



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Queen Alexandra College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' view of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of teaching, training and learning](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Business](#)

[Information and communication technology](#)

[Customer service \(and sports\)](#)

[Health and social care](#)

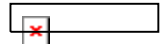
[Visual and performing arts](#)

[Literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and Braille](#)

[Social and life skills](#)

[Mobility and employability](#)

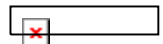
Basic information about the college



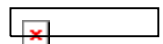
Name of college:	Queen Alexandra College
Type of college:	Independent specialist college
Principal:	Susan Wright
Address of college:	Court Oak Road Harborne Birmingham B17 9TG
Telephone number:	0121 428 5050
Fax number:	0121 428 5047
Chair of governors:	David Corney
Business name and number:	Queen Alexandra College - 3387540
Charity number:	1065794
Name of reporting inspector:	Joyce Deere
Dates of inspection:	26-30 April 2004

**charity or registered business number of the company running the college*

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



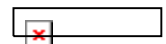
reports to the governing body. The college provides education and training programmes for people with a visual impairment and/or other disabilities. In recent years, the college has increasingly offered places to students without a visual impairment, and a third of students do not have a visual impairment. The college does not accept students with severe learning difficulties. Very few students have high levels of personal care needs.

The college's major contracts are with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the residential training unit of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and Job Centre Plus. The provision that was inspected is funded by the LSC and the residential training unit. Of the 143 students on these programmes, 78 are funded by the LSC; 98 are aged over 19; 112 are male; and 29 are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are 38 students who attend on a daily basis. Programmes run by the college include administration and office skills, customer service, manufacturing, performing arts, sport and recreation, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, sign-making, health and social care. Additionally, employment skills, social and life skills, mobility, English for speakers of other languages and basic literacy and numeracy programmes are provided. Qualifications offered include national vocational qualification (NVQ) levels 1, 2 and 3, City and Guilds, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) introductory and first awards and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs). Level 3 courses are also offered through partner FE colleges, and an HE qualification is offered in conjunction with a local university.

The college's residential provision reflects the diverse needs of its students. Staffed accommodation is provided on site in five hostels. An additional staffed hostel is situated just outside of the college campus. The staffed accommodation is complemented by houses within the community, mostly owned by the college, for the more independent students. Facilities available to the students include medical services, counselling and benefits advice, and there is a sports and fitness centre on site. The college management team consists of nine members of staff. Two senior managers oversee the curriculum. Each residential hostel has a team leader that reports to the residential care manager, who is a member of the senior management team.

The college's mission is 'to challenge discrimination and exclusion by providing opportunities for people with visual impairment and other disabilities to learn, live and work independently'.

How effective is the college?



Rates of retention and achievement are good on many vocational courses, and there are high standards of work on these courses. Teaching and learning are good in engineering, administration and customer service, satisfactory overall in visual and performing arts, health and social care, social and life skills and employability and mobility, but unsatisfactory in ICT and in literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and Braille. There are significant variations in the quality of work across the college, and quality assurance is weak. Individual support for students is good, although not all students receive sufficient support in lessons.

The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on many vocational courses

- good standards of work on many courses

- good progress to employment by residential training unit students

- good teaching on art and design, engineering, customer service, mobility and business administration

- good strategic planning to improve the learning environment for students

- good use of practical contexts as the basis for learning on many courses

- good support for students.

What should be improved

- implementation of quality assurance procedures

- assessment and monitoring processes

- provision for literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, and ICT

- planning and co-ordination of the development of life skills across the college

- the deployment of learning support staff

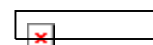
- the use of teaching accommodation

- the effectiveness of the management information system as the basis for monitoring performance

- the rigour of monitoring the contract with the LSC.

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

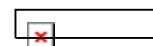


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Engineering	Good. Contributory grade for work-based learning: good . Pass rates on many courses are high, and students produce good work. Much teaching is good or better and students benefit from practical workshops that improve their skills and prepare them for employment. Support for students is good. Not all individual learning plans are completed and quality assurance is weak.
Business	Good. Contributory grade for work-based learning: good . Pass rates are outstanding and much teaching and learning is good. The practical context for learning enables students to develop their administration skills in preparation for employment. Although there are good opportunities within the college for work experience, there is insufficient opportunity for external work placements.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Unsatisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning: unsatisfactory . Students develop confidence in using ICT and there is a good range of courses that enables students to progress. Pass rates are low, and half of the teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Assessment practices are weak, and quality assurance is ineffective. The area is poorly managed.
Customer service (and sports)	Good. Contributory grade for work-based learning: good . Students develop very good personal and social skills, and progression to employment is good. There is much good teaching, and students produce high standards of work in good practical contexts, such as the fitness centre. There is no level 1 provision and the quality assurance is poor.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Contributory grade for work-based learning: good . Pass rates are good and residential training unit students develop good research and study skills in the preparation of assignments. Residential training unit students on the diploma in rehabilitation course are very successful in finding employment. On courses provided in the college, there is too little practical activity as the basis for learning and there are inadequate links between the vocational curriculum and literacy and numeracy. Resources, particularly

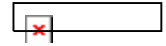
	classroom accommodation, are inadequate.
Visual and performing arts	Satisfactory: Standards of work are good in art and design and there is much inspiring teaching in this area. Specialist resources, particularly for music, are good and students benefit from imaginative enrichment activities, such as visits from artists. In performing arts, students do not have sufficient learning support, and quality assurance in the area is inadequate.
Literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and Braille	Unsatisfactory: Students make significant gains in communication skills and personal development. The teaching of literacy for students with dyslexia is good. However, much of the teaching in literacy, numeracy and on English for speakers of other languages is unsatisfactory and did not meet the needs of students. The assessment and recording of achievement are unsatisfactory, and there is poor planning across the college in order to help students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills or to help those who speak English as an additional language.
Social and life skills	Satisfactory: Students on entry level provision make good progress, and many achieve well. The residences are used very effectively to promote social and life skills. Equal opportunities, in particular disability equality, is effectively promoted within the curriculum. However, the recording of learning is poor, and the links between the college and the residences are underdeveloped. The programme does not focus sufficiently on the longer-term needs of students, but concentrates on the requirements of the awards.
Mobility and employability	Satisfactory: Many residential training unit students are successful in finding employment, and achievements in mobility are good. Teaching and the individual programmes for mobility are good. There are good links with external organisations to help find employment, and effective use of the college enterprises to provide realistic work experience. However, insufficient account is taken of individuals' needs in the employability programme, and there are insufficient staff to teach on the programme. The strategy to provide employability training is inadequate and managers failed to advise mobility staff or students of significant changes to the markers used for orientation across the campus.

How well is the college led and managed?



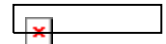
Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is effective operational management of many areas of the curriculum and the performance in these areas is good. Strategic planning for the longer-term future of the college is satisfactory although planning to raise standards for current students is weak. Governors contribute well to the strategic direction of the college, but they do not have sufficient information to enable them to monitor standards. Quality assurance is inadequate. Procedures are not consistently carried out and follow-up is not effective. Management information is poor and self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous. Equality of opportunities is promoted satisfactorily. Requirements of current equality and diversity legislation are not fully met. Financial management is satisfactory. The centre provides value for money in relation to its financial procedures and procurement of services, but significant weaknesses in relation to the monitoring of schedule and purchase orders do not ensure overall value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



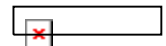
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Overall, the college caters well for a diverse group of students, most of whom have visual impairment and many of whom have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An increasing number of students have Asperger's syndrome or other autistic spectrum disorders. Students attend the provision from across England and Wales. They come from a very broad and varied range of social backgrounds. The college's mission statement shows a strong commitment to provide equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination, and the college has an ethos that fosters equality. Only a quarter of students are female; this is a low proportion, and the college is developing courses that they hope might increase this figure. The percentage of students that are from minority ethnic home backgrounds, at 13%, is lower than the local area but higher than the national average. There are 12% of staff who have a visual impairment, which is a useful role model for students and 12% of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but only one of these is a teacher. Students' literacy and numeracy needs are not adequately assessed or met, although provision for Braille is satisfactory. The college has been slow in responding to all of the requirements the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It is not yet fully compliant.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are good. Students on LSC provision feel well supported on personal issues by their key worker and personal tutor. However, the links between these members of staff are not sufficiently planned to ensure consistent support throughout the students' time in college. The provision and use of assistive technology to enable visually impaired students to gain access to the curriculum are very good. Mobility training is very good and helps students to develop confidence. Students with counselling needs are referred to community services if their needs are beyond that which can be met on the campus. Access to other specialist medical service is satisfactory, although there are currently delays in assessment for low vision aids, and there is insufficient access to speech and language therapy for students who have autistic spectrum disorders. Induction of new students is effective, and arrangements are individualised if necessary. There is good ongoing advice about further education (FE) and employment as well as benefits. Planning for transition from college is satisfactory and improvements are being piloted.

Students' view 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

- staff who listen to them

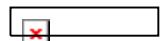
- allowed to be independent

- meeting and living with other people
- making new friends
- social activities
- safe atmosphere
- access to computers.

What they feel could be improved

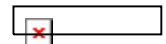
- having to do mobility in the rain
- the appropriateness of the stairs at the main entrance
- queues in the canteen
- incompatibility of some software
- dog run nearer the main college
- too few places to sit outside.

