



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

East Norfolk Sixth Form College

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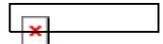
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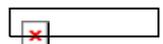
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Basic information about the college

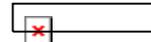


Name of college:	East Norfolk Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth form college
Principal:	Laurie Poulson
Address of college:	Church Lane Gorleston Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR31 7BQ
Telephone number:	01493 662234
Fax number:	01493 441405
Chair of governors:	Mark Duffield
Unique reference number:	130767
Name of reporting inspector:	Clive Rowe HMI
Dates of inspection:	28 April-2 May 2003

Part A: Summary

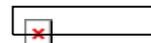


Information about the college



East Norfolk Sixth Form College was established in 1982 and serves an area of approximately 600 square miles, covering Great Yarmouth and the Norfolk Broads. It is one of two colleges, the other a general further education (FE) college, providing post-16 education. The college's mission is 'Excellence and care: working for the community' and aims to give all students the best possible opportunities to develop their individual potential through the provision of a wide range of high-quality education and skills training. Most of the 928 full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and over 96% are studying for advanced-level qualifications, mainly General Certificate of Education Advanced levels (GCE A levels). The college has recently expanded its provision of vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level. With these changes have come a rapid increase in numbers, not only of 16 to 18 year olds but also part-time adult students, of whom there are now over 600. In 2002, 53% of students were female and 47% male. The number of students from ethnic minorities is low, at less than 1%, which is in line with the proportion in the local population. Nearly all the provision is made on one site, except for an adult centre in Great Yarmouth where information and communications technology (ICT) courses are taught. The Greater Yarmouth area is one of marked social deprivation and relatively high unemployment. In the Index of Multiple Deprivation published in 2001, Great Yarmouth was the only town in Southern England to feature in the list of the top ten most deprived.

How effective is the college?



This is a good and improving college whose considerable strengths greatly outweigh its shortcomings. It does well by the very large majority of its students. Teaching, learning and achievement are good in seven of the curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in one. Most students make good or very good progress and to have achieved a top ten college place in each of the last two years in terms of the University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) GCE A-level point scores per student is no mean achievement.

Key strengths

- students achieve well

- good value added

- good teaching and learning

- effective assessment arrangements

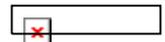
- good academic support
- good governance
- effective course and college management.

What should be improved

- group tutorial arrangements
- expansion of foundation and intermediate provision in some subjects
- support for adult learners
- accommodation and resources for some curriculum areas
- use of ICT in some classrooms and laboratories.

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

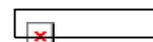


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Performing arts and media	Good. There are high pass rates on most courses along with good

	and improving retention rates. Most students make good progress helped by effective teaching and good academic support. Students enjoy their lessons and demonstrate their knowledge and skills with confidence. Action plans are not reviewed with sufficient rigour and some accommodation is unsatisfactory.
Visual arts	Good. Most teaching is very good although there is some that is not. Students are well supported in their academic studies and the quality of their work is generally high, especially in fine art and textiles. Resources constrain teaching and learning in some design areas.
Maths and information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Students achieve well in GCE A-level mathematics and computing but poorly in ICT. The quality of teaching seen was uneven with most of the best lessons taking place in mathematics. The management of adult students' flexible learning programmes is unsatisfactory, though the academic support for full-time students is effective. There is a well-developed intranet site in mathematics which is used effectively.
Science	Good. There are good retention and achievement rates across the science curriculum. Teaching is good with well-planned lessons enabling students to perform well. Computing resources are not well used to develop students understanding of science. Many lessons take place in crowded and drab accommodation.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Most students make good progress in both English and modern languages and achieve well. There is a good range of GCE A-level courses taught but too few at intermediate and foundation level, especially in Modern Languages. The curriculum area is well managed and students receive exemplary support from their teachers.
Geography, psychology and sociology	Good. Students make good progress and achieve well on most sociology and psychology courses, but in geography generally and in GCE A2 sociology relatively few gain high grades. Students also achieve poorly in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) psychology. There is much good teaching and, with the notable exception of the use of ICT, teachers make effective use of resources. There is good additional academic support for students across all subjects.
History, law and politics	Good. There is good learning and achievement in all subjects which is reflected in the very good pass rates, high grades and retention levels. These positive outcomes reflect the good teaching which is occasionally let down by some ineffective group work. There is good curriculum management which recognises the main areas for improvement including the unsatisfactory level of reference materials available in the library.
Physical education	Good. Very good teaching enables students to achieve good pass rates and standards of sporting performance. The curriculum is well managed but indoor sports facilities are inadequate and work experience is insufficiently developed.

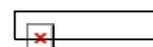
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors provide a clear strategic

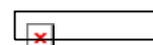
management that is encouraged. Quality assurance processes have improved since the last inspection and are now good, though these are not effectively applied in a few curriculum areas. Self-assessment is comprehensive but is insufficiently self-critical of the quality of teaching and learning. Some development plan targets for improvement are insufficiently defined and, as a result, do not support effective monitoring of progress. The college recognises the need to improve the quality of the management information that it produces and to provide staff training in its use. Governors' monitoring of college performance and actions for improvement are thorough. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that teachers are deployed appropriately and that consumable costs are carefully controlled. Financial management and value for money are good.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



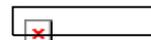
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory and most students appreciate the welcoming and friendly environment that is actively promoted. The college, working co-operatively with the local general FE college, serves the post-16 educational needs of most of the local community and has good links with partner schools and the Educational Action Zone. While the college has made considerable effort to integrate its part-time and adult students into the life and work of the college there is still more to be done to ensure that all students are equally well supported, including those with basic skills. The college is fulfilling its statutory requirements in respect of equal opportunities, and an equal opportunities focus group, with student representation, has been established. The college's policy has recently been revised and a race equality policy included along with a disability statement for staff and students. However more could be done with this information. While procedures are in place to support the monitoring of race and equal opportunities issues and these issues are effectively promoted when students first arrive at the college, they receive insufficient attention in the classroom. The college provides good opportunities for students from a wide range of backgrounds, and arrangements for academic and welfare support for full time students are very effective. Learners with restricted mobility are still unable to access some parts of the college and literacy and numeracy provision for adult learners is not well developed.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The support provided for full-time students is much better than that provided for adult students. Most full-time students benefit from well planned and effectively delivered pastoral and academic support. Guidance on to courses is good. Students receive timely and well-judged advice and guidance from subject and personal tutors. Induction procedures are effective. Student association involvement in induction activities helps new full-time students settle into college quickly and the initial assessment of whether new students need any additional learning support is completed efficiently. All students have access to a wide range of information and welfare services that cover housing, financial, health and personal counselling. The impact of tutorial arrangements is uneven and the quality of tutorials seen was unsatisfactory; many are poorly attended, particularly by second-year students. Careers education and guidance arrangements are effective and guidance on progression to higher education (HE) and employment is very good. Part-time adult students receive too little help. Support for this group of students is often restricted to subject tutor contact in lessons.

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

- the commitment of their teachers

- the enrichment opportunities the college provides

- the good academic support provided by their subject teachers

- the good reputation of the college locally

- the intranet and improvements in access to computers, software and video resources

- the work ethic encouraged by the college.

What they feel could be improved

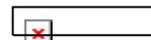
- some specialist accommodation

- the teaching of the general studies course in tutorial time

- availability of learning resources

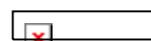
- transport arrangements.

