



# The Sixth Form College, Farnborough

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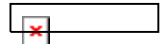
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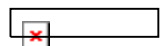
**Basic information about the college**



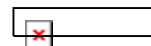
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Name of college:	The Sixth Form College, Farnborough
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Dr John Guy OBE
Address of college:	Prospect Avenue Farnborough Hampshire GU14 8JX
Telephone number:	01252 688 200
Fax number:	01252 688 206
Chair of governors:	Bryony Abbott
Unique reference number:	130703
Name of reporting inspector:	Penny Silvester HMI
Dates of inspection:	19-23 November 2001

**Part A: Summary**



## Information about the college



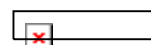
The Sixth Form College, Farnborough is a sixth form college, which serves the needs of full-time students aged 16 to 19 in the travel to study area of Hampshire, South Berkshire and West Surrey. The college concentrates on the education and training of young people aged 16 to 18. The college has grown from 1,180 students in 1992, to 1,797 full-time students this year. Approximately 96% of the students are studying at least one level 3 qualification. Overall, 98% of the students are aged 16 to 18. The small numbers of students aged over 19 are mostly undertaking programmes of study in information technology (IT) and business administration. The college works collaboratively with the local general further education (FE) college to ensure that there are appropriate courses of study for adults in the Farnborough area.

The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is 5%, which is slightly higher than that of the local community. Of the 1,837 students, 56% were female and 44% male.

The college offers programmes in 9 of the 14 areas of learning. No courses are offered in construction, retail, hairdressing or land-based provision. Provision in design technology, health and social care and foundation programmes is very small, and has been excluded from the inspection. The most substantial areas of work are visual and performing arts and media, science and humanities.

The mission of the college clearly states its intention to develop as a distinguished provider of academic and vocational education leading to higher education (HE) and employment. Students following level 3 courses achieve high standards. The college's one corporate objective, which pervades all aspects of its work, is to improve students' achievements.

## How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievement are outstanding in six of the nine curriculum areas inspected. They are good in the remaining three areas. Leadership and management of the college are outstanding. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

### **Key strengths**

- high retention and pass rates
- outstanding teaching and learning
- high standards of students' work
- excellent support for students

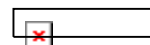
- outstanding leadership and management
- rigorous monitoring of students' progress
- excellent attendance and punctuality
- effective implementation of the new General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) qualifications
- very good accommodation and teaching resources
- comprehensive enrichment activities
- good use of IT within the curriculum
- effective financial management.

***What should be improved***

- pass rates on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) programmes
- retention rates on adult programmes
- pass and retention rates on a small number of courses.

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

## Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is innovative. There are high pass rates in most science and mathematics subjects except GCSE maths. Extensive enrichment activities enliven learning. Leadership and management are effective.
Business studies	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is outstanding. Pass and retention rates on most courses are high. Very good standards of students' work. Rigorous monitoring of students' progress. Well-managed department.
Computing and IT	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is very good. The standard of students' work is good. There are high pass rates on the new GCE AS, but low retention rates on adult courses. There is effective management of full-time courses but weaker management on part-time courses.
Leisure and recreation	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is outstanding. Pass rates are very high on most courses. Retention rates are very good on most courses with the exception of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced leisure and tourism. Standards of students' work are high. The curriculum area is managed effectively.
Art and design and media	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is outstanding. Pass rates are excellent. Retention rates are very good. The standard of students' practical work is very high. There are very good enrichment activities. The learning environment is well organised and well maintained.
Performing arts	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is outstanding. Excellent pass rates and retention rates on most courses. Students demonstrate outstanding practical performance skills. There are extensive external links that enhance the curriculum. The area is effectively managed.
Humanities (general)	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is very good. Pass rates are good on most courses. Retention rates are poor on philosophy, history and politics courses. There is good subject management.
Humanities (social sciences)	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching is very good. Pass rates on the GCE Advanced level (A level) are very good. Pass and retention rates on the new GCE AS courses are excellent. The social science provision is well co-ordinated and well managed.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is very good. Pass rates and retention rates are good on most courses. Not all modern foreign language students are reaching their full potential. There are exciting enrichment opportunities. Management of curriculum changes has been carried out effectively.

### How well is the college led and managed?

The leadership and management of the college are outstanding. All aspects of the work of the college are focused on maintaining and improving high standards of teaching and learning, and on supporting individual students to achieve their potential. Students achieve high standards. Governors and senior managers work well together. The introduction of curriculum reforms during the two years prior to the inspection was well planned and executed. The changes introduced have had a positive impact on standards. There has been exemplary use of the management information system by teachers to support students and track their progress. Financial management and deployment of resources to support learning are effective.

### To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's equal opportunities policy emphasises the importance of effective recruitment, induction and support of individual students in ensuring equality of opportunity. The proportion of students at the college from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than that in the local population. The performance of individual students is carefully monitored and support is provided when required. All staff are required to act immediately if any signs of harassment or discrimination are detected.

### How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Students receive outstanding guidance and support at the college. Induction arrangements are well planned. There are effective procedures for diagnosing and addressing students' individual learning needs. A strong tutorial system enables the effective monitoring of students' performance. Careers guidance is responsive to the needs of students. Personal support for students, including counsellors and visiting chaplains, is good.

### 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***

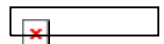
- high quality of teaching
- effective support provided by teachers

- safe, positive and friendly atmosphere of the college
- effective monitoring of their progress
- extensive extracurricular and enrichment activities
- learning resource centre and access to IT
- resources used to support learning
- high quality student recreation areas and refectory.

***What they feel could be improved***

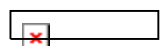
- crowded common room and refectory at peak times.

**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**



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**Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors**

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	91	8	1
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**
Learning	88	11	1
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**

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

\* work-based learning

\*\* no work-based learning and virtually all students were aged 16 to 18

## Achievement and standards

1. The Sixth Form College, Farnborough offers a wide range of academic programmes preparing students for GCE AS and A level, alongside vocational qualifications and GCSEs. There are also a small number of courses for adults.

### 16-18 year olds

2. The majority of students undertaking level 3 programmes are aged 16 to 18. Level 3 courses are studied by 96% of daytime students. The retention and pass rates of level 3 courses are very good. Pass rates have been consistently well above the national averages for the last three years. Retention rates have improved in the last year from around the national average to well above it.

3. The pass rate for GCE A level is good. In 2000/01, 89% of students aged 16 to 18 who completed their course, passed the examination. The exceptions are in accounting and politics. In 2000/01, the average points score for students taking two or more GCE A levels was 20.2. This was substantially above the county (18.0) and national (17.8) average. Students on the majority of GCE A-level courses perform as, or better, than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Students on the newly introduced GCE AS qualifications have performed very well in comparison to their GCSE scores. Retention rates on GCE A-level programmes are above national averages, with the exception of philosophy, history and politics.

4. The majority of students following a GNVQ advanced/Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) programme are aged 16 to 18. In 1999/2000, the average points score for GNVQ advanced was 11.7, which was above the national average of 10.2. Pass rates were high in 2000/01, at 95%, which is well above national averages. Retention rates were good at 80%.

5. The college has significantly improved its pass rates at level 2 in the last three years. Retention rates are very good. Within courses preparing students for GCSE, 88% complete the course. Some 93% achieve grades A to G. However, only 43% obtain passes at the higher grades of A\* to C. This is below the national average. Pass rates on GCSE mathematics have been low for the last few years. The college has taken action to introduce alternative courses in mathematics for those students who are unlikely to gain a grade C or above in one year. Pass and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate were well above national averages in 2000/01. Some 93% of students who



completed their course were successful.

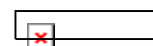
6. Only eight students are taking a GNVQ foundation programme at the college. Retention rates are around the national average, but pass rates are well above.

7. The standard of students' work observed during inspection was extremely high. In 86% of lessons, attainment was better than average and in 58% it was very good or excellent. Written work and assignments are of a high standard and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Students develop high levels of evaluative and analytical skills. They demonstrate good research skills and high levels of critical awareness.

### **Adult learners**

8. The number of adult learners has declined in the last few years and is now low. There are very few adult students on GCE A-level and GCSE programmes. The majority of adult learners are studying on short courses in IT and business administration. Retention rates are below the national averages. Pass rates have improved in recent years from below the national averages to just above.

