



Alton College

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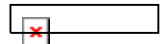
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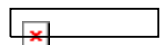
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Basic information about the college



Name of college:	Alton College
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	Michael Gray
Address of college:	Old Odiham Road Alton Hampshire GU34 2LX
Telephone number:	01420 592 200
Fax number:	01420 592 253
Chair of governors:	Robert Ormond OBE
Unique reference number:	130691
Name of reporting inspector:	Angela Cross-Durrant HMI
Dates of inspection:	13-17 May 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

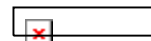


Alton College is a tertiary college in east Hampshire, situated on a single site containing attractive, well-designed buildings. The college attracts students from many parts of Hampshire and also from west Surrey and west Sussex. The proportion of students remaining in full-time education in the area after the age of 16 is well above the national average, at 76%, and there are several similar colleges within a 20-mile radius from which students may chose. The main area that the college serves is largely rural and though it contains areas of prosperity there are also areas of deprivation. The only large employer in the area is the district council, except for the armed services. Fewer than 10% of the local firms have more than 25 employees and many people commute for employment, mainly to London, but also to Guildford and Basingstoke.

The college offers courses in 10 of the 14 areas of learning. It serves the needs mainly of full-time students aged 16 to 18, though its carefully designed provision to meet the specific needs of adults in the local community has grown steadily. In the academic year 2001/02, the college enrolled 1,402 16-18 year olds and 90 adults on full-time programmes, together with 51 16-18 year olds and 1,883 adults on part-time courses.

Although the college is classed as a tertiary college, it chooses to use sixth form college national averages against which to measure its academic performance. The college achieved accredited status from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 2001. In its mission statement, the college states that it is 'the principal provider of high quality modern sixth form education in east Hampshire and surrounding areas' and that it offers 'a developing range of targeted courses for adults and businesses'.

How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching is good and retention and pass rates are often outstanding. The range of courses meets the needs of the local community. Inspectors judged the overall quality of provision to be outstanding in science, mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT), and English and modern foreign languages. They judged the quality of provision to be good in business, visual and performing arts, media, humanities and basic skills, and satisfactory in health and social care and childcare. There was no unsatisfactory provision. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- outstanding pass rates and many outstanding retention rates on level 3 courses
- outstanding leadership and management
- good teaching
- college-wide shared priority of 'putting the student first'

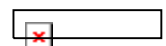
- impressive range of extra curricular and enrichment activities to enhance students' experiences
- good provision for students with learning difficulties and with physical or sensory impairment
- excellent support for students
- specific and effective provision to meet local needs.

What should be improved

- retention and pass rates on level 2 courses
- insufficiently critical evaluation of teaching and learning in some self-assessment reports
- overcrowding in social areas
- insufficient use of new technologies in some lessons.

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

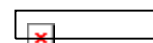
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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).

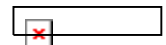
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Outstanding. Teaching is lively and much is very good. Pass rates on General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) subjects are outstanding. The pass rates on the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) human physiology and health course are poor. Teachers support students very well and monitor their progress carefully. Curriculum leadership and management are particularly good. The student attendance rate at lessons is outstanding.
Mathematics	Outstanding. Teaching is purposeful and students concentrate and work well in lessons. Some retention and pass rates are outstanding. Students receive particularly good support from teachers. The provision is managed very well. There is insufficient use of information technology (IT) in lessons.
Business	Good. Teaching is good. Many pass rates on level 3 courses are outstanding. Teachers support students very well and monitor their progress thoroughly. A few lessons are poorly planned and some teachers do not check adequately that students have learned what was intended.
Information and communications technology	Outstanding. Lessons are very well planned and teaching is highly effective. Pass rates are outstanding and students produce work of high quality. There are some excellent teaching materials. Leadership and management of the provision are outstanding. Teachers support students very well.
Health and social care and childcare	Satisfactory. Most teaching is at least satisfactory. Pass rates on full-time health and social care courses are high. Students benefit from effective work placements. Pass rates on full-time National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses in early years, childcare and education are low. Some teaching is dull.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Teaching is effective. Most pass rates are very high. Teachers give good support to students. There is a good range of extra curricular activities to enhance students' learning experiences. Some specialist accommodation and facilities are inadequate.
Humanities	Good. Teaching is good. There are some outstanding retention and pass rates, and the proportion of students who achieve grades A-C in GCE A-level subjects is also outstanding. Students' work is of high quality. Some teaching is unimaginative and does not hold students' attention.
English and modern foreign languages	Outstanding. Teaching is at least very good; some lessons are outstanding. Many pass rates on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and GCE A-level subjects are outstanding. The provision is managed very well. There is a wide range of activities to complement students' studies.
Basic skills	Good. Lessons are well planned and teachers are sensitive to students' needs. Teachers monitor students' progress well. Many students progress to studies at higher levels. Resources in community centres are inadequate. Targets in some students' individual learning plans are insufficiently specific.

How well is the college led and managed?



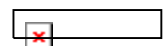
Leadership and management of the college are outstanding. Since the last inspection in 1998, the college has widened its range of courses, managed a substantial building programme, improved further its quality assurance arrangements, maintained its high pass rates in many areas and improved others. Many retention and pass rates are outstanding. Governors demonstrate outstanding commitment to the college and oversee its performance very well. Governors and college staff have a common sense of purpose and share a clear vision of the college's future. Communication throughout the college is very good and staff morale is high. Financial management is good.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



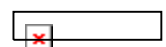
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college has successfully broadened the range of its courses in order to provide those that are educationally and socially inclusive. The college's provision includes courses at entry level, level 1 and level 2, as well as many courses at level 3 and some at level 4. The college runs basic skills programmes for adults and for new recruits in the army. It provides discrete, well-managed courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for speakers of other languages, and provides level 2 and level 3 education for students from a local special school for students with mobility or sensory impairment. It is expanding its range of basic skills courses for adults and runs courses at community centres. The college has worked actively in meeting the requirements of the recent Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act. It collects and analyses thoroughly data on the ethnic and gender composition of its student body. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is 3%, which is higher than that of the local community of 1%. The college has a well-established equal opportunities policy and its implementation is monitored carefully. It also has a specific and highly effective policy to prevent bullying.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The extensive and thorough arrangements for providing support and guidance for students of all ages are very effective. The college goes to great lengths to ensure that students enrol on appropriate courses and the proportion of students who change their courses after enrolling is small. There is a well-managed tutorial system through which tutors monitor students' progress with care. Teachers also give very good support to students. Teachers and tutors monitor students' attendance and punctuality at lessons; the attendance rate is excellent and students are punctual. Students receive very good careers education and guidance to help them progress to higher education (HE) or employment. Students with learning difficulties, and those with mobility or sensory impairment, are supported particularly well.

Students' views of the college



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

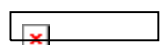
What students like about the college

- enthusiastic and highly supportive teachers
- 'mature atmosphere' and being treated like adults
- high number of courses to choose from
- broad range of extra curricular activities to supplement their courses
- regular homework, promptly and helpfully marked
- crèche
- excellent relationships among students and lack of bullying.

What they feel could be improved

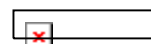
- social areas that are often overcrowded
- space available for car parking
- cost of bus passes
- sessions for developing their key skills.

Other information

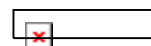


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the LLSC. The LLSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) receives the college's post inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Achievement and standards



1. Alton College offers courses in 10 of the 14 areas of learning. The college's provision is mainly for full-time students aged 16 to 18, mainly at level 3. The college has undertaken detailed market research and offers a selective range of adult provision in accounting, IT, basic skills and care-related studies, in response to carefully identified local needs. Although the college is a tertiary college, it compares its retention and pass rates with the higher national averages of sixth form colleges. In the four-year period 1998 to 2001, most retention and pass rates on level 1 and level 3 courses overall have been substantially above the national average for sixth form colleges. In the same period, retention and pass rates have remained a little below the national average for level 2 courses, though pass rates for adults improved considerably in 2000 and 2001 to reach the average. Retention and pass rates on short courses have improved continuously and are above the national average.

2. In the three years 1998 to 2000, although the average retention rates on level 1 courses declined, they remained above the national average for sixth form colleges. In the same three years, the pass rates on level 1 courses improved significantly to reach the national average. Level 2 courses comprise only 4% of the provision for students aged 16 to 18. The average retention rates and pass rates on level 2 courses have remained close to, but below, the national average. The average retention and pass rates on level 3 courses have been in the top quartile of sixth form colleges. For more than five years, the college has provided level 2 and level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18 from the local Treloar College, a college for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The retention and pass rates achieved by the students from Treloar College have been consistently good. During the period 1997 to 2001, the average retention rate on the level 2 courses for these students was 95% and the average pass rate 90%; on the level 3 courses the average retention rate was 85% and the average pass rate 87%.

3. In 2001, pass rates on GCE A-level courses were very good or outstanding. In 2001, pass rates on many GCE A-level and AS courses were between 95% and 100%, including GCE A-level chemistry, physics, mathematics, further mathematics, economics, business studies, computing, art, communication, drama, photography, government and politics, sociology, Spanish, English language and English literature. In many cases, the proportion of students on GCE A-level and AS courses achieving grades A-C is significantly above the national average for sixth form colleges. In 2001, the average points score for students taking two or more GCE A-level subjects was 21.2. This is substantially above both the county average of 18 and the national average of 17.8. Pass rates on Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses reached 100% in business and 92% in art and design. Pass rates on GCE AS subjects are particularly high. In 2001, out of a total of 42 GCE AS subjects, only four subjects achieved a pass rate lower than 90%. In 2001, the pass

rate in GCE AS English literature was outstanding. A total of 131 students started the course, 92% completed it, 100% passed, and 91% of these achieved grades A-C. The pass rate on the GCE AS psychology course was also particularly impressive. Of the 190 students on the course, 92% completed the course and 95% passed.

