



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Shrewsbury Sixth Form College

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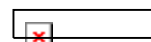
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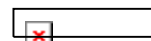
**Basic information about the college**



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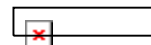
Name of college:	Shrewsbury Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Bill Dowell
Address of college:	Priory Road Shrewsbury Shropshire SY1 1RX
Telephone number:	01743 235 491
Fax number:	01743 242 735
Chair of governors:	Robert Bland
Unique reference number:	130800
Name of reporting inspector:	John Evans HMI
Date of inspection:	28 April-3 May 2003

**Part A: Summary**



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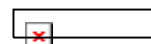
## Information about the college



Shrewsbury Sixth Form College is situated near the town centre of Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire. The town has a population of approximately 70,000 people. The college is a medium-sized sixth form college serving the town and the surrounding area. There is also a general further education (FE) college in Shrewsbury. In 2000/01, the participation rate in post-16 full-time education in Shropshire was 69%, a fall of 4% from the previous year. Some 54% of young people achieved at least 5 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications at grades A\* to C, of whom 92% continued into full-time education. Achievement at GCSE level in Shrewsbury schools is better than the Shropshire average.

The college was established in 1981 as part of the local re-organisation of secondary education. Student numbers have increased year on year. The college has around 1,100 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 900 part-time adult students. Its core work is the advanced level academic curriculum for students aged 16 to 18, supplemented by a small number of GCSEs and vocational courses. This curriculum is taught in 34 subject areas, organised into three sections. There is an additional lifelong learning section responsible for part-time courses for adults. The college offers courses in 11 areas of learning. There is very little or no provision in land-based industries, construction, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Three areas of learning - humanities, science and mathematics, and English, languages and communications - together account for 70% of all enrolments. In the current year, 53% of students are female and 47% are male. The college shares a joint leadership team with a small FE college situated 20 miles away. This is the first year of this development, building on two years of close collaboration. The college's mission is 'to provide educational and training opportunities, and support, of the highest quality'. It challenges all learners to achieve their potential, and develop the skills to enable progression to a life of learning.

## How effective is the college?



The college provides good teaching and high quality learning resources across a broad General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and Advanced level (GCE A-level) curriculum. Retention and pass rates are high. Most students achieve higher grades than might be predicted from their previous attainments, though the most able are not always given sufficiently demanding work in lessons and overall pass rates in key skills are poor. The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievement were judged to be outstanding in mathematics and good in all other curriculum areas inspected. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

### **Key strengths**

- high pass rates
- good provision in all curriculum areas, with outstanding provision in several individual subjects

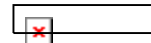
- good teaching and effective learning
- high standards of students' work
- effective monitoring and improvement of students' achievements
- good learning environment and resources
- very good support and guidance for students
- broad GCE AS and A-level curriculum
- involvement in local partnerships to promote educational and social inclusion.

***What should be improved***

- the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements
- enrichment and key skills
- social facilities for students
- the sharing of good practice between subject areas.

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

## Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high and many students get high grades in biological subjects. Most teaching is good or very good and there is good use of information and communications technology (ICT) in chemistry and physics. Students develop good practical skills. Quality assurance procedures are not applied rigorously in all subjects.
Mathematics	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates are excellent on advanced level courses. A high proportion of students achieve grades A* to C, and many achieve higher grades than would be expected based on their GCSE results. The majority of teaching is good or better and makes effective use of ICT and information and learning technology (ILT). Assessment and monitoring of students' progress is thorough.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high. Most teaching is good or better, and much is very good in economics. Students get very good individual subject support from their teachers and work in a stimulating learning environment. Quality assurance procedures are not applied consistently at subject level.
Computing and information technology	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates have improved and were high in 2002. Most teaching is good or better and much is very good on courses for adults and in GCE A-level ICT lessons. Teachers give students effective individual subject support. There are few opportunities for adult students to progress to other courses and actions for improvement are not systematically implemented.
Travel, physical education and food	<b>Good.</b> Pass and retention rates are high. Most teaching is good or very good and this helps students to achieve high standards in their work. Students get very good individual subject support from their teachers. There are insufficient opportunities for students to undertake certified enrichment activities and for staff to share good practice.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high. Teaching is good or very good in most subjects and meets the individual needs of students well. Students are well supported by their teachers, work effectively on their own, and produce work of a high standard. There is insufficient monitoring of aspects of teaching and learning and little sharing of good practice across the arts.
Humanities	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high. Most teaching is good or better in all subjects. Students get good individual support from their teachers, and good accommodation and resources enhance their learning. The monitoring of students' progress is not always rigorous. Some quality assurance procedures are not applied satisfactorily.
Social science	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high. Most teaching is good or very good, and learning takes place in a stimulating and attractive environment. Students are well motivated and work enthusiastically. Monitoring of compliance with college quality assurance procedures is

	not effective and teachers do not share good practice between subjects.
English and foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high on full-time courses. The majority of teaching is good or very good and teachers have enthusiasm for their subjects. Students are supported well by their teachers and participate keenly in many lessons. Action planning for improvement is not well established.

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

Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers provide a clear strategic direction for the college and carefully monitor progress in achieving the objectives. Challenging targets are set for students' achievement and retention. Pass and retention rates have continued to improve over the past three years and are high. The quality of teaching and learning is better than for sixth form colleges generally. Provision is good in all the areas inspected. The college self-assessment report is comprehensive and subject to thorough validation, but the application of quality assurance, self-assessment and action planning procedures at subject level is not sufficiently thorough. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between subject areas. The college has further improved the quality of its accommodation since the last inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Financial management is good and staff are deployed efficiently. The college provides good value for money.

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

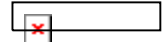
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It is actively involved in local initiatives designed to widen participation, including effective partnerships with two local 11 to 16 schools. The college uses its strong links with local charitable organisations and the local education authority (LEA) to reach adult learners with learning difficulties, those who have been away from education for some time, or those who need to improve their basic skills. Increasing numbers of adults are enrolling on college courses. Effective action has been taken to make the college accessible to students with restricted mobility. The college has suitably amended its equal opportunities policy to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. There is an equality and diversity action plan. However, the college does not sufficiently promote equality of opportunity through its teaching or its tutorial system.

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

Students receive very good guidance and support throughout their studies. The college's links with its partner schools are effective. It provides prospective students with excellent and impartial pre-course information and guidance. Admissions arrangements are effective and the induction process is comprehensive. Tutorial provision is well organised. Students have frequent opportunities to

guidance help students to progress into higher education (HE) or employment. Information and advice on financial, health, and welfare matters are readily available. Students' attendance is monitored closely and absences are followed up quickly. Additional learning support is available for those students who are identified as needing it. However, teachers are not always informed of the progress of individual students who receive it. There is no personal and social development programme.

### **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***

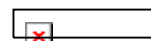
- excellent relationships with enthusiastic teachers
- high standards of teaching
- good facilities in the learning centre, including computers
- wide choice of GCE A-level subjects
- very good personal and academic support from teachers
- effective learning support
- good careers advice and guidance
- adult atmosphere.

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

- inadequate social areas and crowded canteen

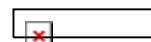
- crowded and noisy learning centre
- lack of space in accommodation in some subject areas.

### Other information

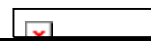


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

### Part B: The college as a whole



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

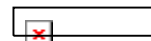


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	76	22	2
Teaching 19+	87	13	0
Learning 16-18	73	25	2
Learning 19+	87	13	0

*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).*

### Achievement and standards





1. In 2001/02, 88% of college enrolments were full-time students aged 16 to 18. Of these students, 98% studied qualifications at level 3 and approximately 1% studied at level 2. The remaining 12% of enrolments in 2001/02 were by adults aged 19 and over, primarily on part-time courses. Adult students mostly take courses at level 1 and level 2 and short introductory computing courses.

### **16 to 18 year olds**

2. During the period 1999 to 2001, retention and pass rates at level 3 compared favourably with the national averages for sixth form colleges. The retention rate improved from 81% in 1998/99 to 88% in each of the following two years. The pass rate declined slightly in 2000 to the national average, but improved again in 2001 to 89%, compared with the national average of 85%. At GCE A level, pass rates were consistently high in most science subjects, mathematics, business studies and economics, art and design, English and foreign languages and most humanities and social science subjects. Only those in home economics and general studies were significantly below the national average. The overall pass rate for GCE A-level improved from 88% in 1998 to 91% in 2001.

3. Data on students' achievements in 2001/02 show further very significant improvement at GCE A-level. The overall retention rate increased markedly at level 3 to 95%. The retention rate for the second year of the GCE A-level course was uniformly high; most subjects recorded rates at, or slightly below, 100%. Retention rates for most GCE AS subjects were above 90%. The overall pass rate at level 3 improved to 93%. The pass rate at GCE A-level, including general studies, was 97%, with 20 subjects recording a 100% pass rate. Achievement of the higher grades of A-C was 73% overall, and above 80% in 10 subjects. The overall pass rate for GCE AS subjects was 90%, a slight fall from the previous year. There were pass rates of 100% in seven GCE AS subjects; 63% of students achieved higher grades.