### **Quality of education and training**



9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded in 164 sessions. The profile of grades awarded to lessons was very good. The overall quality of teaching is outstanding and a high proportion of lessons (65%) was very good or excellent. Only 1% of lessons was unsatisfactory. The majority of lessons were from level 3 programmes. Teaching on level 1 and 2 programmes was good. Students aged over 19 were present in only two of the lessons. In both, teaching was good, and learning and attainment were satisfactory.

10. Lessons are well planned and based on comprehensive schemes of work that clearly indicate the stages of learning, methods of teaching and identify the assessment goals. Clear objectives are set at the beginning of lessons and progress against these objectives is regularly reviewed. The teaching meets the needs of the majority of learners and leads to the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge.

11. The levels of attainment in lessons were consistently higher than expected. Teaching is challenging and inspires students to develop high-level skills. Students learn how to be critical and analytical as well as gaining good subject knowledge. They understand complex issues and theories, and demonstrate high levels of evaluative skills. Additional skills, such as group work and oral skills, are well developed through the teaching and learning methods used in the classroom. Students demonstrate very good practical skills. These are particularly good in science and visual and performing arts and media. Students make effective use of their time in lessons.

12. Teaching is enhanced through a very wide range of enrichment activities. There is an extensive programme of visits, visiting speakers and work experience across all curriculum areas. Teachers expertly enable students to relate work experience and visits to the theoretical components of their courses. Multimedia and IT are well used to enhance learning. There is excellent use of the college intranet to enable students to access lesson notes, handouts and assignments.

13. The good quality of teaching and learning is consistent in all curriculum areas. Co-ordination is effective across groups that are learning the same subject, for example, GCE AS psychology, where over 200 students are taught across a large number of teaching groups.

14. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic, well

informed and up to date in the knowledge of their subjects. They provide high levels of support to students both within and outside lessons. Students speak highly of the teaching and support provided by their teachers. Students work productively in lessons. They are enthusiastic and show a great interest in their work. Students are involved in the selection of teachers. Each prospective teacher gives a short lesson to a group of students. The students evaluate the teachers' performance and this evaluation contributes to the judgements about appointment.

15. In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons, unrealistic objectives and poor time management by teachers sometimes led to tasks not being completed, which resulted in insufficient time being given to reflection on what had been learned. In a small minority of lessons, not all students were involved in learning.

16. Teaching staff are well qualified in their curriculum subjects. Many have a wide range of teaching experience and bring a strong sense of commitment and enthusiasm to their job. Over 90% have teacher-training qualifications. An experienced team of IT technicians maintain the IT resources effectively. Science technical staff have a good range of industrial experience to support them in their role. Staff development and training is well planned. The college focuses on ensuring that staff develop IT skills, and keep abreast of their subject and curriculum initiatives, particularly the changes associated with Curriculum 2000. Newly qualified teachers have a comprehensive induction programme and are provided with good support during their first year of teaching.

17. The college has developed its accommodation considerably since the previous inspection. A £6 million building programme has been completed recently, providing good quality accommodation, including a brand new theatre, which is used by students and the local community to put on plays and other events. The new student centre includes attractive individual and group tutorial rooms. The students' common room, although of good quality, is too small for the size of the college.

18. The standard of accommodation in teaching rooms is high, and most are given a distinct subject identity through attractive wall displays, with posters and students' work that promote interest and learning in the subject. Many rooms contain fixed television and video players, and furnishings are comfortable. Space utilisation by the college is efficient. However, some rooms become crowded and hot on occasions, as a result of the large group sizes. There are also problems with noisy air-conditioning units in some areas, which the college is aware of and addressing. Access to those with restricted mobility, covering 22% of curriculum areas, is limited. Wherever possible, alternative timetabling arrangements are made to ensure the whole college curriculum is available to all students.

19. The college provides good access to high specification computers both to students and staff. The ratio of personal computers to full-time students is 1:4.5, and there are sufficient machines available to students, both within curriculum areas and in the resource centre. Laptops are available both to students and staff. This provision has a positive effect on students' learning and cross-college communication. The library is well stocked with up-to-date and relevant books, videos, CD-ROMs and other learning materials. Students have good access to quiet areas for private study.

20. There is a good level of specialist equipment in all curriculum areas. Multimedia projectors are used in many curriculum areas, particularly the science laboratories, where information communications technology (ICT) is used to good effect to promote learning. Performing arts have an impressive, fully equipped theatre and suites of rehearsal rooms and studios.

21. The college has established a very good system of assessing and recording students' progress. Assessment is thorough and rigorous and is carried out regularly.

22. Effective student reviews clearly identify what students do well and how they need to improve. There are regular reports to parents. The college has developed an effective electronic registration system for recording students' attendance. A networked personal computer is available in all teaching rooms, which enables staff to monitor the attendance and punctuality of students, pass on messages from other members of staff, and inform tutors of any concerns they may have about aspects of behaviour or attendance. Use of this system has had the dual impact of ensuring all

teaching staff are able to use IT to a minimum basic level.

23. The college has effectively introduced assessment strategies to support the Curriculum 2000 reforms. It made a strategic decision to enter students for the January 2001 GCE AS module tests. This enabled students' progress to be reviewed and individual targets to be revised. It also enabled students to have the time to carry out some of the many enrichment activities on offer. Students' pass rates on the new GCE AS qualifications were very good.

24. The assessment of key skills has been less well developed. Tutors play an important role in tracking students' progress in achieving competencies in key skills. Last year, few students achieved their targets in relation to key skills in communication, IT and application of number. However, many have made sufficient progress to complete one or more of these qualifications in the current year. The college has reviewed its policy on key skills assessment and new GCE A-level students will be externally assessed for only the key skill of IT.

25. Students' work is marked very carefully. Homework is returned promptly and detailed feedback is provided that clearly identifies how the students' work can be improved. There is good intervention when students are not managing their work. The assessment system is well understood by students, staff and parents. Effective internal verification systems are in place for vocational programmes and key skills.

26. The college offers an appropriate range of courses for the 16 to 19 age-group. Its main focus is GCE AS and A-level provision. The college offers a small number of courses for adult students, which are limited in scope and scale. It works collaboratively with the local general FE college, who offer vocational courses and who work with adult learners.

27. The college has very successfully introduced Curriculum 2000. There are over 50 courses provided: GCE AS, GCE A level, GNVQ foundation and intermediate and AVCE. Students are given effective support and guidance in making their choices. The college timetable is very flexible and enables students to study a wide range of combinations of courses. Marketing is a significant strength of the college. It has a very good reputation in the local community. Links with local feeder schools are excellent.

28. The college makes adequate provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, offering extra support, for example, for dyslexic students, and moving teaching locations for those with mobility difficulties.

29. Guidance and support for students are outstanding. Good, attractive prospectuses give detailed information about progression routes and courses, as well as describing the life and ethos of the college. There are well-attended, twice-yearly open events for prospective students and their parents. Tutors visit the college's partner schools to provide advice and guidance to pupils about the opportunities at the college and whether the college can meet their particular needs and ambitions. All new students receive two interviews; the second, at enrolment, enables the students' programme to be adjusted following examination results. A carefully planned induction programme is provided, and students who wish to transfer between courses receive advice and guidance before doing so. Arrangements for careers education and guidance, in collaboration with the local careers company are effective. The careers library is very well stocked and managed. A particular strength is the support offered to students in the preparation of their applications to HE. Tutors specialise in supporting certain types of applications, such as those to Oxbridge, medicine and veterinary studies, and teaching and nursing. A beneficial mentoring scheme pairs students with adults in professions related to their career aims, and there is also a voluntary work experience programme.

30. Procedures for diagnosing and addressing students' individual learning needs are effective. Initially, students who may need additional help are identified through the enrolment process, through liaison with schools, and through referral by teachers, tutors and students themselves. Students' needs are individually assessed and support sessions are arranged, for instance for dyslexia; time management and study skills; and English as an additional language. Great care is taken to support small numbers of students with sensory impairments or physical disabilities.

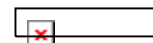
Currently, about two thirds of students offered additional support have taken it up and pass rates and retention rates amongst students who receive support are good.