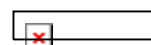
4. In 2001, key skills achievements were poor. Only 21% of students achieved the full award, though 53% completed their portfolios and 76% passed the external tests. The college has revised its key skills arrangements in order to rectify this weakness, but it is too soon to gauge the effectiveness of the changes.

5. Students approach their work with maturity and display good learning habits. They often learn from one another. Their study skills are well developed, and students are prepared particularly well for examinations. They gain good analytical skills, are able to express their own views clearly, and ask questions confidently and fluently. Students' attendance at lessons is very good, and was over 90% in some curriculum areas inspected. Students are generally punctual when arriving for lessons. A high proportion of students progress to HE. In 2001, 66% of students progressed to HE, an increase of 6 percentage points since 2000. Of those who applied to HE institutions, 84% achieved places and 73% of applicants went to their first choice universities and colleges. In 2001, 84% of students on AVCE courses gained places at the HE institution of their first choice. A total of 40 students have gained places at Oxford or Cambridge since 1999.

6. Students are successful in a range of external activities. A student won a national prize for a GCE AS English essay. Engineering students won first prize in an electronics competition. Geography students participated successfully in an environmental survey and mapping project. Music students regularly give performances at the college and the college jazz band recently performed in France. One student was recently invited to join the National Youth Orchestra. Students have competed in national athletics meetings.

7. The college recently joined a system in which the sixth form colleges that subscribe to the system compare their pass rates. Analysis of outcomes indicates that pass rates on level 3 courses are very good, but some students' grades are not as high as predicted by their GCSE results, for example, in media, photography, drama and history.

Adult learners



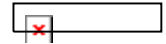
8. In the three years 1998 to 2000, the average retention and pass rates on level 1 courses for adult learners have improved steadily, and in 2001 were above the national averages for sixth form colleges. In the same three years, the average retention rate on level 2 courses was below the national average. The retention rate on level 3 courses was above the national average in 1998 and 1999, and in 2000 improved to be in the top quartile for sixth form colleges. In the three years 1998 to 2000, pass rates on level 2 courses were within the bottom quartile in 1998 and 1999, but have since improved and reached the national average. Pass rates on level 3 courses were in the bottom quartile for sixth form colleges in 1998, but have improved steadily and are now above the national average.

9. In 2001, the proportion of adults gaining grades A*-C in GCSE mathematics was particularly high, and has been consistently well above the national average. Pass rates on the level 2 NVQ accounting course are also very good. Retention rates on early years and education courses are good, but are poor on care courses. In 2001, the pass rates on both the level 2 and level 3 Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) courses were above the national average, and many adult students on the course find employment as a result of gaining their qualifications.

10. The attainment of adult students in lessons is lower than that of students aged 16 to 18. In 42% of lessons for adults, attainment is better than satisfactory, compared with 66% of lessons for 16-18

year olds. However, adult students produce work of a high standard in, for example, photography, IT and accounting.

Quality of education and training



11. The inspection took place at a time when GCE AS and A-level examinations in several subjects were already being held and many more were imminent. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 147 sessions. The profile of grades awarded to lessons was very good. Teaching was good, very good or outstanding in 74% of lessons. Only five of the lessons (3%) were unsatisfactory. The student attendance rate at lessons observed was very high, and in some curriculum areas, the average rate of attendance was well over 90%.

12. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Teachers plan their lessons well, inform students of the objectives of the lessons, and manage time competently in order to keep students on task. Revision lessons just before examinations were particularly well prepared, students knew exactly what they were expected to do and a lot of ground was covered. Many teachers use good question and answer techniques to help students recall salient facts. In the best lessons, teachers use carefully devised and thought-provoking handouts and other materials, and ensure students' understanding is sufficiently robust to move on to new topics. They move from one topic to the next at a brisk pace in order to keep students interested and fully occupied throughout the lesson. Some teachers, for example in ICT, have produced outstanding learning materials and have put these on the college's intranet for students who miss lessons, or who wish to pursue a topic in more detail.

13. Teachers encourage students to contribute fully to class discussions, and students are able to speak confidently and knowledgeably about their subjects. Many students ask, as well as answer, pertinent questions. They conduct themselves in a mature way in lessons. They learn from one another, work well in small groups and on their own, and sometimes exhibit impressive powers of concentration. Teachers approach new topics carefully in small, logical steps and check thoroughly that all students in the class understand what was intended. Some teachers display very good listening skills and are adept at helping students to focus on key points during discussions. In some areas, teachers have devised good materials of varying complexity to enable the more able students to study in more depth and others to learn at their own pace.

14. In the less effective lessons, teachers laboured points and students lost interest. Sometimes, teachers rushed through aspects of a lesson and several students lost the thread of what was being said. In a few lessons, teachers monopolised all discussion and failed to check that students understood what was being covered. Some teaching is dull. Teachers spend too long talking about a topic and not enough time engaging students' imagination or participation. They do not ensure students can make relevant links between different aspects of a topic or between related topics. Some teachers fail to notice students who are struggling, or who are bored because they are able to do more than is asked of them.

15. The college's accommodation has been extended in eight major building phases, the most recent of which provides a large sports hall, a new library, extensive IT facilities and additional classrooms. These new facilities will be ready for use in September 2002. The college's buildings are well maintained and well furnished, and provide a good learning environment. Space and accommodation throughout the site are used to full capacity. There is a shortage of space for social and common room areas. The refectory, cafeteria and communal areas are congested at peak times. Access to the buildings is very good for students with restricted mobility and other physical disabilities. Some rented external accommodation used for courses in the community provides a poor learning environment. Some of the IT workshop rooms are poorly ventilated. There is a well-established childcare centre with places for 20 children.

16. Specialist learning resources are good. In ICT, physics and in environmental science, for example, teachers have developed excellent teaching and learning materials for use in lessons. These are also available on the college's intranet for students' use. In humanities, the materials displayed on classroom walls are exemplary. Relevant press articles, quotations from eminent philosophers and sociologists, sample essays and students' work are on display. They are referred to frequently by teachers and students as being stimulating and helpful. There are some excellent teaching materials and reference books in English, and a good language laboratory for students of modern foreign languages. In visual and performing arts, the drama studio and photographic studio are well equipped. However, there has been a major increase in the number of students studying art and design, drama, film, media and music, and specialist facilities and accommodation are over-stretched.

17. There is a well-used and well-stocked library and adjacent 'independent learning centre' containing 36 computer stations. Surveys show that students are highly satisfied with the library. Since the last inspection, the college has increased its library spending by 50% for each full-time equivalent student. The college also spends £106 for each full-time equivalent student on books and excellent learning resources, including a college intranet which contains learning resources from a wide range of curriculum areas. Library resources in general are good, though they are poor for humanities and basic skills. The college has improved substantially its IT facilities since the last inspection. The student to computer ratio is good at 5:1 and will be 4:1 when the new accommodation and facilities are in operation. Access to computers for students outside timetabled lessons is sometimes difficult. The number of computers on open access in the independent learning centre is insufficient to meet demand.

18. The teaching and support staff are well qualified for the work they undertake. There are sufficient teachers with vocational training and with assessor qualifications. Teachers received very good staff development in preparation for the introduction of Curriculum 2000. There has been an effective IT training programme for staff.

19. The assessment of students' work is thorough. Teachers mark students' work fairly and accurately, and where appropriate adhere closely to awarding body requirements. Teachers set work regularly and mark and return it promptly. Teachers' comments on students' work are constructively critical, in particular on English and science courses. In humanities, some marking is scanty and teachers do not provide sufficient guidance to students on how they might improve their work. On most courses teachers check and moderate each other's marking. In some cases, however, this is unsystematic and the sample of students' essays or assignments selected for moderation is not sufficiently representative of a group's work.

20. All students on vocational courses take a test at the start of their studies to identify any additional learning needs they may have and to plan an appropriate programme of work. Students on entry level, level 1 and level 2 courses take the Basic Skills Agency test. Those on level 3 courses take a different test, produced by a local college, designed to be of specific relevance to their vocational courses. The college has found the tests to be helpful in identifying individual learning needs. Initial assessment of GCE A-level students' needs is gained through interviews with students when they enrol and from information from schools. The college has conducted considerable research and will introduce a specific test for students on GCE A-level courses in September 2002.

21. Students' progress is reviewed carefully each term. Teachers agree action plans with GCE A-level students and monitor carefully whether they are likely to achieve their expected minimum grades, which are based on students' GCSE points scores. Some action plans are insufficiently precise, but deficiencies are noticed quickly by student service managers and appropriate action is taken. Parents receive reports each term on students aged 16 to 18, and there are parents' evenings once a term. Students and parents value highly these progress reviews.

22. The college responds very well to the needs of 16-18 year olds from six local secondary comprehensive schools, several other maintained and independent schools in east Hampshire, and provides suitable academic and vocational courses to enable students to progress to further education (FE), HE and employment. The college has broadened the range of studies taken by

students aged 16 to 18 in line with the recommendations for Curriculum 2000. The college aims to be fully inclusive and has engaged successfully in initiatives to widen participation from new students of all abilities, including students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It offers a wide range of courses for students of all abilities at entry level, levels 1, 2 and 3, a few courses at level 4 and an access to HE course. These include: over 40 GCE AS and A-level courses; nine AVCE, four General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate, and two GNVQ foundation courses; and an entry level programme for students who need additional learning support to improve their basic skills. Students have many opportunities to progress from one level of study to the next at the college and beyond it, and are able to combine GCE AS and A-level studies with vocational programmes.