Other information

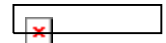


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring 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 should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



Achievement and standards



1. Students learn together, irrespective of their funding, in all areas of learning apart from health and social care, where residential training unit students follow an HE course and level 3 courses in partner FE colleges. Where there are differences between the two cohorts of students, these are indicated in the text.

2. Students' achievements are good overall. Retention rates for LSC students are high, in line with other specialist colleges, but higher than the average for residential training unit provision, according to residential training unit data. Students who complete their programmes also have a good success rate in gaining qualifications, many of which are vocational qualifications at level 1 or above. Overall pass rates for the college improved from 73% in 2000/01, to 77% in 2001/02, and rose to 87% in 2002/03. Achievement of individual learning plans for residential training unit students are high and in line with those for colleges of a similar type. Pass rates are outstanding in business, very good in care and good in engineering. Pass rates are poor in ICT.

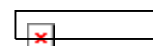
3. Students demonstrate a high standard of work in mobility, engineering, business, customer service, care, and arts and design. Students on entry level programmes progress well to higher level programmes. Of the LSC students who started the college in 2001/02, two-thirds progressed to other courses within the college, or into FE, most to higher level programmes.

4. Progression rates into employment for residential training unit students are particularly good and are above the national average for colleges funded by the residential training unit. Of students starting the programme in 2001/02, 29% found employment, compared to 21% nationally from colleges funded by the residential training unit. A further 9% went on to FE. Almost a third of students who started in 2002/03 progressed into jobs, which was around twice the national rate for colleges funded by the residential training unit. An additional 6% of students went on to FE that year. Students find good jobs which reflect their type and level of qualification. The progression rate into employment varies by programme, and finding a job is not the aim of some programmes. Progression rates are good in engineering, customer service and health and social care. In ICT, few students gain jobs. The college has assisted some students to find voluntary work when they leave, but has not maintained data on such outcomes.

5. Students with a recently acquired disability learn to live more independently, and there is good progression from residences offering high levels of support to residences where students take care of their own needs. Students make good progress in mobility. On most programmes, students develop personal and social skills, such as team work and respect for other people. They become more assertive and more aware of their rights as people with disabilities. These skills are developed

through the residences and the extended curriculum as well as through programme areas. These skills are developed to a good professional level in customer services. Students with autistic spectrum disorder gain experience in coping with challenging contexts, such as increased contact with other people and breaks to their routine during trips and outward bound programmes. Students become confident in using assistive technologies. Achievements of key skills have been poor historically, and fewer students are now entered for these qualifications. Achievements in Braille are satisfactory. Teaching staff, students and parents are aware of the wider range of students' achievements, such as the development of confidence, but assessment processes do not measure or record these skills well in order to ascertain how far students progress from the time they start at the college.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. Overall, teaching is satisfactory; half was good or better and just over a tenth unsatisfactory. The proportion of good or better lessons with high numbers of residential training unit students was 10% higher than that for lessons with mainly LSC students. Teaching and learning show wide variations between subjects. In many practical areas such as engineering, administration, customer service, art and design and mobility, much teaching is good or better. The best teaching is well planned and is essentially interactive, encouraging active participation by students, often in realistic vocational contexts. In these lessons, students receive appropriate levels of support. For example, in an administration lesson, a student worked very effectively in creating demand curves using Braille graph paper, mapping pins and rubber bands as part of her assignment work on sales and selling processes. In customer service, students work on the fitness centre reception to develop reception skills, and in engineering, students work on project briefs for external customers. Common strengths in teaching are the use of techniques that encourage the development of learning skills. The best teachers use techniques of questioning, problem-solving and evaluation. Residential training unit students on the diploma in rehabilitation studies develop good research skills and learn to use the web effectively in preparation for their assignments. Good use is made of the residences to develop social and life skills.

7. Weaker and unsatisfactory teaching does not adequately meet students' needs. Often in these lessons, the levels of staff support were not sufficient. This was particularly significant in performing arts and ICT, although other areas were also under-resourced. Another common weakness was the over-reliance on paper-based materials as the basis for the lesson. In literacy, numeracy, employability and social care classes, these materials were often not based on students' vocational or personal needs and/or were insufficiently stimulating for students. Another common weakness was too great an adherence to the demands of the award, rather than the needs of individual students. This was particularly evident in literacy and numeracy and in social and life skills.

8. Most members of staff are well qualified and experienced. Of the 28 teaching staff, 26 are qualified teachers and many have an additional qualification in visual impairment. Only one is from a minority ethnic background. Two teachers have qualifications in dyslexia, although no member of staff is qualified to teach English to speakers of other languages, and there is no specialist input from a qualified speech and language therapist. Learning support assistants and medical and residential staff are appropriately qualified, with many residential staff working towards NVQs level 2 or 3 in care. The number of learning support assistants has recently increased to 24, but not all students are receiving the support agreed in the contract with the LSC.

9. Much of the teaching accommodation provides a good basis for learning. Students studying engineering, customer service, sports and business administration have very good opportunities to learn in real life environments. In engineering, the resources meet industrial standards. ICT facilities have been significantly improved as part of an information and learning technology (ILT) strategy to improve resources across the college. The ICT equipment is of a high standard and assistive technology is readily available in all teaching and learning contexts, although there are a few

examples of software which is not yet compatible with the computers in the rooms. Facilities for visual and performing arts are very good, with particularly good resources for music. The residences are used well for the development of daily living skills. However, the teaching accommodation is not adequate for teaching health and social care or for theory lessons in sports, and classrooms are cramped and uninspiring for discrete literacy and numeracy classes. Life skills taught during the day are not always taught in a realistic context. Resources in the library are not sufficient for customer service and health and social care.

10. The college has developed an accommodation strategy to improve the standard of residential accommodation. Registered residential accommodation meets the standards of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). Students are able to stay on the campus in staffed accommodation, or in houses in the local community, where they have visiting support. Many students progress from accommodation with large numbers of care staff to more independent accommodation, as they become more confident. Health and safety is satisfactory in the houses, although individual risk assessments are too generic.

11. Pre-entry and initial assessments are wide ranging, and cover medical, mobility, literacy, numeracy, information technology (IT), social and vocational skills, and residential aspects. New and prospective students can take different types of vocational tasters to help them make informed decisions about which occupational area suits them best. Students benefit from the pre-entry assessment process, which develops their confidence to return to education and to enter residential accommodation for the first time. Pre-entry reports give some useful information about the students' test-taking strategies and other contextual information which might have influenced the outcomes of the assessment. However, pre-entry assessment is not always used accurately to identify support needs, especially the extent of personal care required. Insufficient use is made of specialist expertise in identifying students' specific disabilities prior to entry and during initial assessment. For example, students' cognitive abilities are not assessed so as to identify the appropriate programme level for some students, and to inform the development of cognitive skills for others. Specialist assessments are not in place for students with autistic spectrum disorder and their individual speech and communication requirements have not been identified. Some students are screened for dyslexia but this is not usually followed up by a formal psychological assessment if the screening suggests the student is dyslexic. Initial assessments of literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently focused on what students need to do in order to be successful on their programmes, or in their personal interests.

12. Insufficient use is made of initial assessment for planning learning in literacy and numeracy, employability, social and life skills. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to plan learning in those areas and in engineering. Students' formal reviews for the LSC are satisfactory overall. They contain accurate details about academic and vocational achievements, but insufficient detail about other aspects such as experiences and achievements gained through other elements of their programme, for example, student support, care and therapy. Residential training unit students' progress is reviewed every six weeks, in line with programme requirements. These are generally satisfactory but are poor in ICT. Reviews for English for speakers of other languages students are also unsatisfactory. Students' progress is monitored through half-termly reports, personal tutorials, and through weekly reviews for entry level students. These are generally satisfactory.

13. The college has detailed policies and procedures for the assessment of students' work and for internal verification, as well as guidelines and checklists for staff. The college has provided some training and examples of what is expected from staff. Despite this, assessment practice varies in quality. There are good aspects of assessment in engineering, visual and performing arts, and health and social care. Internal verification processes are appropriately thorough and rigorous in health and social care, engineering, and business. Internal verification is not sufficiently rigorous in customer service. In ICT, assessment practice is very weak and, although the internal verifier has identified the key weaknesses, insufficient effective action has been taken to remedy them. Assessment is also inadequate for literacy and numeracy and social and life skills. The self-assessment report correctly identified that assessment practice was not of a consistently high standard.

14. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students through its curriculum is

satisfactory. Most vocationally orientated programmes provide good training and realistic work experience that prepare students well for work. Students who cannot take whole qualifications take the units which are suitable for them. New programmes have been introduced in business, engineering and in ICT which provide more appropriate options for entry and foundation level students. Progression routes provide good opportunities for students to progress to higher-level programmes or to alternative programmes at the same level. The college has recently introduced a new IT qualification which includes modules specifically designed for visually impaired students. In some cases, new vocationally based programmes are designed for individual students. However, the employability programme is not adapted to suit the needs of different client groups and there are too few opportunities below level 2 for students in customer services. Literacy and numeracy provision does not meet students' needs and interests.

15. Enrichment activities are good. A third of students are on sports, health or fitness programmes for personal interest, in addition to their main programme aims. All residential training unit students and almost half of the LSC students take part in outward-bound activities to develop personal and social skills. A good variety of other holidays, trips and events are also arranged. Students have been assisted to pursue personal interests, such as driving lessons, go-carting, ballroom dancing, swimming, music, and youth hostelling, within the wider community. Students have good structured and informal opportunities for contact with the local community. Some are members of community groups, such as the local Asperger's group. Students are encouraged to use facilities such as libraries and cafés off campus, and to meet people from the wider community who use the college's businesses and resource centre. Some residential training unit students are associate students and attend university or other FE colleges for part of their programme.