31. A strong tutorial system provides the central focus for the monitoring of students' performance at the college, through the college's management information system. A well-managed team of professional tutors work closely together to maximise their respective skills and knowledge in supporting students. All students are assigned to a tutor group, which, where possible, includes other students from their secondary school. Students feel well supported in the college. They have good access to relevant and effective support on both personal and academic issues from tutors and teaching staff, who give freely of their time. This support is much appreciated by parents. The below average pass rates on GCSE courses indicate that support for students at this level needs to be developed further, in conjunction with subject teachers. The college has identified this as an area for improvement.

32. The tutorial system is used to deliver an important programme of supplementary studies, including careers education, preparation for HE and employment, health education and current affairs. This programme supports the students in preparing for the GCE AS and A level in general studies. The teaching in tutorials was good or better. Pass rates for general studies have been above or in line with national averages over the last three years. The college has identified the need to find alternative approaches for students on AVCE courses, who achieved less well in this examination.

33. Personal support for students is good. The college offers support for students from the college's professional counsellors and visiting chaplains. Links with external agencies, can be used when further expertise is required. An active students' association provides further welfare support, as well as social activities for students. Some 300 students receive financial support from the access fund.

## Leadership and management



34. The leadership and management of the college are outstanding. All aspects of the work of the college are focused on maintaining and improving high standards of teaching and learning, and on supporting individual students to achieve their potential. Governors and senior managers work well together. They have established a sound framework for governance and are committed to raising standards. The introduction of curriculum reforms during the two years prior to inspection was well planned and executed. The changes introduced have had a positive impact on standards. The first group of students to complete the new GCE AS courses, performed well and speak very positively of their experience. Staff at all levels are committed to supporting individual students and to helping them improve their performance. Students' achievements at 16 in the catchment area of the college are high, but the college's admissions policy is not selective and admission is not competitive. Students on the majority of GCE AS and A-level courses perform as, or better than, would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Overall pass rates at level 3 are well above the national average for sixth form colleges and have shown steady improvement, despite significant growth in full-time student numbers. Teachers and managers focus on maintaining and improving high standards of teaching and learning. Provision is outstanding in six of the nine programme areas inspected, and good in the remainder.

35. The college places significant emphasis on collaboration with other organisations to ensure that the needs of the locality are met. Effective links have been established with neighbouring schools. These ensure that the transition from school to college is smooth and that students settle into their studies quickly. The college has taken a leading role in developing collaborative arrangements with other sixth form colleges in the area and is working with a neighbouring general FE college to ensure that the courses offered at the two colleges are complementary. Communication within the college is excellent. Staff are consulted regularly and contribute to the development of policy. The

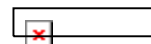
management information system developed by the college is reliable, and the use of the system by teachers to support students and track their progress is exemplary. The system enables curriculum managers, teachers and tutors to intervene at an early stage to support students who are not progressing as they should. Curriculum areas are well managed and there is effective communication between teachers and pastoral tutors. The monitoring of students' attendance is exemplary. There is excellent feedback to both students and parents on students' progress. Teaching is carefully co-ordinated. Set schemes of work ensure that the approach to teaching a subject is uniformly effective and of a high standard. Teachers are well supported and the induction of new teachers is effective. Staff development is carefully planned and teachers are provided with the training they need.

36. The college's one corporate objective, which pervades all aspects of its work, is to improve students' achievements. Planning to achieve this objective is effective. Governors are appropriately involved in setting the strategic direction of the college and are well informed about its academic performance. Strategic planning and self-assessment procedures are well integrated. Strategic aims are clear, simply stated and all staff are provided with a clear summary of the strategic plan. Managers and governors carefully monitor achievement of objectives. Financial management is strong. Enrolment targets are met and exceeded, and the college has improved its accommodation and resources significantly since the last inspection. The college provides good value for money; student retention rates and examination pass rates are high, and teachers and accommodation are used efficiently.

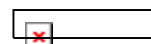
37. Quality assurance procedures are set out in the college quality assurance policy and supplemented through annual guidance notes. Paper work is kept to a minimum. Lessons are observed regularly and the percentage of good or better lessons has increased from the high level observed during the last inspection carried out by the Further Education Funding Council. Observation helps identify staff development needs and informs staff appraisal, which is carried out regularly. Staff are set clear targets for improvement linked to the strategic aims of the college and the outcomes of self-assessment. Effective use is made of value added calculations based on students' qualifications on entry to the college to raise standards. The methodology has been used by the college for over six years and is the main instrument for monitoring the performance of courses and individual students, and for raising achievement. Self-assessment is carried out annually and is rigorous. Specific subjects are also inspected annually through partnership arrangements with other sixth form colleges. All staff and governors are involved in self-assessment and an external consultant assists with moderation procedures. Weaknesses are identified and addressed.

38. The college's equal opportunities policy underpins its mission and emphasises the importance of effective recruitment, induction and support of individual students in ensuring equality of opportunity. The proportion of students at the college from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than that in the local population. The performance of individual students is carefully monitored and support is provided when required. All staff are required to act immediately if any signs of harassment or discrimination are detected.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science and mathematics



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in most science and mathematics subjects
- outstanding teaching
- innovative teaching in science
- high rates of students' attendance and punctuality
- very effective use of IT to promote learning
- high levels of support for students
- extensive enrichment activities that enliven learning
- effective leadership and management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rate on GCSE mathematics at grades A\* to C.

### ***Scope of provision***

39. The curriculum area offers an appropriate range of full-time GCE AS and A-level subjects in science and mathematics for students aged 16 to 18. GCSE biology and mathematics are offered, and free standing mathematics units have been introduced this year. There are good opportunities for students to mix and match modules.

### ***Achievement and standards***

40. Pass rates in many science and mathematics subjects are very high. For example, in 2001, the pass rates for GCE AS chemistry and physics were 97% and 99% respectively. GCE A-level biology has maintained a 98% pass rate for the previous three years. All the students who completed GCE A-level chemistry and further mathematics in 2001, were successful. Most GCE A-level subjects

obtain a higher proportion of high-grade passes than is achieved in similar colleges. The proportion of students gaining grades A to G in maths is similar to that achieved in sixth form colleges and retention rates are good. However, a low proportion of students achieve grades A\* to C. The college has recognised this issue and introduced alternative qualifications in mathematics for those students whose prior attainment in mathematics makes it unlikely for them to obtain a grade C or above in one year.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics grades A* to C	2	No. of starts	143	149	171
		% retention	76	87	91
		% pass rate	26	28	37
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	92	96	118
		% retention	89	92	84
		% pass rate	98	98	98
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	78	80	83
		% retention	76	76	81
		% pass rate	98	98	100
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	90	84	71
		% retention	70	76	72
		% pass rate	97	91	88
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	212	194	206
		% retention	76	85	73
		% pass rate	97	89	89
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	32	41	31
		% retention	78	88	84
		% pass rate	96	100	100

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

41. The standard of attainment in lessons and in the assessed work of students is very high. Students demonstrate high levels of scientific and mathematical knowledge. Science and mathematics students have won a number of external prizes for their accomplishments, including commendation from the Institute of Physics, and Beacon Awards in mathematics and chemistry. Students take pride in their work and the content and presentation are both of a good quality. Mathematical notation and scientific terminology are used correctly and students can talk about their work with clarity and confidence. Students' attendance is excellent at 94%. Students arrive punctually for each lesson. A high proportion of students are accepted into HE, including many prestigious institutions, such as Oxford and Cambridge.

***Quality of education and training***

42. Teaching is outstanding. Some 92% of lessons were good or better and 62% were very good or excellent. Mathematics lessons are well planned and carefully structured, with a good variety of activities that keep students involved and interested. Teachers ensure that each individual is given the precise help he/she requires.

43. Teaching of science is innovative and exciting, and clearly inspires learners. Use of multimedia projectors with cameras and interactive software packages, enable teachers to display models and practical demonstrations to whole groups very effectively. During an excellent lesson in physics, students learned about the effect of thermal activity on the properties of materials. A piece of rubber tubing was immersed into a cylinder of liquid nitrogen, and the change to the material caused by extreme cold was demonstrated by smashing it with a hammer to show how brittle it had become. In another lesson, students' knowledge of behaviour was actively reinforced by a practical demonstration of learned behaviour by the teacher's dog. Many teachers use selected web sites on the Internet to illustrate the concepts and theories being discussed. For example, in a biology lesson, a lively animation of the withdrawal reflex in mammals enabled students to describe the structure and function of neurones.