23. The college has very good links with the schools in the area. It also has a specific and very effective arrangement with the Treloar College, an independent specialist school for students with physical disabilities who need specific support and facilities to enable them to continue their education after the age of 16. It provides very helpful prospectuses to inform all potential students. Senior managers of local schools praise the quality of the working relationship with the college, and they value highly the regular newsletters from the college to inform them of and celebrate the successes of their former students. The college provides effective intensive short courses, at the Army Education Centre at Bordon, in literacy and numeracy skills for soldiers seeking to progress to courses designed to lead to promotion. The college is part of the Bordon Community Learning Partnership for one of the more deprived housing areas of east Hampshire and provides basic skills courses for adults in a community centre. It also runs vocational training courses in the workplace for employees of the East Hampshire District Council in Petersfield.

24. The college has expanded its courses for adults, which are run at the college and at other locations in the community. It has undertaken good market analysis and provides courses that meet local needs. At the time of inspection there were 60 adults attending daytime courses and just under 2,000 enrolled on short courses taking place in the evenings. The courses range from basic skills courses to vocational and professional courses at level 4. There are, for example, many courses in IT, administration and business studies, initial teacher education for FE teachers, as well as NVQ courses in early years, childcare and education, and basic skills programmes. Adult students speak very highly of the courses they have joined.

25. The college provides a well-managed programme of enrichment activities to enhance students' experiences. They include sports, community service, Duke of Edinburgh's awards, music and performance, and a wide range of other activities that enrich students' studies. More than 75% of the students participate in one or more of the programmes. Students value these programmes. They are also required to take GCE AS or A-level general studies in the first or second year at the college in order to broaden their studies. The number of students pursuing general studies is high and pass rates are good. College students engage in a very wide range of educational visits and excursions linked to their curriculum studies, including visits to Europe and further afield. For example, a group of students plan a working visit to Bolivia in 2003, as part of the college's involvement in the World Challenge initiative. There is a good range of extra curricular activities for students in college, including an annual foundation lecture from an eminent speaker, most recently the Lord Chief Justice, one-day conferences involving keynote speakers, such as Members of Parliament, and gatherings attended by students, their parents and members of the community to celebrate students' achievements.

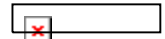
26. Prospective students are provided with comprehensive information about the college. Five college staff spend much of the spring term in the schools, providing advice on courses and interviewing prospective students. Students receive impartial guidance from a team of specially trained teachers to ensure that they enrol on courses appropriate to their abilities and career aspirations. The process is thorough and effective and the number of students who change their courses or subjects after enrolment is low. Well-designed induction programmes enable students to get to know the college and to settle into their programmes quickly. The level of support for students from all teachers is high and contributes to the achievement of very good retention and pass rates. Tutors also support students very well through a well-managed tutorial programme. The programme varies appropriately, according to the length of course and whether students are in the first or second year of study. Students' attendance and punctuality are monitored closely through the

tutorial system and if students fail to attend or are not punctual, appropriate action is taken immediately. Students' attendance at tutorials is good. Tutors are enthusiastic and committed to the welfare of their students. They receive highly valued support from student service managers to help them in their tutorial work. The quality of documentation for tutors is good and helps them to plan effectively their sessions with students. A small minority of tutorial periods are not sufficiently productive.

27. Students receive extensive careers education and advice from both the college's student services team and the local careers service. In particular, full-time students benefit from excellent guidance in preparing for HE. Students wishing to gain employment also receive much help. Work experience placements and talks from external speakers contribute effectively to students' programmes. There is also a professionally trained counsellor whose services are valued by students. The students' union comprises student representatives from each tutor group. The elected president is a member of the college corporation.

28. The college provides a wide range of additional support to meet students' identified learning support needs. This includes individual sessions for students, group workshops, and learning support assistants helping students in the classroom. The effectiveness of particular learning support provision for students on health and social care courses has improved the student retention rate substantially since September 2001. An extensive service is provided for dyslexic students, whose retention rates are better than for those of the rest of the college. The college provides very good support in the classroom for students with sensory or mobility impairment.

Leadership and management



29. Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors and all staff have a clear sense of purpose. The strategic plan and corporate objectives are understood by staff. The plan contains a detailed analysis of the external environment and the changing political and educational climate in which the college operates. It clearly identifies the college's core values, in particular those of 'putting the student first, investing in staff, excellence in achievement, and quality awareness'. These are borne out in the college's performance and activities. There are outstanding pass rates in many GCE A-level and AS subjects, and outstanding retention rates in many subjects. Although Alton College is a tertiary college, governors and senior managers acknowledge the importance of comparison with the highest possible national standards and have chosen to use sixth form college national averages against which to measure the college's performance. Teachers support this decision wholeheartedly. The percentage points by which the college's average pass rates exceed general FE and tertiary college national averages, therefore, are even higher than those by which the college exceeds sixth form college averages. The college is currently considering changing its classification from a tertiary college to a sixth form college.

30. The management structure of the college is clear, responsibilities and accountabilities are understood, and communication within the college is very good. Key college-wide responsibilities are shared effectively among the principal's management group, comprising the vice-principal and two assistant principals. Well-organised meetings take place at all levels, minutes of meetings are thorough and clear, and actions are followed up. However, the terms of reference of some college committees are insufficiently clear. The college works closely with four other colleges in the area to minimise unnecessary competition and ensure students in the region have the best choice of high quality education. Leadership and management of curriculum areas are generally very good and some are outstanding. The college has recognised that the management of key skills and basic skills are insufficiently well developed and have taken action to address these shortcomings. However, it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of this action.

31. Many major improvements have been made since the last inspection in 1998. The college was awarded accredited status by the FEFC in 2001 and its quality assurance arrangements have

continued to improve since then. Findings from course and service area reviews, students' perception surveys, parents' perception surveys, lesson observations and the complaints procedure all contribute to the college's self-assessment process. The validation of the self-assessment report involves another local college, also accredited by the FEFC, and the approval of governors. Overall, the college's self-assessment report is clear. However, in some curriculum self-assessment reports, insufficient attention is given to teaching and learning. Grades awarded by college staff for lessons observed are considerably higher than those awarded by inspectors. In a small minority of subjects, the college does not ensure that best practice is shared. There has been some delay in writing the course reviews and compiling the self-assessment report, and this in turn has resulted in delays in implementing action plans. Progress against action plans is, however, reviewed thoroughly by college and corporation committees. Inspectors judged four curriculum areas to be outstanding, four good, and one satisfactory. These grades are similar to those awarded by the college itself as a result of its self-assessment.

32. The college sets itself demanding targets for retention and pass rates and most targets are met. In most areas, GCE A-level and AS pass and retention rates are outstanding, and a high proportion of students achieves grades A-C. Managers have ready access to accurate and up-to-date data to enable them to monitor progress against targets. The college also heeds its position in the Department for Education and Skills 'league tables', which indicates that it is among the top performing colleges in Hampshire, and its performance is also very good when measured against schools and colleges nationally.

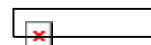
33. The college has clear equal opportunities policies which are understood fully by staff and students. Equal opportunities issues are addressed effectively by the elected campus council, which is chaired by the principal. The college's analysis of pass rates indicates that the success of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is high relative to the rest of the college. The college has a comprehensive 'bullying policy'. This provides an effective mechanism to prevent oppressive behaviour or discrimination. The college has been active in considering the implications and requirements of the recent Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act. The college caters well for students with physical disabilities from the local Treloar College. Accommodation is well designed to accommodate students with physical and sensory impairment. Students with mobility and sensory impairments are integrated fully into the college and where necessary, the students are supported very well in lessons. The college works closely with the local armed forces to provide a range of basic skills provision for recruits. The college is expanding its courses in basic skills for adults in the local community.

34. Financial management is good. The college is able to make highly accurate forecasts of the number of students expected to enrol as a result of its well-established links with local schools. There are effective processes in place to assign budgets to departments and monitor expenditure. Budget holders have reliable and accessible management information available to them. The college ensures value for money, for example, by using regional consortia to purchase equipment and consumables. The college has raised around £4m to undertake a major building project. This will provide new facilities and resources for IT, sports, childcare and the library.

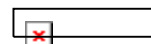
35. Individual staff development needs are identified effectively through annual staff appraisals and the college places much emphasis on the continuous professional development of its staff. Heads of department play a key role in identifying, co-ordinating, and at times running, staff development activities. For example, the college arranged substantial staff development to ensure teachers were prepared thoroughly for Curriculum 2000. The college has clear priorities for staff development for the year 2002/03.

36. The corporation has a thorough understanding of the educational character of the college and plays an active role in overseeing its strategic direction. It monitors closely the college's academic performance, the quality of its provision and resources, and any financial issues. Governors receive regular briefings to update them on college and educational issues. The chairman appraises the principal regularly and thoroughly. Governors demonstrate outstanding commitment to the college. For example, a group of governors has established an independent charitable foundation to raise additional funds for the college. This has resulted, for example, in setting up a range of scholarships to attract to the college students who are particularly gifted or talented.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- lively and effective teaching
- high retention rates
- outstanding pass rates in GCE A-level chemistry and physics
- consistently outstanding attendance rates
- thorough assessment and monitoring of students' work
- effective support for students
- effective leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on the GCSE human physiology and health course.