16. The college's programmes attract students of different ages, ethnicities, disabilities and levels of academic ability, but relatively low numbers of female students. The college is aware of this and is investigating alternative curriculum options. Programmes to provide training related to specific disabilities are satisfactory. Mobility training is good and literacy provision for students with dyslexia is also good. Provision for learning Braille is satisfactory. The college has not identified sufficiently the specific needs of students with autistic spectrum disorders, especially in communication skills. Although students make satisfactory progress in social and life skills, there are few interesting options and the curriculum is not focused sufficiently on students' likely destinations. Transition programmes are currently being piloted. Students' religious and worship needs are met by the college, and some students attend local mosques and churches. Awareness of equal opportunities and diversity is developed through tutorials, life skills, residences, work experience and enrichment activities. However, this process relies on individual members of staff. The main emphasis is on disability equality, with much less emphasis on race and gender.

17. Different aspects of students' overall programmes are not co-ordinated well. Individual learning plans are not used adequately to integrate literacy and numeracy skills into vocational training, or to plan for the structured development of personal, social, communication, employment and mobility skills throughout the extended curriculum. Actions have not been taken to develop personal and social skills for some students, even though this has been identified as a specific need. Life skills are not co-ordinated well across residential and non-residential contexts.

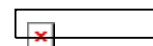
18. The quality of support and guidance is good, overall. Induction of new students is good. There is a detailed checklist of important aspects of the college that are to be covered in the early part of a student's time at the college. New students start college two weeks before existing students which gives them time to settle in to the new environment. Under some circumstances students begin attending part time, beginning with one day a week until they become comfortable with attending. Similarly, transition from the college is managed satisfactorily. The college is aware that the procedure could be co-ordinated better, and has commenced a pilot project to bring about improvements. Students receive good advice from ongoing involvement with Connexions and with employers about further courses and suitable careers. They also receive good advice about the benefits and allowances they are entitled to. Procedures for monitoring attendance and addressing any concerns regarding absence are satisfactory, although lateness to lessons is not always challenged. The tutorial programme is satisfactory for most areas of learning, although it is good in engineering and unsatisfactory in ICT. Learning support assistants often provide sensitive support for students.

19. Support for personal development is good at an informal level. Each student has a named key worker in the residence and a personal tutor who is a member of staff on their course. These staff give effective day-to-day support and guidance. Students value this support and, in particular, the opportunities to talk things through with their key worker in key sessions. There are, however, insufficient planned links between residential and college staff to ensure personal support is coherent and consistent throughout a student's time at college. This was also noted as a key weakness in the last inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1998.

20. In addition to the informal personal support provided by a key worker and a personal tutor, students can obtain help from the college's counselling service. This service also provides a referral route to community mental health services, including from psychiatrists and psychologists. The college has its own nursing staff who meet the everyday needs of students. They liaise with students' home medical services as necessary. Assistive technology support is good. A physiotherapist and ergonomist also provide advice and support for students. Access to other specialist medical services, including for further visual assessment, is satisfactory, although assessment for low vision aids is too slow.

21. The college does not have sufficient expertise to ensure it can assess and meet the communication and language needs of students who require additional speech and language support, although a member of staff is currently undertaking extended professional development in this area of disability.

Leadership and management



22. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Strategic planning for the longer-term future of the college is satisfactory. There is an appropriate understanding of the likely changes in the local and national demands for specialist residential provision, in particular, the complexity of the needs of students who have visual impairment and the increase in placements sought for those who have autistic spectrum disorders. There is appropriate development planning to work towards these longer-term goals. However, due to poor information, short-term plans are not adequately focused on improving standards for current students. Day-to-day management of curriculum areas is mainly satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in areas that span the college, such as employability. The college has not met all of the key issues identified in the last inspection by the FEFC in 1998. There remain insufficient links between students' programmes in the college and those in the residential accommodation. Inspection by the Training and Skills Council in 2000 identified quality assurance as a weakness, and this remains so.

23. Governors contribute positively to shaping the strategic direction of the college, for example, with regard to the current consideration of extending the college. They are well informed about developments in the curriculum, such as the change from teaching key skills to literacy, numeracy and communication, and other aspects of the provision. However, they are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the achievements of students to enable them to monitor the college's performance effectively. The governors have not fulfilled their responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. A policy is in draft form and targets for increasing staff and student representation from minority ethnic groups have not been set. Similarly there is no action plan to ensure the requirements of the SENDA are fulfilled.

24. The college's mission statement to promote equal opportunity and tackle discrimination and harassment is evident in much of its work and is achieved satisfactorily overall. For example, inappropriate language and behaviour is tackled effectively by staff and students discuss issues relating to disability. The use of the community as a learning resource, together with the frequent contact with external organisations and employers, contributes well to the college's mission. However, managers failed to notify mobility staff or students of a change to the site that affected the orientation of visually impaired students.

25. Professional development is satisfactory. There are regular courses to improve understanding of a range of relevant topics, including aspects of learning difficulties and disabilities. However, in a few areas of the curriculum, insufficient training affects the quality of teaching and learning; for example, in working with students who have autistic spectrum disorders and in ensuring staff remain up to date with current industry practice. A few learning support assistants have successfully taken up the opportunity to train as teachers or mobility officers. Although staff development is systematically provided, the intention for annual staff appraisal is not achieved, and in many cases staff have not been appraised for several years. Managers do not all fulfil their requirement to appraise staff they have responsibility for. There is no central record of who has been appraised or when appraisals have taken place. Due to the inadequacies of lesson observation and analysis of students' achievements, appraisals, including targets that are set, are not sufficiently informed by a thorough understanding of the member of staff's work, and the outcomes of appraisal do not contribute effectively to staff training programmes.

26. Management information is not sufficiently detailed. Whilst information is kept on individual students, including the achievement of awards, progression to other courses and destinations after leaving college, much of the information is incomplete or contradictory. It is not aggregated into a form that can be used to evaluate effectively aspects of the college's work. There is insufficient information about gains made by students in addition to the completion of qualifications and awards. Information about the student intake has been used to help with some planning; for example, to develop courses, such as textiles, to increase the number of female students. A new management information system is planned to be developed in the summer, however, as yet, there are no details of what will be required of it or how it will operate.

27. Quality assurance is inadequate. The planned quality assurance system covers important areas of the college's work, including regular monitoring of assessment and planning and recording of students' learning. However, these procedures are not consistently followed, nor are effective actions taken where areas of weakness are identified, such as the failure of staff to fulfil the expectations made of them. The college is aware of these weaknesses but has been too slow in remedying them. Observation of lessons takes place at least annually for most staff. However, until very recently, managers were not involved in the observations, and they only received a summary agreed between the peer observer and the observed member of staff. This procedure did not give managers an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, many of the judgments made in these sessions were far more generous than those given within the inspection.

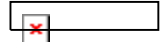
28. The self-assessment process is not robust. Reports for most curriculum areas have involved contributions from all staff, and in a few of these areas, the reports accurately identify their strengths and weaknesses. However, in most areas, they overestimate the strengths and understate or miss areas of weakness. In most parts of the report, there is too little information about students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning, upon which improvement can be successfully planned.

29. The college effectively seeks the views of students and takes appropriate action to address any concerns raised. A student representative attends governors' meetings and his views are specifically sought during meetings by both the chairman and the principal. The student forum, a subcommittee of the governing body, has, for example, contributed to planning the refurbishment of one of the student residences. The weekly meetings of students and staff provide less formal opportunities to raise questions and concerns. Recent actions following these meetings include making queuing fairer in the refectory and fixing a faulty catch on one of the dog pens. In addition, students speak readily to key workers, personal tutors and other staff as needs arise. Procedures for dealing with complaints are satisfactory.

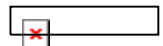
30. Financial management is sound, with plans budgeted carefully and expenditure monitored carefully. The college has satisfactory regard for the principles of best value. It carefully considers any new purchases through competitive tendering and regularly reviews current suppliers, for example, the source of financial investment advice. However, resources are not always deployed as effectively as they should be. The college does not ensure that all students receive the provision they require, as stated in schedule and purchase orders. For example, in some classes, insufficient staff are present to meet the contractual obligations for the students, and this affects the quality of

teaching and learning. Students detailed as requiring one to one help throughout their programme do not necessarily receive such help. The principal has not effectively implemented recommendations made at the beginning of the academic year by the LSC to make sure that such occurrences do not take place.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Engineering



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates

- high standards of work

- good teaching and learning

- good practical context for learning

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- incomplete individual learning plans

- inadequate quality assurance.

Scope of provision

31. There are 38 students in engineering; 4 are female, and 6 are from minority ethnic backgrounds. All are studying for nationally recognised qualifications. Vocational programmes in this area are NVQs in signwork and engineering manufacturing, a bicycles qualification and GNVQ in manufacturing. A computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacture programme has recently been introduced. All students on the NVQ programmes have employment as their primary aim. All students also have life skills lessons, which include aspects of employment and independence. Seven full-time teachers teach on the programmes. Many students on the NVQ programmes have work experience through orders placed with the college by external companies.

Achievement and standards

32. Retention and achievement rates are high both for residential training unit and LSC-funded students. Very few students leave and most of those who stay achieve their qualifications. The standard of students' work is good. They develop good practical skills with hand and power tools and produce work of a high standard. For example, a high-quality bench has been made for a memorial garden; industry-standard work is completed in the cycle workshop; large commercial contracts are successfully met in the sign workshop. Students develop confidence as a result of developing these practical skills. The attainment profile of lesson observations is good; almost two-thirds are graded as good or better.