4. Data for 2002, which compares students' results at GCE AS and A level with their previous achievements at GCSE, show that students are achieving higher grades than predicted in some subjects. At GCE A level, the degree of improvement is most significant for mathematics, human biology, history, geography, law, sociology and English language. Students in economics and design achieved below their expected grades. At GCE AS, the degree of improvement is significant in mathematics, design, history, geography and classics. Students of general studies, English language and Spanish achieved below their predicted grades. Data for other subjects show students achieving results broadly in line with predictions made on entry.

5. Results for Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCE) courses in 2002 show pass rates of 100% on each of the double awards and 93% on the one single award. In travel and tourism, 85% of students completing the double award achieved higher grades, well above the national average. Retention and pass rates on the AVCE's precursor, the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced programmes, fluctuated, but were broadly in line with the national averages.

6. At level 2, the overall retention and pass rates were above the national level over the period from 1999 to 2001. In 2002, the pass rate on the small remaining GNVQ intermediate course was 100%. The proportion of students achieving grades A to C for GCSE mathematics and English, at 51% and 79%, respectively, compares favourably with re-sit courses in other colleges. Achievements in key skills at levels 2 and 3 have been poor. The majority of students fail to complete all aspects of the assessment programme.

7. Attendance during the inspection averaged 87%: some 3% above the national average for sixth form colleges. It was highest in business, at 91%, and lowest in computing and IT, at 80%. Most students arrived punctually to lessons, but lateness is a problem in some curriculum areas, particularly in English and modern languages where it is allowed to disrupt the learning of other students.

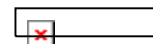
8. The standard of students' work is usually good, and often very good. Students are well motivated

and make good progress in their subjects. Coursework is of a high standard in all curriculum areas. Most students confidently demonstrate the skills most fundamental to individual subjects. In humanities and social science subjects, for example, they display impressive levels of knowledge and understanding, which they are able to adapt and apply in new contexts. They develop good practical skills in science and use equipment purposefully and accurately. Mathematics students are confident when solving mathematical problems. Music students demonstrate high standards of performance, and design students show a strong practical appreciation of the importance of design development and experimentation. Rates of progression to HE are high, at about 80% each year.

### **Adult learners**

9. The relatively small number of adults studying accredited courses are largely enrolled on evening-class programmes in information technology (IT) and languages. Retention and pass rates for adult students have been above the national average at all levels for the last three years. In 2002, retention and pass rates across the range of IT courses for adults were high. However, retention and pass rates are generally unsatisfactory on GCSE language courses for adults.

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



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 138 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 77% of lessons, satisfactory in 22% and less than satisfactory in 1%. In one-third of individual subjects, all teaching observed was good or better. In a high proportion of lessons, 41%, teaching was very good or excellent.

11. Teachers show considerable enthusiasm in their teaching. Most lessons are well planned and have clear objectives, although these are not always shared with students. Teachers make good links with what has been learnt previously and use a varied range of teaching methods and learning activities. Teaching is strongly focused on covering the requirements of the syllabus and external examinations. In the most effective lessons, teachers carefully structure learning activities to develop students' knowledge and understanding in progressive stages at an appropriate pace. This helps students to gain a thorough understanding of the syllabus requirements, together with the range of skills and knowledge they need to succeed in examinations. Students receive very good individual support from teachers both within and outside their lessons. Many teachers make excellent use of ICT and develop imaginative approaches to promoting good learning which engage the whole class, especially in mathematics, business, geography, design, music and media, PE and travel and tourism. In many subjects, students make good use of the Internet and college intranet for research both during lessons and as part of homework, and use computers to prepare written work. Most students' work is thoroughly marked with good indications of how they can improve their performance.

12. In the less successful lessons, there is a great deal of teacher exposition, which sometimes fails to maintain students' interest or fully engage them in the topic. In some subjects, few opportunities were provided for students to work together. The use of questioning to check students' understanding is not as effective during whole-group teaching. Teachers do not pay enough attention, when planning lessons, to ensuring that learning activities and materials are matched to the range of abilities and learning preferences within the class. In some subjects, this results in more able students being insufficiently challenged and losing interest.

13. Most teachers are graduates with qualified teacher status. There are 55 full-time teachers and 31 part-time teachers. Their individual training needs are identified during the annual review. However, although the focus of the college-wide staff development programme is on teaching and learning, around 15% of full-time teachers did not have a review in 2001/02. Most full-time teachers are observed teaching once each year, but the findings are not usually included in their annual review.

14. The college is successfully implementing its accommodation strategy. It has increased student numbers, provided new specialist facilities and eased the pressure on teaching and social areas. Space is used efficiently. Classrooms are well equipped and many have been imaginatively developed as teaching rooms for specific subjects. However, some classrooms remain overcrowded. Access to the college for those with restricted mobility has improved, but access to mobile classrooms for social science subjects and a room for food technology remains poor. The college's aim of providing good teaching accommodation is made more difficult by the growth in student numbers and the listed status of some buildings. Social facilities for students are inadequate.

15. The learning centre is outstanding. It includes a wide range of learning materials, student support services, classrooms and a base for LearnDirect. Networked computer workstations are located alongside each subject section. The book stock and periodical list are good for most subjects. However, at times, there are not enough study spaces for all the students wishing to use it.

16. IT resources are good. Students and staff have good access to computers. Teachers can have their own laptop computer. Desktop computers are all networked and provide access to the Internet. Students make good use of the well-established college intranet. Technical support is readily available to help teachers develop their own sites. Students on the GCE AS geology course use the videoconferencing facilities to share lessons with students at Ludlow College.

17. Assessment is thorough and regular. The college monitors the quality of assessment through the assessment, review and reporting group. The group also disseminates good practice. The clear internal verification policy and procedures are implemented effectively on the majority of courses. A senior manager monitors comments from examiners and verifiers appointed by regulatory bodies to ensure that they are responded to promptly and appropriately. Most students get clear assessment plans at the beginning of their courses to help them plan their work. Teachers regularly set tests and homework for students. Many subject teams analyse internal assessment through cross-moderation of marking. Most teachers mark students' work carefully, correct errors and return it promptly. Some teachers, however, do not provide enough written comments to help students see what they did well and understand where they can improve their work.

18. Students' progress is carefully monitored in the majority of subjects. Students are given target grades for effort and attainment in each subject, using data on their prior GCSE performance and their current progress. Teachers provide students with prompt sheets to help them complete their action plans to achieve the targets. However, the quality of the action plans varies between subjects. Parents can meet with subject teachers twice in the year to discuss academic progress. They also receive progress reports three times a year. They value those produced at the end of the year, but find those issued at the end of each term difficult to understand.

19. Full-time students have a wide choice of GCE AS and A-level subjects. Some 33 subjects are offered at GCE AS and most are also available at GCE A level. Students can also choose from one AVCE double award and one AVCE single award programme. Most GCE A-level students take four GCE AS subjects in their first year together with general studies, key skills and an enrichment programme. Students have few opportunities to study a combination of academic and vocational subjects. However, some students study GCE AS or A-level subjects with an AVCE single or double award in travel and tourism. There are few courses at intermediate level. There is a GNVQ intermediate business course and the college plans to offer four vocational GCSE courses from September 2003. Adult education courses include languages, ICT and leisure activities, and those designed to widen participation by disadvantaged groups.

20. The range of college-wide enrichment activities designed to broaden students' awareness and experience is small. It includes sports, the Duke of Edinburgh and community sports leader awards, and participation in music groups and bands. The student council also organises a number of social and charitable events. Students do benefit from additional activities within their subject, for example, study trips to Europe and theatre visits.

21. All students are entitled to develop the three main key skills. At intermediate level, they are taught in separate lessons. In GCE AS subjects, many teachers give students opportunities to develop their key skills. GCE AS general studies is intended to prepare students for the

communication qualification. However, most students attach little value to key skills. Attendance at lessons for key skills for advanced level students in IT and in GCE AS general studies is unsatisfactory, and few students achieve key skills certification.

22. The college has effective links with its partner schools. In 2002, the college ran a successful gifted and talented summer school for pupils in years six and seven from local schools. The college provides excellent impartial pre-course information and guidance to Year 10 and Year 11 pupils at their schools. The college's prospectus, course information sheets and web site are well designed and provide useful and accurate information on courses. The admissions arrangements are effective. There is a joint application arrangement with Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology. All applicants for full-time courses are interviewed before they start their course. Where necessary, they are advised to enrol on a more appropriate course elsewhere. Prospective students and their parents appreciate the support provided, and indicate high levels of satisfaction in the college's surveys of their views.

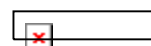
23. Induction held for prospective students towards the end of their last term at school is effective. It enables them to get a good feel of the college and their proposed course, and to settle in quickly to their studies. They receive a student handbook and the charter and their rights and responsibilities are clearly explained. Parents of new students are invited to an induction evening to meet tutors and senior staff. Tutorial provision is well organised and the tutorial programme is well planned. Senior tutors give personal tutors excellent guidance and support. They provide a detailed college programme, good supporting documentation and regular briefings. Tutorials are held twice a week. High expectations of students are accompanied by frequent opportunities to discuss and plan future courses of study or employment. However, tutorials are not observed as part of the lesson observation programme. There is no personal and social development programme and equal opportunities are not well promoted.