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



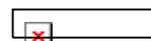
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors*

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching	68.2	24.5	7.3
Learning	66.4	29.1	4.5

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

**too few adult lessons were seen to form separate 16 to 18 and 19+ categories*

Achievement and standards



1. Most students make good or very good progress and for the college to have achieved a top ten college place in each of the last two years in terms of UCAS GCE A-level point scores per student is a very good achievement. Student achievement generally is above the national average for sixth form colleges and most pass rates show useful improvements over the last three years. Retention rates are also good. Adults achieve well on foundation and intermediate courses but not on advanced-level courses. Sometimes there are wide differences in how well the same students achieve between courses. The college monitors these inconsistencies carefully and rigorously measures students' progress over time.

2. Attendance in lessons averaged 82%, slightly below the national average for sixth form colleges. It was particularly good in science, social sciences and humanities, but below the college average in mathematics, ICT, visual arts and performing arts and media courses. With a few exceptions, students were also very punctual, ensuring that lessons had prompt starts.

16 to 18 year olds

3. Students achieve well and make good progress in most subjects, especially in relation to their starting points. Students typically grow in confidence over their time at the college, and second-year students are noticeably more willing to ask as well as answer questions. Most students are well motivated, work hard and enjoy their studies. Retention rates are good and pass rates on most courses are high; being at or above national averages, an outcome that has been maintained in each of the last three years. Students achieve an average point score at GCE A-level that is well above the national average for sixth form colleges and the percentage of students who achieve high grades is also above average in many subjects. For example, the numbers of students gaining high grades in GCE A-level mathematics, computing and law are more than 50% above the national average. However, students do not achieve well on all courses and, for example, pass and retention rates are poor in GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) ICT. Retention rates in GCE A-level performance studies are unsatisfactory.

4. Intermediate-level students still do not achieve well enough even though examination outcomes at this level have improved significantly over the last two years. Retention and pass rates are still noticeably more uneven across the eight GCSE subjects than they are at GCE A-level and too few students achieve higher grades in psychology, English language and in information technology (IT). While many students' work shows a marked improvement over the course, the improvement is often not great enough for them to gain a sufficiently high grade to progress on to an advanced course in the same subject or a related one.

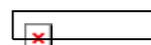
5. Students' work in lessons is typically good. In just over 68% of lessons, attainment was good or better and it was unsatisfactory in fewer than 2%. Students in English and foreign languages consistently demonstrate good communication skills, take responsibility for their own learning and are committed and conscientious. Many students work particularly well on practical activities and produce work of a very high standard. Music and media students have good technical skills while performing arts students use technical language competently and confidently. Students' written work is also typically of a high standard; written explanations are clear and well presented. Many IT students develop good practical skills, although students' in some mathematics and computing classes are noticeably less confident than others when asked to answer questions in class.

6. An increasing proportion of students leaving college with advanced-level qualifications progress to HE. In 2002, some 63% of full-time second-year students did so.

Adult learners

7. Most adult students are studying for foundation and intermediate-level qualifications and are successful. At both levels most do well. These positive achievements, however, do not extend to those studying for advanced-level qualifications. For example, in 2001, against a national average of 66%, just 50% of adult learners who completed an advanced-level course, achieved the qualification. In the classroom and workshop, most students are developing good practical skills but not all are keen to sit the examination at the end of the course.

Quality of education and training



8. Teaching and learning are good and in some curriculum areas, very good. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 110 lessons. In 68% of these teaching was good, very good or occasionally excellent. In 25% it was satisfactory and in 7% it was unsatisfactory, poor or very poor. Overall, the learning was judged to be good, very good or excellent in 66% of lessons, satisfactory in 29% and unsatisfactory in 5%. There were too few adult lessons seen to make a separate comparative judgement on the teaching of these students although generally their progress and achievement is in line with 16 to 19 students.

9. Overall the quality of teaching shows improvement on the last inspection report. This judgement sits comfortably with the assessment the college made for itself in its self-assessment review. If there is a criticism to be made of the teaching it is that at times it is too narrowly focused on the immediate examination requirements, but given the time when this inspection took place, just before the summer examinations, that is entirely understandable. One of the most impressive features of the teaching is its consistency across nearly all subjects.

10. Where teaching is effective, teachers have realistically high expectations of students. They encourage them to ask questions. In doing so, these students move gradually from being dependent on their teachers to being self-confident students capable of providing informed views on important topics and showing initiative. In the best lessons, teachers take care to acknowledge prior learning and set clear learning objectives, which they review regularly. They show good subject knowledge and the high levels of practical skill required. They succeed in engaging students' interest through innovative coursework assignments and through the careful selection of resources. They remain at all times aware of the students' learning needs and, through careful planning and good time management, meet them effectively. In the small number of less successful lessons, the planning is less thorough and the sequencing of work poorly developed. There is too little variety in the lesson plans and an over reliance on a few favoured methods of working that are not always appropriate. In some areas, there is not enough use of ICT in lessons.

11. Most students work effectively in class and acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills the teacher intends. The most able can demonstrate that they can apply key ideas to unfamiliar contexts and, second-year students particularly, arrive at lessons well prepared and are inquisitive learners. Many second year students also show that they can now work independently, though a minority remain overly dependent on the teachers help to the very end of the course. Most students share ideas and information well and have a good appreciation of what they need to do to improve. Adult students are willing to use lessons as starting points for learning and are capable of building on the foundations laid in class at home. In nearly all lessons, students work hard and very little time is wasted.

12. Most teachers are well qualified and most have appropriate experience. Overall, three quarters of teachers are trained and most that are not are currently working towards a teaching qualification. All newly-appointed teachers are required to study for a teacher training qualification if they do not already have one. The college gives professional development a high priority and there is a comprehensive development plan, supported by a wide-range of well-judged activities. These arrangements are effective. For example, a member of the computing department has received some specialist technical training and is now teaching a course which could not have been offered otherwise. Most teachers consider the college is very helpful to them in their efforts to keep abreast of course developments and the requirements of awarding bodies. Over the last year, much attention has usefully been given to improving teaching and learning. Some of the training needs are identified by the college lesson observation system. However, there is no specific college-wide training planned to assist teachers to use ICT within their lessons. Support staff have relevant experience and are appropriately qualified.

13. Accommodation varies from very good to poor but the college makes good use of the facilities it has. Strategic decisions need to be taken quickly about how best to develop the site along with its partners, keeping in mind needs of the whole community. While the range of specialist equipment available is generally appropriate, in some areas, the specification and quantity is on occasions insufficient, although teachers are adept at ensuring that the disadvantage to students is kept to a minimum. Some specialist rooms, for example photography, three-dimensional art and two of the science laboratories, are very cramped. The gym is small and outdated and the on-site outdoor sports facilities inadequate. In contrast, the new skills improvement centre is a most useful and well-used resource. The library is similarly new and pleasant, though unevenly stocked, area. Teachers' needs are not well addressed and there are too few quiet workspaces for teachers. There are still some rooms which wheelchair users are not able to access.

14. Access to IT resources is satisfactory although the ratio of computers to students is slightly below average. Because of the way that they are deployed some students have difficulty accessing computers for general use. The recently installed college intranet holds a range of useful information

for learners, including links to useful websites. Mathematics students make very good use of this resource though there are insufficient computer technicians to meet the demand effectively.

15. Assessment of full-time students work in the college is good. In most cases, the formal coursework assessment process is thorough, detailed and fair. Students' work is accurately and consistently marked and progress is reported each term to personal tutors although there is little recording and reporting on progress in general studies. Most curriculum areas adopt the college assessment and moderation policies resulting in some good examples of assessment practice, in particular within art and design, geography, mathematics, English and modern foreign languages. Homework as well as coursework is regularly set and marked and students are aware of the marking criteria. In some of the best examples, students assess themselves using awarding body criteria before comparing and agreeing results, in discussion, with those from their tutor. Parents of full-time students are kept informed of student progress through twice-yearly reports and additional personal contact from tutors or support staff. They can also attend well-organised consultation evenings.