Scope of provision

37. The college provides an appropriate range of GCE A-level courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Some 355 students are enrolled on GCE AS courses and 250 students on the second year of GCE A-level courses. The only provision at level 2 is a GCSE course in human physiology and health, and the number of students enrolled on it is low. There is no specific provision for adults.

Achievement and standards

38. Retention rates on GCE A-level biology, chemistry and physics courses are higher than the national averages for sixth form colleges. All students who completed GCE A-level chemistry in 2000 and 2001 were successful and pass rates in all three subjects are consistently high. The proportion of students achieving grades A-C on GCE A-level courses is higher than the national average for sixth form colleges. Students achieve as, or better than, their GCSE points scores suggest they would. In 2001, retention and pass rates on GCE AS subjects were high, and a high proportion of students in biology, physics and chemistry achieved grades A-C. In 1999, the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C on the GCSE human physiology and health course was below the national average, in 2000 it was above it, but in 2001, none of the seven students on the course achieved A*-C grades.

39. Students' attainment in lessons is mostly good or very good, and students' assessed work is very good. Students demonstrate a high level of practical skills and scientific knowledge in their lessons. They are able to discuss their work confidently and in a mature way and they have developed good research and analytical skills. The quality of students' coursework files is often high. Most students are diligent and take their work seriously. They concentrate well in lessons and enjoy their studies. Students' attendance at lessons is excellent and they are punctual. A high percentage of students progress to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE human physiology and health (grades A*-C)	2	No. of starts	55	33	7
		% retention	76	79	57
		% pass rate	34	50	0
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	105	114	114
		% retention	80	84	86
		% pass rate	91	91	89
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	72	75	62
		% retention	79	91	88
		% pass rate	98	100	100
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	63	67	74
		% retention	84	90	87
		% pass rate	98	95	98

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

Quality of education and training

40. Teaching is very good overall and outstanding in some lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and expect high standards from their students. Lessons are well planned. Teachers help students to develop good study skills and undertake effective revision practice from the start of their courses. In biology, for example, students are required to produce revision cards

that help to consolidate their learning.

41. Most teachers prepare materials that capture students' interest and extend their understanding. In a very good physics lesson, a multimedia projector and a software package were used to demonstrate the effect of particles on objects in a wind tunnel, and to model the behaviour of the Viking space probe in a range of conditions. Students manipulated gas laws competently and answered questions about them confidently. They develop high levels of practical skills. In a chemistry lesson, for example, students worked in groups to prepare and purify aspirin. Students were supported well by the teacher and they could explain the theory behind the reactions and the tests being used. Students also understood the ways in which their work relates to industrial practices.

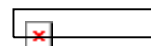
42. Laboratories are adequate, but are sometimes overcrowded when used for some biology and chemistry lessons involving large groups. There are high quality interactive CD-ROM teaching materials for physics on the college intranet. Good quality teaching materials on environmental protection have been developed by teachers. They are available on the college intranet together with links to further associated websites. The resources for both physics and environmental protection enable the more able students to study their subjects in greater depth. Handouts and materials used in lessons to support learning are effective. Physics laboratories are well equipped with computers but there are no comparable facilities for the other sciences. Teachers are well supported by enthusiastic technicians.

43. Students are given good support from teachers and tutors throughout their time at the college. They receive excellent guidance about which subjects to choose. Teachers and managers place considerable emphasis on ensuring that students enrol on appropriate courses and the initial induction programme is carefully planned. In biology, for example, students complete introductory exercises to help them decide whether the course is appropriate for them. Tutorials are well organised and effective in providing students with good academic and pastoral support. Students are set target grades to achieve, and tutors and teachers monitor carefully their progress in reaching them. Students also contribute to their progress reviews by completing a questionnaire for them to gauge their own progress. Teachers have high expectations of students who quickly become self-critical and accustomed to assessing their own progress. Students' work is marked carefully and returned to them promptly. Teachers' written comments on students' work provide encouragement for students and help them to improve their performance. Teachers also ensure that students receive extra support by providing additional science workshops and revision sessions.

Leadership and management

44. The science curriculum area is led and managed very well. Communication is effective and teachers frequently discuss students' progress. Teachers receive appropriate updating and training. Managers and teachers are self-critical. They are committed to helping students achieve their potential. Course reviews are carried out carefully, but though self-assessment identifies general strengths and weaknesses, insufficient attention is paid in the self-assessment report to teaching and learning. Some very good practice is not shared by teachers.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics and further mathematics courses

- very good achievements on GCSE courses
- outstanding retention rates on GCE A-level mathematics course
- teachers' highly effective support for students
- effective teaching
- excellent curriculum leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT in mathematics.

Scope of provision

45. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in mathematics and further mathematics, and GCSE mathematics. There are 384 students enrolled on mathematics courses, of whom 74 are aged 16 to 18 on the GCSE course, and 23 are adult students also on a GCSE course. The remainder are 16-18 year olds studying at GCE AS or A level.

Achievement and standards

46. Pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics and further mathematics are consistently outstanding. In 2001, the percentage of students gaining grades A*-C on the GCSE mathematics course for adults was 34 percentage points above the national average. The percentage of students gaining grades A*-C on the GCSE course for students aged 16 to 18 was also above the national average. Student retention rates are outstanding on the GCE A-level mathematics course and very good on the GCSE course for adults.

47. Students on the GCE A-level mathematics and further mathematics courses work purposefully in lessons and demonstrate good understanding of their subjects. They are able to discuss confidently different methods of dealing with a problem. In some lessons, students' attainment is above average and they are able to display mastery of the subject. Students' written work is well presented.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion	1999	2000	2001
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		year:			
GCSE mathematics (grades A*-C) (16-18 year olds)	2	No. of starts	107	101	90
		% retention	83	74	75
		% pass rate	39	65	46
GCSE mathematics (grades A*-C) (adults)	2	No. of starts	25	43	31
		% retention	80	65	81
		% pass rate	61	68	72
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	43	30	36
		% retention	88	74	66
		% pass rate	97	100	100
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	183	157	159
		% retention	90	90	90
		% pass rate	90	92	97

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

Quality of education and training

48. Much teaching is good or very good. In the best lessons, teachers share the objectives of the lessons with students, who know exactly what they have to do, and work well individually or together on difficult tasks. Teachers in further mathematics lessons enable students to investigate topics well beyond the confines of the syllabus and extend their learning effectively. Some teachers, particularly in lessons for adults, are adept at managing lesson time well, ensure a 'crisp' start to lessons and enable all students to make appropriate progress. In a GCSE lesson for adults, for example, students were fully absorbed in the teacher's explanation of the n th term of an arithmetic progression, and were able to answer confidently ensuing questions about it from the teacher. In a further mathematics lesson, a student solved a three-dimensional vector problem by partial differentiation. In another further mathematics lesson, a student produced a concise set of faultless solutions in a demanding further mathematics module trial examination, in far less than the time allocated. In some lessons, teachers do not always deal adequately with students of differing abilities. Some teachers use the same method for teaching for too long and students lose interest and concentration. There is insufficient use of IT in lessons.

49. Teachers are very experienced, well qualified and keep up to date with curriculum changes in both GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics. They give outstanding support to students outside lessons. Students are able to seek help by visiting the 'maths club', which is run voluntarily by seven teachers and two second-year students. Students also make very good use of the extensive resources in the mathematics student work area, and are able readily to seek individual teacher's help outside lessons. They speak highly of the learning support they receive and maintain that mathematics is one of the most supportive of the college's departments. Students with substantial mobility impairment are supported effectively in lessons, both by teachers and an appropriately qualified amanuensis.

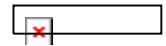
50. Teachers set homework for students regularly, which is marked thoroughly and fairly and returned promptly to students. Sometimes, teachers' written comments are insufficiently detailed to enable students to understand where they went wrong and to improve their performance. Teachers conduct regular reviews with students to monitor their progress.

Leadership and management

51. Course leadership is inspiring. Teachers feel valued and part of a supported team. They value being able to share in decision making and to share teaching and learning resources. They openly

appreciate the practice of regarding staff updating and development as a priority in the department. Seven of the eleven teachers are part time. They attend the weekly staff meetings, which keep them informed of developments and issues. Teachers and managers in the curriculum area are impressively enthusiastic about teaching mathematics. Courses are reviewed thoroughly each year to identify weaknesses, to make improvements where necessary, and to respond to students' needs. Course reviews have identified the little use made of IT in lessons, and a teacher in the department has been selected to help teachers increase its use in lessons. The first batch of new computers is already in place.

Business



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates on many courses
- good teaching on full-time level 3 business courses
- good support from teachers for individual students
- thorough assessment of students' work and monitoring of their progress
- high proportion of students progressing from vocational courses to HE studies.

Weaknesses

- a few poorly planned lessons for adults
- insufficient involvement of business and industry in full-time students' programmes.

Scope of provision

52. The college offers GCE AS and A level in business, GCE A level in economics, GCE AS accounting and AVCE courses. The courses are mainly for full-time students aged 16 to 18. There

are 287 students enrolled on business courses. The intermediate GNVQ in business, which ran for several years, did not attract students in September 2001. Over 60 adults are working towards the AAT qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. Of these, 11 are studying full time on a one-year 'fast track' programme. The college also offers full-time NVQ business administration courses for adults that include opportunities for participants to study for a range of additional qualifications in IT. In addition, there are short IT courses for adults in the day, during the evening and on Saturdays. The adult provision is managed in a separate department of adult studies.