24. Careers education and guidance are good. Over 80% of level 3 students progress to HE. Tutors, supported by personal advisers from the local Connexions partnership, also offer effective careers guidance to those wishing to gain employment. The college's adult careers adviser provides adults with careers guidance. The learning centre is well stocked with careers information. The college holds its own careers convention and arranges visits for students to outside careers events. It also arranges for students to attend talks on HE and specialist careers organised by a local public school. An evening meeting on HE is held for parents.

25. Information and advice on financial, health, and welfare matters are readily available to all students from support staff located in the learning centre. Tutors make sure that students know the people who can help them, both in their studies and with personal matters. Students can use a confidential counselling service or be referred to specialist external agencies when necessary.

26. The additional learning support needs of full-time students are carefully identified through the interview process, from school reports or by assessment. In addition, some students refer themselves for support or are referred by a tutor. Learning support is well organised. Students can attend subject-specific support lessons, one-to-one sessions for those with specific learning difficulties, and general study support sessions on topics such as note taking and essay writing. However, subject teachers are not always made aware of the progress of individual students who receive additional learning support. Some students who would benefit from attending learning support sessions do not do so. Students' attendance is monitored closely and absences are followed-up quickly. Those identified as 'at risk' of withdrawing from their courses are carefully monitored and supported.

## **Leadership and management**



provide a clear strategic direction. Strategic planning is systematic. Clear and appropriate strategic objectives include excellence in students' achievements, high quality courses in specific areas for adults and the development of education in Shropshire through collaborative ventures. There is a detailed development plan for the achievement of the college's strategic objectives, and progress towards meeting the targets is carefully monitored each term. Students' achievements are high and showing steady improvement; the pass rate at GCE A-level of 97% with 73% of grades A-C in 2002. The quality of teaching and learning is better than for sixth form colleges generally. Provision is good in all curriculum areas inspected, and outstanding in some individual subjects.

28. Governors and senior managers are strongly committed to promoting students' achievement. Senior managers provide appropriate information to enable governors to monitor the college's performance. Clear targets are set and closely monitored. The recently established quality and standards committee has improved governors' detailed understanding of the college's performance. Governors are aware of areas of concern and ask for more information if necessary to help them to determine what action to take. Although the range of expertise among governors matches the needs of the college, the corporation has difficulty recruiting and retaining women on the board. At the time of the inspection, there was only one female governor, as several others had recently resigned from the board. There has been slow progress towards creating and implementing a formal training and development programme for governors, a weakness identified in the last FEFC inspection in 2000.

29. The college has recently reorganised the senior management structure. A joint leadership team with Ludlow College, comprising the principals of both colleges and three directors, has been established to plan curriculum development and to improve students' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Although it is too soon to judge the success of this arrangement, there have been benefits such as joint staff training. The college management team comprises the principal and directors, the assistant principal, and the risk and estates manager. They work effectively as a team and staff value the accessibility and support of senior managers. However, some staff do not clearly understand the responsibilities of senior managers in the new structure.

30. A panel, including a governor and a representative from another sixth form college, validated the college's most recent self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with most of the grades awarded. Detailed data on students' achievement, retention rates and attendance, including national benchmarking data, are used in making judgements and determining actions. Students' views are gathered and their concerns acted upon. However, managers do not ensure that quality assurance is sufficiently rigorous at subject level. Some subject area self-assessment reports are satisfactory, but many do not effectively evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Action plans also vary in effectiveness. Weaknesses identified by self-assessment are not always addressed, agreed actions are not always sufficiently specific, and completion dates are often not included. There is inadequate monitoring of progress made towards achieving the improvements planned. Some middle managers and teachers are not convinced of the value of self-assessment.

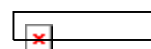
31. The college has a process for observing lessons and evaluating teaching and learning. The observation schedule for this year is on target, but few observations took place during 2001/02. Lesson observation for teachers on part-time courses for adults has only recently begun, and there is no observation of tutorial work. Some evaluations lack clear judgements and there is no assurance that actions are taken at an individual level to address any identified weaknesses in teaching and learning. The results of lesson observation are not used in the annual staff review process. Some teachers do not see the need for lesson observations. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between subject areas.

32. The college has engaged in a range of collaborative projects with local partners that successfully promote educational and social inclusion. These include support for adult students with special needs on programmes such as homestart and independent living. Some students act as mentors to pupils in two local 11 to 16 schools as part of a strategy to promote educational progression. The number of applications from these schools has risen in 2003. The college is well represented on many local groups, for example, the Shrewsbury Partnership in Education and Training. It is a significant partner in the 14 to 19 Pathfinder initiative within Shropshire. The college's equal opportunities and race equality policies have been revised to meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Initial staff training

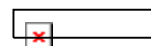
has been provided on the college's increased responsibilities under the new legislation. The college monitors enrolments and achievement by gender and by progression from partner school, but implementation of the equality and diversity action plan is at an early stage.

33. Financial management is good. Governors and senior managers are provided with sufficient data to enable them to monitor effectively the college's financial health, despite persistent problems with the college's management information system. The recent appointment of a director of finance to the joint leadership team is intended to improve strategic financial planning. Staff are deployed efficiently. The average class size is 16, based on enrolments at the time of the inspection. Students' success rates are very good in nearly all areas. The college provides good value for money. Although the college has not met its funding target in each of the last three years, it is on course to meet its target for students aged 16 to 18 in 2002/03.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science



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

#### **Strengths**

- high retention and pass rates
- very good higher grade pass rates for GCE A-level biological sciences
- much good teaching
- students' good practical skills
- good progression to HE in science-related subjects
- good use of ILT in chemistry and physics.

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient planning to support the learning needs of individual students
- little sharing of good practice across science subjects
- lack of rigour in quality assurance.

### **Scope of provision**

34. The college offers a broad range of GCE AS and A-level science subjects. There are currently 520 students on science courses, of whom 300 are studying at GCE AS. There are 80 students on both GCE AS chemistry and physics, 92 on GCE AS biology, 31 on GCE AS human biology and 18 on GCE AS environmental science. About two-thirds of the students continue the subject at GCE A level, although the proportion is slightly lower in biological subjects and environmental science.

### **Achievement and standards**

34. Retention and pass rates are high for all subjects. Data indicate that students achieve broadly in line with expectations based on their previous results. Higher-grade pass rates at GCE A level are above average for all subjects and very high for biological subjects. They have been well above the national average since 2000 and have continued to improve. In 2002, 71% of passes for GCE A-level biology were at higher grades. At GCE AS, higher-grade pass rates are above national averages in most science subjects and at the national average in environmental science. Pass rates of female and male students are broadly similar, but there are differences in higher-grade achievement, with females generally doing slightly better than males.

35. Students' attendance and punctuality are good, but a few students are consistently absent or late. Students produce work of a high standard and demonstrate very good practical science skills. For example, they are confident when planning experiments in physics, such as measurement of spring extension, and their volumetric analysis techniques in chemistry are particularly good. The proportion of students who progress to HE to study science, engineering or medical subjects is very high.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2000 to 2002**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	71	57	68
		% retention	77	75	96
		% pass rate	94	95	98
GCE A-level human biology	3	No. of starts	40	31	32
		% retention	83	81	100
		% pass rate	81	100	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	73	74	58
		% retention	89	81	98

		% pass rate	94	87	98
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	62	67	44
		% retention	89	82	100
		% pass rate	91	87	93
GCE AS biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	*	150	133
		% retention	*	90	89
		% pass rate	*	93	88
GCE AS environmental science	3	No. of starts	*	18	32
		% retention	*	94	97
		% pass rate	*	94	90

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

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

35. Most teaching in science is good and some is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. In most lessons, teachers use a range of activities that promote effective learning. These include the use of ICT in chemistry and physics, and of videos, the overhead projector, games and crosswords in biology. Students undertake fieldwork in both biology and environmental science. The Internet is used for research in all science subjects and the high proportion of practical work and teacher demonstrations helps to extend students' understanding considerably. In a physics lesson, a video depicting the work of Rutherford and a computer-based simulation of the effect of bombarding gold foil with alpha particles helped students to understand atomic structure and maintained their interest. In a carefully planned biology lesson, well-designed worksheets and regular inputs by the teacher encouraged students to thoroughly investigate the factors affecting water loss in plants. Through careful questioning, they could explain their observations and suggest reasons for anomalous results. Very good working relations between students and teachers enhance learning, and all students concentrate in lessons and focus on their task throughout.

36. A few schemes of work lack detail. Teachers do not routinely plan to meet the needs of the full range of students' abilities and consequently, in some lessons, the most able students are not adequately challenged. In other lessons, teachers are occasionally so concerned to cover the full subject specification that the lesson moves on to the next topic despite the fact that not all students have understood the key points.

37. Science teachers are well qualified and experienced, and have had recent subject-specific and assessment-related professional development. Teachers are well supported by experienced technicians. Most equipment is good and there is access to IT in laboratories. However, students always have to work in pairs in physics, because of insufficient apparatus for individual work. All students have good module notes or booklets, but there are full course textbooks only in biology and chemistry. An appropriate range of textbooks is available in the college library. Environmental science has good accommodation in the geography suite, but laboratories for the other three subjects are in different parts of the main site, separated by stairs, and are rather dated and too small for some large classes that use them.