Quality of education and training

33. Teaching and learning are good. Almost two-thirds of lessons observed were graded as good or better, and no lessons were graded as unsatisfactory. Teachers challenge students' understanding by careful questioning. They allow students to attempt to find solutions and then give helpful guidance where necessary. There is good interactive teaching, including the use of role play. Careful attention is given to the different levels of student's ability in each group. Wherever possible, groups are broken down into smaller numbers with regard to levels of ability. The learning in the workshops is enhanced by most of the work being for external customers, which gives the students a good understanding of a commercial environment.

34. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified. The learning support assistants are all working towards an appropriate level 3 qualification. Accommodation and equipment are satisfactory in engineering, sign and manufacturing. The accommodation and equipment in bicycles are showing their age. This has been recognised by the college, who are about to refurbish this provision and improve access to the facilities. Computer-aided design is provided in a modern, well-equipped IT suite. Students use a high-quality industrial software package. Where needed, good adaptations have been made to equipment and access. Physical access to the workshops is good. Helpful adaptations have been developed, such as a special ramp for a workstation to accommodate a wheelchair. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory.

35. Assessment planning and recording are satisfactory. The tracking of assessments on vocational qualifications is good. Assessments are tracked and measured against time to ensure that students are making the appropriate progress. Internal verification is rigorous and planned well to cover all units and each student. Regular standardisation meetings take place to ensure consistency amongst assessors. However, the planning of learning is weak, and individual learning plans are incomplete. Reviews are regularly completed and personal tutors ensure that pastoral and support issues are covered, although the recording is incomplete and information from various areas of the college does not always get to the personal tutors.

36. The provision of programmes and courses is satisfactory. Programmes are occupationally relevant, with an appropriate range of courses. The practical workshops provide students with a good exposure to the demands that will be placed on them when they find employment. The college's bicycle shop and sign business provide good vocational work experience and a few job opportunities. There is opportunity to progress to level 3 at the college or at other local colleges.

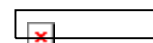
Students are taken on visits, including relevant trade exhibitions. One student, who had not settled at any previous colleges, has a programme carefully built around his passion for steam trains to encourage him to stay. Teachers have built on this to widen his learning experience. There is significant support for students on placement. The college's employment officers have worked alongside students in employers' premises to assure employers that the arrangement would work. Beneficial use is made of teachers' contacts with businesses to find placements. Where the college is doing commercial work for companies, teachers take a student who is doing the work with them to visit the company. Students gain a better understanding of work in a commercial environment and the opportunity to examine the prospect of a work placement or permanent employment.

37. Support for students is good. Staff have a very good understanding of the impact of visual impairment on practical work and encourage students to find ways of completing tasks. Tutorials are good. They are carefully managed by vocationally competent staff to ensure good progress towards students' anticipated qualifications. Students also receive good practical and pastoral support. They are well guided by learning support assistants who have great empathy with the students. Three of the five assistants are former students and have a good understanding of students' needs.

Leadership and management

38. Day-to-day operational arrangements are satisfactory, but quality assurance is inadequate. The college's main aims and strategy are clear and understood well by the staff. However, team meetings are infrequent, result in few actions and mainly cover operational issues. Insufficient use is made of the management information system. It provides information on individual students, but does not provide information on the success of the department or sections. Staff development and provision for training are good, with events at the end of each term. However, staff appraisals are insufficient; members of staff have only had one appraisal in the last three years, and they do not have an appropriate process to raise their own aspirations for development. Quality assurance arrangements are not adequate. Teaching is regularly observed and the results are fed back to the tutor and the line manager to assist in staff development. However, the observations are insufficiently rigorous. Not all staff feel they involved sufficiently in the self-assessment report. The report was not thorough, although the overall grading was realistic. Staff ensure that all students are treated with equal respect. They have received training related to disability discrimination acts, although they have had no training about recent race legislation. There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity, which is rarely covered after induction.

Business



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates

- high standard of administration skills

- much good and very good teaching

- good context for learning and developing administration skills.

Weaknesses

- insufficient external work placements
- inadequate arrangements for industrial updating for teachers.

Scope of provision

39. The college currently provides NVQ levels 1 and 2 in administration and the Pitman's basic office skills award. It also offers the BTEC first award in business and entry levels 1 to 3 in business and business administration. All students work towards nationally recognised additional qualifications in text processing, word processing and audio-transcription. Students also receive training in life skills, employability and mobility. Of the 16 current students, 10 are aged over 19; 4 of these 10 are funded by the residential training unit. There are 6 female and 10 male students. Five students are from minority ethnic groups. Three full-time teachers deliver the business and administration training, and teachers from across the college deliver other programme elements.

Achievement and standards

40. Pass rates are outstanding and well above national averages. Of the 19 students who started NVQ programmes in the last 3 years, 18 have successfully achieved the qualification. The two students on the GNVQ programme in 2002/03 successfully passed with distinction. Excellent pass rates in excess of 90% have been achieved in additional IT qualifications in each of the years since 2001. The numbers of adult students who find employment is satisfactory on residential training unit training programmes. Rates of retention are high. Most students demonstrate increased confidence and independence and make significant gains in personal and learning skills. Vocational assignments and portfolios are of a good standard and are generally well presented. All students make good progress in the development of ICT skills and use these skills effectively to support their learning. The development of practical administration skills is good for most students and is clearly demonstrated when students carry out real administrative duties within the college.

Quality of education and training

41. There is much good and very good teaching. Two-thirds of teaching was good or better. Most lessons are well planned with a range of activities to meet individual needs. Realistic but challenging lesson aims are set for each student. Lessons are well paced and structured. Teachers and learning support assistants work well as a team to provide effective individual coaching and support. Students are encouraged to work as independently as possible using a range of multimedia materials and assistive and adaptive devices. Good integration of key skills are evident for students working at a higher level. For example, in one lesson, a student worked very effectively in creating demand curves using Braille graph paper, mapping pins and rubber bands as part of her assignment work on sales and selling processes. This was checked with the vocational teacher and the application of number key skills tutor and digital photographs were taken as evidence. Good attention is paid to spelling and grammar and students are effectively assisted in identifying and correcting their mistakes. Most students are well motivated and enjoy their lessons. Although no unsatisfactory lessons were observed during inspection, a few lessons lack detail and clarity in planning and teaching is not sufficiently inspiring or challenging to motivate students to work

independently to their full potential.

42. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are well qualified and experienced, but some lack recent occupational experience. Vocational teachers have a range of relevant qualifications including those relating to visual impairment, autism, counselling and basic skills in literacy and numeracy as well as teaching and assessing qualifications. One teacher works closely with the awarding body to adapt print papers to make them accessible to visually impaired candidates, and has dictated adapted versions. A satisfactory range of information and communication technology facilities with a variety of assistive and adaptive devices, particularly for the visually impaired, allows students to work with a good degree of autonomy. Library resources are satisfactory.

43. Assessment is satisfactory. Work is reviewed regularly and students generally have an appropriate understanding of assessment processes. Clear and constructive feedback is given to students so that they know what they need to do in order to improve and this enables them to make progress. Tracking of individual progress is satisfactory. Although there are regular meetings between assessors and internal verifiers, there is a lack of standardisation activities. The initial assessment process is comprehensive and is used appropriately to develop individual learning plans. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Target setting is adequate but sometimes lacks detail and timescales.

44. There are good contexts for learning and developing administration skills. Students have good opportunities to experience the reality of an actual working day in supported, but genuine, work environments within the college, such as reception and post duties. Some of the more able students have work placements in the college's enterprises which are genuine commercial environments dealing with high-profile clients as well as members of the general public. Many employed staff are former students and provide positive role models. Students benefit significantly from these experiences which enhance the development of personal and social skills as well as their administration skills. Links between learning in the classroom and actual work activities are good. Their experience of well-adapted working environments enables students to have a better knowledge and understanding of how workplaces can be adapted and how this can be funded. This increases their confidence in seeking work. However, external work placements are insufficient. Only two students have been on external placements this year, though more could benefit. The range of programmes is satisfactory to meet students' needs, and curriculum changes have been made this year to more appropriately meet changing student profiles. Induction is thorough and helps students to settle into their course well.

45. Support for students is satisfactory. Students are very positive about the support they receive. Teachers know students well and there is sensitive management of students' personal and learning needs. Group tutorials provide clear explanations and activities relating to progression and the workplace. Appropriate targets for all aspects of students' development are set and monitored in individual tutorials and progress reviews. However, links between tutors and hostel key workers are not always sufficient to ensure adequate progress is made, particularly in personal and social skills. Arrangements for providing careers advice and guidance are satisfactory.

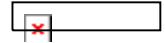
Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management of the curriculum are satisfactory. Staff have a clear understanding of the strategic direction of the college. An adequate course review system makes appropriate use of student feedback to plan improvements. Staff are adequately involved in the self-assessment process and the report is broadly accurate. The college management information system is inadequate, but staff maintain their own programme data which they use to set and monitor targets. Communications are satisfactory. Staff are supported very well by other staff and managers, particularly when they have personal problems. There is satisfactory promotion of equal opportunities.