44. A wide range of enrichment activities is offered for the personal development of students and to enliven the curriculum, including trips and visits and specialist lectures given by external speakers. A visiting speaker gave an interesting talk using live wolves, to demonstrate key points of his lecture. An interesting programme of work experience is offered to GCE A-level chemistry students, who have placements in a number of vocationally relevant companies.

45. Teaching staff are very well qualified in science and mathematics. The technical staff all have relevant industrial experience, which is used to good effect when planning and developing practical work. All science and mathematics accommodation is of a high standard. A good range of specialist equipment is available.

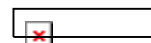
46. Science and mathematics staff provide high levels of support to students within and outside lessons. They make themselves freely available to give students additional curriculum help. An effective workshop in mathematics is available to students. Additional lessons are also available for science students. Good guidance and support are given to students when applying for HE by tutors, and subject teachers give useful information on career pathways.

47. Assessment is systematic and rigorous. Homework is set very regularly, in many cases, in every lesson. This work is marked carefully and useful comments are given to students to help them improve their future work. Internal verification procedures are well developed.

### ***Leadership and management***

48. Leadership and management are effective. Managers have a strong commitment to enhancing students' achievements and improving the quality of provision. Communication is effective and regular team meetings are held which are well documented. Course reviews consistently focus on the quality of teaching and learning and curriculum development. Students' views are gathered through questionnaires and discussion, and responses are made to bring about improvements in styles of teaching and learning, and in assessment schedules.

### **Business studies**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass and retention rates on most courses



- high standard of students' work
- outstanding teaching
- excellent up-to-date teaching resources
- rigorous monitoring of students' progress
- well-managed department.

***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on GCE A-level accounting.

***Scope of provision***

49. The college offers a range of business courses to students aged 16 to 18, including GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in business. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in business and accounting. Students on GNVQ intermediate work towards the young enterprise certificate, in which they set up a business, produce a business plan, finance the enterprise, produce the product or service and market it. GCE A-level business students can take part in an international business studies exchange at the Lyngby Business School in Denmark. There is a small provision on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) business administration for adult students.

***Achievement and standards***

50. Pass rates on most courses are good. Pass rates have been consistently above national averages on GNVQ advanced in business and have reached 100% in two of the last three years. The numbers of students achieving high grades has also been above average, with 92% of students achieving merit and distinction grades last year. GNVQ intermediate pass rates have followed a very similar pattern. Pass rates on the new GCE AS business course have increased to 97% in the last year. Some 78% of students achieved high grades, which is well above national averages. Pass rates in GCE A-level accounting were below the national average, but issues surrounding this course have been addressed and the results in the GCE AS accounts course showed a marked improvement, exceeding the national average this year. Retention rates are above average on the majority of courses. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001

Young enterprise certificate	2	No. of starts	26	27	39
		% retention	100	93	92
		% pass rate	100	84	92
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	8	10	20
		% retention	100	90	85
		% pass rate	100	100	88
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	34	29	27
		% retention	76	86	96
		% pass rate	100	86	100
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	89	83	121
		% retention	80	84	84
		% pass rate	82	94	87
GCE A-level accounts	3	No. of starts	31	40	39
		% retention	74	65	74
		% pass rate	87	65	56

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

51. Levels of attainment on business courses are high. Students not only achieve a high standard of written work, but they also develop critical awareness, analytical and research skills. All students are encouraged to generate their own ideas and freely debate these with the group. Students on the GNVQ intermediate course won the Blackwater Valley Trophy for the best company report on their 'Over the Top Designs' at the national Young Enterprise Awards. There is good progression within the courses at the college, and a high number of students progress to HE. The remaining students, on completion of their course, find gainful employment either locally or in London.

### **Quality of education and training**

52. Teaching is outstanding. Some 93% of classes were good or better, 71% were very good or better. Teachers expect high standards from students. All students are actively involved in learning. At the start of each lesson, aims and objectives are clearly set out. Students know exactly what their expected outcomes will be. Teachers use good question and answer techniques to draw on students' previous knowledge and work experiences. Students are encouraged to express their opinions in class and on many occasions, lively discussions ensue. They are confident and willing to challenge each other's views. In one lesson, students watched a video about the court case between a supermarket retailer and a jeans manufacturer. Students were able to analyse critically the arguments for both sides. Teachers use excellent teaching materials, which include up-to-date examples and case studies. Good use is made of well-animated PowerPoint presentations to attract students' attention. In a lesson on appraisals, students showed a high level of understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the use of appraisal. In another lesson, on promotion campaigns, students were able to devise a wide range of promotion strategies for a particular target group for products such as a new deodorant, new breakfast cereal, new yoghurt drink and unisex jeans. Students were able to work within a budget and to a set time-scale.

53. Students' progress on all courses is rigorously monitored. Regular reviews are carried out and students who need help are identified very early on in their studies. Assignment deadlines are adhered to. Course work is thoroughly marked with spelling and grammatical errors identified. Work is returned to students promptly with constructive comments, identifying how work can be improved. Excellent advice is given to students on how to improve their examination grades. Students are well prepared for the rigours of external examinations.

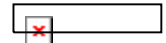
54. Support for students is excellent. A well-structured induction thoroughly prepares students for their studies. Students' individual support needs are diagnosed at the beginning of the course. Students' progress is closely monitored using the excellent college-devised tracking system. The tutorial system provides very good pastoral support. Students speak highly of the academic support they receive from their teachers.

55. Excellent IT facilities include up-to-date software, Internet and e-mail. A good supply of books, journals, magazines, and videos is available in the classroom to meet the needs of students. All classrooms provide an environment conducive to learning. The library is well stocked. The shared folders on the college intranet enable students to access lesson notes, handouts, and teachers' presentations, and allow staff to share resources. All staff are well qualified and many are external examiners.

### ***Leadership and management***

56. The department is well managed. Communication between teachers and managers is good. There is effective consultation through a regular cycle of team meetings. Course reviews are rigorous and results feed into strategic planning. Detailed schemes of work and assessment plans are in place, ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and an even distribution of students' workload throughout the year. The department sets itself high standards. The self-assessment process is rigorous and leads to improvements.

### **Computing and IT**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- very good teaching
- excellent pass rates on the new GCE AS course in computing
- very good resources to support learning on full-time courses
- high rates of attendance and good punctuality on full-time courses
- good standards of students' work
- effective management of full-time courses.

## **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on part-time courses for adults
- inadequate teaching resources on part-time courses for adults.

## **Scope of provision**

57. The college offers a good range of full-time courses at advanced level. These include GCE AS and A-level computing and IT. A new AVCE IT course was introduced in September 2001. The number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 doubled during the three years prior to inspection, with enrolments reaching 321 in September 2001. The scope of the part-time provision for adults is limited and student numbers are small. During the three years prior to the inspection, there was no growth in numbers and planned courses often failed to recruit. The college resources centre offers some BBC 'webwise' programmes but the main taught provision for adults is computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and integrated business technology II (IBT 2).

## **Achievement and standards**

58. Retention rates and pass rates on GCE A-level computing were good, but declined during the last year to the national averages for sixth form colleges. The retention rates on the GCE AS computing course introduced in September 2000, was good and all the students successfully achieved their qualification. Retention rates and pass rates on GCE A-level IT have varied around the national average for the three years prior to the inspection. GCE A-level IT students perform better than would be predicted from their GCSE results. Retention rates on the main part-time course for adults, CLAIT, are significantly below the national average, and pass rates are satisfactory. During the inspection, full-time students were punctual and the average attendance at classes was high at 90%.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and IT, 1999 to 2001***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
CLAIT (short course)	1	No. of starts	69	74	55
		% retention	71	81	71
		% pass rate	53	78	67
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	52	59	51
		% retention	79	85	75
		% pass rate	98	94	82
GCE A-level IT	3	No. of starts	56	68	79
		% retention	75	69	78
		% pass rate	71	96	82

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

59. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and the standard of students' work in class is high. The standard of some project work is very high. Advanced-level computing students demonstrate good skills in programming and designing databases. Students' files are well organised and note taking is generally good, particularly in some IT classes. There is good progression to HE from GCE A-level courses.

