in the subject content. Lessons are well planned, make demands of students, and often link to professional practice. Students attend lessons regularly. The average attendance rate for the groups observed was 81%. Teachers work as part of a team and all are specialists in different aspects of the provision. They communicate their enthusiasm and extensive knowledge to students. Some lessons, however, are uninspiring and dull. For example, during one practical demonstration, students were inactive for most of the time, and they became distracted and lost interest. In another lesson, too much time was allocated to a short practical task, which some students finished quickly and then had nothing to do. Hairdressing students often have to work on head forms for a large part of the lesson when waiting for clients. In 34% of the lessons observed, students arrived late. Their failure to arrive on time disrupted the lesson because the teacher then had to repeat parts of the lesson for their benefit.

85. The internal verification process is good and students' assessments and progress are recorded carefully. Assessments are well spaced throughout the year. There has been some progress on making key skills integral to the curriculum area. The staff have worked alongside key skills teachers and produced effective learning materials that are relevant to the occupational area. Students have individual learning plans but these do not reflect their results in initial assessment and are not updated to take account of their progress.

86. The franchise provision in the city centre aims to enable adults to make swift progress. Resources and the teaching at the franchise centre are good. Class sizes are small and students can attend extra sessions to complete work they may have missed, or use the practical facilities to complete required case studies.

87. The hairdressing and beauty section is accommodated in a purpose built suite of commercial salons at the front of the college. These salons are of a high commercial standard and are well equipped with modern fixtures. Hair and beauty students use a wide range of quality products and are able to demonstrate their acquisition of the requisite NVQ competences. Students can purchase textbooks, equipment, salon wear and various products from a retail outlet at the college. This facility, however, is not used as a work experience placement for students with the aim of enriching their learning. Students following hair and beauty programmes find the cost of kits expensive. All full-time teaching staff have appropriate professional qualifications and relevant industrial experience. Theory is taught in other areas of the college, in rooms which are not up to the standard of those in the hairdressing and beauty suite.

88. Students are well supported by their teachers and tutors, and speak highly of them. All full-time students have both group and individual tutorials.

Leadership and management

89. The section is well managed. There are clear lines of management responsibility which are devolved from the section manager to three team leaders. Each team leader is responsible for a significant area of the provision. Just over half of the teaching on beauty and holistic therapy courses is carried out by agency staff who are well supported and effectively managed. The section has its own business development plan and also a human resources and marketing plan. These plans include demanding targets. They also specify who is responsible for monitoring progress towards reaching these targets and the deadlines by which the targets must be reached. The internal inspection report serves as the self-assessment report. Few staff, however, are familiar with the internal inspection report or consider that it has much to do with them.

Care and early years

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

Strengths

- very good retention and pass rates on level 2 NVQ care programme
- good pass rates on full-time level 3 courses
- well-planned and carefully monitored work experience
- good arrangements for teachers to gain relevant industrial experience
- effective support for students
- high standards of students' work.

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on students' learning in lesson planning and management
- too few childcare text books in the learning centre.

Scope of provision

90. The college offers an appropriate range of full and part-time courses in health and social care, early years, adult care and counselling. Courses are available in childcare and counselling at foundation, intermediate and advanced level and at intermediate and advanced levels in the other areas. Full-time programmes take place during the day. Courses leading to NVQs in care take place during the day or evening. Following a recent change, the GNVQ intermediate course is offered in the evening. Much of the provision is offered flexibly enabling students to enrol at different times in the year. There are currently 143 students aged 16 to 18 and 21 adults on full-time college courses. All but one of the 283 part-time students enrolled are over 19 and they attend classes for a maximum of three hours each week. The college also offers some part-time outreach provision in a local secondary school as part of its commitment to widening participation.

Achievement and standards

91. Pass rates on all courses are high and in 2001 were above the national average. Between 1999 and 2001 pass rates on all courses have gone up and on three courses, introductory counselling, BTEC national diploma in early years and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma in nursery nursing, they have reached 100%. Both retention and pass rates are particularly good on the level 2 NVQ care programme. The retention rate on this programme is well above the national average and the pass rate has increased to 96%, compared with the national average of 59%. Students on

NVQ courses receive good support and guidance. Three assessors join the teacher who works with students on the level 3 early years programme every four weeks and two teachers share the teaching of a large group of NVQ care candidates. Students make rapid progress towards achieving their qualification, and many level 2 students obtain it within nine months.

92. Retention rates on the advanced GNVQ have improved steadily and are now above the national average. However, retention rates on the CACHE diploma in nursery nursing have declined and were significantly below the national average in 2000/01. Retention rates on the introductory counselling course have remained at the national average for the last three years. During the same period, retention rates on the BTEC national diploma course have stayed slightly above the national average.