47. Arrangements for industrial updating for teachers are inadequate. Two of the three vocational teachers have not been in industry for many years and are not fully up to date with changing administration and business practices. Arrangements for staff appraisals are inadequate and have not been carried out for teaching staff for some years. Currently, there is no adequate formal

mechanism for staff to discuss individual training needs. The lesson observation system is generally satisfactory but it is often too generous and does not clearly link into individual staff training and development to improve individual performance. However, generic staff training is good.

Information and communication technology



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good personal development

- good range of courses to enable progression.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates

- poor teaching and learning

- weak assessment

- ineffective quality assurance

- poor management.

Scope of provision

48. The college offers a range of full-time qualifications at levels 1 and 2. All students have the opportunity to develop ICT skills as part of the core curriculum. Full-time courses include the GNVQ in ICT at foundation and intermediate levels, the NVQ in IT applications at levels 1 and 2 and the BTEC introductory IT at work certificate. Computer-aided design is offered as a module within the GNVQ foundation course. Further part-time qualifications in text processing and in using computer

applications are also available. These include a range of qualifications for computer users with visual impairments. There were 24 students at the time of the inspection, of whom all but one were male; 17% were from minority ethnic groups. One-third of the students has autistic spectrum disorder and two-thirds have a visual impairment.

Achievement and standards

49. Pass rates on full-time courses are low. In 2002/03 only one student achieved the qualification. Current students' progress towards their qualification is unsatisfactory. However, students have made good progress in personal development. Most students have grown significantly in confidence and self-esteem while studying at the college. They are enthusiastic about their learning and proud of their ICT skills. They have made good progress relative to their previous attainment. They have also learned to relate better to other students, and a few have gained employment. A significant number have developed enough confidence to enrol on further courses within the college which make more demands on their personal and learning skills. Students with visual impairments have developed good skills in using assistive technology.

50. Students have developed good practical IT skills at the level required by their qualifications. For example, NVQ students use word-processing and desktop publishing software well to produce colourful and well-designed posters. All students can use the Internet appropriately to research topics, and can incorporate articles and images from the Internet in their work. However, they have a poor understanding of the requirements of their qualification.

Quality of education and training

51. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in nearly half of the lessons observed. In all lessons inappropriate behaviour was challenged sensitively and effectively. Most lessons were based on individual or small group activity. In the better lessons, teaching staff showed a good awareness of students' individual needs that enabled them to plan learning and deliver support in class that meets those needs. Teachers promote the effective use of assistive technology well for those with visual impairments. In the poorer lessons there were insufficient staff to support students, and students made very little progress. For example, in one lesson the teacher spent five minutes with each of the students in turn. No student was able to make any significant progress when they did not have the teacher's individual attention. Although students develop good practical use of ICT, the planning of work to achieve their qualification is inadequate. Two schemes of work did not show how the course syllabus would be covered. On one course, assignment briefs had been drawn up using inappropriate criteria. Individual learning plans do not provide sufficient detail about how the qualification will be achieved. Teachers fail to relate literacy and numeracy learning to the context of students' ICT courses, and students find these lessons dull and boring. In most sessions teachers' reinforcement of the importance of Health and Safety was insufficient.

52. All teachers have teaching qualifications and most also have further qualifications relevant to teaching students with visual impairments. However, as has been recognised by the college, insufficient teaching staff have been trained in the support of those with autistic spectrum disorders. General ICT equipment is available with a wide range of assistive software and equipment. Workstations in the dedicated ICT centre are good with sufficient room for books and notes. However, in other classrooms, workstations are cramped. Versions of software differ in different classrooms creating difficulties for staff and students. Technical support is satisfactory, though security restrictions are not always considered sufficiently when planning lessons.

53. Assessment practices on the NVQ course are weak. Assessment plans are very poor. They contain no detail of how, when or what types of evidence will be used to meet performance criteria. Some students are working towards, or have achieved, similar relevant qualifications and these are not taken into account sufficiently in assessing competence or planning assessments. Students are insufficiently involved in planning how NVQ evidence requirements will be met. The action plans lack detail, and are often just exhortations to concentrate on units. Most students' portfolios include written policies and procedures provided by the teacher in their portfolio. These are then cross-referenced to performance criteria as if they were the students' own work. Teachers' use of assessment is inefficient. Most portfolios contain evidence that could be, but has not been, cross-

referenced to the competence standards. Most assessment occurs towards the end of the course, and those who leave early do not receive accreditation for their achievements. Some assessments by observation lack detail of the performance criteria they are referring to. There is insufficient written feedback to students on the extent to which their evidence meets all the qualification requirements and it does not detail what further work is required in order to meet the qualification requirements. Assessment on the GNVQ course is fair and promotes equality of opportunity effectively. However, it did not meet awarding body requirements on the IT at work certificate. Initial assessment of vocational skills is satisfactory. Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment to monitor the rate of students' progress. Managers fail to use assessment results effectively to guide course development. Although overall pass rates are considered, there is no use of pass rates of individual units to identify where teachers or students may need extra support.

54. There are good progression opportunities in IT. Students can progress from level 1 to level 2 and from teacher-led courses to those where students take more responsibility. Courses facilitate students' transfer to other areas of learning such as art and design and business studies. There is a particularly wide range of additional qualifications available, including many in text processing and desktop publishing that are well regarded by prospective employers. Students also have the opportunity to gain accreditation in using assistive software. There are insufficient work placements to enable students to practice the skills they acquire on their course in a working environment.

55. Personal support for students is effective. There is good liaison between teachers, personal tutors and key workers to identify problems that students may be experiencing. They negotiate effective strategies and actions with students to help them overcome them. This includes good access to specialist support services, such as counselling. The diagnosis of individual and additional learning needs is effective. It is reflected in the skill with which teachers individualise lesson outcomes and in-class support. There are robust procedures for dealing with poor attendance and punctuality; both issues are covered at reviews and tutorials, and appropriate supportive action taken. Latecomers to classes are challenged appropriately. Punctuality and attendance were good in the classes observed. Induction is generally satisfactory for most students, but unsatisfactory for NVQ students; it pays insufficient attention to these students' responsibilities for identifying and collecting evidence of their skills. There is insufficient curriculum support in many lessons. Teachers in tutorials pay insufficient attention to students' rate of progress towards qualifications. New tutorial procedures to address this have not yet been effective

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are poor. Staff have a good sense of shared values, reflecting equality for all and in line with the college mission statement and vision. Management of human resources is poor. There is insufficient provision of staff to support teachers in class, or to cover staff who are absent for long periods. There have been no recent appraisals, and slow progress in raising the levels of expertise in supporting students with autistic spectrum disorders. Procedures to review schemes of work and lesson materials are ineffective. Managers have placed insufficient emphasis on monitoring the vocational progress of students. Internal communications are recorded poorly, and responsibility for actions is insufficiently clear. Managers' use of data to monitor progress, and equal opportunities and to support decisions is unsatisfactory. Quality assurance is ineffective. Managers have made slow progress in addressing weaknesses that were identified in previous inspections and in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report lacks detail. Although internal verification and course reviews identify many of the weaknesses found by inspectors, managers have been ineffective in addressing them. Lesson observations lack rigour; observers generally award higher grades than inspectors. Insufficient attention is paid to the quality of learning and the levels of attainment. Measures to eliminate harassment or oppressive behaviour are robust and effective. There has been no training in relation to the latest race legislation and there is only one female studying ICT. Initiatives to address this gender imbalance have not been successful.

Customer service (and sports)



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- very good development of personal and social skills

- good progression into employment

- high standards of work

- much good teaching

- very effective use of the fitness centre for work placements.

Weaknesses

- poor quality assurance

- no level 1 provision.

Scope of provision

57. There are currently seven residential training unit students on customer service programmes, all working on NVQ level 2 customer service. Five students are working towards the full qualification and two are working towards two units of the award. There are five male students and two female. There are five white students and two from minority ethnic groups. All students are on full-time programmes and have scheduled classes in customer service, literacy, numeracy and IT. Students also participate in work placements performing some duties in the college such as working on reception or in the post room. Some students may also work on placement in college enterprises such as the fitness centre. Additionally some students work on external placements such as a local citizen's advice bureau or jobcentre. Three of the four students on sports courses are funded by the residential training unit. Sports students work towards NVQ level 2 in sport, recreation and allied occupations operational services. Sports students have work experience in the college fitness centre and receive specialist vocational training and attend classes in numeracy, literacy and IT according to their needs.

Achievement and standards

58. There are good rates of progression into employment. In customer service in 2002/03, three out of six students achieved permanent paid employment and a fourth is about to take up an offer of employment. One student gained employment as a learning support worker at the college and another gained employment with the college's catering subcontractor. Another student gained full-time employment with an external organisation.

59. Students demonstrate good standards of work in their portfolios, in class work and whilst working on placement. Portfolios are well organised and show a good understanding of customer service, including legislation that has an important effect on providing customer service. Students are able to work to high standards on placement, for example, they are able to staff the reception area and deal effectively with a wide range of customer enquiries from visitors and telephone callers.

60. Students develop good social and personal skills whilst attending the college. These skills come from a variety of sources. Residential students gain a wide range of personal and social skills from evening activities in association with a support worker. Activities include organising a Christmas dinner for other students and taking faulty goods back to a retailer for a replacement or a refund. Work placements also provide opportunities for developing personal and social skills, for example, a work placement at a local jobcentre allowed one student to develop her self-confidence and self-esteem. Classroom activities also promote personal development by the use of carefully planned activities that enhance students' skills in team working, problem solving, assertiveness and researching information. In one lesson, students had to research a topic of personal interest and make a short presentation to the group. Each student was then assessed by his or her peers in a constructive way. The exercise developed students' confidence as well as their ability to provide feedback in a positive way.