### ***Quality of education and training***

60. Teaching is very good. Some 87% of lessons were good or better. Full-time courses are well planned and teaching is effectively co-ordinated. Schemes of work are shared and teachers produce good quality teaching materials that meet the needs of students with different abilities and learning needs. Resources, ranging from schemes of work to assignments, course materials and homework are shared through the college intranet. In the best lessons, teachers use an interesting and varied range of activities to maintain students' interest in their work. In an effective lesson on the use of PowerPoint, the teacher developed the students' creative, research and critical skills. Students produced high quality PowerPoint presentations to a tight deadline and demonstrated an ability to evaluate their own work. In another lesson, students worked on business projects, based on real scenarios such as part-time jobs and parents' businesses, which they had researched. They developed their understanding of IT systems and produced work of a high standard using databases, spreadsheets and word processing. Resources for teaching IT key skills are well developed. Challenging and interesting activities are used to cater for the learning needs of students with different skill and ability levels. All students demonstrated confidence and skill in using and applying word processing, spreadsheet and database applications. The quality of resources for teaching part-time courses for adults is inadequate and teachers pay insufficient attention to the range of abilities within these classes.

61. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and well supported by an experienced team of technicians. The college operates an extensive network of up-to-date hardware and software and a large and well-equipped resources centre provides students with ample opportunities to practice their skills and produce assignments. Students use the centre to access materials on the shared drives, e-mail accounts and the Internet. The stock of computing and IT books in the resources centre is excellent. Students taking full-time computing and IT courses are supplied with a textbook at the start of their course. Computing rooms are bright, spacious and well furnished with interesting, relevant and up-to-date displays.

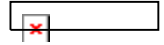
62. Students studying on full-time courses work to clear assessment and homework schedules, which are distributed to students at the start of the course, and are displayed on the classroom walls. Staff adhere to scheduled deadlines rigorously, which motivates students to manage their time effectively. Students' attendance and progress are monitored using the college's bespoke management information system. Teachers liaise with the students' personal tutors using this system: this enables teachers and tutors to provide students with regular and accurate feedback on all aspects of their performance.

### ***Leadership and management***

63. The management of full-time computing and IT courses is effective. Managers set high expectations for staff and students. There is good teamwork and excellent communication between the staff. The area has successfully accommodated the recent significant growth in student numbers and the introduction of the new GCE AS courses through effective deployment of staff and efficient use of teaching accommodation. Managers analyse students' results carefully on a routine basis, and the curriculum offer is adapted in response to their findings. For example, in 2000/01, the pass rate on the project module of one GCE A-level course was lower than on other modules. In response, the managers led the team in the production of a comprehensive project documentation guide, which was being adopted successfully across all computing and IT project work at the time of inspection.

64. Management of the college's part-time IT programmes for adults is weaker. Courses often fail to recruit. Quality assurance procedures have not been developed and the good practice observed in the management and teaching of full-time programmes is not reflected in part-time programmes.

## Leisure and recreation



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most courses
- outstanding teaching
- high levels of students' attainment
- high standards of students' work
- good attendance
- good internal verification procedures in place
- effective management of curriculum areas
- good sports facilities that enhance learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism courses.

### ***Scope of provision***

65. The college offers a wide range of full-time provision for students aged 16 to 18. This includes GNVQ leisure and tourism courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. AVCEs in both

travel and tourism, and leisure and recreation, and GCE AS and A level in physical education (PE) have been introduced in the last two years. Hanson Higher Sports Leaders and Community Sports Leaders Awards are offered as part of the college enrichment programme. Travel and tourism students are also offered opportunities to acquire additional qualifications that improve their progression and work opportunities. These include Welcome Host, Spanish language, Reed Travel Training and Sports Leaders awards.

### ***Achievement and standards***

66. Retention rates and pass rates are very good on most courses. Pass rates on GNVQ foundation have been consistently above the national average for the last three years. They have risen to 100% in the last year. Retention rates on GNVQ intermediate are excellent. Pass rates have increased and were 13 percentage points above the national average in 2000/01. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced are well above national averages and reached 100% in the last year. Retention rates, however, were just below the national average. The number of students who complete their GCE A-level PE course has steadily improved, and has been above the national average for the last two years. Pass rates show a similar pattern. Retention rates and pass rates on the newly introduced GCE AS course in sport have shown a further improvement, with a retention rate of 95% and pass rate of 94%. Students taking the GCE A level in PE in previous years were not achieving as well as they might have expected in relation to their GCSE performance. The introduction of GCE AS course in sport has changed this situation and students performed better than predicted. The number of students achieving high grades was above the national averages.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in leisure and recreation, 1999 to 2001***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	No. of starts	11	20	8
		% retention	82	100	75
		% pass rate	79	90	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	17	19	28
		% retention	82	95	98
		% pass rate	79	78	93
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	44	38	42
		% retention	67	71	67
		% pass rate	97	89	100
GCE A-level PE	3	No. of starts	74	86	63
		% retention	74	81	83
		% pass rate	85	93	96

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

67. Students' work is of a very high standard. Teachers have high expectations of students in all of their activities. Students are encouraged to extend and apply themselves to their studies. The standards of attainment observed in lessons are very good. Intermediate and advanced-level students display high levels of critical evaluation, research and analysis in most of their classroom work. They are able to develop reasoned argument and demonstrate high levels of knowledge in the leisure and tourism industry. Foundation-level students demonstrate high levels of planning and evaluation. Students' punctuality and attendance are good.

### ***Quality of education and training***

68. Teaching is outstanding. All lessons were good or better. Some 92% of lessons were very good or better. A wide range of appropriate teaching methods is used. All lessons have clear aims that are fully explained to students and checked at the end of teaching sessions to consolidate learning. Students are enthusiastic about their studies. In all lessons, students' interest is maintained and students are focused on the tasks they are asked to perform. Students are encouraged to plan, research and evaluate their work. Students use the Internet effectively to support their research into current practices in leisure and tourism. Some imaginative quiz techniques are used to develop ideas with foundation-level students.

69. Travel and tourism students enjoy a number of educational visits, including residential conventions to Euro Disney and New York. These visits are then used to enrich classroom activity. Teachers skilfully use educational visits to reflect industry practice and standards. Travel and tourism students participate in work experience in a wide variety of placements that contribute to their learning and often lead to holiday employment. Students are able effectively to relate work experience and personal experiences to the theory they were learning in most lessons. Students following the GNVQ intermediate leisure and recreation course have a regular lesson in which they coach a group of young people with learning difficulties. The students demonstrated high levels of coaching skills and developed effectively the sporting skills of the young people.

70. Teachers are well qualified. Staff development opportunities exist to up-date staff within the curriculum area and as part of the appraisal system. Classrooms are equipped to very high standards and all but one had a networked computer that provided access to a number of computer applications. A very good sports area is used effectively to develop students' sporting skills. There is a wide range of outdoor sports pitches. A good recreational sports programme allows college students to participate at a competitive level. The library has an adequate supply of books and other learning materials to support students' learning.

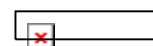
71. The assessment of students' progress is very effective. Assignments reflect industry practice and are set at an appropriate level. Assessment requirements are clearly presented to students. Students' written work is well marked. Detailed written feedback clearly identifies how students' work could be improved. Students' progress is monitored effectively using an excellent college-devised tracking system. Internal verification procedures are rigorous and the marking of students' work is consistent.

72. Students receive high levels of support in their studies. All students receive an effective induction. Individual student progress is carefully monitored through a very good tutorial system. Effective screening identifies the additional support needs of individual students. Students appreciate the support and help they receive outside of normal teaching time, and staff willingly give their time freely throughout the working day. The pastoral tutorial system is highly valued by students.

### ***Leadership and management***

73. Travel and tourism and sport courses are well managed. Managers are committed to the process of continuous improvement and maintaining quality at the highest levels. Challenging targets are agreed, and in most cases, met. Course reviews focus clearly on improving teaching, learning and standards. Students' views are gathered and issues are addressed. Communication is good. All staff contribute to the planning process and the setting of targets for recruitment, retention and achievement.

### **Art and design and media**



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



### ***Strengths***

- excellent pass rates
- high retention rates
- outstanding teaching and learning
- high standards of practical work
- effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- well-organised and well-maintained teaching environment
- very good extra curricular opportunities.

### ***Weaknesses***

- no significant weaknesses.

### ***Scope of provision***

74. The college offers a good range of full-time GNVQ intermediate, AVCE and GCE AS and A-level courses in art, design and media. Courses in film studies are only offered at level 3. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18. In art and design, the specialist areas of work offered cover fine art, photography, textiles, graphic design and three-dimensional design. At the time of inspection, 28 students were studying at level 2 and 1,049 at level 3, of whom 484 were following art and design courses, and the remainder media and film studies. The inspection covered all these areas.

