



Stephenson College

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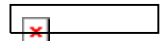
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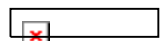
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Basic information about the college

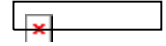


Name of college:	Stephenson College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	David Rathe
Address of college:	Bridge Road Coalville Leicestershire LE67 3PW
Telephone number:	01530 836 136
Fax number:	01530 814 253
Chair of governors:	Christine Crann
Unique reference number:	130747
Name of reporting inspector:	Noelle Buick
Dates of inspection:	20-24 May 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

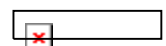


Stephenson College is a general further education (FE) college situated in Coalville in north west Leicestershire. The college has two sites in Coalville, at Bridge Road where full-time and most part-time programmes are run, and at Ravenstone Road industrial estate where the heavy and light motor vehicle programmes take place. In addition, there are two subsidiary sites in Ashby-de-la-Zouch and at Moira. The college took over North West Leicestershire Training Services Ltd in September 2000 and now offers substantial work-based training through Stephenson Training Services. The college has four franchise partners that are all based in Leicester and deliver 14% of the total units.

Unemployment in Leicestershire in September 2001 was 3.1% compared to the national rate of 2.9%. Of those unemployed, 27.4% were aged 18 to 24 years. The minority ethnic population is 11.5% compared with the average in England of 6.2%. There are pockets of deprivation, notably in the Greenhill ward of Coalville itself, which ranks in the top 13% in the national indices of deprivation. The college has been instrumental in the development of a partnership project in this area which has resulted in the opening of a community learning centre in November 2001.

The college has provision in all 14 areas of learning. There are almost 9,000 students of whom 17% are aged 16 to 18 and 83% are 19+. Full-time programmes are being followed by 8% of students. Most part-time students are on programmes provided at various outreach and satellite centres in the locality. Enrolments are broadly distributed by level but of the students aged 16 to 18, the majority are on level 2 programmes. Enrolments for students aged 19+ are mainly at levels 1 and 2. The college provides work-based learning for approximately 500 learners in 9 areas of learning, but predominately in business, construction, engineering, hair and beauty, health and social care, and childcare.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be good in four of the curriculum areas, satisfactory in three and unsatisfactory in the remaining three. The quality of work-based learning was considered satisfactory in one area but unsatisfactory in the remaining five areas. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

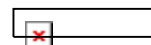
- good pass rates
- extensive part-time provision in the community for adults
- effective support for full-time students

- good specialist resources in motor vehicle engineering and business and management
- good strategic planning
- effective governance.

What should be improved?

- unsatisfactory teaching in some curriculum areas
- low retention rates on some courses
- insufficient use of value added data
- poor management of key skills
- poor diagnosis of additional learning support needs for adults
- unsatisfactory management of work-based learning
- inconsistent application of quality assurance procedures
- unsatisfactory implementation of the equal opportunities policy
- achievement on the modern apprenticeship programme.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

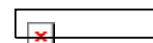


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Construction	Unsatisfactory. Students' retention and pass rates are good on most courses but are poor in work-based learning. Theory teaching is unsatisfactory. Learning in the workplace is good and employers provide effective support. Course management for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 plumbing is poor.
General engineering	Unsatisfactory. Teaching in welding and computer-aided design is well managed. Resources are good. Pass rates are unsatisfactory on most courses. Both retention and pass rates are unsatisfactory on modern apprenticeship programmes. Key skills is poorly managed.
Motor vehicle engineering	Good. There are good links between theory and practical teaching. Pass rates on most courses are good and retention rates are satisfactory. Links with motor vehicle manufacturers are good and workshops are well resourced. Teaching for work-based learners is ineffective. Target setting during progress reviews for work-based learners is poor. Pass rates for modern apprentices are extremely low.
Business and management	Good. Pass and retention rates are good on most programmes. Teaching is good on management programmes but some teaching lacks inspiration and fails to motivate learning. There are poor and declining levels of achievement on the foundation modern apprenticeship. There are two well-resourced business centres.
Information and communications technology and computing	Good. There are good retention and pass rates on most courses. Students progress very well on to other courses. There is much good teaching, especially for adults. Arrangements for key skills are insufficient.
Hospitality, travel, sport and leisure	Satisfactory. Pass rates are good on most courses but retention rates have declined on a number of courses. Key skills teaching is good, as is additional learning support. The range of additional qualifications is good. Although most teaching is good, there is poor teaching in mixed classes with students from different levels in sport and recreation. Resources are inadequate in most areas.
Hair and beauty	Good. There is a good range of full-time and part-time courses. Pass rates on most courses are good but retention rates are low on NVQ level 3 hairdressing. Retention and pass rates are good on most beauty therapy courses. Achievement is poor in work-based learning. Students are effectively supported by well-qualified and experienced staff. Practical work is good. Teaching is mostly good.
Childcare	Satisfactory. Good teaching and well-designed learning materials support and motivate students. There is extensive outreach provision but no provision for students at foundation level. Retention rates are low and declining on full-time courses. Achievement is poor for both

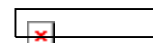
	foundation and advanced modern apprentices.
Health and social care	Unsatisfactory. Retention rates are unsatisfactory for most programmes and achievement is poor for modern apprentices. The management of assessment is poor and reviews of students' progress are not effective. Internal verification is poor. The teaching of practical skills is good.
Basic skills	Satisfactory. Students learn effectively and have good achievements on individually tailored programmes. Learning materials are well designed. Retention rates are low on short courses. There is a shortage of specialist staff and little basic skills development for part-time vocational students. Most teaching is satisfactory.

How well is the college led and managed?



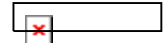
Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college and strategic planning is effective. The college has good links with outside bodies, which help it to meet local needs. Since the last inspection the college has maintained high pass rates on most of its courses. Retention rates are mostly at or above the national average, although they have declined on some courses. The achievements of learners on modern apprenticeships are poor. The management structure for work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Quality assurance procedures cover all aspects of the college's work but are not applied consistently. The college's assessment of its own performance was detailed, but lacked rigour. Monitoring of equal opportunities is unsatisfactory. Financial management is good and the college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



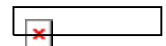
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Arrangements to meet the needs of the different college communities are good. The college, through its mission statement, is committed to widening participation. It actively promotes inclusive learning and works with a high proportion of non-traditional students from a wide range of backgrounds. Many courses are delivered in the community to enable participation from a wide range of under-represented and social priority groups. These include women returning to work, carers and ex-offenders. The college is beginning to work with Hindu and Chinese communities in Loughborough. The minority ethnic population of the college is high when compared to numbers in the local community because of the large number of students enrolled for block release who come from all over the country. The college has developed good relationships with its four franchise partners and employers to provide learning in the community. Students aged 16 to 18 who live more than three miles from the college are entitled to free transport. College publicity materials are free from bias and promote open access to the college. Opportunities for prospective students to get advice and support are good through the college's monthly advice nights and other events. Many students progress to courses at other levels in the college. A college nursery gives priority to students' and staff children. All parts of the college main site and the Ashby-de-la-Zouch business centre are accessible to students with restricted mobility.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The guidance and support arrangements for students attending the college are good. There is a comprehensive range of support services which is clearly promoted to students. All full-time students and modern apprentices are initially screened for their support needs. Additional support staff work well with teachers to support students' learning needs in lessons. Most tutorials are well organised and supportive to students' needs. Careers guidance is good. Arrangements for diagnosing additional needs of students in the college's outreach provision are unsatisfactory. Progress reviews for most modern apprenticeship programmes are inadequate. Most lack specific measurable targets and progress towards completing NVQs is slow.

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

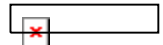
- supportive teachers and tutors
- good ICT facilities
- opportunities to learn at work
- flexibility of the timetable, particularly for adults
- opportunities for adults to retrain
- free transport for students aged 16 to 18.

What they feel could be improved

- unsatisfactory teaching and assessment of key skills

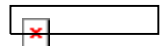
- insufficient ICT support
- inadequate range of lunchtime activities
- inadequate car parking.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



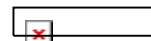
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	57	35	8
19+ and WBL*	67	26	7
Learning 16-18	52	41	7
19+ and WBL*	69	26	5

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

*work based learning

Achievement and standards



1. Data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised student records (ISR) for 1999 and 2000 were provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2001. Inspectors also used additional data held by the college to help them form their judgements, particularly in relation to work-based learning. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievement and standards on particular courses. The data on students' achievements show that overall pass rates are above the national average.

16-18 year olds

2. Some 17% of students are aged 16 to 18. Enrolments are broadly distributed by level but the majority are on level 2 programmes. Overall retention rates are broadly similar to the national average. For example, in 2001 the overall retention rates on level 1, 2 and 3 long courses were 79%, 75% and 76% respectively. The national average was 80%, 77% and 77% respectively. In the past three years the overall trend shows a decline in retention.

3. Retention rates on full-time courses are good in construction and NVQ beauty therapy courses. They are at or near the national average in motor vehicle engineering and business and management. Retention rates have declined on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced ICT to below the national average for the first time in 2000/01. Retention rates have also declined in NVQ hairdressing, NVQ level 2 childcare (full time) and the national diploma in health and social care. In the current year, 2001/02, retention rates have fallen significantly in GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and NVQ level 2 sport and recreation.

4. Pass rates have declined in 2000/01 but are still above the national average, as they have been for the last three years. For example, in 2001 the overall pass rates on level 1, 2 and 3 long courses were 74%, 78% and 81% respectively. The national averages were 66%, 68% and 73% respectively.

5. Most pass rates on full-time courses are above the national average in construction, motor vehicle engineering, business and management, ICT, leisure and tourism, hairdressing and basic skills. They are satisfactory in childcare but are unsatisfactory in general engineering. Most of those completing NVQs in care achieve successfully.