38. Assessment procedures are well established. Each module has an extensive programme of tests and a mock examination. Teachers carefully compare achievement against student and subject targets. Students receive helpful advice on how they can improve their work. Teachers keep detailed records of the work of each student, but assessment policies differ between subjects, as does the amount of assessed work, which is lower in physics and environmental science. In biology and



chemistry, teachers carefully correct errors and provide detailed comments but, in other subjects, marking sometimes consists of little more than ticks and a final comment. Coursework marking in chemistry and environmental science is sometimes lenient, for example, where experimental results are insufficiently accurate.

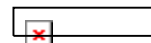
39. The good range of full-time GCE AS and A-level science courses prepares students well for further study. Through links with local universities, students can attend lectures and demonstrations and see equipment used, for example, for spectroscopic analysis. There are also links with the Royal Society of Chemistry, for example, for the Olympiad and the Analyst of the Year competition, but few with local schools and industry. There is no level 2, part-time or evening provision but occasionally an adult student joins classes for full-time students.

40. Students are well supported. Additional workshops are available for each subject, and teachers help individual students at lunchtime or after lessons. Students' progress is monitored thoroughly in both subject and tutorial reviews. Individual support is good within science subjects, but students are not always referred for relevant college learning support. Entry requirements are relatively modest, and the mathematics for physics course for students who do not study GCE AS mathematics, or for those who struggle with mathematics during the course, is especially valuable. Students value the careers advice and guidance available to them.

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

41. Subject leadership is good. Subject teams meet regularly and subject heads ensure students' progress is carefully monitored. The analysis of examination results and data on students' achievements as compared with their previous attainment is thorough. The implementation of the quality assurance procedures lacks rigour. Some self-assessment reports are thorough, but others are incomplete or not sufficiently evaluative. There are few opportunities for sharing good practice across the sciences.

## **Mathematics**



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

### ***Strengths***

- excellent retention and pass rates on advanced level courses
- high levels of achievement relative to prior GCSE grades
- development of good learning resources by teachers
- good use of ICT and ILT in teaching and learning

- very good support for individual students
- highly constructive feedback on students' work.

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient attention in lessons to individual learning needs.

### **Scope of provision**

42. The college offers mathematics and further mathematics at GCE AS and A level to full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are currently 138 students at GCE AS and 108 students at GCE A-level. GCSE mathematics is available to students who have not previously achieved a grade C or above in the subject. There are 35 GCSE students.

### **Achievement and standards**

43. Pass rates are consistently high on all courses. Students' achievement at GCE A level is outstanding. In 2002, the GCE A-level mathematics retention rate was 100% and the pass rate was 98%, and for GCE A-level further mathematics, the retention rate was 99% and the pass rate was 100%. The proportion of students achieving higher grades is significantly above national averages for both courses. Data indicate that students achieve significantly better GCE AS and A-level grades than might be predicted from their GCSE results. The GCSE mathematics retention rate improved significantly in 2001/02, but the pass rate was only slightly above the average for students re-sitting the subject.

44. Students produce good-quality written work maintained in well-organised files. They present solutions to mathematical problems with clarity and conviction. Students on further mathematics courses display high levels of fluency when discussing mathematical ideas. All students are very competent with graphical calculators. There is good progression to HE; 96% of students studying mathematics followed this route in 2002.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2000 to 2002**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	39	35	50
		% retention	79	76	94
		% pass rate	39	69	51
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	103	108	82
		% retention	92	82	99
		% pass rate	94	95	98
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	141	153
		% retention	*	90	91
		% pass rate	*	97	91

GCE A-level mathematics (one year)	3	No. of starts	22	21	16
		% retention	100	95	100
		% pass rate	100	**	94

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

\*\* data unreliable

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

45. The mathematics subject team has developed innovative and imaginative teaching methods. Most teaching is good, and in a significant proportion of lessons it is very good or excellent. All lessons have clear objectives which are explained clearly to students and related to previous and future work. Teachers make good use of ICT to present the core material in each lesson. These presentations are well produced and complemented by course module handbooks. In the most effective lessons, the presentations carefully develop students' knowledge of the topic and the learning moves smoothly from one level of understanding to the next. In a lesson on transformations in three dimensions, the teacher used appropriate software and an interactive whiteboard effectively to demonstrate rotation through 90 degrees and create a visual image students could use to help them find the relevant matrix. Students made further progress using intuitive solutions in three dimensions. Teachers also make good use of intranet and Internet links in the classroom. In a lesson on convergence, an Internet link to 'Waldo's Math' produced an animated illustration that helped to clarify the concept for students and added to their understanding of the topic. Students are encouraged to look beyond the routine to find more elegant solutions to problems.

46. In some lessons, the teacher relies too heavily on an ILT presentation and the innovation and responsiveness that characterise much mathematics teaching are diminished. Teachers explain aspects of mathematics well, but sometimes spend too much time on the same point and some students lose interest. The individual learning needs of students are not systematically considered when lessons are planned, and insufficient use is made of differentiated learning materials to enable all students to make appropriate progress.

47. Mathematics rooms are well equipped with multimedia projectors and interactive whiteboards. Most classrooms have examples of students' work and colourful posters of mathematical interest displayed on the walls. Teaching staff are well qualified and work very effectively as a team to develop very good intranet-based learning material, which students can access from home for extension work or to catch up on any work they have missed. Recent training has focused on using the specialist software available for the ILT equipment in the classroom. A student handbook lists the wide range of learning resources available in the college learning centre or accessible on the intranet. A useful list of mathematics-related web sites is included. Students can also use the mathematics software within their area of the college network.

48. Assessment is thorough. Homework is often set after each lesson and assessments are set across different groups, using common marking schemes. Assessments are carefully planned by the course team and detailed in course booklets and on the intranet. Students' work is carefully marked, with detailed constructive feedback on how it can be improved. Teachers regularly update a database with results from assessments and modules to give a comprehensive overview of the performance of each student.

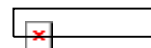
49. The subject area has strong links with partner schools, which teachers visit to provide 'taster' sessions. The mathematics course team has developed learning materials using Mathwise and Autograph software for the 'linking learners' project, which aims to link secondary schools and colleges via the Internet to give Year 11 students access to resources that they would not normally be able to use. There is no opportunity for students achieving grade C in GCSE mathematics to progress to an advanced level mathematics course.

50. Support for individual students is very good. Subject-specific support sessions are available in each teaching block and over one lunchtime each week for students who need further assistance. Students on GCE AS courses who achieved a grade B for GCSE mathematics can attend additional lessons to develop their necessary algebraic skills. Teachers also provide considerable informal support outside lessons. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Tutors provide good guidance and support to students who apply to HE, and subject teachers share useful information on relevant career paths. Additional support is given to students applying to Oxford and Cambridge universities.

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

51. Subject leadership is good and courses are well organised. Teachers work together collaboratively. At regular subject area meetings, they discuss approaches to teaching and learning and students' progress. Data on students' achievement and feedback from students are thoroughly analysed and effective action is taken to address any weaknesses identified. The subject team has developed new teaching methods and sustained high student achievements at advanced level. There has been little exploration of ways to widen access to mathematics and few female students choose the mathematics and mechanics option. The action plan to address weaknesses identified through self-assessment lacks detail. Progress against the plan is not sufficiently monitored.

### **Business**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates
- much good teaching
- stimulating learning environment
- good subject support for individual students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient challenge for more able students
- lack of rigour in quality assurance at subject level.

### **Scope of provision**

52. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in accounting, business studies and economics, and the GNVQ intermediate business course. All provision is full time and caters for students aged 16 to 18. There is no evening or GCSE provision. There are currently over 280 enrolments in this area: 182 students on business studies; 55 on accounting; 34 on economics; and 13 students on the GNVQ intermediate. The college no longer offers a level 3 vocational course.

### **Achievement and standards**

53. Pass rates have shown a steady improvement over recent years. On most courses, pass rates were significantly above the national average in 2002. The proportion of students achieving high grades declined in 2002 on GCE A-level courses, but increased significantly, to well above the national level, on GCE AS courses. Retention rates are below the national average at GCE AS. Student numbers have been declining on the intermediate business course, nevertheless, there were 100% retention and pass rates last year. Attendance at lessons observed during inspection was good, at 91%.

54. Students display an appropriate range of knowledge and understanding of business concepts and processes. They demonstrate effective oral communication skills; some GCE AS students are better at expressing their views orally than in writing. Many students demonstrate a good ability to analyse and make reasoned argument. The standard of most students' written work is good. However, the work of some students lacks detail, concerns itself with irrelevant issues and tends to be descriptive rather than evaluative.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 2000 to 2002**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	111	90	60
		% retention	82	80	100
		% pass rate	96	99	98
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	16	**	17
		% retention	94	85	100
		% pass rate	93	100	88
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	*	37	39
		% retention	*	84	79
		% pass rate	*	61	94
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	*	121	113
		% retention	*	83	83
		% pass rate	*	94	97
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	*	30	28
		% retention	*	87	86
		% pass rate	*	84	92

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

55. Most teaching is good, particularly in economics. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of imaginative methods that maintain students' interest and involve the whole class. In one business studies lesson, students undertook role play to consider whether or not the company in the pre-release examination case study should develop an ethical policy for their business. The standard of debate was good and students offered well-reasoned arguments for both sides of the case. In a lesson on manpower planning, students worked with a computer-generated template projected onto a screen to build up a full response to questions posed by the teacher. All students were involved in the development of the completed form. The same group of students then worked on a recruitment exercise using the college intranet. Some of this activity was completed as homework. In an economics revision lesson on fiscal policy, students took part in a lively class discussion on the interpretation of the Phillips Curve which helped to develop their understanding of the impact on inflation. In the majority of lessons, ILT is used to promote the learning.