### ***Achievement and standards***

75. Pass rates on art, design and media courses are excellent. Pass rates for intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses in art and design are above the high national average. Pass rates and achievement of high grades for GCE A-level courses are consistently above the national averages for sixth form colleges. GCE AS pass rates for 2000/01 were high, and were above 90% in a wide range of subjects. Although students enrol with varying levels of achievement, the percentage of students achieving high grades is above the national average. Retention rates on all courses are above the national average. Standards of attainment in lessons and project work are high. In art and

design, students acquire basic specialist skills and knowledge quickly, and rapidly establish an ability to communicate their ideas and creativity through drawing. In all areas, students express their thoughts well through the written and spoken word.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in art and design and media, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	9	17	14
		% retention	56	65	86
		% pass rate	100	73	100
GCE A-level fine art	3	No. of starts	28	40	46
		% retention	79	70	78
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	21	20	36
		% retention	71	75	78
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	156	150	138
		% retention	73	80	87
		% pass rate	98	95	100

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

76. Students following GCE AS courses develop good research skills, and students working in different specialist areas of art and design show maturity and confidence, as they experiment with different techniques and approaches to solving problems. Project workbooks in photography, for example, show that students develop specialist skills early, well before applying them to assignments. One GCE AS film studies student won the 'National Young Screenwriting Performance Award 2001'.

77. Progression rates into HE are very high. Art and design students benefit from a compact agreement with a regional specialist HE institution, where all recommended students will be provided with guaranteed places on their foundation course.

***Quality of education and training***

78. The standard of teaching and learning is high. All lessons were good or better. Some 73% were very good or excellent. Teachers ensure that the purpose of each lesson is clear and build on students' previous experiences. Analytical and creative skills are developed. Teachers know their students well and are careful to involve all in discussions, and ensure that all are achieving their potential. In an outstanding textile lesson, for example, students were encouraged to discuss examples of work they had completed at the start of the lesson. The teacher skilfully supported the discussion and helped students develop the ability to criticise work constructively. Students then worked independently and produced high quality observational drawings and design ideas. The teacher provided support, but ensured that the students were generating their own ideas.

79. Art and design students in all the specialist areas develop the ability to respond effectively to creative challenges. They investigate different possibilities and options thoroughly and are highly individual in their responses. They rapidly develop the confidence to evaluate and improve their work. Students specialising in different disciplines share and exchange creative ideas confidently. Students' project workbooks demonstrate their developing confidence in communicating ideas through visual research and experimentation with different media and techniques. Media and film

studies students acquire knowledge quickly which enables them to demonstrate their individuality and creativity. In a good example of group work, students evaluated 'soap opera' characters. Their conclusions were perceptive and they made effective use of up-to-date audio-visual equipment to present their findings.

80. Teachers are well qualified, make effective use of their experience and work effectively as a team. Communication between teachers is excellent. Students have access to very good extra-curricular activities, including gallery visits and overseas trips during the summer holiday. Art and design students visit Tunisia each year. The trip provides a wealth of materials and sources of inspiration for project work as demonstrated by the high standards of displayed work. Media students produce impressive handbooks for visits.

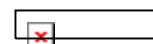
81. Resources are of a high standard and accommodation is well maintained, equipped and appropriately furnished. Due to the popularity of the area, the resources are well used. Open-plan facilities enable students to share and exchange creative ideas across subject areas, although at times, noise from adjacent lessons can be intrusive. Opportunities to see creative activity in different disciplines bring new stimulus to their work. Creative inspiration is further enriched through effective use of displays in both work and circulation areas. Students are encouraged to use the learning resource centre and studio-based resources for reference and research. Effective use is made of the Royal Academy School's outreach drawing unit. Teachers are well supported by technical staff and training opportunities are well thought out.

82. Students' personal progress is carefully monitored by teachers and record keeping is meticulous. Teachers take care over feedback to students and ensure that students are clear about how to improve and develop their work. Liaison between teachers and personal tutors is effective. Well-developed teamwork ensures that teachers apply national standards and assessment criteria consistently.

### ***Leadership and management***

83. The area is managed effectively and individual subjects are well led. Quality assurance procedures are well implemented and managers and teachers are committed to innovation and to maintaining and improving high standards of teaching and learning. Any concerns expressed by students are dealt with promptly.

## **Performing arts**



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

### ***Strengths***

- excellent retention rates and pass rates on most courses
- outstanding practical work
- outstanding teaching

- comprehensive extra curricular and enrichment programme
- outstanding accommodation
- effective management and clear strategic and artistic direction
- strong academic support and monitoring of progress
- effective external links.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- no significant weaknesses.

#### ***Scope of provision***

84. The college offers a broad range of provision at GCE AS and A-level in dance, music, music technology, performing arts and theatre for students aged 16 to 18. The provision is organised into the combined curriculum areas of dance, drama and theatre and performance studies and the curriculum area of music. A comprehensive and exciting extra curricular and enrichment programme enables students to improve and develop performance skills.

#### ***Achievement and standards***

85. Pass rates on most courses are excellent. Those at GCE A level, are consistently high, with the majority of courses being above the national average. For example, pass rates on GCE A-level performing arts reached 100% in two out of the last three years. Pass rates on the new GCE AS qualifications are outstanding with GCE AS-level dance and GCE AS music performance achieving 100% pass rates. The retention rates across all the qualifications are good, with the majority being above the national average. The pass rate for theatre and dramatic arts fell slightly below the national average in 2000/01. However, the pass rate on the new GCE AS performance studies course, which replaces it, was extremely high at 96%.

#### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in performing arts, 1999 to 2001***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GCE A-level music performance	3	No. of starts	20	19	16
		% retention	70	74	100

		% pass rate	100	93	94
GCE A-level performing arts	3	No. of starts	36	41	56
		% retention	72	73	86
		% pass rate	100	100	98
GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts	3	No. of starts	30	24	21
		% retention	73	78	67
		% pass rate	95	94	86

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

86. Performing arts and music students are achieving exceptional standards of written and practical work in relation to their learning goals. The standards of attainment in practical work are a particular strength. Students are able to demonstrate advanced technical and performance skills well above the level expected. Teachers have very high expectations of students. Students meet these high standards and display high levels of professional discipline and rigour in all aspects of their work. Attendance is very good.

### **Quality of education and training**

87. Teaching is outstanding. Some 100% of lessons were good or better and 73% were very good or excellent. All lessons are well planned with detailed schemes of work, assessment and feedback. Evaluation is structured into lessons and students demonstrate high levels of critical analysis and reflection. In the best lessons, outstanding teaching built upon theory through the practical exploration of tasks and presentations. Complex themes, exercises and texts were expertly broken down into smaller learning goals. Students were able to work through challenging, creative processes such as choreographing and devising with independence, confidence and co-operation. In all lessons, students were enthusiastic, imaginative and completely focused on the tasks they were undertaking.

88. A comprehensive and exciting extra-curricular and enrichment programme enables students to improve performance skills. There are excellent opportunities for personal development in the form of free individual instrumental tuition for all GCE AS music students. The college also has an exciting 62-strong dance company, a 169-voice choir, various bands and orchestras and is involved in a range of dramatic productions.

89. The accommodation for performing arts is outstanding. An excellent purpose built theatre, including studios and rehearsal rooms, provides good quality accommodation across the performing arts. This has allowed the whole curriculum to grow and develop as larger numbers of students are attracted and accommodated. The theatre is establishing itself as a venue for local groups and national touring companies as well as the many student performances, which take place. It provides important educational opportunities for students to see performance work with professional practitioners and to develop skills such as front of house and stage management. The college has built a network of links with the local community, for example in music; students from local secondary schools are invited to the college to take part in lessons and performances. Dance students are working collaboratively with students with learning disabilities. This provides the dance students with the opportunity to develop teaching skills. The students with learning disabilities have a beneficial and enjoyable experience, which will culminate in a joint performance later in the academic year.

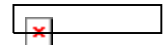
90. Students' progress is closely monitored, both formally through the college's internal information system, and informally in lessons. Students speak highly of the support they receive. Well-structured academic tutorials enable students to make good progress. The tutorial system provides students with excellent pastoral support. All students identified as requiring additional support receive it.