6. Standards of most students' work observed in lessons during the inspection were satisfactory. The standard of work was higher where students were motivated by well-structured lessons, delivered at a good pace by teachers with good subject skills.

Work-based learners

7. There is a large number of work-based learners for a college of this size. They represent 2.9% of enrolments. The majority of the 488 learners undertaking work-based learning are aged 16 to 18. Only 130 (27%) are over the age of 19. In most areas, training and assessment are satisfactory, but in plumbing and in health and social care, there has been slow progress and a lack of assessment over significant periods of time. Assessments in business and management are particularly thorough.

8. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is very poor across all areas of learning. Many programmes have no achievements, especially foundation modern apprenticeships. This weakness reflects significant problems in providing and assessing key skills. On most programmes, apart from those in business and management, the pass rates of NVQs are also poor. Achievement in NVQs is below that for students in the rest of the college.

9. All students have a thorough induction, undertaking a rigorous basic and key skills initial assessment which is used to determine support needs and to refine students' choice of programme. They are then found a suitable work placement or employment, which can involve a delay of up to one month before they start work-based training.

10. Most employers and work placement providers are highly supportive of learners. There is little co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training, and often employers are not directly involved in learners' progress reviews. However, in the areas of childcare, motor vehicle engineering and construction there is better liaison with employers. In the area of painting and decorating there is close co-operation to ensure that learners benefit from on-the-job and off-the-job training and do not duplicate work. There is a lack of learner and employer awareness of programmes. Target setting with learners is often weak, with the use of goals that are very general and lack time scales.

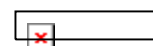
Adult learners

11. During the current year 2001/02, 83% of the total number of students are adults. In addition to those taught at the college's two main sites, courses are provided at over 50 outreach centres across north Leicestershire and south Derbyshire. The college also runs a number of European Social Fund (ESF) courses, particularly in computer training.

12. Retention rates for adults are broadly similar to the national average at levels 1 and 2, but at level 3 they have declined to 71% in 2000/01 compared to 79% the previous year. Retention rates have been maintained at a high level over the last three years for short courses which have large numbers of adult students. Pass rates for adults are above the national average at all levels. They are particularly good for short courses in computing, where there are large numbers. In 2000/01, pass rates for adults were slightly higher than for students aged 16 to 18. At level 1, 79% of adults achieved a qualification compared to 74% of students aged 16 to 18, while at level 2, the figures were 82% and 78% respectively. At level 3, both students aged 16 to 18 and adult students reached 81% achievement. On short courses, 84% of adults achieved a qualification compared to 81% of students aged 16 to 18.

13. Standards of work are higher than for 16-18 year olds. In 56% of lessons, attainment was judged to be good or better. It was judged satisfactory in 36% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 8% of lessons.

Quality of education and training



14. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 147 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 60% of lessons, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 7%. Learning was good or better in 57% of lessons, satisfactory in 36% and less than satisfactory in 7%. Teaching and learning for adults was better than for students aged 16 to 18. The teaching in 67% of lessons was good or better for adults compared with 57% for students aged 16 to 18. The best teaching was on level 3 courses and the highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was on level 1 courses.

15. In the lessons judged to be good or better, effective planning ensured that students were fully involved in a range of stimulating activities which matched their individual needs and interests. The best lessons were delivered at a brisk pace with all students keeping up and included. Some lessons in hairdressing and beauty therapy effectively used different schemes of work to meet the different learning needs of students in the group. Students participated actively and had a strong rapport with teachers. Good use was made of both students' and teachers' experiences to effectively link theory to practice. Workshop lessons in ICT were particularly good with the right balance of students working on their own and with teacher support. The quality of teaching, training and learning materials was good, particularly in childcare. The quality of teaching delivered by specialist, trained staff was good in basic skills.

16. In those lessons judged to be unsatisfactory, teachers did not ensure all students understood the purpose and content of the lesson. Learning was not adequately checked. Sometimes teachers answered their own questions without giving students time to respond. Some 30% of teachers'

responses to students' questions were unsatisfactory. Overall, theory lessons were less effective than practical lessons, particularly in construction. In some curriculum areas, for example, business and management and hairdressing and beauty therapy, small class sizes and some poor attendance hindered debate and sharing of experiences. In sport and recreation and motor vehicle engineering, students on different course levels are taught together. This arrangement is not effective as teaching strategies do not take into account the pace of learning of the lower level students.

17. The approach to key skills is inconsistent, with curriculum managers for respective areas making independent decisions about how these skills should be taught. Some courses use specialist subject tutors while other areas teach the key skills themselves. In hospitality, travel, sport and leisure key skills are effectively integrated into the programme, but this is not the case in most curriculum areas. In some construction classes where key skills are taught by construction staff, they are more vocationally relevant and better understood by students. Most students fail to see the relevance of key skills. Attendance at key skills sessions is low and progress towards achieving them is slow, particularly at level 1. In work-based learning, poor achievement of key skills is slowing down the pace and reducing the number of modern apprenticeship frameworks completed. Opportunities for identifying and assessing key skills are often missed in both work-based learning and college courses. The college recognises that there are weaknesses in key skills teaching and is in the process of revising this provision for the next academic year.

18. The college currently has 59 full-time teaching staff and 38 permanent, part-time staff, of whom 90% and 58% respectively hold a recognised teaching qualification. Of the 149 flexible part-time staff, 65% have a teaching qualification at level 1 or 2. Many staff, without a teaching qualification, are working towards one, supported by standards fund money. A number of staff are also working towards basic skills qualifications. Good staff development opportunities are available for both teaching and support staff. These can be taken up by direct request or as a result of identification at appraisal interviews or curriculum development needs. There is an annual appraisal process for all staff, which was updated in September 2001 and is currently being implemented.

19. Most classrooms have computers. There is a specialist ICT room with adapted computers and relevant software to support students with additional needs. Students have use of an open access and well-equipped learning centre for independent study, which is open during normal college hours. It is also used for some whole-class teaching although there are plans to create a separate space for teaching to ensure complete freedom of access for students. The library is well stocked and is updated in line with curriculum requirements, on an annual basis. The developing college intranet has a useful range of functions including e-mail facilities for staff and students. Lecture notes and other learning materials are being increasingly held; students can access it from home.

20. The college's main site and other designated college buildings are accessible for wheelchair users and students with restricted movement. There is a lift providing access to the first floor and stair chair lifts on the main stairs to the first floor. There is a mini com system for hearing impaired students. A member of staff in the open learning centre is currently training to use sign language.

21. The college is in the process of acquiring land to build a new campus with an expected completion date in 2004. The current main site accommodation is well maintained and continues to be a pleasant environment for staff and students to work in. There are quiet rooms available for students to use to practise their religious beliefs. Examples of students' work are on display in public areas of the college. Some specialist accommodation is outdated and some classroom space is used inappropriately. For example, in basic skills, teaching for adults takes place in accommodation with child-oriented wall displays.

22. There is excellent off-site specialist accommodation for motor vehicle and conservation students. The beauty therapy salons were recently updated and provide a good realistic working environment. The training restaurant for catering students is open to members of the public. The Ashby-de-la-Zouch business centre provides a well-equipped and comfortable learning environment predominantly for adults. There are around 50 additional venues used to deliver community provision.

23. Recruitment of adult students has continued to rise significantly in recent years. The college continues to widen participation through offering courses at community venues. Staff are engaged in a variety of partnership activities to take learning to members of the community in recognised areas of social and economic deprivation. There are currently projects being provided in specific wards of the community, for example, in the Greenhill and Agar Nook areas of Coalville and in rural settings, such as Moira, where poor transport restricts access to courses provided at the main site. Other projects include working to support ex-offenders, asylum seekers, members of the travelling community and women returning to work.

24. The college seeks to promote a strategy of access to education for all students. There are bias-free publicity materials available in a range of languages, other than English, on request. A full-time and part-time prospectus gives an overview of the curriculum on offer and there is a separate prospectus for students with additional learning needs. There are individual leaflets describing respective courses. The college provides a wide range of courses, which meets the needs of young people and adults including work-based learning. Students can choose to study courses from pre-entry and level 1 in most areas to level 4 and into higher education (HE). A range of attendance modes is offered. There is low uptake and poor participation in enrichment activity, partly due to the fact that a large proportion of students are adults.

25. Arrangements to ensure that students are directed to the right courses are provided in all areas of the curriculum. There are monthly advice evenings for prospective students. These initial guidance sessions are followed up by individual interview with a member of the relevant curriculum team. There are good links with local secondary schools and a number of taster sessions for Year 9 students. Projects with disillusioned and disruptive Year 11 pupils are well established and lead to increased participation at the college.

26. The college has a clear assessment strategy and a good internal verification policy. Most assessments and marking are sound and fair. Students' work is returned within a reasonable period. In ICT and childcare, marking is particularly thorough. Most students are provided with relevant feedback, although this does not always provide specific guidance on how they can improve their performance. In health and social care, students do not have their work assessed regularly. Assessment practice is poor in plumbing. Most internal verification is satisfactory but it is not always sufficiently critical. There is insufficient internal verification in health and social care, carpentry and joinery and hospitality, travel, sport and leisure. There is an effective college system for monitoring external verifier reports.

27. All college students are issued with learning plans by their subject teachers. These are pre-printed and detail the learning activities for each unit and can be personalised. Written reports are produced for full-time students twice a year. Once a term, employers are usually informed of the progress of students that they have sponsored. The responses of employers to college questionnaires indicate that a third would like more information about the performance of their employees. Parents are also able to meet with teachers at two consultation sessions each academic year, although the college does not record or monitor the attendance at these sessions.