93. The standard of students' work on most courses is high. Students on the introductory counselling course demonstrate that they have developed skills for responding sensitively to others and are fully aware of the need for keeping information confidential. The best students demonstrate considerable skill in reflective and analytical thinking. Students on the second year of the AVCE course have developed satisfactory skills for working on their own. For example, one student is making good use of contacts established with a charity that supports children with disabilities, to complete an assignment. Students are using a variety of sources effectively, including the Internet, to extend their knowledge and understanding. They co-operate well with each other when working on their own and share information and materials. However, some written work is too descriptive and insufficiently analytical and evaluative. Students at foundation level find it difficult to keep purposeful group discussion going.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Care and early years, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Counselling introduction	1	No. of starts	132	99	105
		% retention	95	89	98
		% pass rate	67	91	100
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	31	85	49
		% retention	97	92	88
		% pass rate	70	82	96
CACHE diploma nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	62	37	26
		% retention	90	92	67
		% pass rate	77	68	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	41	30	30
		% retention	42	70	73
		% pass rate	62	67	93
BTEC national diploma early years	3	No. of starts	21	23	13
		% retention	90	83	83
		% pass rate	39	81	100

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

Quality of education and training

94. Teaching on part-time vocational courses is good. Both theory work and the assignments students' experience in the workplace. Teaching on level 3 courses is good overall and on level 1 and 2 courses is at least satisfactory. There are very good resources in childcare rooms for practical activities and these are used imaginatively to develop students' understanding. Some teachers use a wide range of well-designed teaching materials that include scenarios. These enable students to apply their knowledge. The briefs for assignments are clear and specify the marking criteria. Teachers mark and return work promptly. They provide students with feedback on their performance, giving praise where this is due and identifying those areas of work where improvements are needed.

95. On level 1 and 2 courses, teachers make insufficient use of visual materials to prompt interest in and aid understanding of the topic. Staff use a wide range of teaching methods. In some lessons, however, they do not change the learning activity when it ceases to hold the students' interest. Teachers of vocational subjects have begun to work with key skills teachers to help students develop key skills. They aim to ensure that students can acquire and practise key skills through their vocational assignments.

96. All teaching is carefully planned. Teachers have occupational expertise and know their subjects well. Many teachers, however, give insufficient attention to ensuring that students are given appropriate learning activities which will help them to achieve their learning goals. There is no section on the lesson plan form where staff can specify the activities the students will undertake. In many lessons, teachers dominate discussion and do not give the students sufficient scope to express their opinions and explore their ideas. For example, a student in a level 3 childcare lesson raised a challenging point for discussion but the teacher did not use this to encourage the students to develop their critical thinking. There is insufficient use of questioning to elicit opinions, justifications and explanations from

students. Questioning is mainly used to check learning. In some lessons, teachers go over earlier learning thoroughly.

97. There are almost equal numbers of school leavers and mature students in classes on the CACHE diploma in nursery nursing course. Those with greater experience of childcare contribute more effectively to group discussion. More confident students summarise information clearly. They raise challenging points for discussion, but teachers do not capitalise on these to further the students' understanding. The college finds good work placements for students where they can apply their knowledge and develop skills of working with children. Students carry out research into child development on their own. They are able to link theory to practice and they have a good understanding of anti-discriminatory practice.

98. Both full-time and part-time teachers are well qualified and they have recent and relevant industrial experience. Most classroom accommodation is good. There is an excellent range of resources, including textbooks and creative materials, available in them. However, there are insufficient childcare textbooks in the learning centre.

99. Students, both school leavers and adults, receive good support from their teachers and tutors. They benefit from regular group and individual tutorials and regular assessment and monitoring of their performance in the workplace. They find their teachers approachable and helpful.

Leadership and management

100. The curriculum area is well led and ably managed. The section is organised into four course teams with one head of section. There is good communication between teams and many systems are standardised across the department. The head of section keeps staff well informed through monthly team meetings which are minuted. However, actions and their time scales are not always clearly recorded in the minutes. Staff contribute to the self-assessment process and they identify many of the weaknesses that need to be rectified. They work well together to implement improvements. The head of section encourages teachers to apply for staff development training.

Visual and performing arts and creative studies

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- effective teaching and learning
- effective development of students' skills through well-designed projects
- broad and appropriate range of provision
- good links with the community.

Weaknesses

- unclear assessment criteria in project briefs
- poor pre-entry guidance on some courses
- poor sound-proofing between classrooms.

Scope of provision

101. The college offers a broad range of appropriate full-time and part-time provision in art and design, performing arts, including drama, dance and music, media and creative studies, including photography, watercolour, upholstery, floristry, embroidery, garden design and interior decorative techniques. Courses are available at levels 1 to 3. There is also a pre-degree foundation diploma course in art and design.