91. Assessment is well planned and rigorous. In all lessons, students were able to identify clearly how they would be assessed and what was expected of them. Teachers provide detailed and comprehensive feedback on students' written work, which clearly sets out how work can be improved.

### ***Leadership and management***

92. The provision is well managed. Each separate curriculum area has a clear artistic and strategic direction, which is shaped by all members of the staff team. Managers set high expectations for staff and students and managers and students are committed to continuous improvement. Rigorous quality assurance mechanisms lead to improvements. Communication within the two areas is good, but the sharing of good practice could be improved. There is good support for the performing arts from senior managers and governors. They regularly attend performances and value the work of staff and students alike.

### **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates in GCE A-level geography, history, law and philosophy
- good attendance and punctuality
- very good teaching
- good quality learning resources
- effective linking of assessment to learning
- wide and appropriate range of courses and enrichment activities
- good subject management.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates in GCE A-level politics
- poor retention rates in GCE A-level philosophy, history, and politics
- ineffective time management in a few lessons.

### **Scope of provision**

93. The college offers a wide portfolio of humanities subjects at both GCE AS and A level to full-time students aged 16 to 18. This comprises critical thinking, economics, geography, government and politics, history (both early and modern), law, philosophy, and religious studies. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 839 students studying humanities subjects.

### **Achievement and standards**

94. Students' pass rates are good in most subjects. Pass rates in geography, history, law and philosophy at GCE A level are above the national averages. Performance in the new GCE AS in these subjects reflects similarly high achievement. Pass rates in GCE A-level politics have declined to well below the national average in the last year, and the pass rate on the new GCE AS politics is eight percentage points below the average. The results in the newly introduced GCE AS subjects have shown a notable improvement in the performance of students compared with their predicted grades. This improvement has occurred in all subjects except politics. Retention rates are low in some subjects. In the most recent GCE A-level cohorts, retention rates were significantly below national averages in history, politics and philosophy.

95. The standard of the written work of most students is high. Students plan essays and assignments well. Work is generally well organised and contains relevant material. Often there is good evidence of research and the more able students are confronting challenging ideas and theories with considerable confidence and success. Most students are critical and appropriately analytical in their assignments. A few students do not manage to get beyond an anecdotal and superficial approach to issues. The quality of students' work folders is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are outstanding. Most students are diligent and serious about their work, but they also clearly enjoy what they do, and all these factors ensure that they reach high standards. There is excellent progression to HE for humanities students.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	47	49	47
		% retention	77	86	83
		% pass rate	86	83	87
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	77	69	83
		% retention	74	84	90

		% pass rate	98	97	97
GCE A-level politics	3	No. of starts	32	22	19
		% retention	81	77	78
		% pass rate	92	100	79
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	91	84	96
		% retention	87	85	78
		% pass rate	94	92	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	48	46	61
		% retention	69	70	78
		% pass rate	97	88	91
GCE A-level philosophy	3	No. of starts	*	17	23
		% retention	*	71	57
		% pass rate	*	92	85

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

\* course did not run

### **Quality of education and training**

96. Teaching is very good. Some 84% of lessons were good or better: 4% of lessons were unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned, and are based on comprehensive schemes of work that clearly articulate the stages of learning, methods of teaching and linked assessment goals. Clear objectives are normally set at the start of lessons and learning outcomes are carefully explained to students. However, on some occasions, learning outcomes were too elaborate and too ambitious, leading to some confusion amongst students. This, together with poor time management, sometimes led to tasks not being completed and insufficient time for students to reflect adequately on what they had learnt.

97. Teaching is nearly always challenging, well informed and up to date. Students are learning to be critical and analytical, as well as gaining good subject knowledge. They have an understanding of complex issues and theories. The level of attainment displayed by most students in respect of these areas of learning is high. Additional skills, such as group working and oral skills, are also being well developed through the teaching and learning methods used in the classroom. Learning is enriched through such activities as visits to courts, to Parliament, geography field trips and attendance at subject conferences.

98. There are good learning resources. Learning materials, including handouts, videos, audio tapes and extracts from journals and newspapers are varied and of good quality. The developing use of shared subject folders on the college intranet is proving to be of considerable benefit to students' learning, enabling them to extend their knowledge and understanding of topics, and encouraging them to develop IT skills. The book stock for humanities in the library is extensive and there is a good range of relevant journals. Classrooms are well equipped and provide attractive and stimulating learning environments with excellent wall displays. There is excellent specialist equipment in geography. Teachers are highly qualified and experienced. They regularly receive good relevant staff development.

99. Students receive excellent support and guidance. They appreciate the extensive advice about career and HE progression that is available through the tutorial system. Effective tracking systems monitor their progress and achievement. Considerable choices are offered to students in humanities subjects at both GCE AS and GCE A level, and they receive good advice and guidance on these choices. Written information, including course and subject leaflets and subject handbooks, is



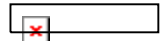
comprehensive, attractively presented and very helpful.

100. Assessment is used effectively to enhance learning. Assessment activities clearly link to learning outcomes. Homework is set regularly. Teachers provide detailed feedback on written assignments. Students' progress is regularly and effectively monitored. There is clear feedback to students and parents on areas where students could improve.

### ***Leadership and management***

101. Humanities subjects are well managed. Subject leadership is good and all staff adhere to the good quality assurance systems in place. Managers and teachers are constantly striving to improve the achievements of their students. Issues affecting quality are appropriately identified and promptly resolved. Responses to any student concerns are effective. Staff meet regularly and communication is good. Value added data are well used to inform managers of students' achievements. Targets for students' pass and retention rates in some subjects sometimes lack challenge.

### **Humanities (social sciences)**



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

### ***Strengths***

- excellent pass rates and retention rates on the new GCE AS course
- high pass rates at advanced level
- very good teaching
- well-planned lessons and courses
- excellent subject resources
- good support for students
- well co-ordinated and managed social science provision.

## **Weaknesses**

- insufficient challenging work for the more able students.

## **Scope of provision**

102. Social science provision is narrow, but very popular. GCE A-level courses in psychology and sociology are offered to students aged 16 to 18, and there is a GCSE in sociology. Enrolments in social sciences have risen significantly over the last three years. Over 500 students were taking GCE A-level psychology courses at the time of the inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

103. At GCE A level, pass rates in both psychology and sociology have been good over the last three years. They are significantly better than the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of students achieving high grades has declined over the same period, and is broadly in line with the relevant national figures.

104. Pass rates on the new GCE AS course are outstanding. In the first year of the examination, nearly all students passed, and three quarters achieved high grades. In sociology, over 40% of students achieved a grade A. The college policy of entering all students for the first module in January is successful. Retention rates are also very good. Over 90% of students who commenced the courses successfully completed them.

105. Standards of students' work are consistently high. Students quickly develop the necessary skills to succeed. Written work is usually accurate and displays good subject knowledge and understanding. Less able students are successfully coached to achieve work of a pass standard. By the second year of their courses, students demonstrate good critical and evaluative skills. Students' oral contributions are often perceptive and show a very good understanding of the subject matter. In some sessions, students gave good presentations that demonstrated fluent communication skills and good subject knowledge. Some students are capable of achieving work of an even higher standard than they do currently. Teachers are aware of this, and are striving to raise standards further. Attendance at lessons is very good.

## **A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities (social sciences) 1999 to 2001**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	169	168	165
		% retention	88	81	78
		% pass rate	94	96	86
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	54	57	54
		% retention	57	67	85
		% pass rate	100	97	93

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

## **Quality of education and training**

106. Teaching in the social sciences is very good. Some 93% of lessons were good or better, 50%

were very good or better. Teaching is particularly well planned. Detailed schemes of work and lesson plans ensure that both teachers and students know what is to be achieved during the course and in individual lessons. There is an impressive consistency of teaching between different groups of students. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and determined that their students should succeed. As a result, all students acquire the skills they need to succeed. Students work productively both in whole class and in groups. Very little time is wasted.

107. Considerable thought is given to teaching strategies and the effect these have on students' learning. In the best lessons, a variety of appropriate techniques are used to engage students' interest, motivate them to learn, and improve their analytical and evaluative skills. In one psychology lesson on stress management, a very lively and effective question and answer session was followed by a period of complete silence as students meditated. A range of other stress management techniques was introduced during the lesson. By testing their pulse rates throughout the lesson, students were able to evaluate the usefulness of a variety of techniques in controlling stress. Other practical sessions used stimulus material on eyewitness testimony to introduce students to research on memory. Students developed a good understanding of the concept of reconstructive memory by watching video clips of simulated bank robberies and car crashes. In sociology lessons, students drew effectively on their personal experiences to make sense of sociological thinking on family life.