28. In business and management, childcare, and hospitality, travel, sport and leisure there are good examples of specific, short-term and realistic targets being set for students. In other areas many targets are vague and only relate to timescales for completing work. The college makes little use of any of the prior achievement of students in determining specific targets and identifying levels of achievement for individuals. There was a pilot scheme to measure the improvement in students' performance in literacy skills following training. However, across the college little use is made of any value added data and, in particular, they are not used to identify targets for individual students.

29. The information gathered from the initial assessment of students aged 16 to 18 and modern apprentices' competence in basic and key skills is used effectively to construct their learning plans. However, there are ineffective arrangements for diagnosing additional student needs for the substantial number of students studying in outreach centres, particularly in care and ICT. At the start of the course, adults complete a written assignment but this is not systematically analysed by staff to identify weaknesses and strengths. The assignment only assesses writing skills and not numerical skills.

30. The support and guidance arrangements for students attending college are effective. Some 400 students were identified as needing additional support. An analysis of college records shows the support to be effective, with 87% of these students being retained to the end of their course, and of these, approximately 73% achieving their qualifications. Within lessons, support ranges from help with numeracy, reading and writing to additional vocational skills development on either an individual or group basis. In NVQ computing, painting and decorating, and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) leisure and tourism, support by learning support tutors in practical lessons enhances learning. Relationships in these lessons between support tutors, teachers and students are good.

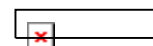
31. Student support services within the college are effective. In centrally located areas staff provide a well co-ordinated service, with clear points of contact for students. The service provides careers advice, course guidance, a counselling service, accommodation placement, financial support and course application processing. It also co-ordinates students' initial assessment and monthly advice evenings. Careers education advice and guidance are provided jointly by the local Careers Service and college appointed staff. This guidance is generally good in advising students to further courses or career opportunities.

32. There is effective help for students who require financial support to complete their qualifications. Examples of help include money to buy personal protective equipment, textbooks and to cover exam fees. Approximately 200 students are in receipt of financial support ranging from £100 to £2,000. In addition, the college provides free transport to and from the college for full-time students aged 16 to 18 living more than three miles away.

33. During the previous inspection, inspectors were unable to judge the effectiveness of the then newly introduced tutorial system for full-time students. The quality of tutorials is now good. Two thirds of tutorials observed were good and none were unsatisfactory. The better tutorials were well prepared. Tutors monitor performance against students' action plans and discuss issues to do with course progress, punctuality, attendance and personal concerns. A new action plan is devised and a date set for the next meeting. In some tutorials, student targets are not always specific to their individual areas for improvement.

34. Strategies for monitoring attendance for full-time students aged 16 to 18 are good. However, parents and guardians are not always informed of non-attendance if this is less than three consecutive days. The monitoring of attendance for work-based students is variable. Some employers are notified by telephone during the day of college absence but other employers have little contact or feedback from the college.

Leadership and management



35. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the college has developed new outreach centres in the community and significantly increased the number of students. Links with external partners are particularly strong. The college has used its links with local schools and voluntary organisations to encourage the participation of an increasingly wide range of students. The expansion has been effectively managed. Senior managers and governors provide a clear strategic direction for the college. The overall strategic plan sets realistic targets for the college and its objectives are revised annually. Operational priorities derived from the strategic plan form the basis of curriculum operational plans. The alignment of the key objectives in curriculum operational plans with those of the college is clear. Governors recognise the college's strengths and weaknesses, and contribute constructively particularly to the assessment of its performance. Senior managers and governors review operational plans comprehensively each term. Staff are kept well informed by the monthly newsletter and information provided on the college's intranet. Regular staff meetings and professional development days help staff to have a clear understanding of the college's strategic objectives and its progress towards meeting them.

36. Courses are organised into thirteen sections and two divisions. Accountability is clear. Managers meet regularly with their staff in order that college policies and procedures are applied consistently. However, some aspects of course management are unsatisfactory. Many courses attract small numbers of students and are combined for some lessons with courses at different levels. The mix of students from different courses is sometimes inappropriate. Class sizes are small. Teachers do not always teach on the courses for which they are best qualified or most experienced. In July 2001, the college recognised that the management of work-based learning was poor and revised its management and procedures for the academic year 2001/02. The new arrangements are designed to improve the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress. Although it is too early to assess the overall impact of these changes, some problems remain. For example, the reporting mechanisms for assessors, the conduct of progress reviews and the co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training are unsatisfactory.

37. Since the last inspection the college has maintained good pass rates on most of its courses. Although retention rates are generally satisfactory, the college has recognised that improvement is needed in some areas. It has clearly identified the areas of unsatisfactory performance through termly course reviews and has set sensible targets for improvement. The targets are set by reference to national standards and past performance but do not take account of the previous achievements of students. On some courses, teachers do not give sufficient attention to how the targets can be met and actions planned are too vague for progress to be monitored effectively.

38. Quality assurance arrangements for curriculum areas are well documented and cover all aspects of the college's provision. However, the application of quality assurance procedures is inconsistent. Students and employers are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the college, although students' views from termly surveys are used to provide useful information for self-assessment. The surveys show that most students are happy with their courses. Self-assessment involves all staff but the final report is insufficiently self-critical and contains too many bland generalisations. In most curriculum areas the college has made an overgenerous assessment of the quality of its provision and has failed to identify that much of the work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Action plans are detailed and many of them clearly identify actions required to improve students' performance and the quality of teaching. They clearly state who is responsible for each action and the date by which it is to be achieved. Termly review meetings monitor progress against the plans.

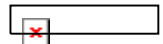
39. The lesson observation programme is comprehensive and enables the college to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, both in its college-based provision and franchised courses. The college's appraisal system applies to all full-time and many part-time teachers. However, at the time of the inspection some teachers had not been appraised for two years. Records of appraisal are incomplete. The college has recently implemented its revised procedures for appraisal drawn up in September 2001 to provide clear formal links between appraisal, lesson observation and staff development. It is too early to measure the effectiveness of these arrangements. Quality assurance of support services is poor. Although some services have prescribed requirements identified for service standards, they are not regularly monitored. The procedures for monitoring the performance of the college's franchised provision are effective.

40. Owing to its recent expansion and difficulties in filling some posts, particularly in basic skills, the college employs significant numbers of full-time and part-time staff who do not possess teaching qualifications. There are good opportunities for teachers to gain or improve their teaching qualifications. Mentoring of new staff is effective in most areas. The college includes training in equal opportunities issues in its induction for new staff and runs a number of useful training events for teachers and employers throughout the year. However, the equal opportunities policy is poor and procedures for monitoring equal opportunities are ineffective. There is no equal opportunities development plan. There are clear procedures for appeals and complaints. Complaints are carefully monitored and an annual report is presented to governors. The college receives few formal complaints.

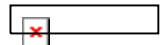
41. Managers receive monthly reports which help them to analyse enrolment, retention and pass rates. Operational problems with the computer software have resulted in some reports being produced late. Insufficient information is available to managers on-line.

42. Financial management is good. Governors and senior managers monitor college expenditure very carefully. The college has developed significant cash reserves which it intends to use to help to finance its move to new purpose-built accommodation in September 2004. The college has consulted widely on its proposals. Management of the college's budget is good. Spending has been prioritised to benefit students. For example, the college made a significant investment in new computers to support students in 2001. Resources are managed effectively. There is regular and thorough monitoring of the college's progress towards achievement of unit targets and tight controls on spending. The college carefully monitors the cost of its provision against that in similar colleges. Its costs are comparatively low. Best value is assured by the detailed monitoring of teachers' workloads to ensure that their time is used efficiently and through the careful deployment of resources. The college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Construction



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most courses
- good teaching in most practical lessons
- good learning in the workplace
- effective links with employers.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates for work-based learners
- slow progress towards achievement in carpentry and joinery

- unsatisfactory theory teaching
- poor assessment practice in plumbing
- poor course management of NVQ level 2 plumbing.

Scope of provision

43. The college offers a range of construction programmes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These include carpentry and joinery, brickwork, painting and decorating and plumbing. The majority of learners are work-based with 181 on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and other NVQ training programmes. There are only 62 full-time students. An additional 65 students attend the college for off-the-job teaching as part of a training package for other providers. There are also short courses in gas safety and forklift truck certification. Attendance arrangements include full-time, day or block release and evening courses. There are seven full-time staff and seven part-time staff, of whom three are work-based assessors.

Achievement and standards

44. Pass rates on all full-time courses are well above the national average. They are particularly good on NVQ level 2 bricklaying and mechanical services. Retention rates on most full-time courses are good although on NVQ wood occupations at both levels, they are just broadly similar to the national average in 2000/01. Retention rates and achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework for work-based learners are poor. Of those who started training from 1996 to 2002, only 47% remain and only 10% have achieved the framework so far. Achievement is particularly slow for learners in carpentry and joinery. Only 6% have achieved so far.

45. The quality of practical work is good. Additional support for practical lessons in the college workshop for plumbing and painting and decorating is particularly good. Students receive effective guidance from teachers and realistic practical projects are set. First-year plumbing students are able to accurately install systems to industry standards while working mostly on their own. Some students have successfully progressed from full-time college courses into employment and modern apprenticeships.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ trowel occupations	1	No. of starts	12	11	11
		% retention	92	91	91
		% pass rate	100	90	80
NVQ wood occupations	1	No. of starts	12	10	17
		% retention	83	80	71
		% pass rate	100	88	83
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	26	25	32

		% retention	56	65	69
		% pass rate	64	33	77
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	12	19	16
		% retention	56	47	92
		% pass rate	100	67	91
NVQ mechanical services	2	No. of starts	16	13	14
		% retention	75	92	79
		% pass rate	100	100	91

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

Quality of education and training

46. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching was good in only 21% of lessons and 21% were unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are not well planned. Theory lessons are particularly unsatisfactory and not linked to practical activities or students' experiences in the workplace. For example, in a brick work theory lesson, the wrong illustration was used making it very difficult for students to relate the theory to industry practice. In NVQ level 2 plumbing, lessons lack structure with no evident pattern or variation of style to suit students. There were no checks on learning and students' participation was poor. Lesson plans, when they are used, contain few specific objectives and schemes of work are poor. Teachers make poor use of handouts in theory lessons. Some are out of date and do not relate accurately to the current syllabus. The work set for students in lessons is undemanding.