Achievement and standards

53. Pass rates on many courses are outstanding. Students on level 3 business programmes generally perform better than predicted by their GCSE points scores. Over the three years 1999 to 2001, all students who completed the GNVQ advanced business course achieved the qualification. Pass rates on GCE A-level business studies, GCE A-level economics and GCE AS accounting have mostly been well above national averages for each of the three years. In 2001, over 75% of the students taking GCE A-level business and economics achieved grades A-C. Pass rates on the new GCE AS course introduced in 2000 are also high. The pass rate on AAT courses at level 2 was above the national average in each of the three years 1999 to 2001. In 2001, pass rates on AAT level 3 and 4 courses were also above average. Pass rates on the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) programme are considerably above national averages, but they have declined on the level 2 integrated business technology course. Retention rates on most courses are at, or exceed, national averages.

54. Many students progress from vocational business courses to HE courses. In 2001, more than 90% of students who completed and passed the advanced GNVQ course progressed to HE or relevant employment, and 85% of those who completed the full-time AAT programme gained relevant employment.

55. The level of attainment in lessons is good. Students are able to work in a business-like manner and to work to deadlines. They can apply business theory to practice and are knowledgeable about topical business issues.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ level 2 accounting (adult students)	2	No. of starts	21	12	14
		% retention	81	67	79
		% pass rate	71	100	90
GNVQ advanced business (two-year course)	3	No. of starts	32	46	43
		% retention	84	78	84
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level business studies (two-year course)	3	No. of starts	94	79	122
		% retention	78	85	83
		% pass rate	92	97	99
GCE A-level economics (two-year course)	3	No. of starts	40	21	16
		% retention	95	95	94
		% pass rate	95	90	100
GCE AS accounting (one-year course)	3	No. of starts	51	16	43
		% retention	95	95	88

		% pass rate	95	90	82
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Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

56. Teaching is good or very good in a high proportion of lessons. It is particularly good in level 3 business lessons. The best lessons are well structured and maintain students' interest. Teachers ensure that new learning or revision is developed in a logical sequence. They encourage students to analyse opinions and practices, apply knowledge to practical situations, and evaluate their own and each other's conclusions. Teachers are adept at enabling all students to respond constructively to questions and problems posed and have high expectations of students. Students are confident in testing their ideas. In a lesson using a case study on the decline in manufacturing, students were competent in applying a range of business concepts to the problem. They were able to make realistic decisions, use topical examples to illustrate their findings, and present these to the class in a succinct and business-like fashion. In many lessons, teachers enable students to identify their own weaknesses and devise strategies to overcome them. In lessons devoted to revising for examinations, teachers provide extensive guidance on how to gain maximum examination marks. The atmosphere in lessons is purposeful and positive. Students work hard and enjoy good working relationships with their teachers and with each other. The few poor lessons were insufficiently well planned. Teachers sometimes rushed through topics and students did not learn all they could. Teachers sometimes failed to give clear instructions to students about tasks to be completed and they did not check adequately that students understood what was expected of them.

57. Both teachers and tutors work effectively together to monitor students' progress. The weekly tutorials are valued by students. The practice of reviewing individual students' progress and action plans is effective. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of adults and make flexible arrangements to accommodate their family or work commitments. Adult students benefit from the responsive support they receive from teachers. Work is set regularly for students and marked swiftly. Students' written work demonstrates good communication skills and essay writing techniques. Students' work also reveals their good Internet research skills and the ability to seek out other sources of evidence. Written comments on students' work are extensive and provide clear guidance on how they can improve their performance. Teachers give freely of their time to provide students with extra help for students.

58. Teachers visit full-time AAT students when they are out of the college on work experience and monitor well their real-life experiences in the work place. Students are able to use the experience to generate work-based evidence for their portfolios. Good links are maintained with the employers of part-time AAT students. However, links with industry are underdeveloped on the full-time programmes. Students enjoy some visits to industry and the AVCE students have two weeks of work experience built into their programme, but there is no direct participation of employers in, for example, helping to design assignments for students or providing topical materials, nor are they called upon to assist in assessing students' work, such as presentations or business plans.

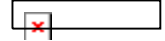
59. Teachers are appropriately qualified. A few have recently joined the college from industry, but others have not taken up opportunities to update their experience of current commercial practices. Learning resources are in general good, but students sometimes have difficulty gaining access to computers outside normal lesson time.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management of both the departments are strong. Teachers work together well in small teams and share a common understanding of priorities and values which are communicated to students. Course reviews and self-assessment reports are self-critical and contain realistic action plans, which teachers implement conscientiously. Well-operated systems exist for monitoring students' attendance, and absentees are followed up scrupulously. Good procedures exist for moderating and verifying grades and marks for students' work in AVCE and AAT programmes. In other areas, the process for teachers to check each other's marking is informal and

there are no in-house records to show that students' marked work has been moderated to ensure that marking meets required standards.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates
- very well-planned and effective teaching
- high standard of students' work
- excellent learning materials for students on the college's intranet
- teachers' exceptionally good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient open access to computers for students outside their lessons.

Scope of provision

61. The college has broadened effectively the range of courses for students in line with the Curriculum 2000 initiative. It offers a wide range of courses for full-time and part-time students in the computing and IT department. These include GCE AS and A-level computing, GCE AS and A-level ICT, and GNVQ intermediate and AVCE ICT courses. Students on the AVCE ICT programme also take GCE AS computing. There are around 340 full-time students on ICT courses. The adult studies department also offers a wide range of IT taster programmes, and students may attend these, for example, part time for a half day or a whole day during the week, or on Saturdays. There are also some full-time courses for adults. The taster programmes include aspects of office computing applications for new computer users, a course leading to the European computer driving licence (ECDL). Full-time courses for adults include the City and Guilds 7261 diploma course in computer applications. The college has around 1,300 enrolments on courses for adults.

Achievement and standards

62. Pass rates are outstanding and virtually all are well above the national average. For example, in 2001, the pass rate on the full-time GCE A-level computing course was 100%, on the GCE A-level ICT course it was 91%, and on the GCE AS computing and the GCE AS ICT courses, the pass rates were well over 90%. Pass rates on the ECDL course the City and Guilds diploma in computer applications course, both for adults, are also outstanding. Retention rates are significantly above average. The average rate of student attendance in lessons during the inspection was excellent at 90%.

63. Full-time students aged 16 to 18 produce work of a very high standard and demonstrate very good understanding of their subjects. Though many adult students have not used computers before enrolling at the college, they are able to produce work to a professional standard.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Internet technologies (adults)	1	No. of starts	*	8	41
		% retention	*	100	98
		% pass rate	*	49	85
ECDL (adults)	2	No. of starts	*	42	26
		% retention	*	88	88
		% pass rate	*	88	96
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	*	10	20
		% retention	*	90	95
		% pass rate	*	89	63
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	*	32	60
		% retention	*	88	77
		% pass rate	*	100	91
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	43	26	35
		% retention	81	92	75
		% pass rate	94	92	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

64. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers deal with topics in a lively manner and their enthusiasm for their subject motivates students. They plan their lessons well and use a variety of activities and materials to maintain students' interest. Teachers regularly check that students understand the topic under discussion and give excellent support to individual students according to their needs. Teachers use good question and answer techniques to extend students' knowledge. Students participate enthusiastically in class discussions and practical activities. In two very good lessons, they produced excellent websites on a variety of topics following particularly clear guidelines from the teachers. In another lesson, the teacher used imaginative role play techniques to good effect, and students acted out the various components of a network, using string to show the links. In this way, the differences between serial and parallel transmission and between dispersed, centralised and

distributed networks were clarified for students. In a lesson for adults new to using computers, students produced highly professional newsletters and leaflets, which demonstrated their high levels of IT skills. The teacher gave excellent guidance and showed students how to adapt templates for specific purposes. Students are prepared well for their examinations. They are taught how to work out the number of points they need in each section of an examination question to achieve maximum marks.

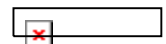
65. Students benefit from enthusiastic and highly committed teachers who give them excellent support both during and outside lessons. Teachers monitor students' progress thoroughly. There is a very good programme of staff development and all new staff are assigned to mentors. The programme works well.

66. Teachers have produced excellent learning resources which they use in lessons. The resources are comprehensive and contain detailed schemes of work, lesson plans, question papers, model answers and revision notes. Through regular use in lessons, students gain confidence in using these resources when working on their own. The materials have been put on the college's intranet and students can refer to them, particularly when revising. Teachers and students often use e-mail to communicate with each other. If students have a query related to their course work, they can e-mail their teacher who undertakes to respond the same day. There is a good stock of computing books and magazines, journals, newspapers, and CD-ROMs in the library. Students have adequate access to IT facilities in lessons. However, there are insufficient computers available on open access for students outside the classroom. This shortcoming has been recognised by the college and steps are being taken to rectify it. A major new building is due to be opened in September 2002, which will increase significantly the number of industry-standard computers.

Leadership and management

67. Management of the provision by the acting head of computing and ICT is excellent, as is the management of the adult programmes in the department of adult studies. This high standard of departmental management, together with good individual course management, has contributed to the high levels of students' achievements. There are regular and effective team meetings and communication between teachers and managers is good. Some teachers work in both departments and this helps good practice to be shared. Relevant targets are set at course level. Students' feedback, achievements and targets are analysed and discussed at course review meetings, appropriate action plans are devised, and progress towards meeting targets and objectives is monitored carefully.

Health and social care and childcare



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on full-time health and social care courses
- students' good understanding of the value of the care profession
- effective contribution of work placements to students' learning

- very good learning support for students.