16. Value added data are now used to identify minimum target grades for those studying GCE A-level subjects and other students use individual learning plans effectively, supported by personal tutors, to show their level of progress and to set future long term goals. For some students, specific and measurable short-term targets are rarely set or recorded and in some humanities subjects; for example, insufficient attention is given to the collection and use of initial assessment data. Part-time adult students receive no initial assessment to identify skills needs and poor target setting and insufficient information about progress means many students are unaware of what they still need to do to succeed. Some teachers do not systematically keep records of progress or individual learning plans.

17. The college offers courses that meet the needs of its full-time GCE A-level students very well. Senior managers have a detailed understanding of the local community that the college serves and, based on that knowledge, have made sound decisions on the courses it can successfully offer. Inevitably, this has involved some difficult choices and in some curriculum areas, such as modern languages, there are too few courses at foundation and intermediate level. At GCE A-level, there is an almost unlimited number of subject combinations that students can choose and a very high proportion of students complete them successfully and progress on to FE, HE and training. The range of courses for part-time adult students is more limited with most, 89%, studying for ICT qualifications. Access to the provision is not as flexible as it needs to be. While the college works with other providers of post-16 education well there is little formal consultation to ensure that the needs of the local community are fully met without unnecessary duplication of courses or that any gaps in provision are systematically addressed.

18. Curriculum 2000 has resulted in the broadening of the curriculum for many students though key skills are addressed pragmatically rather than systematically or well. However, most students display good key skills across a broad range of competencies. Optional visits and off-site activities remain an important feature of many courses. These are generally popular with students and enrich the curriculum considerably. There is an enrichment programme which is available to full-time students and is compulsory for first-year students. There is a good range of sports activities to meet the interests of a wide variety of students and part-time adult students also have full access to this provision. There are also opportunities for students who wish to take part in acts of collective worship within the college.

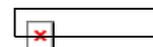
19. Support for full-time students is good. Students value highly the very good support from their subject and personal tutors. Staff are friendly and sensitive to their needs. They encourage students to develop independence and provide timely help. Much of the support provided occurs outside of formal tutor time and goes unrecorded. In contrast, support for part-time adult students is inadequate. Subject tutors provide help in lessons but individual support needs are not recorded and the help needed is not always provided. Students who study at the off-site ICT centre do not have access to the same level of resources and support as full or part-time students who study at the main college site. Part-time adult students receive little formal advice on how best to progress.

20. All students benefit from good advice and guidance prior to joining the college, especially from high quality publicity material and pre-course activities. Potential full time 16 to 18 students are

interviewed at school and they then get the opportunity to attend taster sessions at the college before having a final interview with subject tutors. Qualifying students can access their first choice courses. The system of referring students for literacy and number work is well documented and students benefit from the individual attention and help they receive. Careers education and guidance are satisfactory with career information and resources available on the college intranet and in the library, and many students make good use of specialist Connexions advisers who provide good one-to-one support. Subject and personal tutors also provide valuable advice and help with university and employment applications.

21. The college has recently appointed a welfare officer along with two part-time counsellors who provide timely and effective help on welfare, funding, health and counselling issues. Student support services are well managed and tutors are monitored and supported by senior tutors. A new tutorial system has recently been introduced but the time allocated for tutorial work is not well used by all tutors. Group tutorial sessions are often poorly attended, particularly by those in their final year. The tutorials seen were mostly unsatisfactory.

Leadership and management



22. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of purpose and staff understand the college's mission and strategic aims. Pass rates are consistently high on many courses and retention rates are generally good and improving. Governors and senior managers work closely to support the achievement of strategic objectives. These include the expressed priorities to improve accommodation, to widen the range of intermediate-level courses, to establish a fully embedded quality assurance system and to increase community access to the college's learning resources. College plans combine actions to achieve strategic objectives with the outcomes of self-assessment and appropriate actions are identified to affect improvements. The content of these plans provides a suitable agenda for improving performance, stating actions to be taken and those responsible for their completion, though some development plan targets are poorly worded. Student numbers, both full and part time, have increased significantly over the last two years.

23. Management at course level is mostly good. In English and modern foreign languages, as in many other curriculum areas, managers set high standards and lead by example. In humanities subjects, minutes of team meetings are detailed and include agreed action points for completion. In physical education, schemes of work are of good quality and have been developed to support the introduction of new courses. Course teams meet regularly. They give due priority to improving student achievement. Many of the actions taken are successful and, for example in physical education, the strategy to improve the GCE AS course has contributed to the much improved examination outcomes.

24. Communication within the college is good and staff appreciate the open style of management that is practiced. Heads of faculty work closely with department heads to ensure effective transfer of information between senior management and course teams. Meetings are scheduled in an annual calendar and minutes are regularly circulated. Most teachers make good contributions to one of several cross-college working groups, including equal opportunities, quality assurance and professional development. The principal holds a daily briefing session for teachers and daily bulletins and regular newsletters are published. The college intranet provides access to information on student applications, enrolments, attendance, retention and achievement rates, student evaluations and equal opportunities monitoring data. The use of this centrally held data is not well developed and the college is working to resolve the problems it has experienced; the self-assessment report identifies the need for further staff training.

25. Since the last inspection the college has given high priority to improving the quality assurance arrangements in the college. Quality assurance processes are now good, although these are not effectively applied in a few curriculum areas. Self-assessment is comprehensive but is insufficiently

self-critical of the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements are monitored and steps are taken to bring about continuing improvement. The cycle of classroom observation informs staff appraisal but the internal lesson observation grades awarded are too generous. Some development plan targets for improvement are unclear and do not allow progress, or the lack of it, to be properly monitored. The college's self-assessment does not give enough attention to an analysis of known weaknesses.

26. A clearly defined staff appraisal system contributes directly to the identification of staff development needs and an appropriate proportion of the college budget is invested in professional development. Comprehensive records are kept of staff development activities. Teachers, administrative and support staff particularly value the in-service training and development opportunities they receive. Continuing professional development and outcomes of lesson observation are reviewed as part of the appraisal process. However, the appraisal cycle is too broad and, at the time of the inspection, a significant number of staff have yet to be appraised.

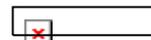
27. The college is responding well to the needs of its community and is committed to extending courses to attract adult students. Since the last inspection the college has begun to diversify the curriculum for 16 to 18 year olds. A number of vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level have been introduced. However, the majority of classes are taught during the daytime only and those students who can only study in the evenings cannot attend. The college has good links with its partner schools, with a senior member of staff assigned to liaise with each school. The principal meets regularly with local head teachers. The college is a member of the Great Yarmouth learning community and is a supportive partner of the Great Yarmouth Education Action Zone. There are many productive links with employers' groups and with other regional and local organisations.

28. Students are represented on the cross-college equal opportunities group. This group actively seeks to respond to race and equality issues identified through monitoring of centrally gathered data. The college's response to the Special Educational Needs Disability Discrimination Act has been satisfactory. A disability statement has been published for staff and students and an external consultant has completed a review of access for learners with restricted mobility. However, staff are yet to be given appropriate training in the implications of the act for support services and teachers. The college has reviewed and strengthened its race equality policy in line with the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act, but equal opportunities are not effectively promoted through teaching and learning.

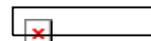
29. The college is well served by its governing body. The framework for reporting to governors is good and governors receive regular and appropriate information on students' achievements, financial reports and progress towards achieving college priorities. They exercise their duty to monitor its financial health carefully and appropriately and the board has a clear view of the strategic direction of the college and its mission in the local community. They bring a wide range of valuable experience to the benefit of the college. Governors regularly participate in training and development events. An external facilitator has been appointed to support Governor training. The Board and its sub-committees are appropriately involved in determining the college's strategic direction. Governors undertake an annual review of their own performance and actions for improvement are implemented.