47. Learning for modern apprentices in the workplace is good. Employers provide good support, a wide range of training opportunities and work experience relevant to the NVQ. Good assessment practices have been developed in most areas through effective links with employers. In painting and decorating and brickwork, assessment in the workplace is regular and employers are actively involved in identifying assessment opportunities. Some employers have trained workplace supervisors as work-based recorders to ensure assessment opportunities are not missed. Assessment practice for plumbing is poor. There are no accurate records kept of practical lessons. Some learner progress reviews have not taken place and those that have contain few personal targets for improving achievement. The work-based assessors' qualifications do not meet awarding body requirements.

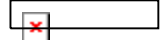
48. All students have an initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills. Additional learning support is given where a need is identified. This is often provided during key skills lessons. Although key skills are taught separately, construction staff teach some lessons. In these lessons key skills are effectively linked to the relevant construction disciplines. Most staff are suitably qualified with relevant vocational qualifications, industrial experience and assessor awards. There is a good range of specialist workshops with sufficient materials and equipment to enable students to work effectively.

Leadership and management

49. Construction is poorly managed. Course files contain some relevant documentation concerning programme management. However, there is little evidence that this documentation is used to monitor and improve programmes. Some documents have not been updated to take account of recent programme changes by the awarding body. Monthly construction staff meetings only began just before the inspection. Internal verification is not effectively monitoring assessment in carpentry and joinery. The college has taken some action to improve assessment but this has still to be approved by the external verifier. This includes increasing the frequency of assessment opportunities. There is a staff appraisal system in place and some construction staff have been appraised. This has led to one member of staff competing a period of industrial updating. Course

management of NVQ level 2 plumbing is particularly poor and weaknesses in assessment practice have not been identified. Self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous to ensure improvements in the quality of provision and students' achievements.

General engineering



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

Strengths

- good teaching in welding and computer-aided design
- good learning facilities.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement on most programmes
- lack of learner and employer awareness about the structure of modern apprenticeships
- delayed start to NVQ level 3 for some work-based learners
- poor management of key skills delivery
- poor target setting in work-based learner reviews.

Scope of provision

50. The college offers provision in fabrication, mechanical and electrical engineering at NVQ levels 2 and 3. National certificate, national diploma and craft level qualifications are also offered. There are 40 work-based learners doing foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. They attend the college for theoretical and practical courses on a day-release basis. There are only 11 students on full-time courses, mainly following national diploma qualifications. The remaining 79 are part-time students following short evening programmes. There are two full-time and six part-time staff.

Achievement and standards

51. Pass rates on both the national certificates in electrical and mechanical engineering are unsatisfactory. These have been below the national average for two of the past three years in electrical engineering, and in all three years in mechanical engineering. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 are below the national average and have improved in 2001 to above the national average at level 3. Framework pass rates for both modern apprenticeship programmes are well below average. For advanced modern apprenticeships, framework achievement ranges from 57% for those starting in 1997 to 22% for those starting in 1998. No foundation modern apprentices have achieved the framework since 1997. Retention rates have improved in electrical engineering but are still below the national average in mechanical engineering. Some learners progress from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships and from national certificate to higher national certificate programmes.

52. Links with employers are good but both learners and employers lack information on the structure and content of modern apprenticeships. Both are unclear about the content of NVQs. This has slowed the pace of gathering workplace evidence for NVQ units. The start of some NVQ level 3 courses is delayed until the fourth year of an advanced modern apprenticeship. This puts undue pressure on learners and their employers to complete in a short time scale and leads to many missed opportunities for gathering relevant workplace evidence during years two and three.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ engineering manufacture	2	No. of starts	20	23	33
		% retention	55	70	70
		% pass rate	50	61	58
NVQ engineering maintenance	3	No. of starts	9	9	11
		% retention	100	67	82
		% pass rate	78	0	55
National certificate in mechanical engineering	3	No. of starts	6	7	10
		% retention	83	71	70
		% pass rate	67	71	70
National certificate in electrical engineering	3	No. of starts	8	5	6
		% retention	75	80	100
		% pass rate	63	80	50

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

Quality of education and training

53. There is much good teaching. Some 70% of lessons were judged good or better and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the most effective lessons teachers challenge and inspire their students. Most students respond enthusiastically and make good progress. For example, in a practical welding lesson the teacher skilfully structured the lesson to enable students to take significant self-responsibility for health and safety arrangements. Students were constantly questioned on both their theoretical and practical knowledge and achieved a high standard of practical work. The computer-aided design course is taught by a very experienced teacher with significant knowledge of teaching programmes to large commercial organisations. Students receive good quality workbooks containing many illustrations and topical tips. Examples of relevant workplace applications of the software are also given. Students' attendance over 31 weeks is over

95% and many students arrive early and leave late as they are greatly encouraged to improve their skills and finish modules. All students' assignments are complete and up to date. The work produced by students is of a good standard. On other courses, there was some uninspiring teaching with little or no use of handouts, visual aids or practical examples.

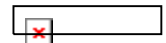
54. Learners and employers are not fully aware of the significance of achieving key skills. Many are unclear about the content of key skills and how work-based evidence can be cross-referenced and used. Key skills teaching, particularly application of number, is related to an engineering context. However, lessons are rushed as the delayed start to key skills has resulted in unrealistic time scales to complete them. Termly performance reviews are carried out for work-based learners, but in many cases, challenging targets are not set. Where targets are set, progress towards these is not checked on subsequent visits. Workplace supervisors are consulted during the review process but do not have sufficient knowledge of the modern apprenticeship programmes to contribute effectively.

55. Most of the equipment used for practical engineering training is good. The welding facility is particularly good due to considerable investment over the past 12 months. Safe working practices are rigorously enforced when operating equipment or using hand tools. Students have good access to resources and materials for use on courses. There is a high level of dependence on the two full-time engineering lecturers. Plans to cover sickness and absence are inadequate.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Managers' responsibilities are clearly defined and understood in the small engineering section. However, there is little setting of realistic and demanding targets to address retention and pass rates on full-time courses. For work-based learners there is an over emphasis on the achievement of NVQs and theoretical qualifications, rather than the requirement to achieve apprenticeship frameworks. Key skills teaching is poorly managed. Managers respond well to the needs of local industry with a limited range of short courses which are well supported.

Motor vehicle engineering



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- effective use of a wide variety of teaching methods
- effective use of well-resourced workshops
- effective staff development programme.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement on modern apprenticeship programmes
- ineffective teaching of some work-based learners
- poor target setting in progress reviews for work-based learners.

Scope of provision

57. The college offers a good range of courses including the first diploma, national certificate and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in automotive mechanical and electronic maintenance and unit replacement. Provision is located at two centres, the main college and a purpose-built vehicle workshop approximately 1½ miles away, which cover both heavy and light vehicle programmes. The purpose-built workshop is used primarily to deliver the theoretical knowledge and national certificate qualifications specific to a number of national vehicle manufacturer and franchise outlets. Other motor vehicle students who are taught mainly on the college site access the purpose-built workshop and test equipment to enhance theory lessons. There are a total of 484 students, with the majority aged 16 to 18. Only 13 students attend full time with the remaining attending either on a part-time or block release basis. There are 37 students on work-based training undertaking foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and other NVQ training programmes. Training is carried out by 14 full-time staff and 7 part-time staff. There are a further three workshop supervisors and two work-based assessors.

Achievement and standards

58. Pass rates are good and have been above the national average on most of the courses for the last three years. On the NVQ level 2 light vehicle programme, pass rates have been at 100% for the last three years. At level 3 they have declined significantly in 2000/01 to 54% from 100% in 1999/2000. Retention rates are at or near the national average with the exception of the first diploma which is well below. Pass rates for both modern apprentice frameworks are very low. No foundation modern apprentices have achieved the framework. On the advanced modern apprenticeship only 14% of those starting between 1996 to 2002 have achieved the full framework qualification and only 40% remain in training. Achievement of NVQs in work-based learning is well below average, with figures reducing over the past three years from 57% to 8% on the foundation modern apprenticeship. Some learners have progressed successfully from the full-time first diploma into employment and part-time education at national certificate level.

59. Good work is produced by students. A wide range of engineering techniques are taught using the good range of resources available. Students undertake wheel alignments, gearbox adjustments and oil pressure testing to industry standards. They benefit from regular visits by motor vehicle manufacturers to demonstrate the latest fault diagnostic techniques and developments in technology.

A sample of retention and pass rates in motor vehicle engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
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BTEC first diploma in motor vehicle engineering	2	No. of starts	*	9	12
		% retention	*	77	58
		% pass rate	*	86	86
NVQ mechanical and electronic systems (light vehicles)	2	No. of starts	12	6	17
		% retention	92	50	65
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ mechanical and electronic systems (light vehicles)	3	No. of starts	10	1	17
		% retention	100	100	76
		% pass rate	89	100	54
NVQ mechanical and electronic systems (heavy vehicles)	3	No. of starts	119	91	99
		% retention	89	80	77
		% pass rate	90	83	97
BTEC national certificate in motor vehicle engineering	3	No. of starts	153	110	133
		% retention	85	70	78
		% pass rate	95	64	90

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

* course not offered

Quality of education and training

60. Much teaching is good with 70% of lessons judged good or better. A wide range of teaching styles is effectively used to encourage discussion and debate in theoretical and practical lessons. Extensive use is made of individual and small group work to clarify key theories. Good use is made of examples from teachers' own experiences in industry and students' experiences from external visits in relating theories to everyday activities. Theoretical sessions are consolidated by well-planned practical demonstrations. For example, one theory lesson was appropriately followed by a demonstration on testing fuel injection pumps. Lesson support materials including handouts, sectional vehicle component parts, and systems simulation boards are effectively used. Teachers are enthusiastic and students are complimentary about the manner in which they are taught. Students are encouraged to undertake individual learning. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the practical applications of compressor theory and dual brake operations were inadequately explained. Students' questions were not fully answered and handouts were of poor quality.