56. In some less effective lessons, teachers failed to plan to meet the different abilities of individual students. The pace of teaching was slow and not sufficiently demanding to motivate all of the students. In some lessons, the teacher talked too much and did not give sufficient opportunities for students to participate or for the more able students to progress at their own level. Learning objectives are sometimes too general and the progress made in achieving them is not adequately reviewed.

57. Teachers are well qualified and all have a teaching qualification. They are knowledgeable about their subjects, although there has been little vocational updating through relevant work experience. Learning resources are well designed and used appropriately in lessons. Classroom accommodation is very good, comprising five rooms on a single corridor dedicated to business subjects. The rooms provide a comfortable, well-resourced and stimulating learning environment. Two of them have data projectors installed and another contains 20 computers. Walls display well-prepared and relevant material and students' work is prominently positioned to show the development of key concepts. The equipment is used productively. Students can use the computers for note taking during lessons. Teachers frequently direct students to the college intranet or to the Internet for further information. The intranet is readily accessed by students and holds a good range of relevant information and course material. The quality of most handouts is good.

58. The range of provision is small. There is no GCSE or level 3 vocational provision in business subjects. Visits and external speakers are used to enhance learning in most subjects. GNVQ students visit a major retailer, economics students visit London to attend seminars, and representatives from local businesses provide talks in lessons.

59. Teachers assess and return work to students promptly. However, the quality of grading and comments is uneven. In economics, comments clearly identify strength and weaknesses and provide clear guidance on how students can improve. Assessment is not as good in accounting. Tutors regularly monitor students' progress. There is an individual progress review each term, at which effort and performance are discussed and an action plan agreed. Students know how well they are performing, and parents receive clear feedback on progress in reports and parents' meetings. Attendance is effectively monitored.

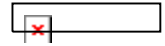
60. Support for students is good. Applicants are interviewed individually and get valuable guidance about the suitability of the course. Although there are explicit entry requirements for each subject, teachers make every effort to accommodate any student very keen to take the subject. The pre-course induction during July gives applicants a good flavour of the subject. Students appreciate the amount of time that teachers devote to their academic and personal development. Guidance and advice on careers and progression into HE are good.

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

61. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject leadership of economics is

particularly effective. Targets for retention and pass rates are carefully set at subject level and pass rates have been improved. There are few opportunities for sharing good practice between business subjects. The quality of lesson planning, marking of students' work, and student reviews at course level are not systematically monitored. As a result, inconsistencies in the quality of students' learning experiences between subjects are slow to be addressed.

## **Computing and information technology**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
- good IT resources
- very good teaching on GCE A-level ICT and adult IT courses
- good individual support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- narrow range of provision
- actions for improvement not systematically implemented.

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

62. The IT and computing subject area provides full-time courses in computer science and ICT at GCE AS and A level. There are currently 250 students on these courses. Some 230 adult students are taking part-time day or evening courses, including computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) at level 1, European computer driving licence (ECDL) at level 2 and integrated business technology (IBT) at both level 2 and level 3. These form part of the college's adult education provision and can be studied at the college and at community venues. Some 450 full-time students are taking key skills IT at level 2 or level 3.

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

63. Pass rates on all courses are at or, more commonly, above national averages. In 2002, pass rates on CLAIT, IBT 2 and ECDL courses exceeded the national average by 36%, 20% and 50%, respectively. In 2001, the percentage of GCE AS ICT students achieving higher grades was twice the national average, although this was not sustained in 2002. Retention rates have consistently been very good, and they are well above national averages on all courses. Most students demonstrate good skills and knowledge, which they readily apply in completing set tasks. A few students fail to apply themselves in the way required to successfully complete the qualification they are taking. Most students' coursework is of a satisfactory standard and some is good.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and information technology, 2000 to 2002***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	170	51	79
		% retention	97	96	91
		% pass rate	37	51	85
ECDL	2	No. of starts	*	*	31
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	87
IBT	2	No. of starts	27	27	***
		% retention	96	100	100
		% pass rate	92	**	100
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	*	*	63
		% retention	*	*	92
		% pass rate	*	*	79
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	*	71	64
		% retention	*	93	94
		% pass rate	*	97	88
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	*	*	53
		% retention	*	*	98
		% pass rate	*	*	88

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

\*\* data unreliable

\*\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

64. Teaching is good or better in most lessons, and very good on GCE A-level ICT and on part-time courses for adults. In the best lessons, teachers make effective use of multimedia projectors for short demonstrations and presentations. For example, in one lesson on the impact of psychological factors on human computer interfaces, a range of static and animated visual images and colours was used to illustrate the impact that sight, memory and perception have on the design of these interfaces. Learning materials are well designed and enable students to work at their own pace. Most students are highly motivated, actively engaged in lessons and focused on the task in hand. Teachers provide very effective one-to-one support through sensitive questioning, and prompt students to develop their own solutions and make progress. Many adult students can describe how the skills they develop are being used to good effect. For example, by using a word processor to



create mail merge documentation for their own business or by corresponding with family living abroad through the use of e-mail.

65. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not hold the attention of all students and some remain unresponsive and do not contribute to discussions. Some demonstrations are over-long and teachers do not take account of students' prior knowledge or skills. Lesson plans lack sufficient detail and lesson objectives are not made clear to students. There is little use of ILT and few resources available on the college network. Effective use is made of multimedia projectors, which are available in all classrooms, but there is no use of on-line or interactive learning materials.

66. Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate experience for the subjects they teach. The standard of computer equipment is good. It provides students and staff with access to modern software applications as well as Internet and e-mail. Students have good access to 'drop-in' facilities in the well-equipped learning centre. Classroom accommodation is good and a wide range of appropriate posters and presentation material is displayed on the walls. A suitable range of textbooks and magazines is available in the learning centre, supplemented by more specialist textbooks in classrooms. The layout of one classroom makes it difficult for all students to see the whiteboard and the projector screen.

67. Assessment is satisfactory. Most students' work is appropriately marked and annotated with useful comments on how it could be improved. However, some teachers do not properly explain how the grade was determined or indicate how students can improve their performance. In-class assessments are appropriate for their purpose. The assessment programme for full-time students is poorly planned and results in uneven workloads. The progress of students on GCE AS and A-level courses is carefully monitored and reviewed against a minimum target grade. There is a strong internal verification and monitoring system for the ECDL course.

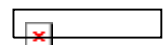
68. The introduction of GCE AS and A-level ICT and ECDL courses has helped to increase the number of students significantly. Nevertheless, the range of programmes available is narrow. There is no full-time provision at level 2 and students do not have the opportunity to combine academic and vocational study. There are few progression opportunities for part-time students, with only one course offered at level 3. The take-up of college enrichment opportunities by IT students is poor.

69. Students receive good advice and guidance about their courses before they start their studies. This is reinforced and extended during the induction period. Students are well informed about the range of support available. They get appropriate careers advice. Teachers provide good support to students outside of the classroom, including extra individual tuition and through e-mail, but students do not value the tutorial process.

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

70. The management of computing and IT provision is satisfactory. There is a good informal communications network and staff are well informed. The subject area head provides good support to a team of teachers who work together effectively and share teaching resources. Teachers are not involved in the development of the self-assessment report. The action plan is not systematically implemented. There is insufficient co-ordination between the subject area and the lifelong learning section responsible for the part-time courses.

### **Travel, physical education and food**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
- good teaching
- very good subject support for students
- good standard of students' work.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient sharing of good practice
- lack of opportunities for enrichment and additional qualifications.

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

71. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in physical education (PE) and food technology and AVCE single and double awards in travel and tourism. The provision caters primarily for full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are currently 40 students on travel and tourism, 79 students on PE and 18 students on food technology courses. The college also provides basic food hygiene and food safety training, as well as a college-certificated course in independent living for adult students with learning difficulties, which currently has 16 students.

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

72. Retention and pass rates are above national averages on all full-time courses. Retention rates improved in 2001/02 and are significantly higher than the national average. In 2002, the pass rate on the AVCE single award in travel and tourism improved by 26%. The pass rate was 100% on the AVCE double award, with 85% of students achieving higher grades. For food technology, the retention rate improved at GCE AS, but the pass rate fell slightly, although it remains well above the national average. Retention and pass rates have been high on PE courses at GCE AS and A level since they were introduced in 2000. The proportion of students achieving high grades on GCE A-level PE courses increased significantly in 2002 to 70%; well above the national level.