Weaknesses

- some dull and uninspiring teaching
- lack of sharing of good practice
- low pass rates on full-time NVQ courses in early years education.

Scope of provision

68. The college offers full-time courses from level 1 to level 3 in health and social care and at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education. There are 37 adult students enrolled on level 2 and 3 NVQ care courses and 137 adults enrolled on level 2 and 3 NVQ courses in early years care and education. The college provides short courses in first aid and basic food hygiene both in the college and in the community. A few students attend a short course to develop basic counselling skills.

Achievement and standards

69. There are consistently high pass rates on full-time level 2 and 3 health and social care courses. In 2001, 43% of the students on the AVCE course gained a distinction and 71% progressed to HE. The college offered the diploma and the certificate in nursery nursing for the first time in September 2000: only a small number of students enrolled and pass rates on both courses were considerably below the national average. There was poor student retention on health and social care courses in 2001, but comparison of the retention rate at the time of the inspection with that at the same time in 2001 suggests a significant improvement in both the level 2 and level 3 course. Retention rates on the NVQ in early years care and education courses for adults are good but they are low on NVQ in care courses. Some of the data on pass rates on NVQ courses are unreliable. Teachers are planning changes to the way they record relevant information in order to improve the reliability of data.

70. In lessons, students demonstrate high levels of maturity and good understanding of the values which underpin the health and care profession. Students help each other when necessary and acknowledge each other's strengths. Students' work is satisfactory or good. Some students demonstrate good analytical skills. There is recognition in their written work of the individual needs of clients and the importance of individuality. Some students have developed good IT skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care and childcare, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	16	12	14
		% retention	88	92	64

		% pass rate	93	91	89
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	*	*	**
		% retention	*	*	**
		% pass rate	*	*	71
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	27	23	27
		% retention	85	82	56
		% pass rate	**	100	100
Diploma in childcare education	3	No. of starts	*	*	15
		% retention	*	*	80
		% pass rate	*	*	67
NVQ early years care and education (one-year course)	3	No. of starts	9	6	41
		% retention	100	100	73
		% pass rate	**	83	**

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

* **course did not run**

** **data unreliable**

Quality of education and training

71. Most of the teaching is good or very good. In the better lessons, teaching is inspiring and motivates students well. Teachers use an appropriate range of learning materials to meet the needs of students of mixed ability. They ask clearly focused questions of students. In a lesson to revise meningitis, the teacher ensured that students understood the importance of recognising the symptoms of the disease and of acting quickly. Specific and searching questions put to students were answered well, and they were able to ask relevant and equally probing questions of the teacher. In some lessons, teachers enable students to make very effective links between theory and practice. However, some lessons are dull. There is some unimaginative teaching and little use is made of visual and other learning aids. Sometimes, teachers allow one or a few students to respond to questions and the rest do too little. Lessons that contain students on both level 1 and level 2 courses, sometimes do not include enough different types of tasks to enable students to work at the right level. All students benefit from good work placements, especially students on early years and education courses. The work placements are linked clearly to course aims. Students can gain a certificate of achievement if their work placement tasks are sufficiently successful.

72. IT resources are very good. Other resources are satisfactory. Several teachers, including some recently appointed part-time teachers who still work in the early years and care profession, have professional vocational qualifications and/or practical vocational experience.

73. Students undergo an assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills at the start of their courses to identify any additional learning needs they may have. However, teachers do not devise individual learning plans for students and the outcomes of the initial assessment of students' skills are not used to plan their learning programmes. Students are aware of their minimum expected grades and their progress is monitored effectively. Teachers make helpful comments on students' work to help them improve their performance.

74. The development of students' IT and application of number key skills is integrated well into courses. Students are making good progress so far. There are good links with practitioners on the early years courses through which curriculum developments are often supported and work placements provided. The college obtains funding, through its link with the Hampshire early years

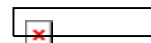
partnership, to pay the college fees for the NVQ candidates. The college is planning to start a foundation degree in early years in September 2002 in association with Portsmouth University. There are fewer external links for health and social care courses.

75. Additional learning support for students is good and time is available to give attention to students who are at risk of failing. Workshops are run on common themes in early years courses for first-year and second-year students. Special workshops are offered to help students to prepare for examinations and to help them complete their coursework. Learning support assistants work well with tutors to help students. Students from the Treloar College with mobility and sensory impairment receive good specialist support during their lessons.

Leadership and management

76. Courses are managed satisfactorily. There are regular departmental meetings. Informal communication is good and the team of teachers works well together. However, key themes such as retention and pass rates are not often discussed. Self-assessment, particularly of the effectiveness of teaching and learning, is insufficiently evaluative. In 2001/02, only a few lesson observations were carried out. Course reviews vary considerably in quality. Some of the good teaching practice that exists is not shared across the courses.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates
- effective teaching
- teachers' good support for students and monitoring of their progress
- broad range of full-time courses
- good range of additional activities, particularly in music and media.

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation

- insufficient access for students to IT.

Scope of provision

77. The college offers a good range of GCE AS and A-level courses for full-time students, including music technology, music, photography, drama, art and design, media studies and film studies. There is also an AVCE art and design course and a foundation diploma course in art and design. The college offers a small programme of evening courses for adults, which includes the City and Guilds part-time course in photography. The provision is managed in two departments: the English department and the arts department. At the time of the inspection, over 650 students were enrolled on visual and performing arts and media courses.

78. A good choice of specialist options is available for students in the AVCE art and design course. The range of enrichment activities for students is extensive, particularly in music and media. For example, students can develop broadcasting and production skills by operating the college's radio station. Art students benefit from a good programme of trips and visits to extend their awareness of styles and cultures from different countries. Annual international visits to major museums and galleries have included trips to New York, Barcelona and Madrid. Drama students regularly visit the London Theatre.

Achievement and standards

79. Pass rates on most courses are very high. They have been well above 90% for the three years 1999 to 2001 in GCE A-level communication, media, design and technology, drama, music performance and photography. Pass rates on the advanced GNVQ course in art and design have improved steadily and in 2001 were excellent at 100%. The proportion of GCE A-level students who achieve grades A-C is well above the national average in art studies/fine arts and music performance. Retention rates are good on most GCE A-level courses, but poor on the City and Guilds photography course for adults. Both retention and pass rates for the short vocational courses in media have been poor. Some students achieve grades in their GCE A-level subjects lower than predicted by their GCSE points scores. A good proportion of students progress to HE.

80. Students work hard, are self-motivated and good at working on their own. Some talk confidently and are passionate about their work. The quality of students' portfolios is good. Media and film students analyse films and magazines confidently and use appropriate specialist terms. Many students show flair and creativity in their work. For example, a group of textiles students produced innovative designs for corsets. Art students, drawing the nude form for the first time, achieved a high standard of precision in their drawing and interpretation. Adult students produce photographs that are technically competent and well composed. The work of some art students is restricted in scale. Some drama students work as directors in an accomplished way, guiding effectively the work of their peers. A few do not have sufficiently developed voice and performance skills. Some music students are accomplished performers: over 100 students play instruments and some take part in public performances. Some students perform in regional or national youth bands or orchestras.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 9231 in photography (adults)	2	No. of starts	42	30	9
		% retention	67	73	100
		% pass rate	100	100	38

GCE A-level communication/media	3	No. of starts	56	59	85
		% retention	77	95	75
		% pass rate	100	89	98
GCE A-level design and technology	3	No. of starts	30	47	54
		% retention	79	80	76
		% pass rate	90	100	94
GCE A-level drama	3	No. of starts	22	35	37
		% retention	86	94	89
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level music performance	3	No. of starts	15	11	15
		% retention	86	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	93
Diploma in foundation studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	*	10	19
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	70	100
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	20	22	41
		% retention	70	86	73
		% pass rate	86	89	100
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	14	24	32
		% retention	92	71	78
		% pass rate	92	94	100
GCE A-level art studies/fine arts	3	No. of starts	58	79	86
		% retention	67	87	85
		% pass rate	97	94	96

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

* **course did not run**

Quality of education and training

81. Most students write good essays. All students demonstrate good presentation skills in their work, in portfolios or through exhibitions or performances. Art students' practical work is of a high standard and they are able to use a wide range of techniques and materials to devise creative solutions to the assignments they have been set. Students who join a course unable to read music are supported well by teachers and quickly learn the basic reading skills. Some have highly developed skills in musical notation. A few students can operate recording studios proficiently.

82. Teaching is mostly good. In the best lessons, teachers give students precise guidance on assessment criteria and on requirements for research to enable them to understand assignment and project briefs. They encourage students' creativity and enable them to hone their skills. They provide students with useful tips on techniques for preparing for examinations and how to make sure they answer questions thoroughly. Teachers check students' progress in lessons carefully and give good guidance on ways to improve their work further. Teachers sometimes divide students into groups to work jointly on tasks, but do not always check that all members of the group participate effectively. They do not notice that some students, when working in groups, sit back and let others

do most of the work.

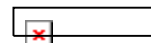
83. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have kept abreast of developments in their subject areas. The library stock is at least satisfactory for visual and performing arts and for media. Media and film texts are particularly good. Because of the large number of students, there are serious shortages of space in drama and music, particularly for practice, rehearsals and performance; the darkroom in photography is too small; and in art there is sometimes overcrowding. There is no effective soundproofing, but the drama studio is well equipped with a contemporary lighting rig and staging. Photographic studios are well equipped and a good collection of musical instruments and other learning aids and materials is available. A strong sense of subject identity has been created in each of the subject areas and much students' work is displayed on walls. Open access to IT and the Internet for students is insufficient. The new facilities, which are to be completed for September 2002, will provide more access.