Quality of education and training

61. There is much good teaching in both the customer service and sports courses. In observed lessons, two-thirds of the teaching was graded good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, teachers used their commercial experience to good effect by illustrating points with genuine examples from the workplace. In the best lessons, teachers used a variety of well-planned activities to maintain the interest of students. Lesson plans took into account the learning needs and individual targets of the students. In one customer service lesson, a very well-planned role-play exercise was used to reinforce key learning points made in a previous theory session. Care is taken to ensure that all students remain fully engaged in classes, and students are enthusiastic about their learning. Students asked questions about the subject that they were learning and made connections between the subject matter in the lesson and their experiences in the workplace.

62. Effective use is made of work placements. The college provides good internal placements for students who are not yet able to work on external placements. These are used well and care is taken to ensure that the duties expected of students on internal placements are similar to those expected of salaried employees. The college fitness centre is used particularly effectively as a work placement. In addition to providing sports students with a placement so that they can work towards their NVQ, it is also used as a work placement for customer service students. The fitness centre is run as a college enterprise and many private members wish to use the fitness centre seven days a week, including evenings. The busy commercial environment of the fitness centre provides an excellent opportunity for students to develop their customer contact skills in a genuinely commercial environment. Whilst working at the reception desk, students have to answer a wide range of questions about the fitness centre in terms of its facilities and charges. Students may have to deal with customer complaints by trying to resolve the issue themselves or referring the complaint to a member of the management team.

63. Staff are adequately qualified and experienced to teach their vocational specialisms. All NVQ assessors hold appropriate assessor qualifications. Teaching accommodation is good for customer service programmes, and the majority of lessons are conducted in well-equipped, spacious classrooms with modern IT resources. Classroom accommodation for sports students is not always adequate. In one class, students had to sit in a small office without desks for them to use and had to

use clipboards to write on. The quality of the learning was compromised by loud music coming from the gymnasium. The changing facilities in the sports centre need updating. There are insufficient learning resources for customer service students. Students do not have access to sufficient books and learning resources to support independent study.

64. Assessment and review processes are weak. In customer service, the internal verifier does not provide sufficient evaluative feedback to assessors in order to improve the standard of assessment, and the process does not place sufficient emphasis on ensuring that evidence presented in portfolios is sufficient and valid in order to meet awarding body requirements. Initial assessment of students is satisfactory. Detailed information is gathered on each student in terms of their academic abilities, career aspirations, personal effectiveness and disability. However, the information gathered in the initial assessment does not help to generate an effective individual learning plan. Tutorials and reviews of progress on vocational programmes lack effective targets and action plans. In one review, the poor timekeeping of the students was identified as an area of concern, however the resultant action plan did not identify the need for corrective action by the student.

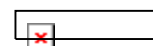
65. The programmes offered do not meet the needs of all of the students as there is currently no level 1 award available nationally. Some customer service students are working towards two units on a level 2 qualification, which is too difficult for them. The college is currently investigating the anticipated provision of level 1 qualifications in customer service. Individual learning programmes are designed effectively to accommodate the students' needs in terms of their requirement for training in the vocational areas, literacy, numeracy and IT. They also accommodates the career aspirations of the students. One student with good academic abilities has been able to spend most of her time on placement in order to prepare her for employment. She has made outstanding progress and is about to secure full-time employment on completion of the NVQ.

66. The staff have a good understanding of the impact of visual impairment on learning and living. Students have good personal support. In the residences, students receive good support on practical issues such as money management, personal hygiene and self-organisational skills. The activities are planned and targets are set for students, with subsequent follow up by a support worker.

Leadership and management

67. Although day-to-day programme management is satisfactory, quality assurance procedures are undeveloped in customer service. The internal verification and assessment procedures are poorly implemented and there has been no formal appraisal of staff for over three years. The lack of formal appraisal has not prevented staff development but it has hindered the strategic development of the programme area. In the sports programme area, appraisals are regular, well structured and productive. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and both programme managers contributed to the draft self-assessment report. Some strengths and weaknesses identified in self assessment were confirmed by inspectors. Some strengths in the self assessment report, such as individualised target setting, reflect satisfactory practice rather than key strengths. Students have a good knowledge of equal opportunities, which is covered during induction, review and vocational classes. Students are well aware of their rights and responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, both in the college and in the workplace.

Health and social care



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good pass rates
- good use of research skills in the preparation of assignments by residential training unit students
- very good progression to related employment by residential training unit students.

Weaknesses

- lack of practical activities as a basis for learning for LSC students
- inadequate links between the vocational curriculum and literacy and numeracy
- inadequate resources for teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

68. There are 13 students on courses in health and social care. Six LSC-funded students are on the BTEC introductory certificate in health and social care or the BTEC first diploma in care. Seven residential training unit-funded students study in local partner organizations, one is an HE organisation and the other is a general FE college. Five students are on an HE diploma in rehabilitation studies, one on a level 3 access course, and one on a level 3 diploma in holistic therapies. Students receive mobility training, specialist equipment and personal and academic support. The LSC-funded students participate in the college life skills and basic skills programmes.

Achievement and standards

69. There are good pass and retention rates on all care courses. Pass and retention rates for residential training unit students are excellent and there is good progression into related employment. All students who enrolled for the course in 2000 passed the qualification. Four of the six students who enrolled in 2001 passed, and the 6 who enrolled 2002 have either achieved their qualification or are completing their programme of study. Of the 14 students who have successfully completed the course since July 2000, 9 are currently working professionally as rehabilitation officers in a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations including local authority social service departments. Rates of retention are very good on the newly introduced BTEC introductory certificate in care and students are making very good progress. All students have successfully completed two of the four units within the qualification and are completing the third unit in line with awarding body requirements and with great care.

70. The residential training unit associate students develop very good research skills which inform their assignments and understanding of professional issues. They use ICT with confidence in the research, preparation and presentation of assignments. They effectively and extensively use the Internet to gain access to up-to-date information, government reports and current legislation. They

develop confidence as a result of their success in developing new skills. The standard of work produced by the LSC-funded students is satisfactory, and they also use ICT effectively to access the Internet and to word process and illustrate their assignments. Attendance and punctuality at all lessons is good.

Quality of education and training

71. Half of the teaching and learning in this area was good or better, and none was unsatisfactory. Much of the good or better teaching was on the courses for residential training unit students. Much of the emphasis in their work was on developing study skills, and teachers and support staff were very encouraging, and provide support where required. The lessons in partner colleges were mainly good, with appropriate support for students. In most lessons at the college there are discrete plans for each student. However, on the courses for LSC students there is a narrow range of teaching activities, with an over-reliance on work sheets and comprehension activities that are not always very stimulating. There are few practical activities planned to support teaching and learning, so students learn mainly from secondary sources, rather than real-life settings. Courses are satisfactorily planned to meet the requirements of the awarding body. Learning activities and assignment schedules are set to an agreed time scale. Progress in each lesson is evaluated and a record made which supports plans for future learning activities. However, there is no planned integration of the vocational curriculum in the delivery and assessment of literacy and numeracy, so the work is not contextualised appropriately.

72. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and have received training in working with students with a visual impairment. However, teaching resources are not satisfactory. There is limited access in classrooms to appropriate ICT for residential training unit students. The software installed on the computers in their base room is not compatible with the software at the university. There is insufficient space between the computers in their classroom for students to use other resources or on which to write, and there are too few 21-inch monitor screens, no zoom text or access to PDF files. In one room, there is no speech software. The health and social care classroom is too small for effective curriculum delivery. The students share a classroom with another course for their vocational lessons. This, together with the size of the room, limits the range of teaching and learning activities.

73. Students' progress is monitored carefully and there are records of learning for each lesson. The written feedback to students on the BTEC programmes is supportive but gives limited guidance for improvement. An internal verification process is in place. The verifier gives clear and helpful guidance to assessors. Students' independent living skills are imaginatively developed through their college programme and through the wide range of social and cultural activities arranged through staff at the hostel. Care staff based at the students' hostels keep detailed records of students' progress in developing these wider life and social skills.

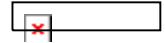
74. Teachers know their students well and most students speak highly of the personal and academic support from staff. There are detailed records of students' learning and support needs across all programmes. There are notes of tutorial contact with students and detailed six-weekly reviews of progress for residential training unit students. However not all LSC students receive their full entitlement identified in the schedule and purchase order in terms of counselling and curriculum support. All BTEC students' basic skills levels are assessed prior to enrolment. The review of progress does not always lead to adjustments to their programme. There is a lack of planned progression to appropriate higher-level courses in basic skills.

Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff teams are clearly identified, and roles and responsibilities are clear to staff and students. Staff are aware of the mission of the college. There is good informal communication between staff on all courses. However, there are no records of team meetings in relation to the residential training unit programmes, and little recording of contacts with the partner colleges. The notes of the regular meetings of the pre-vocational team do not clearly identify and monitor agreed action. The self-assessment report lacks detail and is not a useful document to guide and monitor improvement. Clear targets are not set. There is little evaluation of

issues relating to teaching and learning or students' achievements. Equality of opportunity is not promoted well after the initial induction. Staff have a good understanding of aspects of disability, but there are fewer examples of the explicit promotion of race equality.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- good standards of work in art and design

- much inspiring teaching in art and design

- good specialist resources

- imaginative enrichment activities that benefit learning.

Weaknesses

- insufficient learning support in performing arts

- inadequate quality assurance.