Achievement and standards

102. Most pass rates are well above the national average, with an upward trend in many courses. In 2000/01, there were 100% pass rates on a number of courses including GNVQ advanced art and design, the national diploma in design, GCE A-level art and design, pre-degree foundation art and design, City and Guilds 7900 watercolour, first and national diplomas in performing arts and GCE A-level theatre studies. Other courses with pass rates well above the national average included City and Guilds 7900 interior decorative techniques, 9231 photography, and GNVQ advanced media. In 1999/2000, more students won City and Guilds awards than in any other college in the region. City and Guilds awarded nine medals and five 'highly commended' certificates to creative studies students. Retention rates are consistently high on some courses, such as GCE A-level art and design, and satisfactory on others, such as the diploma course in foundation studies in art and design. On other courses, however, such as the GNVQ advanced media and production course, they are below average, and in 2001 they declined further. In order to help students achieve success, staff set them

demanding goals and require them to achieve exacting standards in their work. Staff place great importance on enabling students to develop skills of evaluation and critical analysis. The quality of students' work is very good and in some instances, it is excellent.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Visual and performing arts and creative studies, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 7802 watercolour	1	No. of starts	43	24	25
		% retention	72	75	76
		% pass rate	90	83	100
BTEC first diploma performing arts	2	No. of starts	12	17	14
		% retention	73	94	71
		% pass rate	75	88	100
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	39	33	22
		% retention	100	81	86
		% pass rate	83	100	100
GNVQ advanced media communication and production	3	No. of starts	12	20	22
		% retention	75	95	45
		% pass rate	75	94	89
Diploma in foundation studies, art and design	3	No. of starts	32	22	24
		% retention	84	91	88
		% pass rate	78	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

103. Teaching is designed to meet the needs of individual learners. Teachers and technicians have a positive and good relationship with students. They have good knowledge of their subjects, technical competence and vocational expertise. Teaching styles are appropriate and broad in range. Most students are industrious, motivated and keenly

interested in their work. They acquire confidence in their skills and knowledge. Pre-degree foundation art and design students developed their understanding of line, form, tone and space during a lively drawing class. Equal opportunities issues are comprehensively explored during induction. Themes related to equal opportunities had been imaginatively incorporated into a media assignment to enable students to develop a more detailed appreciation of key issues.

104. Assignments are imaginatively written to foster the use of research techniques, acquisition of knowledge and development of a broad range of practical skills. Some assessment criteria, however, are not defined clearly. In media, teachers rely too heavily on the broad and insufficiently precise assessment criteria specified in course handbooks. Students on the national diploma course in graphic design found these assessment criteria imprecise and they were uncertain what they had to do to achieve high grades in an animation assignment. Most students have individual learning plans and are set targets. Part-time students of creative studies found these plans more useful than the full-time students did.

105. Classrooms are well equipped and contain good resources. Staff work well together as a team. A well-knit team of part-time staff carries out 60% of the teaching in this curriculum area. Lecturers and technicians are well qualified and have occupational expertise. Newly developed performing arts facilities are equipped with a good lighting rig, sound system and sprung dance floor. The performing arts facility and some media and art and design rooms are very poorly soundproofed, and lessons in them are disturbed by noise from adjoining rooms. Most handouts and paper-based learning materials are well designed. There is little display of students' work around the college. There are two well-equipped computer suites which can accommodate large groups. Some art and design rooms are in a poor decorative state and are not conducive to effective learning. Lighting is poor in the printmaking workshop. Students make effective use of the library's good resources and extensive book stock. Well-maintained IT facilities are also available to them. There is a well-stocked art and design shop on campus.

106. Methods used to assess learners and record their achievements are very good and appropriate to the courses. Assessment is carried out regularly and promptly and learners are aware of the appeals procedure. Students are set realistic learning goals. Internal and external verification processes are rigorous.

107. Courses are well structured. They meet the needs of students and the requirements of the appropriate examining and validating bodies. Key skills activities are an integral part of lessons and tutorials. Students on an ACVE media course had successfully demonstrated their use of the key skills of communication, use of number, and IT through an excellently conceived assignment, which required them to carry out research and then design, produce and market a magazine for students. Links with the community lead to worthwhile learning tasks for students. Students on a garden design course leading to a City and Guilds qualification were involved in a practical project to design a garden for a local wheelchair user. Students learning techniques of interior decoration worked on council properties in Partington. There are some links with employers but these are not particularly well developed.

108. Students benefit from a good tutorial system. Students have individual and group tutorials during which their progress and achievements in academic and practical work are reviewed. Careful records of reviews of students' progress are kept on well-designed forms. Students on some courses receive poor pre-entry guidance. Some adult students working towards City and Guilds qualifications said that before starting their course, they were not made aware of the costs of materials they had to buy. Some media and performing arts students said that the pre-entry guidance they received had not covered their course content. Students' absence from, and lateness for, lessons are dealt with effectively in a number of ways.

Leadership and management

109. The two sections of visual and performing arts and creative studies are well managed. There is effective leadership at team and course level and provision is co-ordinated effectively. Effective measures are being taken to improve students' attendance, and retention and pass rates. There is insufficient involvement of staff in self-assessment and the quality assurance process. There is a staff appraisal system but appraisals are not carried out regularly. The college's inspection team carries out observations of lessons. The staff development needs of staff are not identified systematically through the findings of the observations.

Humanities – social sciences

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on access courses
- well-planned lessons with a range of appropriate activities
- well-managed courses
- enthusiastic and positive students.

Weaknesses

- little added value in the achievements of GCE AS-level psychology students
- low pass rates on two-year GCE A-level psychology courses
- insufficient checking of students' written work in lessons
- inadequate feedback on assessed work on GCE AS/A-level courses.