84. Teachers mark students' work carefully and give students constructive and detailed written comments on their performance. Students' progress is monitored well and parents are kept well informed of progress or any cause for concern. Subject teachers give strong support to individual students. There are subject-specific group tutorials for AVCE students and those on foundation courses. These are focused and seen as relevant by students. Other group tutorials are sometimes not as effective.

Leadership and management

85. Courses are well managed. Teachers work effectively together to support students. Course reviews are generally thorough. Teachers conduct a detailed analysis of retention and pass rates as part of the self-assessment process, but give insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning. Managers have good access to computerised management information on students' attendance and achievements.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- outstanding retention rates, pass rates and proportion of high grades on many courses
- good teaching on most courses
- high standard of students' work in philosophy and politics
- exemplary displays in classrooms to help students learn

- very good attendance and punctuality
- students' enthusiasm for their subjects.

Weaknesses

- some dull and unimaginative teaching in history
- undeveloped use of IT in teaching and learning
- inconsistent quality of teachers' comments on students' marked work.

Scope of provision

86. The college offers a good range of GCE A-level humanities subjects. Provision in history, sociology, government and politics, philosophy and critical thinking was inspected. The recent introduction of critical thinking and philosophy has added significantly to the department's portfolio of courses, and gives students the opportunity to broaden their studies along the lines suggested by the new arrangements for Curriculum 2000. Many science students take these subjects as an additional GCE AS subject. In history, three different options are available, covering the 20th century, the 19th century and the Tudor period. Nearly all students are full time and aged 16 to 18. The college has not recruited students for evening classes in humanities for adults, and there is no GCSE provision. Approximately 350 full-time students are enrolled in the subjects that were inspected.

Achievement and standards

87. Overall, the standard of students' work and students' achievements is good in humanities. In 2001, students taking the new GCE AS subjects achieved outstanding pass rates. Nearly all students who started the courses completed them and passed the examinations, and most achieved grades A-C. For example, in history, 100 students started the course, 93 completed it, 92 passed, and 83% of them achieved grades A-C. In critical thinking, all of the students completed the course, all but one passed, and 75% achieved grades A-C. In GCE A-level government and politics, the pass rates have been consistently outstanding and in GCE A-level sociology, they have been consistently very good. In history, however, pass rates have been slightly below the national average for each of three years 1999 to 2001. In 2001, the proportion of students achieving grades A-C was broadly in line with the national average. However, some students are not achieving as well as predicted by their GCSE points scores, and on the 16th century history course, students' grades are well below what could be expected of them. Student retention rates are good.

88. Students produce oral and written work of a good and sometimes high standard. Many students can speak fluently about their subjects and use appropriate terminology. Philosophy students are particularly impressive when discussing different schools of philosophical thought. Government and politics students discuss the impact of European policies on British politics cogently and refer to a

good range of appropriate supporting material. Sociology students demonstrate a sound grasp of sociological theories and methods, and are able to apply their understanding to a wide range of contemporary events and social policies. Students' written work is usually well structured and draws appropriately on evidence to support arguments. During the inspection, students' attendance and punctuality were very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	15	22	28
		% retention	80	100	86
		% pass rate	100	100	96
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	64	58	60
		% retention	73	88	90
		% pass rate	87	86	85
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	63	55	58
		% retention	75	89	72
		% pass rate	87	96	98

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

Quality of education and training

89. Most teaching is good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Students make good progress during lessons, and teachers are adept at helping students to develop the specific knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in imminent examinations. Students are enthusiastic about their subjects and enjoy most lessons. In the best lessons, students are engaged fully in discussion and tasks, and are clearly animated about their learning, responding to classroom exercises vigorously and with a desire to learn. Teachers use very effective question and answer techniques both to probe and to reinforce students' understanding. In both philosophy and sociology lessons, students gave very good presentations on, respectively, aspects of moral philosophy and research into poverty. They were able to articulate fluently their knowledge and understanding.

90. Teachers manage revision techniques effectively and sometimes imaginatively. For example, in a revision lesson on moral philosophy, students worked collectively to answer well some searching questions and give an outline of their findings to the whole group. In a critical thinking lesson, a snakes and ladders game was used as a means for selecting arguments, which were contained in squares at the top of ladders or the bottom of snakes. Students then had to present a summary or explanation of the arguments to the rest of the class. In politics, 'rapid fire' question and answer sessions on the European Union kept students on their toes, challenging them to recall facts and ideas speedily. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, resulting in an informal yet very purposeful atmosphere. In some lessons, the most able students found some tasks too easy and their learning was not sufficiently extended.

91. Teaching was less stimulating in history lessons. There was a lack of variety in the methods used and some students became bored. The unimaginative approach used by teachers to revise topics did not engage students' attention or enthusiasm. Too much time was spent by students answering short questions. In a good GCE AS history lesson, however, students read sample scripts and mark schemes, and were asked to award grades for what they had read. This clearly improved their understanding of what was required to achieve high grades.

92. Teachers apply appropriate criteria when judging the standard of students' work, using

examination boards' marking schemes where appropriate. However, teachers' written comments on students' marked work is sometimes too brief and gives little or no indication to students of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Students' files are rarely checked and some contain significant amounts of unfinished and unmarked work.

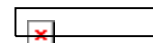
93. Resources are good. Classrooms have a clear subject identity and students are surrounded by a variety of thought-provoking stimuli to promote learning. Displays in classrooms are exemplary and are used effectively to promote learning. For example, good quality sample essays and the products of effective group work are pinned on the walls. There are relevant articles from the press and other sources, and quotations from eminent philosophers, sociologists and politicians. Advice on study skills, revision techniques and examination structure is also prominent.

94. Teachers give good levels of support to individual students, inside and outside lessons, and students speak highly of the time teachers devote to helping them with their learning and other needs. Most handouts and other learning materials are of good quality, particularly in government and politics and philosophy. Teachers in most subjects make little use of IT to aid learning. Students do not benefit from the wealth of resources relevant to humanities studies that are available on the Internet and through software specific to the subjects. Students make little use of IT to develop their independent research skills. There is no computer equipment in the classrooms.

Leadership and management

95. Humanities provision is managed satisfactorily. Subject teams work very well together and there are good informal links between subjects. Subject leaders manage their courses efficiently and were particularly well prepared for the specifications for the new GCE AS subjects. However, insufficient attention is paid during course reviews to evaluating teaching and learning. There is no clear strategy to improve further the quality of the humanities provision.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- very good pass rates in GCE AS and A-level subjects
- high proportion of outstanding and very good teaching and learning
- high standards of students' oral and written work in English
- effective use of the target language by modern languages teachers
- good course leadership and management

- wide range of enrichment activities
- thorough monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate in GCSE English in 2001.

Scope of provision

96. The college offers courses at GCE AS and A level in English literature, English language, communication studies, French, German and Spanish. There are 393 full-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on GCE A-level and AS English courses, and 43 students are re-taking GCSE English, of whom nine are adults. In modern foreign languages, 116 students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on GCE A-level and AS courses. The college also offers Open College Network (OCN) evening courses at levels 1 and 2 in French, Italian and Spanish. At the time of the inspection, 75 adults were enrolled on these courses. No modern language provision is offered at level 1 and 2 for full-time students. There are no modern languages modules on vocational courses.

Achievement and standards

97. Most pass rates are well above national averages on GCE AS and A-level courses in both English and modern foreign languages. High levels of achievement have been sustained over the three years 1999 to 2001 and a high proportion of students achieved grades A-C. Pass rates for the first cohort of students on GCE AS courses were excellent. The pass rate was 100% in English language, English literature and German, 96% in Spanish, 95% in communication studies, and 94% in French. An impressive proportion of students achieved grades A-C. Retention rates on most GCE A-level courses were at or well above the national average in each of the three years. The retention rate on all the GCE AS courses was excellent. The proportion of GCSE students gaining grades A*-C has fallen, but remains just above average, but retention in 2001 was low. Achievements on the OCN courses are good, though retention rates fluctuate from high to low.

98. The standard of students' attainment was good or very good in most lessons. Students in English lessons are able to analyse complex literary and linguistic concepts, deal with abstract ideas and express their own views fluently and at length. Literature students made successful presentations on aspects of Shakespearean characterisation, linking their views effectively to critics' interpretations and readings. Students working in small groups examining sequencing in Ian MacEwan's 'Enduring Love' showed a mature grasp of the relationship of action to theme. Students displayed confidence in all four foreign language skills, though in a minority of lessons they expressed themselves too often in English. Students showed a good knowledge of European culture and of many current social and political issues. Students' written work is of a high standard, much of it is produced in word-processed form. Essays on Virginia Wolfe's 'Mrs. Dalloway' indicated a wide range of mature responses to a demanding text, and a student's course essay on Hector and Ulysses in Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida' achieved full marks in the examination and won a national English Association prize. Coursework dissertations in the three modern languages on various European authors and other cultural subjects illustrated students' good grasp of complex issues.