30. The college is in a strong financial position. It has adopted a careful and prudent approach to financial management. College managers and Governors effectively control budgets for staffing and consumable resources. Students do well on their courses and value for money is good. Reserves have been identified for capital development. The college is reviewing the cost of tenders to address immediate accommodation development needs on its already very congested main site. The inspection revealed some shortcomings in current accommodation, which are having a detrimental effect on aspects the quality of the learning environment. However, the college has made good use of the available accommodation to ensure that the impact of any unsuitable accommodation on students learning is kept to an absolute minimum.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- students demonstrate their knowledge and skills confidently
- good pass rates on most courses
- good and improving retention rates on GCE A-level media and film studies
- good academic support for students
- good assessment practice in drama and performing arts.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate on GCE A-level performance studies
- insufficient specialist accommodation for performing arts and music
- unsatisfactory planning for course improvement.

Scope of provision

31. The college offers a good range of GCE AS and A-level courses in film studies, communication studies, media, performance studies, drama and theatre studies and music. At intermediate level, courses are limited to GCSEs in dance and media. There has been a large increase in numbers of students following courses in film studies and media. There are currently 88 students on GCE AS media and 51 on GCE AS film studies. Groups in music, dance and drama courses are small. The

very large majority of students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

32. Most students achieve well, many very well in relation to their starting points. Students enjoy their studies and most improve rapidly once they have made the transition from GCSE to GCE A-level ways of working. By the time they are completing their GCE A-levels most are rightly confident in their abilities. For those whose intentions are to study a related HE course, secure foundations have been laid on which they can build. Pass rates in media and film studies courses at intermediate and advanced level have improved steadily over the last three years and all students passed in GCE A-level music, drama and theatre studies in each of the last two years. A high proportion of students complete their courses. The only exception to this impressive picture is in performance studies where too many students do not complete their course.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	*	5	12
		% retention	*	80	83
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE AS film/video production	3	No. of starts	*	21	45
		% retention	*	76	84
		% pass rate	*	94	100
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	*	73	106
		% retention	*	74	89
		% pass rate	*	83	91
GCE A-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	15	22	7
		% retention	64	59	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	33	42	39
		% retention	55	97	100
		% pass rate	88	79	97
GCE AS performance studies	3	No. of starts	*	18	31
		% retention	*	78	87
		% pass rate	*	93	93

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

* GCE AS first examined 2000/01

33. College data indicate that students do very well in relation to their starting points. For example in GCE AS and A levels in film studies, media and theatre studies and GCE AS music, most students achieve grades well above those predicted at the start of their course. This end of course achievement is also consistent with that seen in the classroom, where most students written and musical performances are impressive. Film studies students produce meticulously researched projects on 'auteur' theory, which they present with style and authority. Similarly music students perform with confidence and technical expertise. Attendance during the week of inspection was low at 76%.

Quality of education and training

34. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well prepared and students benefit from the expertise of their teachers. By the end of most lessons students have learned most of what the teacher intended. Second-year students are often proactive, come well prepared and are willing to ask as well as answer questions. Most students enjoy their courses and work hard to improve their knowledge and skills. They are keen to take part in challenging discussions and practical work and experiment with new ideas supported by teachers and other students. In dance classes, students confidently improvise in front of an audience of their peers and give criticism sensitively. In music, students use their anthologies and a structure for analysis supplied by the teacher to help each other identify the period represented by some scores. The teacher ably supports this through advice to individuals and by posing challenging questions. Teachers have high expectations of students' abilities and set challenging targets for improvement. Whilst most students achieve them, there are occasions when teachers do not recognise that some students need additional help.

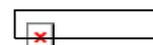
35. Resources are satisfactory overall, although there are some significant shortcomings which the college is well aware of and is trying to address. Teachers are well qualified and all have, or are studying for, teaching qualifications. Cameras and videos are available to students and they are well used. Resources for music and performing arts courses are inadequate. A capital plan is in place to improve music technology resources but these will take valuable space from the performing arts courses. The music room is also too small, though a new one is planned, and there are insufficient practice rooms.

36. Students are kept well informed about their progress. Teachers in performing arts give extremely comprehensive and effective feedback on drafts of coursework and essay plan which has a beneficial impact on the quality of the final pieces of work that students submit. Support for students is also good. The college provides all music students with financial support for instrumental tuition and teachers give their time freely outside lessons to provide extra support before exams and performances. Performing arts students take part in a wide range of performances. All teachers provide individual subject guidance and additional lessons when required, which is highly appreciated by students.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and curriculum management within the curriculum area are mostly good. Managers are effective in providing staff with support and guidance in the day-to-day running of their courses. Curriculum teams meet regularly to discuss these issues. Teachers produce, and share, good teaching resources in media. The academic curriculum is generally well planned, although, lessons are too short for practical dance and drama activities. Course teams, which rely heavily on part time staff, do not always plan their curriculum effectively together. Action plans are not reviewed with sufficient rigour. Meetings that deal with these matters are infrequent and poorly recorded and the quality of tuition provided by visiting instrumental teachers is not routinely monitored.

Visual arts



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

Strengths

- good achievement on most courses

- high standard of students' coursework

- very good teaching in most lessons

- very good academic support

- extensive and well-used resources, especially in fine art.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching in some lessons

- inadequate resources in some areas.

Scope of provision

38. The college teaches a suitable range of GCE A-level and courses that are popular with students. These include fine art, textiles, graphics, photography and three-dimensional (3D) design. Some 254 students are enrolled; the large majority are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

39. Students achieve well on most courses and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Student achievement is well above national averages with many courses far exceeding national averages for high grades achieved. In most lessons, students work enthusiastically and engage in independent study achieving challenging targets and producing high quality work. This is particularly the case in photography, graphic design, textiles and fine art. A large and growing number of students, on completion of their course, progress either to specialist art and design foundation diploma courses or directly to art and design undergraduate courses. Students' work in 3D Design is less impressive.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual arts, 1999 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE A2 3D design	3	No. of starts	21	15	6
		% retention	80	80	100
		% pass rate	80	100	100
GCE AS fine art	3	No. of starts	*	46	66
		% retention	*	78	86

		% pass rate	*	94	92
GCE A2 textiles	3	No. of starts	13	21	12
		% retention	92	81	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE AS graphics	3	No. of starts	14	18	47
		% retention	93	78	85
		% pass rate	54	86	90
GCE A2 graphics	3	No. of starts	27	23	11
		% retention	78	83	100
		% pass rate	91	95	100
GCE AS photography	3	No. of starts	*	52	54
		% retention	*	75	76
		% pass rate	*	74	90

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

*GCE AS first examined 2000/01

Quality of education and training

40. In most lessons, the teaching and learning are very good but in a few lessons they are unsatisfactory. The best lessons are both stimulating and innovative and inspire students to set themselves high but achievable standards. There is some particularly exciting and innovative work in fine art and textiles and good use is made of computers in graphic design and digital imaging in photography. In these lessons, students make very good progress helped by targeted action plans and careful monitoring and recording of progress both in studio sessions and in tutorials. Most teachers' planning is effective, although, in some design lessons, the intended learning outcomes are too general and are not achieved, particularly in respect of problem solving, analysis of function and technical expertise. In some lessons learning is hindered by late starts.