Scope of provision

110. The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time provision in social sciences. Courses are available at levels 2, 3 and 4, both during the day and in the evening. They meet the needs of both adults and school leavers and provide good progression opportunities for students. In addition to GSCE, GCE AS-level and GCE A-level courses, there is an 'express' course on which students work towards GCE A-level and AS psychology and also a BSc degree in psychology. The GCSE sociology and psychology courses are popular with students from many different backgrounds, including young people excluded from school.

Achievement and standards

111. The pass rates on the access to HE course are high and in 2001, they were 100%. Similarly, pass rates on one year GCE A-level sociology course are excellent and have been well above the national average for the last two years. Although the pass rates on the two-year GCE A-level sociology course have declined from 100% to 79%, they remain above the national average. Pass rates on the one-year GCE A-level psychology courses have been very low but they increased to 72%, which is 12% above the national average, in 2000/01. Pass rates on the two-year GCE A-level psychology courses are below the national average. In 2001, there was little added value in the achievements of students on the GCE AS-level psychology course.

112. Retention rates are improving on GCSE courses. In 2000/01, all students on the GCSE sociology course gained grade E or above. Many of these students did particularly well in view of their background and lack of previous attainment. Some had been excluded from school or had no GCSE grades at all. Retention rates for two-year GCE A-level sociology and psychology courses are above the national average. However, those for the one-year GCE A-level sociology course have declined to 42%, which is well below the national average. Retention rates have declined for the one-year psychology GCE A-level course to below the national average.

113. The standards of students' work on the access to HE course are good. Students have a sense of purpose and are keenly interested in their work. Students are able to work well on their own carrying out research in order to write essays. They make effective use of study skill workshops and the IT centre. Advanced-level sociology students have developed a good understanding of theory. In one lesson, they were able to refer back to previous knowledge of cross-cultural research and case studies in a debate on gender. Some students are making slow progress with their individual projects. The standards of students' work in psychology lessons are mostly satisfactory. In GCSE sociology lessons, students worked well on structured activities for the whole class, but they worked less effectively when they had to undertake tasks in group.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE (A*-C) sociology/psychology	2	No. of starts	109	86	87
		% retention	53	71	73
		% pass rate	30	52	50
GCE A-level psychology (one year)	3	No. of starts	51	54	48
		% retention	83	74	61
		% pass rate	48	44	72
GCE A-level psychology (two year)	3	No. of starts	*	73	76
		% retention	*	72	72
		% pass rate	*	61	71

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level sociology (one year)	3	No. of starts	33	37	34
		% retention	69	64	42
		% pass rate	59	83	92
GCE A-level sociology (two year)	3	No. of starts	*	42	51
		% retention	*	74	74
		% pass rate	*	100	79
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	46	28	26
		% retention	71	64	76
		% pass rate	84	94	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

114. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities designed to maintain the interest of students during some lengthy lessons. Teachers used anagram exercises to review work from the previous lessons, true/false exercises and pair work, and all students were fully engaged in these. In some very good lessons with students, over the age of 19, the teachers were able to draw skilfully on the personal experiences of students to develop their understanding of issues relating to gender and study skills. Teachers on all courses have good knowledge of their subjects. In some lessons, teachers do not give sufficient time for students to complete note taking or answer questions. In most of the lessons, the teacher dominated classroom discussion and did not give the students enough scope to develop or test out ideas for themselves. Teachers do not always check the quality of students' written work. Some written work is poor. In some instances, students had incomplete work in their files. Teachers in psychology and in GCSE sociology provide lots of handouts but do not give enough time to students to reflect on the material and take it in.

115. Most staff have teaching qualifications and relevant degrees for the subjects they teach. They have been on a range of courses and training events to keep up to date with developments in their subjects. Accommodation is largely satisfactory and there are displays of students' work in some classrooms.

116. The feedback from teachers to students on the access to HE course on their psychology assignments is very detailed. There is a clear indication of strengths and how work could be improved. Useful comments are made to help students improve their spelling and grammar. Teachers are extremely helpful and prepared to explain work again. Students receive plenty of support and advice on how to structure essays. Teachers' comments on assessed work at GCE AS/A level are often vague and do not give a clear indication of how work could be improved. Assessment cover sheets are not always used well to inform students how they can ensure they meet the awarding body assessment criteria.

117. GCSE students welcome the choice of subjects available to them. The timetabling of GCSE sociology and English has been changed to reduce time between lessons. This change was intended to help improve attendance, retention rates and achievement. Most access students attend for two and a half days each week, but some choose to take additional courses like mathematics or general studies. Students are unclear about the arrangements for learning key skills and the purpose of key skills workshops.

118. Students were well informed about their programmes and had received good advice during enrolment. They receive good academic and pastoral support. Teachers monitor the progress of their students through formal procedures and informally. GCSE students valued both the group and individual tutorials, and had received useful careers advice. Their attendance was continually monitored. Access students described the support they received as invaluable and those who needed financial help were given it swiftly and sensitively.

Leadership and management

119. Course management is effective. Team leaders meet regularly to review the quality of provision. Agency staff and part-time staff are well supported through a mentoring system. Programme improvement action plans specify clear targets for retention and students' achievements. However, some aspects of the quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. The internal inspection report for humanities is vague and there is no clear evidence for judgements. Feedback from students is not analysed effectively by course teams.