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 (grades A*-C)	2	No. of starts	77	74	60
		% retention	87	78	66
		% pass rate	67	72	56
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	20	9	16
		% retention	80	100	75
		% pass rate	94	100	92
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	12	10	13
		% retention	58	70	92
		% pass rate	86	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	111	110	115
		% retention	85	89	81
		% pass rate	98	100	95
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	39	53	64
		% retention	87	81	86
		% pass rate	97	98	100
GCE A-level communication	3	No. of starts	37	34	60
		% retention	76	82	77
		% pass rate	96	93	95
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	39	41	38
		% retention	79	86	74
		% pass rate	90	92	93

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

Quality of education and training

99. Much teaching is very good or excellent. In the best lessons, teachers display authoritative knowledge of their subjects and an enthusiasm for teaching and learning. Teachers use excellent revision techniques to enable students to perform well in the approaching examinations. Teachers of modern languages use the target language effectively. Debates and discussions in lessons are lively. In a French listening comprehension lesson, the teacher went through examination questions carefully and skilfully, eliciting from students the meaning of difficult words. Students' understanding was developed effectively and they approached the past examination paper with confidence. Communication students undertook a structured evaluation of their learning, which involved effective revision of relevant theories and issues. Working in pairs, they devised potential examination questions on Tennessee Williams' 'The Glass Menagerie' and used their growing knowledge of the text to revisit themes dealt with months earlier. Students' contributions to a lesson devoted to various readings of Othello's character demonstrated students' outstanding learning. The teacher guided students through the views of Bradley, Elliot and Leavis with great skill, and succeeded in deepening their interpretative skills. In lessons in both English and modern foreign languages, teachers often moved from one topic to another at a lively pace and kept students fully engaged. Sometimes, however, group work in English went on for too long, and in the hustle and bustle of discussion and activity a few students were left on the fringes of the lesson.

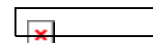
100. Teachers assess and monitor students' work thoroughly. Students' predicted target grades are carefully calculated on entry, based on their GCSE points scores, and their progress is reviewed periodically against these grades. Students benefit from a wide range of extra curricular and extramural activities. They take part regularly in trips to theatres and visits to conferences. A recent trip to the First World War battlefields in Northern France, to support a literature unit on poetry from that era, was clearly a deeply moving experience for some students. Students studying German were able to benefit from a successful exchange visit to Germany.

101. Classrooms and specialist resources in both subject areas are good. The language laboratory, with 20 booths, is well maintained. Teaching materials are excellent, and reference books and dictionaries are readily available. The library stock in modern languages is impressive and there is an annual subscription to various European magazines and periodicals. Staff are well qualified and foreign language assistants augment the support given to languages students.

Leadership and management

102. The English and modern foreign languages curriculum areas are both well led. The success of students has resulted from careful management and good teamwork. Excellent course materials have been developed and there is clear evidence of the sharing of good practice. There is a well-embedded and effective system for reviewing the quality of courses, and a good teaching observation programme. Staff appraisal is well established, and there are good arrangements for teachers to update their expertise.

Basic skills



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

Strengths

- well-planned lessons to meet individual students' needs
- teachers' careful monitoring of students' achievements
- college's effective response to local needs
- good development of students' basic skills
- students' good progression rates into further studies.

Weaknesses

- inadequate learning resources in community centres
- insufficiently specific targets in some individual students' learning plans
- insufficiently co-ordinated basic skills provision.

Scope of provision

103. The college offers a wide range of basic skills courses for adults and young people. These include courses at pre-entry and entry level, level 1 and level 2 key skills programmes, and courses leading to NVQs. Provision is good for speakers of other languages to learn English and work towards greater fluency in spoken and written communication. Some courses lead to qualifications and national awards. In the year of inspection, 2002, most programmes do not lead to nationally recognised qualifications in basic skills, but students complete carefully devised programmes aimed at achieving their individual learning goals. Students can gain college-devised certificates, which record their progress against their learning goals. There is an imaginative range of courses in, for example, cookery, art and craft, and IT as well as activities designed to develop students' basic literacy and numeracy skills. A good proportion of students progress to further mainstream courses in the college. The college has very good links with the local community. 'Return to learn' programmes are available at community centres. At the time of the inspection, 77 16-18 year olds and 652 adults were enrolled on basic skills programmes.

Achievement and standards

104. The college's data are not reliable: they do not give a clear account of students' retention and pass rates and are not included in this report. Students' files indicate good retention rates and pass rates on most programmes. Many students make very good progress towards the achievement of their personal learning goals. They develop the skills which will enable them to cope effectively in the community and in employment, and to become more fluent in the use of the English language. All students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who completed specialist courses in 2001 achieved their learning goals and gained a relevant national award. Many students who attended short courses in the community progressed to other courses, and several have taken up posts in local primary schools as volunteer helpers. Army recruits on a specially devised intensive course achieved a 100% pass rate. This has given them all the opportunity to progress in their military careers.

Quality of education and training

105. Schemes of work meet the requirements of awarding bodies where relevant, though the majority of lessons are devoted to helping students achieve the goals in their learning plans. The curriculum for students with specific learning needs has been well designed and students who are successful can obtain a nationally recognised award. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers ensure that the content and teaching methods suit individuals' learning needs and interests. The best teaching is imaginative, stimulating and exciting. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to help students learn. In the best lessons, teachers ensure the new standards for basic skills are used appropriately to meet students' needs. Students speak enthusiastically about their achievements and express confidence in their teachers. Students' work is displayed in classrooms and encourages others to achieve good quality work.

106. Students undergo an initial assessment when they enrol to identify specific learning needs and to record their prior knowledge. The information is used to devise individual learning plans. The

learning plans are insufficiently detailed. The smaller learning steps necessary for students to achieve the broader learning goals are not clearly identified, nor are the necessary learning resources. Teachers review students' progress regularly, but some students' progress is inadequately recorded. Some students do not have sufficient opportunity to contribute their views when their progress is being recorded. In basic skills courses for adults, reviews take place every five weeks and any further targets are recorded carefully. The progress made by students with learning difficulties is measured against their starting point, and the smallest steps achieved are praised and students are encouraged to go further.

107. Teachers provide very good support for students. In a tutorial, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were being helped to understand the forms that they would need to complete when leaving the college. Ways of progressing to other programmes in the college or potentially to employment were considered and students were given good assistance with the process of finding a referee. Students' work is marked regularly and written comments from teachers are constructive and supportive. Teachers give sensitive feedback to students in lessons.

108. The college has good links with local communities, through which provision such as 'return to learn' literacy programmes, courses in English as a foreign language, and a particularly effective intensive programme for young recruits to the army have been established. There is a scheme to help parents understand their children's learning as well as improving their own basic skills. The college has organised free crèche facilities to help students with young children to study. Students with sometimes severe sensory or physical impairment from a local special school attend the college to study on level 2 and 3 courses, and their achievements on GCE A-level courses in particular are very good. These students receive outstanding support from the college. The student services department provides very good specialist support for students with dyslexia or other learning problems.

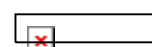
109. Classrooms in the college are large, bright and welcoming. They are accessible to students with restricted mobility and wheelchair users. However, accommodation in community centres rented by the college is not fit for purpose and there are insufficient resources to promote effective learning. In one of the centres, two groups on different courses share a large hall with a dividing screen between them. Sound travels from one end of the hall to the other and interferes with the lessons.

Leadership and management

110. The college has recently appointed a basic skills co-ordinator in order to bring together the many aspects of its basic skills provision. Improvements have already been achieved as a result of the new management arrangements. New lesson plans have been devised and there is a coherent team approach to implementing the new national standards for basic skills. The college has established an effective working relationship with the north east Hampshire LSC Basic Skills Support Unit. However, some aspects resulting from the historical lack of co-ordination of the provision are still apparent. For example, communication and contact between those who teach basic skills is insufficient in different areas of the college. There is unnecessary duplication of effort and too little sharing of good practice and resources. Data on students' achievements are inaccurate and uncoordinated, and there are inadequate means for measuring the effectiveness of the basic skills provision. **Part D: College data**

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	2	33



2	4	23
3	61	14
4/5	0	1
Other	33	30
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2002

Note: Percentages in column 19+ have been rounded and hence do not add up to 100

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	1,472	421	20
Agriculture	14	22	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	90	25	1
Business	376	349	8
Hotel and catering	60	145	2
Health and community care	136	189	3
Art and design	717	36	8
Humanities	4,402	268	50
Basic education	57	565	7
Total	7,324	2,020	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2002

Note: Percentages on Total Enrolments column have been rounded and hence do not add up to 100

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	109	109	163	396	320	383

	transfers						
	Retention rate (%)	90	87	86	69	69	81
	National average (%)	78	81	82	73	70	74
	Pass rate (%)	73	93	72	51	73	87
	National average (%)	70	70	77	68	75	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	498	435	419	374	286	297
	Retention rate (%)	80	79	81	67	72	77
	National average (%)	79	79	82	70	71	75
	Pass rate (%)	85	85	82	64	67	82
	National average (%)	83	85	82	77	78	78
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,925	2,155	2,018	215	356	202
	Retention rate (%)	82	85	88	73	76	84
	National average (%)	78	78	80	63	65	69
	Pass rate (%)	92	91	91	61	78	79
	National average (%)	86	85	85	70	72	74
H Long	Starters excluding transfers	1	0	0	56	40	3
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	82	88	*
	National average (%)	89	*	*	76	73	72
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	40	56	*
	National average (%)	96	*	*	77	70	79
All Short	Starters excluding transfers	233	32	75	126	123	694
	Retention rate (%)	83	56	96	81	88	96
	National average (%)	**	**	**	**	**	**
	Pass rate (%)	82	94	74	43	76	91
	National average (%)	**	**	**	**	**	**

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

** numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

*** data unavailable*

Sources of information: (see next page)

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

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

3. College rates for (2000/01): provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	78	20	2	100
Level 2 (intermediate)	74	21	5	19
Level 1 (foundation)	72	14	14	7
Other sessions	57	38	5	21
Totals	74	23	3	147

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