73. The standards of work achieved by students in lessons are good. Travel students use IT very competently for both research and coursework. Students in practical food preparation lessons develop new skills quickly. Progression rates to HE are good from all subjects. Progression from GCE AS to GCE A level varies from 36% in food technology to 68% in PE. Just over half of travel students who completed the AVCE single award in 2002 progressed to the double award.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in travel, physical education and food, 2000 to 2002***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
AVCE travel and tourism (single award)	3	No. of starts	*	16	23
		% retention	*	88	91
		% pass rate	*	64	90
GCE AS PE	3	No. of starts	*	41	35
		% retention	*	95	97
		% pass rate	*	97	97
GCE A-level PE	3	No. of starts	*	41	27
		% retention	*	88	100
		% pass rate	*	91	100
GCE AS food technology	3	No. of starts	*	**	15
		% retention	*	**	100
		% pass rate	*	**	93

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

\*\* less than 15 starters enrolled

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

74. Most teaching is good or better. The most effective lessons are well planned and provide a good range of structured activities that effectively engage students. Learning objectives are shared with students. They receive clear instructions and guidance to help them understand what is expected of them. Students are enthusiastic and respond well. Teachers make good use of a wide range of resources to promote learning. They effectively use PowerPoint presentations in PE lessons. In an anatomy and physiology lesson, students were able to identify skeletal movement using a computer simulation and other visual aids. Adult students with learning difficulties were set challenging tasks in a practical food preparation lesson. They were able to complete the tasks with sensitive support, and the lesson clearly promoted their development of social interaction and independent living skills. Travel and tourism teachers and students use ILT effectively. For example, students use hyperlinks set up for them to research information on the Internet. Carefully chosen case studies provide variety and interest in travel and tourism lessons. In one lesson they provided the basis for students to compare and contrast the effect of tourism in Kenya, Blackpool and Dorset. Students developed a more evaluative understanding of the impact of tourism through analysis and discussion. Key skills are well developed in many travel and tourism lessons but they are not assessed by the subject teachers.

75. Students are thoroughly prepared for examinations. Revision lessons are well planned. In one PE lesson, the teacher made very effective use of ILT, marked answers to a mock examination and directed questioning to create a lively session that extended students' understanding of examination technique and thoroughly checked the learning of all students.

76. In a few lessons, there is an over-reliance on paper-based activities and there is little student participation and interaction with the teacher. Teachers sometimes direct their questions to the whole class and do not check the understanding of individual students. More able students are not given sufficiently demanding work, for example, through extension activities and, as a result, sometimes lose interest.

77. Teachers are appropriately qualified. However, not all travel and tourism teachers have relevant vocational experience and no use has been made of short secondments. The learning centre has a good range of learning materials to support these courses. In travel and tourism classrooms, the

ratio of computers to students is good and they are used extensively by teachers and students. The standard domestic equipment available on food technology courses is adequate, but the ventilation system is poor and there is restricted access for students with impaired mobility. The college does not have its own sports facilities or fitness centre. Despite the development of links with other local providers to try and overcome this weakness, the lack of these facilities limits the range and flexibility of teaching methods that may be used in PE subjects such as anatomy and physiology.

78. Assessment methods are appropriate. Assignment briefs clearly show students what is expected of them. Assignment work is efficiently marked and returned to students. Most teachers annotate their students' written work with comments to show how it can be improved, but they do not always correct spelling errors. Students know their assessment schedule and teachers apply submission deadlines rigorously and follow up non-submission of work. Students are kept well informed about their progress in relation to their main course of study and the key skills. Teachers and personal tutors effectively monitor students' attendance and progress.

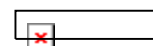
79. There is a narrow range of curriculum enrichment activities. Work experience placements are to be offered to travel students for the first time at the end of the summer term in 2003. Students have few opportunities to achieve relevant additional qualifications. However, PE students do participate in team sports available as part of the college's enrichment programme, and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and bronze medallion life saving are offered to a small number of students.

80. There is good subject and pastoral support. Teachers provide 'drop in' study support sessions at lunchtime and after college. Students who miss lessons can access the learning materials on the intranet.

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

81. Subject teams focus strongly on students' achievement, and retention rates have been improved. The management of travel and tourism courses is good and other subjects are satisfactorily managed. Good practice is not sufficiently shared. For example, the very good subject handbook for food technology is not replicated in other subjects. The quality assurance procedures are not always applied thoroughly to key aspects of teaching and learning such as lesson planning, assessment and moderation.

### **Visual and performing arts and media**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good retention rates and high pass rates
- much good and effective teaching
- good standards of students' work

- good use of ILT within design, music and media
- development of high-quality design and experimentation skills
- good subject support for individual students
- very good specialist resources.

### ***Weaknesses***

- little sharing of good practice between arts subjects
- insufficient monitoring of aspects of teaching and learning.

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

82. The college offers a wide range of arts subjects, primarily at level 3. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in art, design technology, music, media and drama. In design technology, students can choose between textile, graphic or product design. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time. There are currently 212 students on art and design courses, 142 on media, 91 on drama and 38 on music courses. There are also part-time evening classes in GCE AS film studies and the history of art, with 15 and 10 students, respectively.

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

83. Retention and pass rates are high on all courses in the arts area. However, for GCE A-level art and design technology, the percentage of high grades in 2002 was significantly below the national average. The standard of students' work is very good. Art students confidently experiment with a wide range of techniques and media. Students' work in painting is particularly good, showing vibrant use of colour and texture.

84. Design students' product prototypes show thoughtful design development and are well made. Media and music students understand technical aspects well. During lessons, they make perceptive comments, which show a good grasp of concepts and specialist terminology. Music students perform to a high standard.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2000 to 2002***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
GCE A-level art and	3	No. of starts	33	44	36

design		% retention	79	81	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE AS design technology	3	No. of starts	*	73	58
		% retention	*	86	91
		% pass rate	*	83	100
GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts	3	No. of starts	27	22	28
		% retention	78	86	100
		% pass rate	84	95	100
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	*	65	61
		% retention	*	97	92
		% pass rate	*	100	96
GCE A-level music	3	No. of starts	**	23	16
		% retention	**	78	100
		% pass rate	**	89	94
GCE AS film studies	3	No. of starts	*	*	20
		% retention	*	*	90
		% pass rate	*	*	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

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

85. Teaching is good or better in most lessons. Students are highly motivated, eager to learn and work together productively. Teachers give students good individual guidance to help them learn and develop skills in the fundamental principles of their subjects. They sensitively question and develop students' understanding and knowledge. In a music lesson, for example, the teacher had designed flash cards showing key words such as melody, tonality and instrumentation to help students gain understanding of concepts and terminology. The fonts on the flash cards were matched to the meaning of the words and the teacher skilfully questioned and tested the students' understanding. At the same time, excerpts were played to highlight the key aspects on the cards. This helped the students to develop their aural skills.

86. Art and design students understand the need for primary research and the importance of developing ideas step by step. Students effectively use various media to develop an idea and fully explore the range of its potential. Their sketchbooks, project work, preparation drawings and design sheets show extensive use of primary and secondary sources for research. Students are successfully taught to appreciate the value of design development and thorough experimentation. One art student had produced a detailed observational drawing in pencil of historical building. She then simplified this and repeated the drawing using various media and different colour themes so that she could choose the most appropriate and suitable study to develop further. Her sketches and designs were imaginative, lively and interesting.

87. Specialist resources are particularly good. There are some excellent rooms and facilities for music lessons. Teachers are well qualified with relevant experience and vocational knowledge. Technician support is available for art, design, drama and music, and there is a teaching assistant for media. Art students benefit from opportunities to do life drawing. Students have good access to computers and use the intranet effectively to work on projects on their own. Music, media and design

students use the intranet to access lesson notes and information about assessments and coursework. Design students use computers that have a good range of specialist software and CD-ROMS in the purpose-built design studios. They are particularly skilled in using digital cameras to record the progress of projects and import images onto design sheets, which they produce on the computer. Students work purposely and productively on projects using computers independently and are clear about assessment criteria and project outcomes. Music students use computers in the classroom to compose pieces using sequencing and scoring software. Some rooms used for lessons are too small for the numbers of students, resulting in cramped learning conditions.

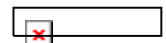
88. Students receive regular and detailed verbal feedback on their progress and, in most subjects, extensive written feedback. However, the marking of students' written work in media is insufficiently detailed and does not show clearly what the students have done well and what specifically they could do to improve. Art students' assessments have extensive written comments, but sometimes they lack constructive criticism of aspects of drawing proportion and composition.

89. Support for individual students is good. Students value the close monitoring of their progress. Subject teachers give detailed and specific advice and guidance during lessons. They also give their time freely outside timetabled lessons. In media, for example, a student on the verge of leaving was given additional advice and guidance by a professional cameraman and effectively supported in essay writing. This enabled him to complete his film-making project in time for the examination deadline.

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

90. Subject leadership is very good in music, and good in art, design and media. Subject area heads ensure courses are planned effectively to cover the syllabus and provide good learning and assessment opportunities. Pass rates have been improved on most courses. The self-assessments in music, art and design are good, but those in media and drama inadequately evaluate the provision. Although teachers within subject areas work closely together, good practice in teaching and learning is not shared across the whole of the curriculum provision. There is little monitoring of the quality of aspects such as lesson planning and assessment of students' work.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
- good higher grade pass rates for geography and history
- much purposeful and enthusiastic teaching
- strong and effective support for individual students

- well-informed and confident contributions by students
- good resources and accommodation
- good recruitment to a wide range of courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- lack of consistent rigour in monitoring students' progress
- ineffective use of quality assurance procedures
- poor attendance in many GCE AS and A-level general studies lessons.