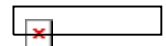
61. Work-based learners undertake a good range of work activities and assessment is regular. Some teachers do not plan activities to meet the different capabilities of different types of learner in the same group. For example, one group included both heavy and light vehicle learners, those on programmes of different duration and those with different start dates. Performance reviews for work-based learners are poor. Few measurable or challenging targets are set and those that are set are not related to achieving specific NVQ elements or units. Workplace supervisors are not always actively involved during the review process.

62. The equipment used for practical training on the heavy vehicle programmes is of high quality with recent upgrades. There is sufficient up-to-date testing and handling equipment in workshops. Good links with national vehicle manufacturers and franchises provide a wide range of modern and in some cases expensive equipment for use in the workshops. Correct working practices are rigorously applied when handling and operating equipment in the workshops. Some of the vehicle resources in the light vehicle department are out of date and do not reflect current industry requirements. The quality of teaching and the technical knowledge of individual teachers are good and continually reviewed.

Leadership and management

63. Management and team meetings are regular and effective. Staff carefully plan, manage and co-ordinate a wide variety of engineering activities. Senior managers and internal verifiers undertake regular staff appraisals and observations of training. There is a well-established staff development programme, including technical updating and industrial liaison visits. Some staff are released from college duties to update their practical skills at local garages. Others attend appropriate college courses. A new computerised learner performance monitoring system assists both workplace assessors and teachers to identify opportunities for assessment and highlight slow progress against expected NVQ units and full qualifications.

Business and management



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most courses
- good teaching on management courses
- well-resourced business centres.

Weaknesses

- poor and declining achievement on foundation modern apprenticeships
- some teaching that does not motivate learning
- lack of designated accommodation other than in business centres.

Scope of provision

64. The college offers General Certificate of Education Advanced level and Advanced Subsidiary (GCE A-level/AS) and the AVCE in business. Professional accounting, personnel practice, personnel development, administration and secretarial courses are also offered. Progression routes are good although there is no entry level provision. On administration, accounting and personnel courses students may progress from level 1 to 4. There are 421 students, of whom 143 are aged 16

to 18 and 307 are adults. Most students are on part-time courses. There are 45 work-based learners of whom 21 are advanced modern apprentices, 22 foundation modern apprentices and 2 on NVQ training.

Achievement and standards

65. Pass rates on most courses are good. In 2001 students achieved pass rates of 100% on NVQ level 2 accounting and customer care, NVQ level 3 administration and the certificate in personnel practice. Achievement on the foundation modern apprenticeship is well below average and has declined from 56% in 1998/99 to 31% in 2000/01. However, 31% of learners remain in training, but their progress is slow. Achievement of the framework students on the advanced modern apprenticeship for 1999/2000 and 2000/01 was 55%. For 2001/02 it is 43% but a further 43% of learners remain in training. Student retention rates in most areas have been at or above the national average since 1998. In some areas, retention rates have declined, particularly in the certificate in personnel practice.

66. All full-time students undertake a minimum of two weeks work experience to reinforce the standards expected in the world of work. The standard of most students' work is good. However, students' critical and evaluative skills are not being developed sufficiently quickly and demanding targets are not set. Entry grades are used to determine the level of entry on a programme, but there is no further use of these to predict grades, monitor progress or to measure value added. In work-based learning the standard of work in portfolios is good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	23	30	20
		% retention	91	87	75
		% pass rate	81	92	100
NVQ customer service	2	No. of starts	15	21	17
		% retention	73	48	100
		% pass rate	100	90	100
NVQ administration	3	No. of starts	26	22	11
		% retention	92	82	82
		% pass rate	96	89	100
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	22	28	21
		% retention	100	93	86
		% pass rate	100	96	72
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	17	10	10
		% retention	94	90	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	23	12	*
		% retention	78	75	*
		% pass rate	78	89	*

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

67. Most teaching in business and management is good. Some 65% of lessons were good or better. Students participate actively in most lessons and have a strong rapport with staff. Teaching on the professional management courses is particularly good. It is well structured and delivered by teachers with good subject knowledge. There are some imaginative approaches to revision exercises. In one lesson, students devised a revision quiz covering a wide range of topics. In another similar lesson, students worked in small groups to prepare outline answers which they presented to the other groups. In the management lessons, homework is regularly set. Marking is effective with clear guidance offered on how to improve grades. Students' written work is competent, though frequently suffers from poor spelling and grammar. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory but other lessons had some unsatisfactory aspects. For example, some questions were ambiguously worded and little challenge was offered to the students to motivate learning. Some teachers' expectations of students are low. The pace of learning is slow and insufficient material is covered in the time available. Students are well supported and attendance is closely monitored.

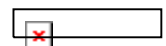
68. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Assessors visit learners in the workplace on a monthly basis to undertake assessments and reviews. During these visits short-term targets are set and clear verbal and documented feedback is given. Assessors identify gaps in the students' workplace experience and arrange for these to be filled at the college. Employers value the contact with the assessors, but direct contact with the teaching staff at the college is inadequate. Key skills are not integrated with other aspects of the course and their achievement in work-based learning is poor.

69. Accommodation in the business centres is good. Rooms are well equipped and well designed with good wall displays relevant to the respective courses using the rooms. Good learning materials including course handbooks and individual handouts are available for students to use either paper based or through the college intranet. Students have good access to computers and each student has an e-mail account and enough file space to store their work. There are no other designated rooms for courses and students move between three different blocks for lessons. In these rooms there are few subject-specific wall display materials producing a learning environment that lacks stimulation. Some rooms are of an inappropriate size and style, and in one room the chairs were too small for the desks. Staff are suitably qualified and have relevant recent work experience.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work effectively in subject teams with good formal and informal communications. Comprehensive lesson observations are undertaken each academic year and the information is used to improve the quality of teaching. Internal verification is well planned. Course reviews are undertaken three times a year but some lack depth and do not have measurable targets. The self-assessment report is widely discussed with the staff although many strengths identified are normal expected practice. There are many very small classes. The average class size is eight, which has limited the ability of some students to have productive discussion or undertake a range of activities.

Information and communications technology and computing



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most courses

- very good progression on part-time courses
- good teaching for adults
- well-managed curriculum area.

Weaknesses

- poor arrangements for key skills
- insufficient attention to the development of students' personal skills.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers full-time provision on GNVQ intermediate and AVCE ICT and the national diploma in computing. There are 67 full-time students and 700 part-time adults on a wide range of courses. These are taught at the college and at many locations within the community including libraries, as well as franchised centres. Courses offered include novice computing, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), desktop publishing, integrated business technology stage 2 and 3 (IBT II and IBT III), web page design, visual basic and the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and advanced ECDL. The range of courses meets the needs of full-time students and adult learners. There are clear progression routes from level 2 to higher level courses. There is no full-time foundation course in IT for school leavers.

Achievement and standards

72. Students on most courses achieve well. Pass rates are very high on part-time courses. For example, on CLAIT short courses the pass rate is 19% above the national average in 2001. Enrolments have risen and high retention rates have been maintained. Part-time students progress very well on to other courses. Most courses retain students at levels well in excess of national averages. The exception is GNVQ advanced ICT, which fell below the national average for the first time in 2001. The pass rate for students completing this course was 100%.

73. Full-time students develop good practical ICT skills which is evident from their practical assignments. One student on GNVQ intermediate IT produced an attractive poster which integrated several techniques into the design. The poster features a logo developed using design software, digitised photographs and images captured from the world wide web. Beginners develop increased confidence in their ICT skills, often from a completely unskilled base. One part-time student has increased her ICT skill level sufficiently well to be able to join a recruitment agency list to seek part-time ICT work.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT short	1	No. of starts	217	854	902
		% retention	95	96	95
		% pass rate	67	75	83
ECDL (1 year)	2	No. of starts	*	120	124
		% retention	*	92	85
		% pass rate	*	74	89
IBT II short	2	No. of starts	114	325	482
		% retention	92	92	94
		% pass rate	49	70	75
GNVQ intermediate IT (1 year)	2	No. of starts	*	14	13
		% retention	*	86	85
		% pass rate	*	45	73
IBT III short	3	No. of starts	11	53	44
		% retention	73	85	93
		% pass rate	63	60	73
GNVQ advanced ICT (2 year)	3	No. of starts	19	14	16
		% retention	74	86	56
		% pass rate	100	90	100

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

* course not offered

Quality of education and training

74. Most teaching is good and no lessons were unsatisfactory. Workshop lessons for part-time adult students are particularly good with above average attendance. Students work on their own with good teacher support, often in small classes. This builds their confidence and skills. One student following a desktop publishing course has redesigned the stationery for her employer. Lessons for full-time students do not gain the interest of all students. A lot of time is spent supporting students in managing and planning their work and in portfolio building, to enable students to obtain their qualification. This limits opportunities for greater challenge. The best lessons feature students being actively involved in developing their skills at their own pace with challenging content. In one lesson, good student learning was achieved through a structured blend of teaching and practical activities. The lesson included a clear explanation of how to construct macros to run database management tasks.