108. Small group work is used very effectively to stimulate discussion between students. In plenary sessions, all students are encouraged to contribute and most do so very effectively. Students enjoy lessons, and their enthusiasm to learn is evident in all lessons. Classroom management is excellent, and teachers demonstrate very good skills in motivating students. In some lessons, the most able students could be challenged more to develop higher-level critical and evaluative skills.

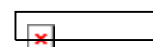
109. Resources in social sciences are very good. The classrooms are effective learning environments, with stimulating displays. Learning materials are of a high quality. The library is well stocked with contemporary advanced-level texts. However, more original research studies could be made available to students. The college intranet contains a wealth of useful resources and links to relevant web sites, but is underused by students.

110. Students are very well supported. Students' progress is monitored very effectively. There are clear strategies to support students who cause concern including well-structured assessment activities, such as short tests and formal assessments. Externally moderated coursework is very well organised. Written feedback to students is good and, in most cases, explains what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

### ***Leadership and management***

111. Social science provision is very well co-ordinated and well managed. There is a very clear focus on improving students' achievements. Managers and teachers are self critical, and successfully address weaknesses. There is an impressive consistency of approach between a large number of teachers in psychology. Planning for the new GCE AS courses and the development of appropriate resources have been exemplary. In both psychology and sociology, teaching materials and ideas for lessons are shared effectively. Communication between teachers and pastoral tutors is very effective. Teamwork is good, and staff are mutually supportive. Inexperienced teachers settle in quickly, and benefit from the enthusiasm of their colleagues.

### **English and modern foreign languages**



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

### ***Strengths***

- above average retention rates and pass rates on most courses
- very good teaching
- exciting enrichment opportunities
- good learning environment with effective use of resources
- careful monitoring of students' progress
- effective management of curriculum changes.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on German and Spanish GCE AS courses
- in some lessons a few students insufficiently involved in learning.

### ***Scope of provision***

112. An appropriate range of courses is offered to students aged 16 to 18. GCE AS and A-level courses are available in English language and English literature. GCSE English is offered with provision for some foundation students. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in French, German and Spanish. The college has successfully recruited large numbers onto the new GCE AS courses. Spanish is also offered to beginners as a level 1 qualification. The foreign languages at work course in French offers progression to level 2 for students who enter with lower grades.

### ***Achievement and standards***

113. Pass rates and retention rates in English are above average on most courses. Pass rates and retention rates on the newly introduced GCE AS courses are very good in English. Some 95% of GCE AS English language students and 99% of English literature students successfully achieved their qualification. The number of high-grade passes was above the national average. Students also performed better than was predicted from their GCSE results. Retention rates on modern foreign language courses are good. Pass rates on GCE A-level French and GCE A-level Spanish are good. Pass rates on GCE AS French are very good at 95%. The number of higher grades achieved is above average. Pass rates in GCE AS German and Spanish are below average. The proportion of higher grades in German and Spanish is falling and students' results are not as good as those

expected from their previous performance.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	57	83	74
		% retention	79	78	81
		% pass rate	22	49	57
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	22	53	50
		% retention	69	72	82
		% pass rate	86	97	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	146	153	149
		% retention	88	86	78
		% pass rate	98	94	97
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	55	32	37
		% retention	78	72	81
		% pass rate	81	83	90
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	25	14	21
		% retention	76	93	90
		% pass rate	79	100	89

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

114. The standards achieved by students on GCE AS and A-level English courses are very good. The GCE A-level students are impressive in their ability to challenge ideas and form opinions. The GCE AS students already show a firm grasp of literary and linguistic concepts, such as how the meaning of a poem is enhanced by its form, or how language structures understanding. Standards of work on the GCSE course are more varied. In modern foreign languages, students are developing their listening and reading skills at a good pace. Students are able to engage with some demanding texts and pick out both the gist of arguments and relevant details. Students are able to express opinions and give supportive arguments. However, students' contributions were sometimes brief and they had not prepared their material sufficiently to use it with confidence. Higher attaining students write fluently and accurately, whilst making good use of source materials. Some students' work shows weakness in grammar, inhibiting their ability to express arguments. Attainment on level 1 and 2 courses is good. Attendance is well above the national average on all courses and punctuality is good.

***Quality of education and training***

115. Teaching is good. Some 84% of lessons were good or better and 4% of lessons were unsatisfactory. Most teaching in English is very good. Students respond with enthusiasm in lessons, participating well in lively discussion and debate in groups and in class. Teachers know their subject well and prepare imaginative lessons using a range of learning activities. In one lesson, students learned patterns of speech using a film clip from an American comedy act. The new curriculum changes are being implemented effectively. Students show a clear grasp of the assessment objectives and respond with enthusiasm to the new focus on contexts and critical readings. In some lessons, teachers failed to involve all the students in the work. GCSE students are not always challenged fully and the lack of access to the higher tier GCSE exam for some students can limit their potential.

116. In modern foreign languages, the quality of the teaching is good. Lessons are well organised, cover a range of skills and are supported by a good range of resources. Teachers have very good language skills and use them extensively in the classroom. In some lessons, students are introduced to new vocabulary and ideas, but students do not have enough opportunities to consolidate their learning.

117. An extensive enrichment programme enhances students' learning. There are creative writing competitions, drama, theatre visits, cultural activities, foreign language exchanges and trips. The visit to the war graves was particularly successful to complement the synoptic topic on the First World War.

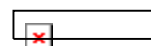
118. Teachers are well qualified and update their subject knowledge through professional development. Rooms are well equipped with videos and mini cassettes for group work. In modern foreign languages good student handbooks set out ideas for independent work and good resources are available in support, including satellite television and video. However, students are not taking advantage of these independent learning opportunities. Two foreign language assistants give conversation classes to support preparation for examinations. Opportunities are missed to use them as a resource in full-class teaching.

119. Students' work is carefully marked with clear feedback using examination criteria. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality is particularly successful. Students are well supported in their studies. The mentor programme, where able GCE A-level students support those re-sitting a module, is beneficial. Students value the guidance gained from English and modern languages staff when making choices over progression to HE.

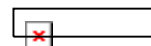
### ***Leadership and management***

120. The courses are well led both in English and modern foreign languages. The introduction of the new GCE AS programmes has been well managed. Good progress has been made in implementing curriculum changes and establishing common systems of teaching and assessment. Staff and managers have a strong commitment to raising achievement. Performance reviews are effective in improving any weaknesses identified. There are effective team meetings and good mentoring arrangements for new staff. In English, good practice is insufficiently shared across courses.

### **Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**



<b>Level</b>	<b>16-18 %</b>	<b>19+ %</b>
<b>1</b>	4.5	29.2
<b>2</b>	12.6	16.7
<b>3</b>	57.8	18.6
<b>4/5</b>	0	0
<b>Other</b>	25.1	35.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	1,941	43	16.11
Agriculture	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	43	0	0.35
Business	511	20	4.31
Hotel and catering	168	2	1.38
Health and community care	102	1	0.84
Art and design	1,509	7	12.31
Humanities	7,935	32	64.70
Basic education	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,209</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
1	Starters excluding transfers	77	165	172	0	0	1
	Retention rate (%)	82	85	86	*	*	*
	National average (%)	78	81	82	72	69	74
	Pass rate (%)	83	72	95	**	**	**
	National average (%)	69	71	77	67	75	76
2	Starters excluding transfers	626	389	594	9	4	5
	Retention rate (%)	86	78	87	78	*	80
	National average (%)	79	80	82	71	71	75

	Pass rate (%)	58	78	91	29	*	75
	National average (%)	84	85	82	75	77	77
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	2,934	3,148	3,289	24	11	4
	Retention rate (%)	79	80	82	88	73	*
	National average (%)	77	78	80	62	65	69
	Pass rate (%)	88	90	89	38	50	*
	National average (%)	86	85	85	69	71	74

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

Sources of information:

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

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

3. College rates for (1999/00): *provided by the college in spring 2001.*

\* not applicable

\*\* not available

**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)	92	7	1	149
Level 2 (intermediate)	75	17	8	12
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>164</b>

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