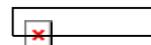
41. There are very good and well-used facilities for fine art and students use these intensively in textiles, graphic design and photography. Students work enthusiastically in most lessons and many do so well into their own time. However, some accommodation is unsatisfactory and constrains how teachers teach and what students can learn. This is the situation in 3D Design. Wheelchair access is not possible in photography and 3D design.

42. The assessment of students' work in art and design is impressive. It is detailed, thorough and accurate and informs students of what they need to do to gain a high grade. Students speak highly of their teachers and greatly appreciate the additional time and energy spent in helping them extend and develop their studies. Tutorials are held regularly and students are informed and involved in the monitoring and assessment of their own progress. Information about students at risk is circulated to the staff and is used to support these students.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are mostly good. A clear sense of direction is set and new teachers are well supported. Students achieve well and most courses are popular. Curriculum area meetings are held regularly although they are informal in nature and are not well recorded. They do not always show how issues that have been identified have been followed up and not all teachers are fully involved in nor fully understand the quality assurance processes. The self-assessment review reflected some of these shortcomings.

Mathematics and information communications technology



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

Strengths

- good pass rates in GCE A-level mathematics and computing
- good use of intranet learning materials in mathematics
- very effective academic support for full-time students.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rate in GCE AS ICT
- unsatisfactory teaching of adult ICT students
- poor lesson planning.

Scope of provision

44. There are a good range of courses which are popular with students. Nearly 300 full time students study GCSE and GCE A-level courses in mathematics and further mathematics, while free standing mathematics units have been introduced for students with GCSE grades below D. There are also numeracy classes for non-mathematicians. Some 185 full-time students and 592 part-time students study computing and IT. GCSE and GCE A-level courses in computing and IT are especially popular and the national diploma in IT for practitioners provides a vocational alternative at advanced level. The European computer driving licence course was introduced this year for all first-year full-time students in the college. A number of industry qualifications are also taught. Adult ICT students are taught at one of the college's two IT centres and both non-accredited short courses and long courses are offered.

Achievement and standards

45. Most students do well in mathematics and computing and these achievements are reflected in the high pass rates in GCE A-level mathematics and computing. Achievements in the classroom tend to be closely reflected in the end of course examinations. Computing students demonstrate a

high level of proficiency in practical IT skills. Some mathematics and computing students are reluctant to answer questions in class, preferring instead to show their understanding on paper. A high proportion of mathematics students progress on to related degrees in HE. In each of the last two years, students have exceeded national benchmarks in both subjects. GCE A-level mathematics students did extremely well last year, nearly all passed and over half achieved high grades. GCE A-level computing students did equally well. Retention rates are satisfactory on most courses. However, students do not achieve as well in GCSE IT and GCE AS ICT courses. Only 7% achieved a higher grade at the end of the GCSE last year.

A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics and information communications technology, 1999 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Computer learning and information technology (CLAIT) 1 year and short	1	No. of starts	440	203	182
		% retention	92	78	96
		% pass rate	64	59	82
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	71	56	68
		% retention	70	71	85
		% pass rate	40	63	40
Integrated Business Technology (IBT) 2 1year	2	No. of starts	126	36	19
		% retention	87	86	95
		% pass rate	18	48	78
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	95	95	64
		% retention	82	83	100
		% pass rate	78	90	92
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	109	98
		% retention	*	88	93
		% pass rate	*	70	89
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	40	26	20
		% retention	63	69	100
		% pass rate	60	83	90
GCE AS IT and information	3	No. of starts	23	49	55
		% retention	35	71	84
		% pass rate	88	69	61

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

*GCE AS courses not examined until 2000/01

Quality of education and training

46. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but significantly better in mathematics and computing than it is in ICT. In the better lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm ensures a lively pace is set and that the lesson has clear, appropriate and achievable learning objectives. Students are encouraged to become involved in dialogue and discussion about the work in hand and take measured responsibility for their own learning. Well-chosen and thoughtful activities motivate and maintain students' interest. In the weaker sessions, planning is weak and insufficient thought is given

to ensuring that tasks are structured to take account of prior learning. This is particularly the case with the more able learners. Poor time management does not leave enough time for students to consolidate learning and, in a few classes, there is insufficient use of directed questions to engage the less confident students.

47. In adult IT classes, much of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not produce individual learning plans for students or keep records of the progress they made. This poor practice impacts adversely on the learning. Most students do not know when they should expect to finish either the module or the course and they do not receive feedback from teachers about their progress. In IT workshop sessions for full-time students, a system has been introduced to track and feedback on assessment but there is a lack of formal monitoring of student progress within sessions. Short-term targets for achievement are not routinely identified.

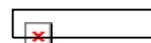
48. The college intranet site for mathematics has been well developed and students use the facility well. Students can access a substantial portion of these resources from home and they value this development highly. Teachers in mathematics are appropriately qualified and most have teaching qualifications. However, in computing, there is a high proportion of under qualified and inexperienced staff. IT students have access to up-to-date resources, but some software is only available in computer rooms and students are frustrated that they cannot access the software outside of formal classes. The book stock in the library for reference purposes is unsatisfactory. One of the IT centres for adults is housed within a primary school and internet access for adult students is restricted by the constraints imposed by the school. Students with restricted mobility cannot access many of the classrooms used for mathematics.

49. The assessment of students work is satisfactory. In mathematics, regular homework is set and returned promptly with clear feedback. There is strong academic support for students to develop their skills and address weaknesses in their performance. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and highly committed to their students. They are readily available to students outside of classes for individual assistance. They routinely arrange additional subject-support sessions for students. Analysis of students' assessment against target grades is used to identify at risk students and to action plan individual support. Students value this support and gain confidence in the certain knowledge that help is available should they need it.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Mathematics courses are well managed. Comprehensive schemes of work and course booklets provide the foundations of good practice across the department. There are regular team meetings with recorded action for the improvement of teaching and learning. The computing department has undergone a recent restructure with many of the teachers new to the college and to teaching. Good progress has been made in developing the team. Teachers attend regular training sessions to update their skills. Communication within and between departments is good and there is an ethos of sharing of good practice, though this good practice is not yet effectively shared with those teachers supporting adult provision in IT. There is a clear sense of direction amongst all teachers in both the mathematics and computing departments. There are, by national standards, a low number of female students on some courses which the self-assessment process has not effectively identified or addressed.

Science



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

Strengths

- students achieve well on most courses

- good retention rates

- good teaching

- highly motivated students.

Weaknesses

- too little use of IT

- outdated laboratories.

Scope of provision

51. The college provides a wide range of GCE A-level science courses. It has recently added GCE AS/A2 geology, GCE AS science for public understanding, GCE AS/A2 environmental science and GCSE human biology to the range of courses it offers. Students are mainly aged 16 to 18 and attend full time. There is good recruitment on to all courses and there are large numbers for most subjects. There are good links with the local hospital, which have been effective in terms of providing work experience for prospective medical students.