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

91. The curriculum area inspected covered GCE AS and A-level courses in classical civilisation, geography, general studies, history and religious studies. Within the college, general studies is part of the communications section, geology is part of science, and the other subjects inspected are part of the humanities section. All students are full time and aged 16 to 18. There are 1,171 enrolments on these courses, with 645 on general studies. All full-time students at the college take GCE AS general studies, but GCE A-level general studies is optional.

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

92. Students' achievement is very good in humanities subjects. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are above national averages in all subjects except religious studies, where most students have lower GCSE results. Pass rates in GCE AS and A-level history, GCE A-level geography and GCE AS geology were 100% in 2002. High grade pass rates are also above the national average for most subjects, substantially so for history. The analysis of GCE AS and A-level results compared to GCSE results on entry shows that significant value is added to the achievements of history and geography students at both GCE AS and A level and on the GCE AS classical civilisation course. Retention rates were mostly well above national averages in 2001/02.

93. Students' attendance is above average for similar colleges in most subjects. However, general studies attendance varies between teaching groups and is sometimes very poor. In many lessons, the contributions of students show high levels of understanding and knowledge. Students are able to adapt and apply their knowledge to the demands of varying tasks both in lessons and in their written work. Much of their written work is confident and well organised, although some students do not express their ideas sufficiently clearly or support them with adequate information.



***A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2000 to 2002***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
GCE A-level classical civilisation	3	No. of starts	49	30	39
		% retention	86	80	100
		% pass rate	93	92	97
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	89	91	64
		% retention	90	85	97
		% pass rate	95	97	100
GCE A-level general studies	3	No. of starts	516	511	81
		% retention	90	84	88
		% pass rate	65	71	79
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	101	97	81
		% retention	83	82	100
		% pass rate	99	99	100
GCE A-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	21	15	25
		% retention	71	80	100
		% pass rate	100	92	88
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	*	98	127
		% retention	*	96	95
		% pass rate	*	100	93
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	*	115	116
		% retention	*	91	93
		% pass rate	*	94	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

94. Most teaching is good or better. In history and geography lessons, teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and most have clear aims and objectives. Teaching is confident and purposeful, and addresses the needs of the students at that particular stage of their course. In most lessons, teachers regularly check the students' understanding. At the time of the inspection, there was appropriate reference to the techniques and assessment requirements of forthcoming examinations. In one GCE AS geology lesson, the teacher effectively demonstrated good features of labelled drawings with examples of the students' own recent work. Fresh and stimulating learning occurs in many lessons. In a series of geography lessons, students gained a thorough understanding of the range of issues that limit the capacity of third world countries to produce adequate food supplies. This was achieved through the detailed study of two countries with different problems: Bangladesh and Niger. Teachers made effective use of video in whole class teaching and this was reinforced by students' individual research, including use of material from the Internet. In two history lessons, the use of role play to demonstrate features of Nazi leadership in the 1930s and the responses of German people to it proved an enjoyable and useful learning activity for students. In a lesson on religious studies, students worked very well in groups to evaluate different theories of creation and produced impressive ideas of their own. Teachers and students have good

working relationships.

95. In some lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to participate. Instead, the teacher asks questions that purely elicit information rather than opinion. Some teachers stick too rigidly to lesson plans and do not allow students enough time to discuss and question issues that arise. There is very little use of learning materials that are differentiated to match the abilities of individual students within classes.

96. Teachers set regular and appropriate written work relating closely to recent learning. Most work is marked very thoroughly, but the amount and value of the written feedback provided is not uniformly good. On most returned work, students receive clear and useful comments but some summative comments do not fully explain the marks given, or provide enough guidance for future improvement. There is insufficient annotation of the actual assignments. The individual progress of most students is reviewed regularly by subject and personal tutors. However, individual action plans sometimes lack precision and measurability, and insufficient time is allocated for personal interviews in lessons.

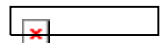
97. Good accommodation and resources enhance students' learning. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Classrooms are allocated to specific subjects. They display relevant materials and give a subject identity. Students' work is prominently displayed in classics and religious studies. The learning centre provides excellent study facilities and a range of books very appropriate to the courses studied. It stocks multiple copies of many essential books. Geography tutors have pioneered developments in using computers and interactive whiteboards in the classroom, but other subjects lack these facilities and have been slow to develop an awareness of their potential. History teachers have begun to create a useful intranet site with course information and background material.

98. Students are well supported in humanities subjects. Tutors willingly accept students with relatively low GCSE results. They accept responsibility for providing them with the extra support they need. All courses offer extra sessions for help with specific problems and these are well attended. Tutors willingly offer extra time and help to individual students. Many students value this support, although some fail to take full advantage of it. Tutors are well informed of the learning and personal difficulties of individual students whom they teach. They are sensitive to these needs and give effective support.

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

Subjects are well led and subject teams successfully maintain good standards of teaching and high pass rates. Subject heads encourage teachers to share ideas and resources, and offer strong practical support in ensuring that courses are run efficiently. There is no effective intervention at middle management level to ensure that quality assurance procedures are rigorously applied. Self-assessment did not identify some important weaknesses, such as the lack of differentiation in lessons. Action plans are imprecise and fail to indicate clearly what has to be done, the persons responsible for carrying out the actions and the timescale.

### **Social science**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very high pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- excellent retention rates on most courses
- very good teaching in government and politics, and sociology
- a stimulating learning environment
- well-motivated and enthusiastic students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient use of ILT
- little sharing of good practice in teaching
- lack of rigour in quality assurance.

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

99. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in government and politics, law, psychology and sociology for full-time students aged 16 to 18. These subjects recruit well; there are currently 457 enrolments on GCE AS courses and 257 enrolments on GCE A-level courses. Psychology is the most popular subject, with 264 students; sociology has 225 students, law has 128 students and government and politics has 107 students. A one-year GCE AS psychology evening class was introduced this year for adult students. It currently has eight students.

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

100. There are good pass rates for GCE A level. In 2002, the pass rates for government and politics, and psychology were at, or slightly above, the national average. The pass rates of 100% in law and 98% in sociology were significantly above the national average. The proportion of students gaining higher grades at GCE A level was well above the national average for government and politics, law and sociology. GCE AS pass rates for psychology are in line with the national average, but pass rates for government and politics, law and sociology declined to below the national average in 2002. The proportion of GCE AS students achieving higher grades is broadly in line with the national average. Retention rates, which clearly improved between 2000/01 and 2001/02, are very good.

101. Students' written work is generally of a high standard and shows they cope well with the variety of demands in the tasks set. Much of the language used by students in lessons and in assignments

is sophisticated, and the best answers show an excellent depth of knowledge and understanding.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in social science, 2000 to 2002***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS government and politics	3	No. of starts	*	77	60
		% retention	*	90	97
		% pass rate	*	97	86
GCE A-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	64	63	52
		% retention	92	87	100
		% pass rate	98	100	94
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	*	67	56
		% retention	*	91	91
		% pass rate	*	89	78
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	*	*	48
		% retention	*	*	98
		% pass rate	*	*	100
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	106	162
		% retention	*	93	91
		% pass rate	*	84	86
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	43	58	67
		% retention	95	78	98
		% pass rate	85	91	94
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	21	121	130
		% retention	90	93	94
		% pass rate	84	96	83
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	101	104	99
		% retention	85	80	98
		% pass rate	97	98	98

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

102. Most teaching is good or outstanding. In government and politics, and sociology lessons, teaching is consistently very good. Lessons are prepared thoroughly and enable students to learn in stimulating and often innovative ways. All government and politics lessons begin with 'diary work', during which students are quizzed on current political events. Students display obvious enthusiasm and knowledge, and the dialogue with teachers is impressive. This approach not only encourages students to keep abreast of current developments, but also ensures that each lesson begins in an absorbing and often humorous way. Close working relationships and mutual respect are evident between teachers and students in most lessons, and students display confidence and enjoyment in their learning. In one psychology lesson, the classroom was turned into a 'revision zone', in which superb resources produced by the teacher were available for students to correct their errors in the

mock examination taken before Easter. Students clearly appreciated this novel and highly effective approach to revision.

103. In a minority of lessons, the teaching does not engage students sufficiently or fails to build significantly on their previous learning. Some teachers do not spend enough time with students who are having difficulties, nor do they provide sufficiently challenging tasks to the more able students. Lessons occasionally lack structure; students are not clear about what is expected of them and their understanding is not adequately checked. High-quality learning resources produced by teachers are used well to supplement the textbooks provided. However, little use is made of ILT to complement the good and varied teaching and learning methods employed.

104. Teachers are experienced, well qualified in their specialist subject and regularly undergo professional development and subject updating. Many are moderators or examiners and all hold an appropriate teaching qualification. They are strongly committed to developing their skills as teachers but there is little evidence of the very good practice within subjects being shared across the curriculum area. Subjects have dedicated and distinctive classrooms in which teachers and students take obvious pride in displaying work and creating a stimulating and attractive learning environment. The excellent learning centre provides students and teachers with access to a good range of materials relevant to this curriculum area.