75. Assignment tasks are effective for developing and assessing skills and understanding. However, some teachers do not identify the required criteria for assignments sufficiently clearly to enable students to plan their work well. There is some inconsistency in the quality of feedback to students on their work. There is insufficient integration of key skills with other aspects of courses. Students' attendance is poor and staff turnover is high. These inhibit progress of all students. For example, presentations scheduled for February have still not been completed. Some key skills assignments do not advance or increase performance and insufficient use is made of information already in portfolios as evidence.

76. Attention to the development of full-time students' personal skills is inadequate. Their technical

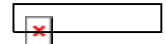
skills develop well but management of their own learning is often insufficient. Tutors during individual reviews neither record nor set clear targets for students to take full responsibility for their own learning and development. Students are often late and attendance is low at 69%.

77. Most resources are sufficient to meet requirements of specific courses. Some students experience problems due to the inadequate specifications of some computer suites, for example, in handling graphics files. The library book stock is very good in the main college centre although it is not well used. The book stock and ICT facilities in some community centres are much more limited. Teachers are mostly well qualified and experienced in ICT for the courses they are teaching. Many do not possess a formal teaching qualification, particularly the community ICT teachers.

Leadership and management

78. Leadership and management are good and have a substantial influence on standards achieved and quality of teaching. Full-time and community courses are particularly well managed. A franchise centre offers well-organised courses to a wide range of new learners including job seekers, people on probation, young offenders and those with English as a second language. Large numbers enrol and progress quickly from entry level through to level 2. Course teams work well together and share good practice. There is a strong focus on supporting students. Part-time teachers attend meetings regularly, are observed routinely and undertake staff development activities. Many of the judgements reached in the self-assessment report were accurate but strengths in teaching and tutorial support for full-time courses were overstated.

Hospitality, travel, sport and leisure



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on many courses
- good key skills teaching
- effective additional learning support
- clear target setting in tutorials.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates in leisure and tourism and sport and recreation in 2001/02

- teaching does not meet individual learning needs in sport and recreation
- inadequate resources in most areas of the curriculum
- inadequate arrangements for staff to update industrial experience.

Scope of provision

79. The college offers courses in hospitality, travel, sport and leisure. These include full-time and part-time NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in food preparation and cooking. The college also offers NVQ levels 1 and 2 in food and drink service. Other full-time courses include GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, AVCE leisure and recreation and NVQ levels 1 and 2 in sport and recreation. The Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC) primary and advanced is offered part time both during the day and in the evening. There are 39 students on NVQ courses of whom 27 are aged 16 to 18. Most of the 49 students on the full-time GNVQ and AVCE courses are aged 16 to 18. Students on the ABTAC course include part-time students and full-time students undertaking additional study. Other additional courses include basic and intermediate hygiene, welcome host, welcome health, resort representatives, first aid and customer service. Students are given the opportunity to join other courses across the college to enhance their career choice. There are eight work-based learners.

Achievement and standards

80. Pass rates are good on many courses. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking, GNVQ and AVCE leisure and tourism have been consistently at or above the national average for the past three years. The retention rate on NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking is particularly good. Retention rates on GNVQ leisure and tourism and NVQ level 2 sport and recreation have fallen significantly during 2001/02. They have fallen to 55% and 60% respectively and are well below national averages. Retention rates have declined on the ABTAC primary for the past three years, although current retention rates for 2001/02 indicate an improvement.

81. Students improve their learning using a variety of activities including self-study and research. For example, students learn to use atlases on their own for travel geography and to research information using CD-ROMs and the Internet. An airline company provides good work experience for travel students. This experience assists project work and increases future employment opportunities. Attendance on most courses is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, travel, sport and leisure, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ food preparation and cooking (1 year)	1	No. of starts	15	18	12
		% retention	82	100	83
		% pass rate	74	77	80
NVQ food preparation and cooking (2 year)	2	No. of starts	16	6	*
		% retention	56	67	*

		% pass rate	100	100	*
NVQ food preparation and cooking (1 year)	2	No. of starts	*	*	11
		% retention	*	*	64
		% pass rate	*	*	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	15	14	17
		% retention	87	79	89
		% pass rate	92	88	94
NVQ sport recreation and allied occupations	2	No. of starts	13	10	9
		% retention	15	70	90
		% pass rate	50	100	100
ABTAC primary (1 year)	2	No. of starts	17	27	35
		% retention	94	89	77
		% pass rate	69	50	63
GNVQ/AVCE advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	23	9	9
		% retention	78	89	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

* NVQ 2-year course became a 1-year course

Quality of education and training

82. Most teaching is good. Some 60% of lessons are good or better but 13% are unsatisfactory. The better lessons are interesting, well planned and delivered at a good pace. Students' learning is checked regularly and clear links are made to the next lesson and to other subjects being studied. In catering, students on NVQs levels 1, 2 and 3 work well together with the more able students helping other students to develop new skills. Teachers' attempts to meet the respective needs of students taking different level courses within the same lesson have not been successful in NVQ sport and recreation. Due to low numbers, students from levels 1 and 2 are taught in the same group. All students were given the same exercise pitched more at level 2. Level 1 students did not understand the task and were unable to complete it satisfactorily. This led to distraction in the group, which had an adverse effect on learning. Staff are not sufficiently trained to identify and meet different learning needs in the same group. In other less effective lessons, students spent too much time copying notes. There was little activity, long silences and missed opportunities to build on students' own experiences.

83. Key skills teaching is good. Teachers use imaginative teaching methods to enthuse and motivate students. In one key skills communication lesson, the teacher introduced a discussion about different airline policies on banning smoking during flights. All students were encouraged to participate, including the quieter students. Students learned to accept different opinions and effectively questioned colleagues. Students completed a self-assessment on their contribution to the discussion. Most key skill assignments are vocationally related, although students are only beginning to be able to transfer evidence between the different key skills.

84. Effective additional learning support helps students to develop their self-esteem and confidence. During lessons, learning support assistants use their expertise skilfully to increase student participation and learning. They keep teachers informed of the progress they are making and meet regularly with the students outside of lessons to agree targets. Students are able to progress at a pace matching their individual ability. Tutors meet students regularly to review progress with work

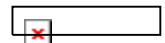
and agree clear targets. The roles and responsibilities of tutors are carefully planned and may include reviews of course work or dealing with issues of a personal nature. Tutors also usually teach the same groups and monitor targets set on an informal basis during lessons. Students appreciate this support and the positive effect it has on their work.

85. The modern, bright restaurant meets the needs of the current curriculum, but the main kitchen does not meet the needs of students. It is an extension of the main college canteen and is long and narrow. This restricts movement particularly during busy periods. The sport and recreation section does not have a separate room for theoretical lessons. A local leisure facility is effectively used for fitness testing and assessments of practical sessions for some students, but there is no formal contract with the college. Travel and tourism courses do not have designated accommodation to ensure reference books and journals are accessible at all times or to display project work. Most staff are qualified to an intermediate level and some have higher qualifications. Many staff do not have current vocational experience within their specialist field of work. Those who do have this experience use it effectively within their teaching responsibilities. Only one teacher updates her industrial experience annually. The others do not. Arrangements for keeping up to date with the latest advances in the industry are inadequate.

Leadership and management

86. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Minuted staff meetings are held regularly. Specific targets and review dates for monitoring the actions identified are not always clear, so the impact on teaching and the quality of provision is limited. Students' views are effectively used to improve the programme. For example, students highlighted dissatisfaction with the teaching of key skills. Changes were made to the style of teaching which is now effective and well managed. There is insufficient sharing of good practice within the three sections of the division. The self-assessment report does not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses and underestimated many of the weaknesses. As a result, retention rates have been allowed to drop on some courses and it was students' action rather than teachers who identified weaknesses in key skills teaching.

Hair and beauty



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- frequent and supportive visits for work-based learners
- wide range of additional qualifications
- good demonstrations of practical skills to students by very experienced staff

- good quality beauty salon.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on NVQ level 3 hairdressing
- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework
- insufficient integration of key skills.

Scope of provision

87. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses leading to NVQ levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Hairdressing at NVQ level 1 started in September 2001. A good range of additional qualifications is offered but it is more limited in hairdressing. There are 325 students in hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies. Of these, 28% are aged 16 to 18 and 10% are work-based learners. The increase in beauty courses is in response to the needs of adults, particularly in complementary therapies. Courses offered include holistic colour therapy, reiki, crystal therapy and Indian head massage. Evening and Saturday provision is available for students unable to attend on weekdays.

Achievements and standards

88. Pass rates on hairdressing courses are significantly above the national average. Retention rates on NVQ levels 2 and 3 hairdressing have declined. This is particularly significant at level 3 where the decline is from 100% to 55%, although numbers are larger than in previous years. Monitoring absence has improved and figures indicate a significant improvement in retention rates this year. Retention and pass rates for most beauty courses are above the national average. Retention rates for the beauty specialist diploma and diploma in reflexology are below the national average of 81% and 84% respectively. Short course retention and pass rates are good. The exceptions are sports massage, advanced reflexology and short manicure courses with pass rates between 50% and 67%. Achievement on modern apprenticeships in 2000/01 is well below average with only one apprentice achieving the full framework qualification. In 2000/01, retention rates on work-based learning improved significantly over the previous two years. Average attendance in lessons is generally good. In two lessons it was low at 17% and 58% respectively.