Achievement and standards

52. Science students do well, most very well. Retention rates are good across the science curriculum and pass rates are high. In all subjects pass rates are at or above the national average and students in biology achieve particularly well. The proportion of students gaining high grades is also at least in line with national averages and on many courses better. Most students do well in relation to their starting points aided by good target setting informed by careful use of value added data. The work seen in the classroom reflects the achievements noted above. Most students are keen and display good knowledge, understanding and skills that are at least in line with what could be expected given the length of time they have been studying the course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 1999 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	14	21	29
		% retention	86	62	90
		% pass rate	50	38	46

GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	101	106	31
		% retention	72	82	90
		% pass rate	93	89	96
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	68	67	50
		% retention	83	91	96
		% pass rate	92	96	92
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	49	54	45
		% retention	69	82	98
		% pass rate	97	93	89
GCE AS human biology	3	No. of starts	*	42	73
		% retention	*	86	90
		% pass rate	*	89	73
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	41	56
		% retention	*	88	100
		% pass rate	*	94	98

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

*GCE AS first examined 2000/01

Quality of education and training

53. Most teaching is good, which in turn produces effective learning. There is high quality lesson planning and, in most lessons, students' learning needs are skilfully taken into account and a range of activities adopted to build on students' prior learning appropriately. In most lessons, students make good progress and can demonstrate understanding of the questions that require thinking and reflection. In a biology session, students carried out concept mapping comparing plant and animal circulatory systems. This produced enthusiastic discussion and an enjoyable and effective lesson. In a chemistry lesson, the teacher effectively uses a mixture of theory and practical work to good effect to improve learners' understanding of the properties of the transition elements. Not all lessons are equally successful and in some the pace is too slow to involve or maintain interest or lead to discussion or sharing of important ideas and information.

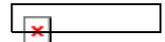
54. Computers are not well used in science. In some cases, this is because of a lack of resources available in science classrooms, but in other instances there are missed opportunities to see the full potential the technology offers. Many science teachers recognise the problem and are now responding appropriately. Laboratory activities are well organised and careful attention is paid to health and safety practices. The adequacy of specialist equipment and book stock for sciences is satisfactory, although there are some out-of-date books in the library. Some laboratories are small for the numbers of students accommodated. Students rightly complain that they are cramped and uncomfortable. Wheel-chair user access is difficult in much of the accommodation. Corridors have some good displays of posters and information, however, there is a general lack of student work in laboratories and very little celebration of student success.

55. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good and students are well supported on their courses and with advice on how to progress. There is a departmental assessment policy that staff follow. All science students receive initial assessment to diagnose their literacy and mathematics skills though at present this does not extend to an assessment of their IT skills. Assessment activities are effective, and tests and homework are regularly set. Students' work is returned to them annotated with helpful comments and feedback. There is particular good practice in physics.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are good. The science courses are well managed and there are good links with college governors. Heads of department and the head of faculty ensure that a strong emphasis is placed on supporting and preparing learners for examinations and student progress and standards are well monitored. Teachers have good access to training and development opportunities and are involved in the self-assessment and target setting process. There are clear lines of communication and there is a good team ethos. Regular meetings are held in a cycle that includes elements of the quality assurance system, however, not all science teachers have been observed.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- good teaching

- very good achievement at GCE A level

- impressive academic support

- rigorous and effective assessment procedures

- highly effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- poor GCSE pass rate in English in 2002

- no foundation or intermediate-level provision in modern foreign languages.

Scope of provision

57. The college offers a good range of courses at GCE A-level. These include GCE AS and A2 in

English literature, English language, communications, French, German and GCE AS in philosophy. There is a clear commitment to maintaining provision in modern languages despite some problems of recruiting students. Most students are aged 16 to 18. There are no courses currently offered in modern languages at foundation and intermediate level. In English, there is a one-year GCSE course. This is also offered to adults in the evening but attracts very low numbers. As a response to poor pass rates in GCSE English in 2002, all GCSE students are also entered for the key skills examination at intermediate level in communication. Key skills communication at advanced level is taught to some GCE A-level students.

Achievement and standards

58. Most students achieve very well and examination outcomes are very good on all GCE A-level courses. Value added indicators also suggest that students make very good progress over the duration of the course and the proportion of students gaining a high grade was well above national benchmarks in 2002. Coursework standards in English are high; students are generally articulate and confident in their oral contributions to lessons, while modern languages students are able to sustain extended discussion in the target language fluently. In GCSE English language examination outcomes were unsatisfactory last year. The 56 students taking GCE AS English who sat key skills advanced communications were all successful. The very large majority of students complete their courses successfully and retention rates are generally above benchmark levels. The work students produce in the classroom is consistent with the examination outcomes noted.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	35	55	56
		% retention	86	76	80
		% pass rate	83	79	42
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	*	78	98
		% retention	*	87	89
		% pass rate	*	97	100
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	*	62	73
		% retention	*	73	95
		% pass rate	*	93	97
GCE AS German language	3	No. of starts	*	19	13
		% retention	*	100	92
		% pass rate	*	95	100
GCE A2 French language	3	No. of starts	14	18	14
		% retention	75	80	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A2 English literature	3	No. of starts	58	60	50
		% retention	91	88	94
		% pass rate	100	96	100

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

*GCE AS first examined in 2000/01

Quality of education and training

59. Most teaching is either good or very good and students' learning is equally impressive. Teachers are enthusiastic and display good subject knowledge. They are effective and their teaching impacts on students who learn quickly and share many of their teachers' enthusiasms for the course. Schemes of work are comprehensive and lessons are typically well planned with clear aims that are shared with students. There is effective use of a variety of resources and a good balance of teaching methods. These include whole-class, group, paired and individual work. In the best lessons, students work at a good pace and are given ample opportunity to explore and develop complex ideas. They are actively involved in their learning. In a few lessons, time management is poor; lesson plans are too ambitious and some tasks are rushed or incomplete, or the pace is too slow to maintain learners' attention.

60. All teachers are well qualified and have relevant teaching qualifications, or are working towards such a qualification. Specialist resources, such as listening facilities, are available for students in the modern language workshop where students benefit from weekly meetings with foreign language assistants. The college intranet is well used, it includes websites for English and modern languages. In English, the library is very well stocked with fiction books. ICT is well used as a resource by both teachers and students, although teachers do not frequently integrate ICT in their lessons sufficiently. Classrooms are attractive with good displays and a clear subject identity, although some teaching rooms are too small. There is a wide range of books and audio-visual resources to support teaching and learning.

61. Assessment is thorough and students are very well supported. All written work is marked accurately and constructively, and returned promptly. Trial examinations are held in all subjects and, where appropriate, internal moderation takes place. Students are given clear feedback and know what they have to do in order to improve. English coursework tasks are completed to a high standard and moderators' comments are very positive. Initial assessment is used to identify students in need of support. Teachers know their students well and are sensitive to individual needs and differences. Students value their teachers' accessibility and speak warmly of the encouragement and support they receive in order to help them to make progress. Enrichment opportunities for students are very good. These include student conferences, theatre visits and other off site activities. Students appreciate the academic and pastoral commitment staff demonstrate to them. Although pre-course guidance is generally good, some students are still inappropriately placed on GCE AS courses in languages and withdraw at an early stage.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are very good. The college management structure is clearly understood by all staff and all are fully involved in planning and reviewing curriculum provision. In both departments, staff contribute to the production of the self-assessment report and to action planning for improvement. Teachers take part in regular continuing professional development and information from external events is effectively shared across the curriculum team. Course administration is thorough, efficient and well documented. Team meetings are recorded and action points followed up. Procedures for regular appraisal are well established and valued by staff. Managers set high standards and lead by example, helping to create an ethos where students take responsibility for their own learning and are conscientious and committed.

Geography, psychology and sociology



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

Strengths

- good pass rates in GCE AS and A2 sociology and GCE A2 psychology

- good retention rates on all courses in 2002

- much good teaching

- good resources for learning

- good additional academic support for learners.

Weaknesses

- few high grades in geography and GCE A2 sociology

- unsatisfactory pass rates in GCSE psychology and GCE AS geography

- insufficient integration of IT into teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

63. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in psychology, sociology and geography. Psychology is offered at GCSE, but the numbers are small with only five students at the time of the inspection. The largest of the subjects inspected was psychology with 194 students, 82 were studying sociology and 65 geography. The number of students completing the full GCE A level has declined in all three subjects since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. The very large majority of students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

64. Student achievement in two of the three subjects is good and satisfactory in the third. Students achieve well on most sociology and psychology courses and slightly below the national averages in geography. There are improving pass and retention rates in all three subjects, though the proportion of students gaining a high grade differs significantly from courses to course. It was high GCE AS sociology and much lower in the same subject at GCE A2. In geography it has generally been below the national average. Students in advanced-level psychology consistently achieve grades higher than those predicted by their GCSE performance but below it in geography. Achievement in GCSE psychology is poor.