English and communication

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most GCE A-level courses
- outstanding work by students in many GCE A-level lessons
- careful planning of extended sessions to maintain students' motivation
- well-managed courses.

Weaknesses

- low rates of achievement of grades A to C in GCSE English
- poor classroom management and inappropriate teaching methods in some lessons
- insufficient additional learning support on the level 2 course
- some ineffective assessment feedback.

Scope of provision

120. The college offers a range of courses during the day and evening for full-time and part-time students. Subjects available include English language, English literature, English language and literature and communication studies. In addition, there is a leisure course in creative writing. Courses attract both school leavers and adults. In 2000/01, about 30% of students in this curriculum area were over the age of 19.

Achievement and standards

121. Pass rates for students on GCE A level and access to HE courses are all well above the national average. However, pass rates on the GCSE English course are low and declining. Many students on the GCSE course are on various programmes across the college and have poor skills in English. Few of them, however, take up the additional learning support available to them. A high proportion of level 2 students also work towards the certificate of achievement in English in addition to the GCSE. The pass rate on this course is satisfactory. The pass rate last year on the GCE AS-level English course was good and the recently introduced valued added data shows that the majority of students are making the progress expected of them.

122. The standard of students' work in many GCE A-level English lessons is very high. In discussions and question and answer sessions, students demonstrate strong analytical skills and a sound grasp of theoretical material. Their use of subject specific terminology was

particularly impressive. Standards of written work were appropriate to the stage of the course.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English grades A*-C	2	No. of starts	142	178	155
		% retention	72	74	84
		% pass rate	49	42	29
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	46	28	26
		% retention	71	64	76
		% pass rate	84	94	100
GCE A-level English literature (2 year)	3	No. of starts	119	70	73
		% retention	87	83	84
		% pass rate	87	71	92
GCE A-level English language (2 year)	3	No. of starts	21	23	17
		% retention	90	90	69
		% pass rate	78	76	100
GCE A-level communications (2 year)	3	No. of starts	35	41	43
		% retention	74	74	80
		% pass rate	80	50	85
GCE A-level language and literature (1 year)	3	No. of starts	41	42	45
		% retention	88	74	67
		% pass rate	71	66	88

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

Quality of education and training

123. Lessons are well planned to maintain the interest and motivation of students during lengthy sessions. All the teaching observed was satisfactory or good and some was outstanding. In the more successful lessons, the teaching was inspiring and teachers challenged the students to use all their skills to the full. In less successful lessons, the teachers demonstrated poor skills of classroom management and in some instances, they used inappropriate resources which were of little help to the students.

124. On GCE AS and A-level courses, there was some excellent teaching which had been planned carefully and imaginatively. Lessons had momentum and a sense of purpose. Students were absorbed in their various learning tasks and they achieved high standards of work. In a GCE A-level English language class, students were confidently analysing written and spoken data using complex grammatical terminology. In a GCE AS-level group, students were quick to grasp the differences between denotation and connotations, responding enthusiastically to the tutor's guidance. GCE AS-level literature students were involved in many different types of activity and moved comfortably from individual to group work in the three-hour period. In some lessons teaching methods were not so successful. Teachers did not manage group work well and they did not give the students sufficiently detailed feedback on their work. Students were not encouraged to work together and they were not shown how they could develop key skills through their learning tasks.

125. Many lessons were effective in enabling students to work confidently towards assessment and students spoke positively about their understanding of the assessment procedures on their course. Teachers gave students regular reminders of the requirements of the awarding bodies. Some teachers, however, were not filling in assessment feedback sheets in enough detail to indicate how students might improve their work. Written feedback did not always reflect the grade awarded. The process and value of diagnostic assessment were not fully understood by students. There was little teaching of key skills. Although GCE AS-level students had been successful in level 3 key skills tests, their portfolios had not been assessed. They had little enthusiasm for the key skills assessment process.

126. Learning materials were relevant and well produced. Rooms often had attractive displays of material relating to set texts and also examples of students' work. In some GCSE classes, resources were not always appropriate. Texts were unimaginative and the students found the learning materials difficult. Although ICT had been used to produce learning handouts and display materials, use of ICT by students was not covered sufficiently in schemes of work. Some GCE AS-level groups were rather cramped in classrooms which were too small for them.

127. Teachers are well qualified. They take part in staff-development activities. Students speak highly of the approachability of their teachers. They also value the tutorial system and its role in helping them keep on target in their studies. However, part-time students have no identified tutor and staff seemed unclear about their tutorial role in relation to these students. A small number of agency staff are well integrated with the team.

Leadership and management

128. Most courses are well managed. Course teams hold regular meetings which are minuted. Internal inspection raised a number of issues for the team which are addressed in a programme improvement action plan. One identified action was to make improvements to the recruitment and selection process and enrolments, which were declining, have increased this year. All teachers, including part-time teachers, are involved in the process of course review. They do not, however, participate sufficiently in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment findings are determined largely by the outcomes of internal inspection.