Scope of provision

76. There are seven LSC-funded students in this area of learning, all on pre-vocational programmes. Four students are male and all are white. Five are on a GNVQ art and design programme, three at foundation level and 2 studying for a GNVQ in performing arts at foundation and intermediate level. All students access the college's pre-vocational life skills classes and are working towards basic skills qualifications as part of their programmes. Each of the two programmes has a programme manager who is responsible for delivery. In addition, other students gain access to the art facilities. All students on the entry programmes have art as part of their programme and students interested in sound engineering join the performing arts students for this unit. Students are also able to try aspects of the performing arts as part of their life skills option.

Achievement and standards

77. Students mainly make good progress in achieving and developing personal skills during their placement at the college. They are able to identify targets set by key workers but are less certain about academic targets. The college encourages students to share their achievements within the college through performances and exhibitions for peers, staff and visitors. Students understand what is expected of them in art and design, but less so in performing arts. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of education and training

78. The teaching in art and design is good. Staff demonstrate good subject expertise. They are patient but quietly demanding and use focused questioning to ensure that students can make their own analysis of information leading to logical conclusions. The differing abilities of students are recognised in planning and delivery, and are supported well by learning support assistants. Helpful staff notes are shared with the class to provide important basic vocational definitions. Students understand different two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials, and can work independently with appropriate tools and equipment with confidence, expression and enjoyment. Wherever possible, the vocational nature of the subject is emphasised. Teaching and learning in performing arts was mainly satisfactory. Lesson plans are too brief and mostly descriptive. Learning in this area is not sufficiently active, particularly in group situations where too few strategies have been devised to encourage active and collaborative learning. The lack of warm-up activities restricts development in several classes. In music and drama lessons on life skills programmes, students could analyse different radio programmes with some discernment and perception, although unreliable ICT equipment restricted what had been planned.

79. The discrete facilities for visual and performing arts are good. Music particularly has excellent equipment - electric guitars, a drum kit, a piano, a keyboard and synthesiser and extensive recording facilities - though much of it is under-used and the main room is dull and uninspiring. Art and design, although located in an old building, has good two-dimensional and three-dimensional facilities and the area is enhanced by colourful and lively displays that provide a sense of excitement and stimulation. Whilst some staff are well qualified, others have no specialist teaching qualifications and recognise that they require more support. Some accommodation for life skills classes is inappropriate: in one class, students had to use chairs as desks. Students' work is attractively displayed in the college.

80. Assessment in art and design is clear, and numerical awards can be clearly cross-referenced against assessment criteria. However, the internal verification system is perfunctory and lacks rigour. Individual learning plans follow a coherent structure, incorporate targets, are reviewed regularly at appropriate intervals and recorded accurately. The small group sizes ensure that students are kept informed verbally about their course progress on an almost daily basis.

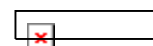
81. Students benefit from the individual nature of their programmes. They are able to gain access to units that interest them and join other courses to follow these interests. There is little opportunity for work experience. Learning is considerably enhanced by the enrichment activities. Students of all levels and abilities were able to experience a samba workshop presented by external performers, and all were able to participate in percussive and kinetic activities with much enjoyment, as well as furthering their understanding of an exciting cultural form. Art and design students benefited from a practising artist visiting their class. She responded to their perceptive questions, giving students a practical insight into the world of arts employment. This session was further enhanced by her follow-up practical work which involved all the students. Residential students enjoy the varied activities that the college provides.

82. Whilst the learning support assistants are highly skilled, and often sensitively support the learning and pastoral needs of students, the allocation of such support is not addressed sufficiently well. One class had five students and no support, although the students were funded for additional curriculum support. The quality of the lesson suffered as a result. The liaison between key workers and academic staff is sometimes inadequate. However, students feel that the college is a safe, supportive and friendly environment.

Leadership and management

83. Whilst the teaching of art and design is of a good standard, there are insufficient measures to ensure the same quality is evident across the curriculum. Observation of teaching is inconsistent, and some staff have not been observed for a number of years. Observers have insufficient understanding of what constitutes strengths in teaching and learning. Mentoring for new staff has not been addressed. The management of accommodation is often poor and leads to inappropriate activities taking place in unsuitable rooms. Self-assessment is often arbitrary, not properly understood and is not used to improve performance. Students feel safe and secure at the college, and there is good understanding of the impact of visual impairment on learning. However, there is little explicit reference to diversity, although contact with other cultures through art and music occurs as part of the programme. Staff have had little training in promoting race equality.

Literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and Braille



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

Strengths

- good development of communication skills

- good teaching of literacy for students with dyslexia.

Weaknesses

- much unsatisfactory teaching and learning

- inadequate assessment and recording of achievement

- poor provision for literacy and numeracy across the college.

Scope of provision

84. All students in the college are encouraged to work towards literacy and numeracy awards. The college has recently reduced its offering of key skills at levels 1 and 2 in communications and application of number, and changed to offering literacy and numeracy qualifications. Students who have already gained level 2 qualifications in key skills have the option of working towards level 3 if they wish. The college has recently undertaken work with City and Guilds to enable visually impaired candidates to access the external assessments on-line. The college has also recently introduced the English Speaking Board award to accredit students' communication skills. There are 4 students taking English for speakers of other languages at the college. They are on a programme of study aimed at improving their literacy and communication skills as well as their skills in using Braille technology. One of these students is also working towards a business qualification. The college

provides Braille tuition to 18 students, with a further 9 receiving Braille technology support, and 4 students receive tuition in the Moon system of embossed reading. Dyslexia support is also available. Discrete literacy and numeracy tuition is offered to most students. It is provided by specialist staff or by subject teachers. There are 8 members of staff who teach literacy, and eleven teach numeracy. Two of these are specialist literacy and numeracy teachers.

Achievement and standards

85. The college has recently introduced accreditation; it is too soon to make judgements about rates of success, although the success rates so far are promising. Students' broader achievements in literacy, numeracy and communication are difficult to determine. Much of this is due to poor recording of students' progress. In many lessons, targets relate to award requirements rather than individual needs. In these lessons, records are often inadequate and do not show whether progress has been made. Students with dyslexia make good progress in literacy. For example, one student has learned how to write his address in ten weeks. Students learn Braille satisfactorily. However, there has been no accreditation offered to them over the past three years. Students demonstrate good development in communication skills, and feel more confident about expressing opinions and contributing to discussions. However, these achievements are not always adequately captured.

Quality of education and training

86. There are many unsatisfactory lessons and very few that are good or better. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the students' individual learning needs are not met effectively. In these lessons, the planning often lacks sufficient detail, because the targets used are primarily related to awarding body requirements and insufficiently related to students' individual needs. Students spend too much time on inappropriate paper-based activities that do not meet their needs. Often, they spend considerable periods of time completing spelling worksheets that are unrelated to the vocational elements of their programme and other personal needs. Too much time is spent practising skills already acquired and not enough on learning new skills. Lessons have too much emphasis on whole class teaching and there is too little use of questioning as a way of monitoring students' understanding. There is little use of vocationally relevant literacy. Some students are not working at a sufficiently challenging level. In English for speakers of other languages lessons there is an overemphasis on learning isolated vocabulary and insufficient account is taken of the systematic development of language.

87. In the better lessons, students are well supported by teachers and learning support assistants to extend and develop their skills and understanding. In a literacy lesson, students were encouraged to discuss books they had read and did so with confidence. They showed good understanding of punctuation and grammar, used good vocabulary and were enthusiastic readers. In a vocational class, the teacher effectively supported a student who was using IT to write a curriculum vitae. In specialist dyslexia support lessons, teachers plan effectively to meet individual students' literacy needs. They skilfully use multi-sensory approaches. As a result, students are motivated and encouraged well, and make significant gains in literacy when they see that they can learn. A visually impaired tutor, with an empathetic and motivational approach, provides a positive role model for students in Braille. Students are encouraged to learn to use Braille by touch or sight, where this best suits their individual needs.

88. Specialist equipment for visually impaired people is good. There is good use of Braille, enlarged text and other materials to support learning and enable students to succeed. Some classrooms are too small for the number of students and some are drab and badly ventilated. IT is not used frequently, although when it is used it is successful. The small numbers of students who were observed using it in lessons record their work effectively and to enhance hand-eye co-ordination. Teachers are qualified, and have received some training in teaching literacy and numeracy. A member of staff is trained in dyslexia support, but no-one is trained to teach English for speakers of other languages.

89. Initial assessment is insufficiently rigorous for students with additional disabilities and English for speakers of other languages. There is no thorough initial assessment of students' levels of social communication or functional literacy, numeracy or those with English for speakers of other languages needs. There is no suitable baseline on which to develop a comprehensive individual

learning plan that takes account of the students' future life or vocational needs. Many of the targets used in the individual learning plans are based on the requirements of the award, rather than on the individual students' needs. However, there is a useful assessment of the dyslexia students literacy needs, and there are well-developed plans to support their learning. There is insufficient assessment and useful feedback to students about their progress in the lesson.

90. The systems to track and record students' progress are not sufficiently developed. There is little monitoring of students' progress against the targets identified in the individual learning plans. Some staff record students' progress at the end of lessons, and some other college activities, however, the records of progress are often insufficiently detailed and do not describe the any gains which students make in functional literacy, numeracy and communications.