65. The overall standard of written work is good. The work of the most able shows a high level of evaluation and synthesis, but some students are less expansive. This group of students finds it

difficult to apply a critical analysis to important questions and issues or get beyond describing events or conditions and on to explanations. Psychology coursework is of a good standard. The work of the most able demonstrates good evaluation of methodology, a clear understanding of the limitations of research and can offer realistic proposals for further research. Students' work is well presented and well written. Their study skills are good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in geography, psychology and sociology, 1999 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	26	**	8
		% retention	54	**	75
		% pass rate	36	**	33
GCE A2 geography	3	No. of starts	32	31	20
		% retention	77	83	95
		% pass rate	61	80	89
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	119	137
		% retention	*	79	86
		% pass rate	*	80	83
GCE A2 psychology	3	No. of starts	57	73	45
		% retention	72	77	96
		% pass rate	84	98	95
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	*	53	39
		% retention	*	68	90
		% pass rate	*	83	94
GCE A2 sociology	3	No. of starts	27	30	18
		% retention	72	72	100
		% pass rate	89	81	94

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

*GCE AS courses first examined in 2000/01

** course not offered

Quality of education and training

66. Teaching is good as is most of the learning. The best teaching is in psychology but there is some good teaching in each area. In a lively psychology session, GCE A2 students consolidated their knowledge of the ethics of research by participating in a simulated ethics committee to decide whether to approve a controversial experiment on animals that would improve understanding of Alzheimer's disease. Teachers prepare thoroughly and choose resources carefully, though lesson plans do not identify activities to meet individual learner's needs. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching strategies that are very effective in engaging students' interest. Systematic checks are made on students' recall of facts and concepts. There is a strong focus on developing study and examination skills throughout courses in sociology and psychology. Revision strategies and preparation for the evaluative aspects of examination questions are very good. In a minority of lessons, the teaching is delivered at a slow pace. Insufficient demands were made on the most able learners in several of the lessons seen.

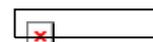
67. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have good command of their subjects. There is a good range of resources in the library and in classrooms. Imaginative learning materials are used which are very successful in promoting learning, though the use of IT is underdeveloped despite almost all classes being equipped with a computer. Some materials have recently been placed on the college intranet for revision in psychology.

68. Work is set frequently on all courses and returned swiftly in most cases. Good summary assessments in psychology and sociology advise students on improving future performance. In geography, assessment notes provide clear feedback to guide students on refining coursework, but some marking in geography has very limited feedback for students. The progress of all students is closely monitored against target grades based on GCSE performance. Teachers provide good support for students' academic progress. Subject clinics are provided in all subjects for important topics and for individual student tutorials; these are well attended. Most teachers devote considerable amounts of personal time to supporting students outside lessons. Most, though not all, students are enthusiastic about the quality and availability of the support they receive. There are, however, few opportunities for subject-related enrichment though good use is made of fieldwork in geography. There is no coherent approach to the teaching and assessment of key skills within subjects.

Leadership and management

69. Management of this area of humanities is mostly good. Action has been successful in improving retention and achievement rates and the day-to-day management of the curriculum is good. Good practice and learning materials are shared effectively. Meetings in sociology and psychology are dedicated to devising and improving lessons and supporting teachers new to the subject. Management information is now used to good effect to monitor retention and attendance rates. The current self-assessment reports lack incisiveness and do not identify all weaknesses. The areas for improvement include the management of GCSE psychology and the writing of schemes of work in geography. Action plans to address weaknesses are insufficiently thorough and there are no action plans to help teachers to prioritise their professional development needs to, for example, make better use of computers or to improve high grades.

History, law and politics



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

Strengths

- very good achievement

- high retention rates

- good teaching

- good assessment

- effective academic support
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- ineffective group work in the few weaker lessons
- insufficient and out-of-date reference materials
- unsatisfactory learning environments for some law students.

Scope of provision

70. The college offers GCE A-level courses in history, law and politics. At the time of the inspection, there were 235 full-time students aged 16 to 18, half of whom study law. The average continuation rate from GCE AS to A2 for 2001 and 2002 is 78%.

Achievement and standards

71. Students achieve very well on most courses. With the exception of politics, students achieve above the national averages for sixth form colleges. A high proportion of students gained high grades in 2002. At GCE A level, there has been continuous improvement in history and law over the past three years and this is also the trend at GCE AS. Retention rates are also very high. Last year only 11 out of 212 students did not complete their courses. There is a good rate of progression to HE.

72. Students produce work to a good standard. Most GCE AS history and law students fulfil their potential. Written work is well argued and fluent. Students develop a broad understanding of subject matter and use new knowledge intelligently. Some develop skills which enable them to explore complex issues. This was well demonstrated in a politics lesson tracing the socialist ideology in the post-1979 Labour Party. Unsatisfactory levels of reference material hinder the growth of research and investigative skills but use of photocopied source material promotes good development of evaluative and analytical skills. There is insufficient promotion of oral competency. It is rare to witness spontaneous or planned class discussion and answers to teacher questioning are often truncated. Surprisingly few students ask questions. However, most students work hard and show a real interest in their work.

A sample of retention and pass rates in history, law and politics, 1999 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS history 1 year	3	No. of starts	*	40	62

		% retention	*	93	94
		% pass rate	*	89	97
GCE AS law 1 year	3	No. of starts	*	66	59
		% retention	*	86	95
		% pass rate	*	84	91
GCE AS politics 1 year	3	No. of starts	*	12	21
		% retention	*	75	95
		% pass rate	*	89	85
GCE A history 2 years	3	No. of starts	41	41	25
		% retention	76	88	96
		% pass rate	65	92	92
GCE A law 2 years	3	No. of starts	33	35	36
		% retention	67	80	94
		% pass rate	86	92	91

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

*GCE AS courses were first examined in 2000/01

Quality of education and training

73. Most teaching is good or better and the learning likewise. Lessons are planned with clear objectives and they start briskly and intentions are shared. Some lesson plans do not target key learning development. There is variety in teaching and learning which sustains students' interest and motivation. In most lessons, topics are well covered. There is consolidation of previous learning. Students work diligently on independent tasks. All lessons incorporate some element of group work. In the weaker lessons, this is not effective in promoting dialogue and interactive learning. An exception is an ambitious history lesson dealing with the persecution of minorities in Nazi Germany. Students move between groups to report their findings from primary and secondary sources. Management of this by the teacher was well planned and student participation was effective. In the better lessons teacher questioning techniques are successful in involving a broad range of learners and in raising thinking levels. Teachers know their students well and ensure that all have an opportunity to take part in the learning. There are some missed opportunities to develop students' use of IT or encourage and expect students to read more widely and apply their knowledge and understanding in the classroom.

74. Teachers are well qualified. They have a good mixture of professional and non-teaching experience. There is a good record of recent professional development. Lessons are taught mainly in two base rooms which are well equipped. They have useful wall displays which include examples of students' work. Some law lessons take place in unattractive mobile classrooms which are not equipped to the same standard. Students in these groups are at a disadvantage. Reference material in the library is barely adequate and there is much inappropriate history stock. This limits students' opportunities for out of class reading. Some recent improvement has been made to the politics list.