Modern foreign languages (MFL)

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

Strengths

- consistently high pass rates on GCSE courses
- keen and highly-motivated learners in all classes
- good accommodation and facilities
- broad and appropriate range of provision
- effective use of homework and assessment.

Weaknesses

- very poor and declining retention rates on many courses
- some poor teaching
- insufficient sharing of good practice
- lack of staff involvement in self-assessment.

Scope of provision

129. The college offers courses in a wide range of modern foreign languages, including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Greek, Japanese, Russian and Welsh. Courses are offered from beginner's level to post GCE A level in many languages. Qualifications students can achieve include GCSE, GCE A level and the Awarding Body Consortium (ABC) practical languages award for students at a lower level. The new ABC courses, which replace the GOALS scheme, are particularly appropriate for adult learners. The majority of students, around 600, are part-time adults. There are relatively few students aged 16 to 18 studying languages. Approximately 110 young people study a language as part of their leisure and tourism course and a further 27 are following a GCE AS/A-level course. This inspection focused on French, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese courses in particular and covered a wide range of courses.

Achievement and standards

130. The standards achieved by students are satisfactory overall. Pass rates on GCSE language courses have been consistently high in recent years. Many students on these courses achieve very high grades indeed. On GCE A-level courses, pass rates have risen and in 2001, were above the national average. Students of Spanish and Italian were particularly successful. The pass rate in GCE A-level German, however, was only 50%. The small

number of students aged 16 to 18 who took GCE AS-level examinations last year performed badly. They did not achieve the grades their teachers predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. Retention rates on many courses are very poor and in decline.

131. In 2001, the large numbers of students following elementary courses led to the college’s achievement of the GOALS bronze award. Students did better on the one-year courses than on the two-year courses. Very few on two- year courses achieved the award, but over 90% passed on the one-year programme. Students on the course leading to the silver award also performed well. Nevertheless, retention rates were very low.

132. Most students achieve satisfactory standards in lessons and in their work, and some achieve good standards. Most adult learners had command of grammar, could express their views, and had good recall of vocabulary. Some students had a fluency in speaking beyond that required for the level of the course they were following and they showed an impressive understanding of language structures. Understandably, many struggled to understand native speakers. In one beginners’ lesson, a student, who understood the word ‘fish’, gallantly offered her understanding of a dialogue. She thought the people were swimming. They were, in fact, having a meal. She had, however, demonstrated the important skill of understanding what you can and not worrying too much about what you can’t understand. Overall, the attainment of students aged 16 to 18 was not as high as that of older learners. In one GCE AS-level class, young people struggled to talk about past events, had poor vocabulary and found manipulating grammar very hard.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Modern foreign languages (MFL), 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Goals 3 silver award all languages		No. of starts	*	*	69
		% retention	*	*	59
		% pass rate	*	*	90
Bronze award all languages (or equivalent for years before 2001) One and two year combined	1	No. of starts	150	473	485
		% retention	71	64	62
		% pass rate	56	63	64
Bronze award one year all languages	1	No. of starts	*	*	228
		% retention	*	*	67
		% pass rate	*	*	92

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Bronze award two year all languages	1	No. of starts	*	*	257
		% retention	*	*	57
		% pass rate	*	*	33
GCSE French, German, Italian, Spanish high grades (A-C)	2	No. of starts	139	122	129
		% retention	69	71	62
		% pass rate	86	90	88
GCE A-level French, German, Spanish, Italian	3	No. of starts	44	62	108
		% retention	69	61	55
		% pass rate	30	71	80

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

133. In good lessons, teachers had high expectations, made their students work harder than they did, and talked less than their students. In these lessons, teachers ensured that learners had ample opportunity to practise the language in a meaningful way. There was a clear context and students spoke or wrote to communicate something, not just to do an exercise. For example, in one lesson, students practised negative structures, by pretending they worked in Fawlty Towers, where there were no facilities and nothing worked. In another lesson, students discussed the merits or otherwise of Coronation Street in an interview. Other teachers engaged and sustained interest in a variety of ways. In one lesson, sniffing seaweed and green tea and squeezing pickles helped make Japan seem that much closer.

134. In satisfactory lessons, some teaching methods were not very effective. Too much time was taken up by the teacher talking or by extended periods where the teacher slowly asked questions of individual students in turn, while the rest of the class did little. Not enough was achieved in the time available. Some activities were rather mechanical or undemanding. In some lessons, there was unsatisfactory teaching. In these lessons, teachers spent far too long merely reading out the meanings of words or phrases, which the students copied down. Too much time was spent talking about the language in abstract terms and not enough to talking in the language.

135. In all lessons, students were impressively enthusiastic and highly motivated. They were attentive without exception and worked with considerable effort. They were keen to learn, clearly enjoyed their language courses and attended regularly. In one lesson, students quickly learned and then used the complex Spanish structure for 'I like', while trying to find what they had in common with a partner.