89. The standard of students' practical work in hairdressing and beauty is good. For example, NVQ level 1 hairdressing students produce practical work at level 2 before they reach the end of their course. Insufficient clients in some practical lessons meant that experienced students had to do simulated practical tasks which does not prepare them sufficiently to produce work of a good standard in a busy salon while dealing with multiple clients. Holistic therapy students perform a range of complex tasks with considerable expertise. Portfolios are well organised but few students use computers to produce assignment work.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	33	34	47
		% retention	73	68	62
		% pass rate	95	95	95
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	10	17	24
		% retention	60	65	83
		% pass rate	100	100	95
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	8	8	13
		% retention	88	88	92
		% pass rate	100	86	83
NVQ hairdressing	3	No. of starts	8	7	22
		% retention	63	100	55
		% pass rate	100	75	91
Beauty specialist diploma (1 year)	3	No. of starts	18	17	29
		% retention	83	71	72
		% pass rate	93	83	95
Diploma in reflexology (1 year)	3	No. of starts	29	23	25
		% retention	93	83	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

90. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching was judged as good or better in 65% of lessons and none were unsatisfactory. Teachers plan their courses and lessons thoroughly using agreed standard formats. Lesson objectives are clearly shared with students. In the better lessons the quick pace and variety of teaching and learning methods maintain students' interest and motivation. In one lesson, in a discussion following small group work, the teacher thoroughly probed and encouraged students to expand on their answers to determine their depth of understanding. In a hairdressing lesson, students actively participated in assessment by self-assessing their own performance. Planning takes account of the different learning needs of the students. For one class, the teacher prepared three lesson plans to account for the differences in students' skill levels and experience. All students completed the tasks successfully. In the less effective lessons the pace was slow. Students were left too long working alone or in groups and lost interest. In lessons where attendance is low there are few opportunities for learning through discussion and sharing of experiences.

91. Work-based learners are visited frequently by an assessor. Reviews of progress occur every eight weeks. The learner and assessor work well together to agree new targets. These are precise and have specific completion dates. The assessor makes further visits to carry out assessments, often within the eight weeks. Learners make good use of witness testimonies for some assessments but few have their practical work assessed by salon staff. Apart from one, most employers have not received any information on their learners' performance at college.

92. Students do not see the relevance of key skills in hairdressing. A limited number of key skills assignments are vocationally relevant but the majority are not. The low achievement of key skills is preventing students achieving the modern apprenticeship framework qualification. The college has

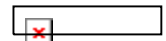
recognised this weakness and plans to further combine key skills teaching with vocational studies. Students acquire a good range of additional qualifications and participate in events such as shows, demonstrations, trade fairs and exhibitions. Additional qualifications available include cosmetic make-up, waxing, eyelash curling and perming, ear piercing and retail training. College managers timetable courses to maximise student choice. All hairdressing students have some work experience.

93. Teachers are well qualified and have extensive industrial experience. Two work in their own salons when not teaching in college. Other teachers have regular opportunities to update their industrial experience. Most of the part-time staff do freelance work or are in self-employment. Students benefit from good demonstrations by teachers on how to perform practical tasks to current industry standards. Salon accommodation for practical lessons is satisfactory to good. One beauty salon particularly reflects a good commercial standard of accommodation. The hairdressing salons are satisfactory but old and in need of updating. The reception has a modern computer with touch screen functions.

Leadership and management

94. Hair and beauty is organised into two course teams with one curriculum manager. Team work is good. Part-time teachers are well supported by managers and full-time colleagues. Challenging retention and achievement targets are set. Co-ordination of college provision is good but there is insufficient integration of college courses with work-based learning. The college has been collaborating with a new provider in the delivery of work-based learning. This new arrangement is beginning to work well but it is too early to determine its full effectiveness. The self-assessment process is thorough and draws on evidence from a number of sources. However, some strengths identified were no more than normal practice. The process did not identify the weaknesses in key skills.

Childcare



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

Strengths

- extensive outreach provision
- much good teaching
- good quality learning resources
- effective links with employers.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on full-time courses
- no foundation level provision
- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- ineffective teaching in some practical lessons.

Scope of provision

95. The college offers a range of courses in childcare and education at levels 2 and 3. These include the national diploma in early years and a Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma course in childcare and education. There is no foundation level provision. The NVQs in early years at levels 2 and 3 attract increasing numbers of full-time and part-time students. Of the 518 students in childcare, 391 are doing NVQs and 73 are work-based learners.

Achievement and standards

96. Pass rates are satisfactory on most full-time courses. Data for part-time courses are unreliable but indications are that pass rates for NVQ level 3 early years and education are improving in 2000/01 compared to previous years. Many students take too long to complete the qualification. Retention rates have declined to below national averages on full-time courses and have not met the realistic targets set by the college. In 2001, the retention rate on the NVQ level 2 early years and education was 63%, well below the national average of 83%. Some students are permitted on to level 2 courses without meeting the initial entry requirements as there is no foundation level course. This lack of provision at foundation level also inhibits entry into a career in childcare for others. The achievements of modern apprentices are poor. Only 32% of those who started between 1998 to 2001 remain in training and only 5% have achieved the framework qualification. The attainment of students is unsatisfactory on many courses. Attendance and punctuality are good.

97. There is extensive provision for NVQs in the college's many outreach centres. Students are highly appreciative of the opportunity to attend lessons in their locality at a range of times to suit them. These opportunities have effectively widened participation and contributed considerably to raising the standard of childcare in these localities. Progression rates from intermediate to advanced level courses are satisfactory, but the number of students involved is low. Guidance on progression from advanced level courses is ineffective. Few students progress to HE. Many progress to relevant employment on completion of their courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ early years and education (full time)	2	No. of starts	6	11	16
		% retention	83	82	63
		% pass rate	100	100	60

NVQ early years and education (full time)	2	No. of starts	19	36	56
		% retention	63	69	82
		% pass rate	**	**	**
NVQ early years and education (part time)	3	No. of starts	40	60	74
		% retention	75	55	72
		% pass rate	**	**	**
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	19	14	12
		% retention	78	79	75
		% pass rate	93	91	88
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	*	12	14
		% retention	*	82	69
		% pass rate	*	100	89

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

* course not running

** unreliable data

Quality of teaching and learning

98. There is much good teaching. Teaching was assessed as good or better in 73% of lessons and unsatisfactory in 9% of lessons. Most lessons are carefully planned using a range of teaching methods to address the needs of individual students. Lesson plans and schemes of work vary in detail. Theoretical lessons are the most effective. In a successful revision lesson, students were able to discuss and critically evaluate a range of theorists. The teacher's good subject knowledge was used to effectively link theory and practice. Teachers produce good written materials to help students to understand the more abstract ideas raised in lessons. The materials are well designed and use simple language to help students to learn. However, some practical lessons are less effective. Teachers do not make sufficient links between the acquisition of practical caring skills and best practice in the workplace. In one lesson on nursery art, some students produced work which was not suitable for use with children. Targets for completion of practical artwork in the lesson were not set and may students achieved very little. The small number of students have resulted in the first and second years of courses being combined for some lessons. The management of these lessons is unsatisfactory. Second-year students spend too much time revising work that they studied in the first year.

99. Internal verification is thorough and effective. Most assignments are carefully marked. Students value the prompt and helpful feedback they receive. There is detailed initial assessment of students' needs at the beginning of their courses. Support workers and teachers combine effectively to provide excellent classroom support.

100. The college has modified its arrangements for work-based assessment. It now works closely with the assessors to ensure that assessment is planned and conducted properly. There are sufficient work-based assessors. Relationships with employers are good. Employers appreciate the detailed and relevant feedback on learner progress. Targets are shared and arrangements for future visits and assessment opportunities agreed. Support for work-based learners includes a telephone help line which gives learners and employers easy access to information and advice. The full impact of these improvements has still to be reflected in increased achievement of framework qualifications. Other students receive good support through the well-organised tutorial programme.

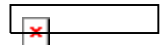
101. Teachers are well qualified with wide ranging experience in the early years services. However,

the college does not employ any current early years teachers or health visitors. Accommodation is well suited to the teaching of childcare and education courses. Most classrooms contain attractive displays of students' work. Students have adequate access to computers in their classrooms, but some of the computers do not work properly. The library is stocked with relevant and up-to-date books, journals and audio visual resources.

Leadership and management

102. Leadership and management are clear and satisfactory, and have had a positive impact on the quality of provision. Most course management is satisfactory. Members of course teams are clearly identified with their lines of responsibility understood by all staff. Course planning makes insufficient use of the data provided by the college's management information system on students' retention and achievement. Appraisals take place annually and include many part-time staff. However, appraisal records are not used effectively to identify the training needs of staff.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- good progression to HE and employment
- good teaching of practical skills
- good quality learning materials.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on NVQs in care
- poor retention and achievement of work-based learners
- poor assessment practices
- inadequate internal verification

- ineffective progress reviews.

Scope of provision

103. The college offers NVQs in care at levels 2, 3 and 4. Most students are adults who are employed in private and public sector care homes and receive their training and assessment in the workplace. Provision is offered in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and includes a major contract with a large National Health Service (NHS) community trust. There has been a six-fold increase in the number of students over the last two years. There are 900 students following NVQ programmes. Some 89 of these are 16-18 year olds who are following foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. A small number of students are enrolled on full-time national diplomas in caring services (social care) and science (health studies). The college also offers a range of short statutory care courses for employers, care students and those following courses in other curriculum areas. These include first aid and moving and handling. A small number of adult students follow introductory courses in counselling.

Achievement and standards

104. Most students who complete NVQs in care are successful in achieving their qualification. For example, at level 2, retention in 2001 was 63% compared to the national average of 74%. Retention rates are improving, particularly at level 2 but they are still well below average. Many students take too long to achieve the qualification. Pass rates have declined at level 3 from 92% in 2000 to 87% in 2001, but are still above the national average of 59%. The retention and pass rates on the national diploma courses are below national averages. Retention and achievement of work-based learners is well below average. Of the 68 learners who started between 1998 and 2001 only 25% remain in training and only 12% have achieved the framework qualification.