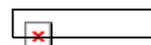
75. Students' progress is well monitored through assignments and the use of minimum target grades. Feedback on marked work is detailed and provides constructive guidance for improvement. Teachers use agreed marking schemes and there is frequent moderation of marking. Targets are set based on GCSE results and expected value added judgements. Student performances against these targets are formally reviewed twice a year. Where progress is unsatisfactory, subject clinics and the development of individual action plans are agreed. Insufficient attention is given to the collection and use of initial assessment data. Most students speak highly of the range of academic support and

guidance they receive. Students also receive one-to-one guidance and further support when learning performance falls below forecast grades or when teachers advise it. Individual action plans for improvement are agreed with subject teachers. The department keeps a record of attendance and monitors the outcomes of these clinics.

Leadership and management

76. Curriculum management is good. There is enthusiastic leadership and an effective team ethos. Comprehensive records are kept of performance indicators which are used to inform decisions. Weekly subject team meetings take place to discuss course and student issues. Formal, minuted departmental meetings are held each month and teachers disseminate information from courses well. They understand and take part in the self-assessment process. Student opinion is also valued. More rigour in assessing the impact of teaching and learning through lesson observation is still needed as well as the writing of better schemes of work and action plans. More consistency in the use of these is also required. In politics, model lesson plans have been developed. These are effective because they identify anticipated learning outcomes, methods of assessment and links with key skills development.

Physical education



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

Strengths

- much good and very good teaching

- good standards of achievement and pass rates

- very well-managed curriculum.

Weaknesses

- inadequate indoor sports facilities

- insufficiently developed opportunities for work experience.

Scope of provision

77. The college physical education department currently provides mainly advanced-level and some intermediate-level courses in sport and public services. At the time of the inspection there were 127

full-time students, 63 of whom were studying GCE A-level physical education. During the last three years the college has expanded provision rapidly, not least by introducing vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level. A sports performance and coach education course has been introduced, and is taken by 45 students from the sports department in addition to their, mainly GCE, subjects. In addition, the department offers cross-college sporting enrichment activities and runs several successful competitive sports teams. Opportunities for students to undertake work experience are limited and some areas of vocational provision are not yet in place. The college has plans to expand the number and range of foundation and intermediate courses when circumstances allow it. Currently there is no provision for adult students.

Achievement and standards

78. Students make good progress and, in most cases, do better than was expected at the start of the course. Standards of achievement and pass rates are good and the proportion of students gaining high grades is in line with national averages. In physical education students achieve particularly well. There was a 100% pass rate on the British and Technician Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in sports studies in 2001/02, but students achieved poorly on the BTEC public services course and of the 11 students who started, only six progressed into the second year. However, current students on all courses are on target to achieve their qualifications. A large number of students achieve basic coaching qualifications, particularly in football and netball.

79. Students reach a high standard of sporting performance and many have achieved major successes at county and regional level. For example, the college men's football team are county champions for the third successive year. The college teams are also county tennis champions, runners up in county netball, rugby and women's hockey, and are currently in the basketball county final. Students written coursework is mainly of a good standard and appropriate levels of attainment are reached.

A sample of retention and pass rates in physical education, 1999 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE A-level physical education (2000, 2001) A2 (2002)	3	No. of starts	38	45	24
		% retention	78	77	96
		% pass rate	85	85	100
GCE AS physical education	3	No. of starts	*	37	42
		% retention	*	86	93
		% pass rate	*	94	95
BTEC national diploma in science (sports studies)	3	No. of starts	**	**	15
		% retention	**	**	87
		% pass rate	**	**	100

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

*GCE AS first examined 2000/01

**course not offered

Quality of education and training

80. Students benefit from consistently good teaching and coaching and they make very good progress. Teacher's schemes of work and lessons are well planned with clearly identified learning outcomes and good links made between theory and practice. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers establish a good rapport with students which in turn helps to promote good learning. Nearly

all students are well motivated and work effectively. They develop a good understanding of important topics and acquire relevant practical skills. Teachers use probing questions well to confirm learning and challenge students to apply theoretical concepts and principles. Clear feedback is given both on written coursework and in practical lessons to aid improvement.

81. Staff are well qualified and experienced practitioners, they regularly undertake professional development and use this effectively to improve their teaching and assessment and to share good practice. Accommodation and resources for the courses taught are unsatisfactory and, in some areas, poor; a fact recognised by the college in its self-assessment review. The college is taking appropriate action to augment the existing gymnasium with a modern sports hall. The indoor sports facility and changing areas are also inadequate and impact adversely on what students can safely do. It also provides a poor quality learning environment. Whilst innovative use is made of the small and outdated gymnasium, it too is unsatisfactory and well short of what is required to enable the curriculum offered to be taught as intended. Facilities and changing areas are not adequate for wheelchair users. Specialist sports equipment and library resources are satisfactory and, although recent purchases have been made, more are still needed. Good use is made of local sports and leisure facilities to enrich students' experience and to provide a focus for some coursework, however, work experience for sports students is not yet effectively integrated into teaching plans and the related courses generally.

82. Assessment of students' work is fair and reliable. Feedback on students' work clearly identifies how well standards are met and where improvements can be made. Students' progress is clearly tracked and monitored. Internal moderation of students' work and regular standardisation activities provide rigour to the assessment processes. Students also benefit from advice and guidance during courses about ways to prepare for progressing on to HE or employment. Teachers give willingly of their time to provide additional academic support outside lessons. This is highly valued by students. By contrast, very few students take the opportunity for formal individual tutorials or timetabled subject clinics as a way of improving their performance.

Leadership and management

83. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum is well managed and provision is regularly reviewed and adjusted in line with awarding body requirements and to help students improve their performance. Teachers work effectively as a team and share responsibility for the development of courses, schemes of work and learning resources. There has been a rapid development of some new vocational and coaching courses. The department regularly reviews students' data on progress, retention and achievement rates and students' opinions gathered through questionnaires. Attendance is closely monitored and un-authorised absence quickly followed up. The system of lesson observation is satisfactory. There are good arrangements for staff development and internal communications are good. Staff regularly share information and good practice obtained from external curriculum and subject development activities through frequent and recorded meetings. Practical sports and off-site visits are carefully planned and risk assessments have been carried out appropriately for all teaching areas and activities.

Part D: College data

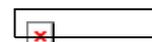
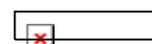


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
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1	0	0
2	2	15
3	97	7
4/5	0	0
Other	1	78
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	202	11	17
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	6	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	65	20	7
Information and communication technology	90	311	31
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	47	0	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	0	0	0
Visual and performing arts and media	195	0	15
Humanities	203	1	16
English, languages and communication	120	7	10
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Total	928	350	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
1	Starters excluding transfers	189	15	*	138	342	52
	Retention rate	89	80	*	89	74	89
	National average	81	83	**	74	74	**
	Pass rate	45	42	*	64	58	87
	National average	70	66	**	65	66	**
2	Starters excluding transfers	300	154	199	90	96	41
	Retention rate	82	68	86	87	84	85
	National average	81	81	**	75	74	**
	Pass rate	32	63	92	60	66	74
	National average	79	83	**	68	67	**
3	Starters excluding transfers	1316	2987	3037	29	64	51
	Retention rate	78	83	91	69	78	71
	National average	80	84	**	70	71	**
	Pass rate	85	86	82 ¹	55	50	53
	National average	85	85	**	63	66	**

¹Lower rate because most of 1st year did not take GCE AS general studies but deferred the examinations to January of the second year.

*too few students

**data not available

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

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

3. College rates for 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.

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)	71	25	4	90
Level 2 (intermediate) and Level 1 (foundation)	53	24	24	17
Other sessions	66	34	0	3
Totals	68	25	7	110

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