105. Assessment is used effectively to ensure that students are on the right course and to monitor their progress. In most subjects, students are given assessment schedules so they can plan their work effectively and they are well informed about grading criteria. Teachers regularly set and mark homework, and return it carefully annotated with supportive and constructive comments. Many teachers regularly check students' files for content and presentation and, in the larger subject areas, there is internal moderation of much assessed work. Individual progress reviews occur three times a year and students appreciate their relevance and importance. However, not all teachers use individual target setting effectively to help improve students' performance.

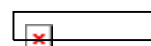
106. The modules within courses are carefully selected. There are external visits to enhance the curriculum, including an annual government and politics visit to Washington DC. Good links have been established with the local courts, members of parliament and universities. There is a good progression rate from GCE AS to GCE A level, especially in government and politics, and sociology.

107. Subject support for students is good. Students speak highly of the range of support they receive from teachers and of the friendly and caring atmosphere. There is a highly effective pre-course induction in all subjects for Year 11 applicants in July, which gives students a commitment and sense of belonging to the college. Students have a personal tutor who teaches on their programme of study. Students who would benefit from learning support are identified early and effective help is provided. Additional sessions are timetabled in all subjects to provide extra support and guidance for full-time students. Teachers give generously of their time outside the classroom. Careers advice is particularly effective in relation to HE, which is the aspiration of most students. Students receive very good guidance and advice in applying to university.

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

108. Individual subjects are effectively led and courses are well organised. There is a strong reliance on the professionalism of subject area heads and teachers to maintain and improve standards, but not all teachers were involved in the development of the subject self-assessment reports. Targets are set for attendance, retention and achievement at subject level, but action plans to achieve them are vague and lacking in detail. College quality assurance procedures are not implemented effectively.

## **English and foreign languages**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very high retention and pass rates on full-time courses
- much good teaching
- excellent support for students by their teachers
- the high quality of students' work
- excellent resources for modern languages.

### ***Weaknesses***

- lack of active participation by students in some lessons
- poor management of students' lateness
- ineffective action planning.

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

109. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in English language, English literature, English language and literature, French, Spanish and German to full-time students. GCSE English is offered as a re-sit course and Spanish GCSE is offered, mainly to those who wish to take GCE A-level Spanish without previous experience. At the time of the inspection, the college had 503 full-time students, nearly all aged 16 to 18, taking courses in English or modern languages. Of these, 65% were studying English courses and 35% were studying modern languages.

110. A variety of part-time courses are offered in French, Spanish, German and Italian to adult students in the evening through the section for lifelong learning and this area of work is growing. Only three groups are studying a recognised qualification, the majority of the provision focussing on conversational languages at various levels.

### **Achievement and standards**

111. Retention and pass rates are high. They are at, or more usually above, the national average on all courses. Achievement of high grades is very good, particularly in the last two years for GCE AS English literature and German, and last year for GCE A-level English literature, English language and German. Data comparing GCE A-level performance with students' prior GCSE grades shows results are generally those expected for the cohort. Retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at GCSE are also high. Progression from GCE AS to GCE A level on most English and foreign languages courses is good. After leaving college, most students progress to HE. On GCE AS English language and Spanish course, the achievement of high grades was below national averages in 2002. Retention and pass rates for adults on GCSE language courses are generally unsatisfactory.

112. Some students have particularly interesting and rewarding personal achievements. One student has just had a short story published, another a play published. Students in modern languages have won travel scholarships, while several English students are involved in local theatre productions. The standard of students' oral work in Spanish and German is particularly high. In all areas, students' work is of a very good standard and displays creativity and diversity of subject choice.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in English and foreign languages, 2000 to 2002**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	21	30	17
		% retention	86	90	82
		% pass rate	72	78	79
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	*	54	46
		% retention	*	89	100
		% pass rate	*	85	93
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	*	79	51
		% retention	*	94	90
		% pass rate	*	95	100
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	27	13	60
		% retention	89	92	100
		% pass rate	95	92	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	131	124	61
		% retention	90	84	98
		% pass rate	88	96	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	60	51	52
		% retention	97	80	100
		% pass rate	100	95	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	28	21	22
		% retention	86	81	100
		% pass rate	86	100	91

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

\* course did not run

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

113. Most teaching is good or better. In the best lessons, teachers communicate real enthusiasm for the subject matter. These lessons are energetic, creative and responsive to the experiences of the learners. Students respond with high levels of participation and personal motivation. In a particularly effective German lesson, one student had chosen to present his personal analysis of Peter Weiss' *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung Jean Paul Marats*, a play which he had acted in previously. This was a lively session in which students' evaluative skills were extended by analysing each other's work against specific criteria. The lesson was clearly enjoyed by students. In a well-planned English literature class, students were given a clear framework against which to discuss the character of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, and this clarity of direction significantly increased their confidence to formulate and share their ideas.

114. In some less effective lessons, students were not asked to do any preparatory work and relied heavily on teacher input and materials. They took little initiative in the learning process although they were able to respond effectively when asked. In a significant number of lessons, students were required to listen for long periods, during which their attention wandered. There is little use of learning activities or materials that take account of the different abilities of students and, in a few lessons, the tasks set were unclear to students or were insufficiently demanding for the more able.

115. A significant number of students arrive at lessons late. This lateness is not always questioned by teachers and, in some cases, is disruptive to lessons that have already started. While lateness is sometimes the result of the timetable or bus times, teachers do not adapt their teaching methods to accommodate late arrivals and avoid these students missing important introductions to lessons.

116. Teachers are well qualified. Resources for modern languages are very good. The section is based in the learning centre, where students have immediate access to a wide variety of learning materials. Students are given considerable freedom over coursework topics, in the knowledge that they will get good support from the learning resources staff. Hyperlinks have been set up to a wide variety of Internet sites to facilitate students' research. The volume of learning material available to language students has increased considerably as a result. English students are well supported in lessons by a range of interesting and varied learning material created by their teachers. During the inspection, these were entirely text based. Some of the English classrooms are too small for the size of classes.

117. The quality of assessment is very good. Assessment criteria are effectively shared with students and coursework is double marked to ensure consistency across a large subject area. Moderator comments are consistently positive. The feedback given to students on their written work is thorough and helpful. Monitoring of students' progress is thorough.

118. The range of language courses available to full-time and evening students is good. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of activities, including a languages taster programme run in conjunction with a local university. Students sample a variety of languages according to demand, such as Czech, Japanese, Swedish, Chinese and Russian. Students also appreciate the visits abroad, for example, to Berlin and Chalons en Champagne, and visits to the theatre as part of the English curriculum.

119. Students get excellent individual support outside their lessons. There are revision and lunchtime sessions to go through individual students' difficulties in English. Strong teamwork in English and the sharing of teaching groups means that students feel able to approach all teachers in the section. Additional teaching support in languages is very good. Teachers and foreign language assistants have developed a range of useful self-study materials. A former German student recently gave a talk on German politics to current students.

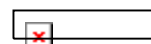
### **Leadership and management**

120. The English curriculum and the advanced level foreign languages curriculum are well managed. Subject teams work together effectively to ensure that students learn and achieve well. The

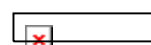


management of adult foreign language courses is less effective. Low numbers of students are recruited and the pass rates are unsatisfactory. There is little discussion about curriculum planning and teaching methods between the lifelong learning section and the languages subject area. Action planning in all subject areas is not well established. Few actions in the current plans had been implemented at the time of the inspection.

#### Part D: College data



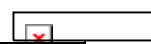
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2001/02**



Level	16-18	19+
1	0	16
2	1	19
3	99	2
4/5	0	0
Other	0	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in spring 2003*

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2001/02**



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments % *
Science and mathematics	1,861	1	24
Land-based provision	33	0	0
Construction	0	4	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	149	0	2
Business administration, management and professional	301	13	4
Information and communications technology	633	158	10
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	139	110	3

Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	4	99	1
Visual and performing arts and media	340	13	5
Humanities	1,894	58	25
English, languages and communication	1,550	26	20
Foundation programmes	0	420	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,904</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in spring 2003

\* percentages rounded to nearest whole number and may not total 100%

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	823	449	**	**	**	4
	Retention rate (%)	92	97	**	**	**	100
	National average (%)	81	83	*	74	74	*
	Pass rate (%)	66	79	**	**	**	75
	National average (%)	70	66	*	61	65	*
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	106	84	92	15	40	54
	Retention rate (%)	83	86	96	73	83	85
	National average (%)	81	81	*	75	74	*
	Pass rate (%)	80	88	95	55	36	83
	National average (%)	79	83	*	68	67	*
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	2157	4674	4265	16	27	27
	Retention rate (%)	88	88	95	94	74	78
	National average (%)	80	84	*	70	71	*
	Pass rate (%)	85	89	92	80	80	71
	National average (%)	85	85	*	63	66	*

compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking data 1998/99 to 2000/2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Learning and Skills Council.

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2000/2001: College ISR (Individual Student Record).

3. College rates for 2001/02: provided by the college in spring 2003.

\* data not available

\*\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

**Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level**

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	77	22	1	128
Level 2 (intermediate)	80	20	0	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>138</b>

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