105. Students demonstrate a clear understanding of care through their oral contributions in lessons. They work well in group activities. Most portfolios of written work are carefully constructed. Work is thoroughly researched and well presented. However, some students do not possess sufficient literacy skills to complete written tasks effectively. The standard of much assignment work is unsatisfactory. Skills in ICT and numeracy are low. Students have good practical caring skills and demonstrate good professional practice in the workplace. Progression into jobs or HE is good. Many are promoted to positions of greater responsibility at work as a result of their qualifications.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	395	149	138
		% retention	43	32	63
		% pass rate	100	88	87
NVQ care	3	No. of starts	81	85	120
		% retention	30	68	70
		% pass rate	100	92	87
National diploma in science (health studies)	3	No. of starts	*	12	6
		% retention	*	64	67
		% pass rate	*	83	75

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

106. Most teaching is good and none is less than satisfactory. Virtually all learners are taught and assessed in their places of work, often on an individual basis. Lessons are well planned. Students are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their courses. Teachers pay careful attention to relevant industrial practices. They make good use of students' own work experiences in relating theory to care practice. Practical teaching is good and in the best lessons, teachers use a variety of activities to maintain interest. For example, in one first aid lesson with two teachers, two tasks were undertaken by the group. While one group practised cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in another room, the others were given a theory lesson. This arrangement enabled the teachers to focus more closely on meeting the diverse learning needs of each group. In the less successful lessons, too much time is wasted on undemanding tasks such as filling in forms. Learning materials produced by teachers are good. They are well presented, relevant and teachers make good use of topical issues in care provision to interest students. A useful pack of materials has been developed to help NVQ students who are doing much of their learning on their own at work.

107. Arrangements for assessment are poor. There are insufficient assessors and verifiers to meet the needs of the increasing numbers taking NVQs. For many learners, assessment in the workplace is too late in their programme. Priority in assessment is inappropriately given to written evidence rather than the observation of practice. Many learners are unsure of the assessment arrangements or who is responsible for carrying them out. Internal verification of NVQ assessment is inadequate. Although regular assessor meetings are held, many work-based assessors do not attend. There have been few observations of work-based assessors undertaking assessment. Many learners' portfolios are not verified until the end of the assessment process. The college has been aware of these weaknesses for some time, but improvement has been slow.

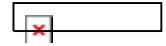
108. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy needs is undertaken for all full-time students and modern apprentices, but assessors and teachers are often unaware of the results. Little assessment is done of the literacy and numeracy needs of adult NVQ learners. Written work undertaken during the preparatory care career pathway programme is assessed, but the criteria for its assessment are unclear and no clear statements of individual needs result. None of the care career pathway students have individual learning plans. Progress reviews are carried out for full-time students and modern apprentices each term. Adult NVQ learners often have long gaps between their reviews or none at all. As there is little initial assessment, teachers are unaware of learners' ability and the potential rate of progress is unknown. Few reviews contain worthwhile targets and actions agreed at the reviews that do take place are poorly recorded.

109. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Accommodation in the college is satisfactory. Classrooms are large and well equipped. However, many of the rooms used for teaching in the workplace are cramped and sparsely furnished. In some care homes, teaching takes place in rooms occupied by the residents. The college library has sufficient reference books but is little used by students. Some care homes have small libraries of books, journals and videos for learners to use.

Leadership and management

110. The management of teaching and learning is effective. Course teams meet frequently. Teachers are effectively deployed to teach in the workplace. However, managers have been slow to respond to the significant weaknesses in assessment practice. The management of key skills for work-based learners is poor. Key skills are viewed negatively by the learners and there is little integration with NVQs.

Basic skills



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

Strengths

- good achievements in basic skills
- effective individual programmes for students
- effective learning by students on discrete basic skills courses
- well-designed materials produced to professional standards.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on short courses
- little basic skills development for part-time vocational students
- inappropriate teaching rooms
- insufficient numbers of trained and experienced staff.

Scope of provision

111. The college offers part-time courses in basic skills to 86 students at its main site, a smaller site in nearby Ashby-de-la-Zouch and a number of community outreach venues. Some basic skills provision is franchised. This includes provision for speakers of other languages in Leicester and basic skills taught by the Probation Service. Approximately 300 students on vocational courses across a number of college sites receive basic skills learning support. At level 1 there are 498 students studying key skills in communication and application of number as part of their vocational programmes. The college intends to introduce the new entry level qualifications in September 2002.

Achievement and standards

112. Students' basic skills achievements are above the national average and have increased significantly in 2000/01. Pass rates are above the national average on the basic English long course and retention rates have improved to broadly similar to the national average. Retention rates are below the national average on short courses. The college has analysed additional learning support in literacy and numeracy for students on vocational programmes. This has shown improvements in retention and achievement for students receiving support.

113. The standard of students' work in basic and key skills is satisfactory. Effective individual programmes are devised for basic skills students, based on each person's needs and interests. These targets for students are related to the national standards for literacy and numeracy. Students on basic skills courses make good progress in developing the reading, writing, speaking and numeracy skills identified in their individual plans. They grow in confidence and develop their personal skills. They acquire skills in ICT and become more independent as learners. Regular termly reviews of progress are held for all students. Many students on key skills at level 1 make slow progress in completing assignments. Attendance rates for key skills sessions are often low.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Basic English (long)	E	No. of starts	86	77	30
		% retention	62	61	76
		% pass rate	98	80	95
Basic English (short)	E	No. of starts	32	53	59
		% retention	84	89	78
		% pass rate	80	59	96
Basic numeracy	E	No. of starts	21	23	14
		% retention	86	91	71
		% pass rate	94	76	100

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

Quality of education and training

114. Most teaching is satisfactory. The best teaching is by experienced staff who have specialist qualifications in basic skills. These lessons showed extensive knowledge of the processes of acquiring literacy and numeracy skills as well as the skills needed to help students develop. Learning on these discrete basic skills courses was effective. Students make observable progress within lessons and over time. Experienced teachers have good group management skills and demonstrate sensitivity in their feedback to students. Well-designed learning materials are produced to professional standards focusing on students' interests. In the unsatisfactory lessons, teachers' own errors in writing or calculating limit students' progress.

115. Key skills teachers devise detailed, timed action plans together with their students, but key skills programmes do not reflect the vocational interests of the students and are not valued by them. Work has begun on devising vocationally specific assignments to interest students more.

116. Basic skills development for part-time students is limited. The number of sessions offered to adults has reduced over the past number of years. Most adult students only study for between two and four hours weekly, which is insufficient to maximise their learning. Students at the centre in Leicester are better off as they study intensively for two-week periods which is an effective method

for developing skills. Learners with the Probation Service are offered one hour's teaching weekly, individually or in small groups.

117. Most teaching accommodation is old and not conducive to learning. College teaching takes place in rooms with little natural light and bare walls or inappropriate wall displays. Rooms are too small for some key skills groups. The main classroom in the college has attractive wall displays and has a good range of the best commercially produced material. There is good office-style workshop accommodation in the franchised provision in Leicester. Some child orientated and hand-written learning material is still in use in franchised provision in Leicester, which is predominately for adults. Students on the main site and in Leicester have access to computers, but those in the main classroom and laptops for outreach use are unreliable and unable to cope with new software. Most staff have specialist teaching qualifications. New posts equating to 3.5 full-time equivalent teachers have been created but there remains a shortage of experienced specialist staff to consolidate and develop the programme.

Leadership and management

118. Most management of basic skills provision is effective. In January 2001, discrete basic skills, key skills and learning support were brought together under one senior manager who leads a whole college approach to teaching basic skills. This is a positive move but it is too early to fully judge the impact of this on students and teaching standards. The length and availability of study sessions create problems for some students. There are no entry level vocational courses for adults with basic skills needs. Students on work-based learning programmes have little opportunity for basic skills development. Most vocational staff have attended a short course in basic skills awareness training. Good practice is beginning to be shared. A project to train and recruit new basic skills teachers is starting to redress teacher shortages.

Part D: College data

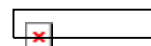
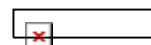


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	27	27
2	46	26
3	18	18
4/5	1	4
Other	8	25
Total	100	100



Source: Provided by the college in spring 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	1,473	3,005	26
Agriculture	41	76	1
Construction	228	745	6
Engineering	663	580	7
Business	327	710	6
Hotel and catering	213	309	3
Health and community care	382	2,985	20
Art and design	81	121	1
Humanities	2,592	1,555	25
Basic education	52	738	5
Total	6,052	10,824	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01
1	Starters excluding transfers	509	789	514	547	693	781
	Retention rate (%)	88	82	79	78	80	78
	National average (%)	80	80	*	78	79	*
	Pass rate (%)	81	92	74	68	87	79
	National average (%)	62	66	*	63	68	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	590	680	762	1002	851	1255
	Retention rate (%)	73	81	75	67	70	74
	National average (%)	76	77	*	79	79	*
	Pass rate (%)	87	86	78	82	76	82
	National average (%)	67	68	*	65	68	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	578	626	452	801	851	831
	Retention rate (%)	82	80	76	73	79	71
	National average (%)	77	77	*	79	79	*

	Pass rate (%)	92	85	81	93	83	81
	National average (%)	72	73	*	65	69	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	22	21	21	168	176	55
	Retention rate (%)	91	81	90	78	72	69
	National average (%)	83	81	*	84	81	*
	Pass rate (%)	84	88	74	83	66	72
	National average (%)	65	69	*	61	60	*

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

* data not available

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 1997/98 - 1998/1999: *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)	66	30	4	53
Level 2 (intermediate)	51	43	6	49
Level 1 (foundation)	50	40	10	20
Other sessions	72	16	12	25
Totals	60	33	7	147

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