136. Accommodation is good. Rooms are bright and pleasant. There is also a good range of facilities, which teachers use to good effect. Language students are well supported by their teachers, both in and outside lessons. The induction programme for students is effective and they value it. Homework is a regular feature of all courses. Assignments are designed carefully to build on what has been covered in class. They are marked thoroughly and teachers give the students detailed feedback on how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

137. A new management structure was introduced some two months prior to the inspection. It is too early to judge its effectiveness. The new role of 'team leader', however, is not clearly understood by the staff involved. In addition to three full-time staff, the section consists of numerous part-time staff, many of whom teach only one or two classes each week. Such a diverse team proves difficult to manage and teachers work largely as individuals. Part-time staff are given a detailed staff handbook but they receive insufficient guidance on how to teach their courses. There is not enough sharing of good practice. Languages staff did not contribute to the self-assessment report for the area. Course teams do not review their courses effectively.

Foundation studies

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

Strengths

- good achievements by most students
- well-planned and effective teaching on many programmes
- effective partnerships with external agencies to widen participation
- good teaching and learning resources
- coherent programme for SLDD with good opportunities for progression
- wide range of additional learning opportunities outside the classroom
- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- narrow range of adult basic education provision
- insufficient linkage between initial assessment, individual learning plans and lesson planning
- little support on mainstream courses for students with weak basic skills.

Scope of provision

138. The inspection covered foundation courses for SLDD, adult basic education and provision to help students with weak basic skills across the college. A wide range of courses is available on the main college site and in outreach centres. There are currently 27 students aged 16 to 18 and 230 students over the age of 19. Courses include those in literacy and numeracy and family literacy. A course for students aged 16 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities provides a one or two-year vocational preparation programme leading to an entry level qualification. There is a range of full-time provision for students over the age of 19 with more severe learning difficulties and this aims to help them improve their life skills, become more independent, become involved with the local community, and prepare them for vocational training and employment. Where appropriate, students can take units of NVQ 1 in areas such as hairdressing, care and business administration. Adults from day centres attend the college for short courses.

Achievement and standards

139. The achievements of SLDD are good. On most courses, the pass rates are significantly above the national average. Students are able to work towards various qualifications. Following some unsatisfactory retention and pass rates on wordpower and numberpower courses, students now work towards qualifications other than these. In general, standards of work in class are good. Students are given tasks which match their individual ability and potential. Several courses for adult learners do not lead to an external qualification but have learning goals which are agreed between the learner, key workers, carers and college staff. Adult learners' achievement is measured by the extent to which adult learners meet these goals. Their records of achievement detail the success they have in becoming more independent, more confident and in progressing to further courses. Records show that the students do well in their work placements.

140. Learners on basic skills courses do less well. Pass rates for numeracy are higher than for literacy. An introductory short course is now offered with the aim of improving the retention and pass rates in this curriculum area. There is little specific measurement of students' progress and achievements in literacy. Records show, however, that students succeed in making clear progress in numeracy.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
ASDAN towards independence	E	No. of starts	9	11	12
		% retention	100	91	100
		% pass rate	100	100	91
LCCI vocational access certificate	E	No. of starts	12	10	15
		% retention	83	70	100
		% pass rate	100	100	93
City and Guilds wordpower	E	No. of starts	*	12	41
		% retention	*	83	14
		% pass rate	*	80	68

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds numberpower	E	No. of starts	*	*	14
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	100
City and Guilds wordpower	1	No. of starts	56	26	91
		% retention	82	92	50
		% pass rate	52	87	71
City and Guilds numberpower	1	No. of starts	14	18	12
		% retention	64	75	75
		% pass rate	89	75	80

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

141. There is much good teaching in this curriculum area, but some which was unsatisfactory. Teaching on courses for SLDD is generally good. Effective links and partnerships exist with external agencies, and good use is made of these when carrying out initial assessments. Students' learning is planned in detail to ensure there is revision of previous work and that new topics are introduced effectively and are given a realistic context. Learning tasks and well-presented worksheets are suited to the different abilities and needs of the students. In lessons, all students participate fully in learning activities. The teachers question the students skilfully to make sure they understand the lesson and to help them think clearly and explore their ideas. Through residential events, work experience and frequent visits to external events and organisations, students develop the skills needed for living in the community, obtaining work, and coping on their own.

142. Learning support assistants and tutors give students good support. They work well together as a team to identify and meet the needs of individual students. Many tutors are adept at providing students with an appropriate degree of challenge. The planning of some lessons does not focus enough on the learning goals specified in the students' individual learning plans. Some plans concentrate too much on what the students have to do to gain a qualification, rather than on ways of helping them learn more effectively. In some instances, the tasks specified in the plans are inappropriate for the students, who derive little benefit from them.

143. In general, accommodation and resources are good. Specialist rooms, such as those for art and design, catering, drama and sports, are used where needed. Dedicated rooms are attractively decorated with students' work. Effective use is made of video cameras, conventional and digital cameras and photographs. Computers and suitable software are available to students. Students do not use computers much in lessons, other than those which take place in the IT room. There are few books suitable for the students' reading levels. Information sheets, however, are attractively presented and are available at a range of reading levels. Most staff are well qualified though few have higher-level specialist SLDD qualifications. A comprehensive programme of staff development enables staff to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

144. The quality of teaching within basic skills provision varies considerably. Numeracy lessons are well planned. In these, teachers have precise aims which relate to meeting the students' needs and enabling students to achieve their qualification. The enthusiasm of the staff motivates the students and lessons are lively and productive. Initial assessment of students' literacy skills is carried out but the results of this are not always taken into account in students' individual learning plans. Learning activities themselves are recorded but their outcomes are not. The teaching of basic skills in the college often takes place in unsuitable accommodation which is too small for the size of the class. Teaching and learning resources for basic skills are narrow in range. There is little provision to help students on mainstream courses who need help with basic skills. There is insufficient communication and planning between the subject tutors and support staff. The college has not yet attained the Basic Skills Agency quality mark.

145. There is a small number of family literacy classes. These are run in partnership with the Lifelong Learning Service. These classes are successful in motivating parents in the community to learn and in sustaining their interest. Lessons have clear objectives which relate to the interests and needs of parents and they provide a bridge into college. Students participate enthusiastically in family literacy lessons and make clear progress towards reaching their objectives.

Leadership and management

146. Provision for SLDD and that in basic skills are managed separately in two sections. The section managers focus clearly on improving the provision for which they are responsible. The course teams for SLDD provision work well together and share good practice. Course teams hold meetings regularly at which they deal with issues relating to individual students, quality assurance, and teaching and learning. Meetings are minuted. Required action is identified and its implementation is monitored. All members of staff were involved in the discussion leading to the production of the self-assessment report. The recently appointed section manager for basic skills has already drawn up constructive plans to improve the quality of provision. Across the curriculum area as a whole, however, there has been insufficient standardisation of documentation. Staff have not arrived at a consensus on preferred teaching styles and practices, standards and criteria for quality.

Part D: College data
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	20.8	29.3
2	42.8	23.6
3	25.6	18.6
4/5	0.3	1.9
Other	10.5	26.6
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2001

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	1,725	3,593	27.6
Agriculture	1	29	0.1
Construction	1	9	0.05
Engineering	24	95	0.6
Business	716	967	8.7
Hotel and catering	697	475	6.1
Health and community care	728	2,087	14.6
Art and design	493	853	7.0
Humanities	4,063	1,825	30.6
Basic education	319	522	4.4
Total	8,767	10,455	99.75

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2001

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,278	1,218	1,268	2,527	2,500	3,799
	Retention rate (%)	84	78	73	87	79	80
	National Average (%)	81	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	29	39	62	37	52	82
	National Average (%)	59	62	66	62	63	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,829	1,902	1,844	2,152	2,502	2,405
	Retention rate (%)	81	76	77	85	80	84
	National Average (%)	76	76	77	79	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	28	34	55	45	43	64
	National Average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,499	1,722	1,700	1,696	1,476	1,498
	Retention rate (%)	67	78	78	82	82	82
	National Average (%)	77	77	77	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	46	51	67	53	61	71
	National Average (%)	71	72	73	64	65	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	5	8	12	169	149	429
	Retention rate (%)	80	100	92	81	96	95
	National Average (%)	83	84	80	84	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	100	0	55	41	26	15
	National Average (%)	64	65	70	58	61	60

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

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 1998/99 – 1999/2000: 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)	65	28	7	104
Level 2 (intermediate)	55	35	9	65
Level 1 (foundation)	64	36	0	31
Other sessions	78	15	7	27
Totals	64	30	6	227

MONITORING INSPECTION OF SOUTH TRAFFORD COLLEGE

BACKGROUND

South Trafford College was inspected in November 2001. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory in all curriculum areas inspected, except science and mathematics, where it was found to be unsatisfactory.

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management is unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted website alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of science and mathematics took place on 18 - 19 June 2002 and 10 - 11 December 2002.

Science and mathematics

In the November 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be **unsatisfactory**. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- Improved retention rates in GCSE sciences, mathematics and GCE A level mathematics

- Effectiveness of GCSE mathematics teaching in helping students work by themselves
- Well-resourced laboratories with good technical support.

Weaknesses

- Low pass rates in GCSE sciences
- Poor and declining retention rates on some GCE A-level science courses
- Ineffective teaching in some lessons
- Insufficient action planning by students to improve their performance
- Poor attendance and lack of punctuality on the part of students on GCSE courses
- No internal verification or standardisation of assessment methods.

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**. At the examination in 2002, pass rates in GCSE science and in GCSE human physiology and health improved to be slightly above the national average. Attendance and retention rates had also improved. Retention rates in GCE A-level science subjects in 2002 also improved to be above the national averages for each subject. Teaching in 70% of lessons seen during the December 2002 visit was good or better and 30% was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The college has implemented systems to monitor attendance and encourage more active action planning by students. Overall attendance at the lessons seen during the re-inspection monitoring visit was 86%, an improvement on that seen at the November 2001 inspection. There was still some lack of punctuality, mainly at the first lessons of the college day. Internal verification and double marking are now being used regularly, particularly in GCSE mathematics, to help to standardise assessment methods. In science subjects the college only has one full-time member of staff in each subject area, rendering double marking impractical. GCE A-level teachers have made progress in adopting a standardised format for feedback to students on their assessed work and there is evidence of a corporate approach with the support of an external consultant.