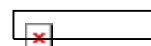
91. The college has identified the fact that the majority of students need to develop their literacy, numeracy or English for speakers of other languages skills, and have taken steps to ensure that the subject is included on students' timetables. However, the development of students' literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages skills has not been designed to meet individual needs; too many students are following the same curriculum, rather than having their individual needs met. Too often, programmes are determined by the requirements of the awarding body. There are too few formal and useful links to the vocational curriculum and residential curriculum in which teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages is contextualised. There is insufficient Braille tuition for students to enable them to progress effectively. There is limited promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum materials. However, in one successful lesson, students were developing good communication skills through an effective discussion and exploration of disability.

92. Learning support is satisfactory. Some teachers do not manage learning support assistants effectively and this results in some students being given either too much or too little help. The most effective learning support assistants are well qualified and experienced, and support students' communications and learning in an unobtrusive and dignified manner. Learning support assistants feel well supported and are actively encouraged to develop their skills through specialist training to work with people with visually impairment, and many are taking teaching qualifications. Additional training opportunities are available to extend their expertise to support other disabled students, such as those with autistic spectrum disorder.

Leadership and management

93. There is poor management and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the college. The link between the discrete literacy and numeracy provision and most of the vocational areas is weak. The links between the working practices in the residences and the college are insufficient to support and develop students' skills. Where students are acquiring new skills and developing existing skills, arrangements are not sufficiently developed to record either the individual skill or the value added. Weaknesses were not fully identified in the self-assessment report. There are inadequate arrangements to review and evaluate the curriculum. Staff promote disability equality by using assistive technology and through discussion of disability, but have had little training in recent race legislation.

Social and life skills



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

Strengths

- good progression from the entry level course

- good use of the residences for learning
- effective promotion of equal opportunities within the curriculum.

Weaknesses

- poor recording of learning
- underdeveloped links between the college and residential provision
- insufficient focus in the programme on the longer-term needs of students.

Scope of provision

94. There are 18 entry level students, all of whom follow a formal, social and life skills programme as well as a range of activities including vocational learning, and literacy, numeracy and communication. Of these 18 students, 8 are female and 16 are white. In addition to the discrete provision, most students in the college follow aspects of a modular life skills programme, according to their needs. This includes aspects of money management and other daily living skills that students need in order to achieve greater independence. The main focus on inspection was the entry level programme but other aspects of life skills, including work in the residences, were observed. There is one programme manager with a team of four tutors.

Achievement and standards

95. Progression is good on the entry provision. Last year, almost half of the students progressed from entry level to more advanced courses. Five of these went on to an NVQ course. Three students were able to complete the two-year entry course within one year, and move on to more advanced courses.

96. The development of students' communication and independent living skills is good. Students acquire useful social and functional skills, demonstrating increased confidence to communicate with others, to contribute in class and to do more for themselves. Students value their achievements in relation to increased independence, both with mobility and in terms of independent living skills. For example, one student with behavioural needs improved his behaviour sufficiently to be able to travel by plane on holiday. Another student with Asperger's syndrome has moved from one of most supported hostels to one that prepares students for transition. He will soon be moving into a house. Retention and attendance are as good, as expected for a specialist college, and punctuality is satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

97. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. The best lessons are planned to take account of individual

students' needs and build on their interests and experiences through practical activities. For example, one student was developing her motor control skills and her ability to follow instructions through a cookery session. In a very effective communication session the tutor carefully extended the students' understanding of adjectives through a stimulating group activity, which also developed skills of turn taking and listening. Effective use was made of open questioning to check students' understanding and to encourage independence. Students are motivated well and work effectively in the majority of lessons. In the less effective lessons, learning is not sufficiently contextualised or related to students' needs and long-term goals. For example, in a life skills lesson, the students were learning to wash in a room with no sinks, in preparation for laying up for a formal meal. There is an overemphasis on paper-based learning. At times, attainment is hard to judge because the starting point is not always clear.

98. Resources are satisfactory. Good use of is made of residential accommodation for learning. Students are effectively supported to make significant gains in their social and independent living skills, with clear links between the residential initial assessment, and the targets set. A student who could not cook or do his own washing when he arrived, now can. The majority of students progress to less supported accommodation during their time at college. However, students preparing for transition into less supported accommodation have insufficient opportunities to take increased responsibility for their own cooking and shopping. The majority of staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Adaptive aids for visually impaired students are appropriate. Effective use is made of ICT both formally and informally. However, some of the teaching accommodation used for life skills is cramped.

99. The assessment and monitoring of progress within the formal curriculum is poor. Baseline assessments do not provide a sufficiently detailed record of the students against which progress can be measured. Progress reports do not always adequately capture the significant gains that students are making, particularly in relation to 'soft' skills. There is an inappropriate focus on what has been covered in curriculum terms rather than what has been learnt. Insufficient use is made of information about learning that takes place within the residence in order to plan learning in the life skills curriculum. Tracking of progress within the residence is effective. However, this information is not included in the formal annual reports to the LSC.

100. The promotion of equal opportunities and disability awareness is effective. Staff are pro-active in maximising opportunities to address issues of equality and tolerance, both formally and informally. Some students have been able to express quite significant understanding of their disability, and the importance of treating others with dignity and respect. Advocacy for students is good and there is an appropriate range of enrichment activities. However, there is not enough focus in the programme on the longer-term needs of the students. Insufficient account is taken of students' likely long-term destination in terms of accommodation and occupation when planning learning. There is too much emphasis on the requirements of the curriculum framework. The modular structure of the life skills curriculum does not always allow sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of the students. It is not always clear how aspects of an individual's programme fit together. Risk assessments in the residences are underdeveloped. They often contain generic statements and do not always take sufficient account of individual differences that fall outside of the broad generic categories.

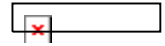
101. Support for students is good. Students benefit from effective support for visual impairment and dyslexia. A student who has a deteriorating visual condition has learnt to use a cane and now has the confidence to go out for the first time on his own at home, since his condition deteriorated. Staff know the students well and provide sensitive and appropriate guidance. Tutorials and transition arrangements are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

102. Operational management of the curriculum is better in entry provision than within life skills overall. Informal communication is effective in providing staff with information about the students. Where learning support assistants work both in the residences and the college, there are regular meetings. However, the formal links between the day and residential provision are underdeveloped. There is no curriculum framework that sets out a coherent strategy for the delivery of life skills across the extended curriculum. The effectiveness of the sharing of information is determined by the

efforts of the personal tutor rather than by planned management of the provision. Quality assurance arrangements are underdeveloped. The self-assessment report contains no evaluation of the quality of teaching and there are no clear links between the outcome of observations and appraisals and planned development for improvement. Staff have received training in relation to disability and recent legislation, but little in relation to race and gender.

Mobility and employability



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

Strengths

- good progression to employment by residential training unit students
- good achievements in mobility
- good teaching of mobility
- very effective mobility programme for individual students
- good links with external organisations
- effective use of the college enterprises to provide work experience.

Weaknesses

- insufficient account taken of individual learning needs in employability lessons
- insufficient staff to teach the employability programme
- poor planning and recording of learning in employability

- inadequate management strategy for employability across the college

- inept management of change that affects students' orientation and mobility.

Scope of provision

103. There are 59 students on discrete employability courses. Residential training unit and LSC students follow a similar scheme of work. Lessons are delivered by two full-time members of staff who also offer a drop-in service to students who want help with job searches. Students are timetabled for one and a half hours of formal employability training per week.

104. The college offers mobility provision for all students at three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced. The basic provision initially focuses on the acquisition of mobility skills that will enable students to travel safely and independently, under supervision. Students on this level have regular mobility lessons. The intermediate and advanced levels build on the skills acquired relevant to the needs of the students. Timetables are negotiated to support individual learning requirements. Short programmes are delivered to support students in work experience placements and as part of college induction. There are 38 students timetabled for mobility.

Achievement and standards

105. The development of mobility skills is very good. Students work towards individual learning targets. Records of learning indicate progression and the development of self-confidence. Students demonstrate good techniques, and develop an understanding of potential hazards.

106. Many residential training unit students are successful in finding employment. During 2002/03, data from the residential training unit showed that this was almost double that for other specialist colleges for students with sensory impairment. The staff in the employment team work hard to find suitable jobs for students and to ensure that students have the necessary adaptive aids to work effectively.

Quality of education and training

107. Teaching and learning in mobility is good or better, with much very good teaching and no unsatisfactory lessons. The learning activities are linked to the individual needs and interests of the students. Tutors have good knowledge of individual students and the requirements of students with additional disabilities and/or learning difficulties. In the better lessons, effective questioning was used to check students' understanding and students were actively involved in planning future lessons to meet their particular needs. For example, in one mobility lesson, the student clearly identified what she needed to learn in order to travel independently on public transport, and asked for this to be included in her next lesson.

108. Teaching and learning in employment were mainly satisfactory, but included unsatisfactory teaching. The course content in employability does not take sufficient account of individual learning needs. In the poorer lessons, students with a wide range of abilities were all working on the same topic which was too challenging for some of the group and inappropriate for their needs. Very little account is taken of individual learning styles and there is a strong emphasis on whole group teaching. In some cases, the focus is on those with more multiple needs and the remaining students are not challenged sufficiently: in other lessons it is the other way round.

109. Staffing resources are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient staff in the employability area to meet the needs of students. There are growing numbers of students who are being timetabled for

discrete employability lessons. At the time of the inspection there were only two staff to deliver this programme. They are also required to offer on-to-one help with job searches and finding work placements and employment. Learning support assistants have the opportunity to obtain a qualification in mobility. This is in part to address the issue of inadequate arrangements for staff cover, but it is too soon to measure its impact.

110. The mobility assessment is satisfactory and provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work. However, there is poor planning and recording of learning in employability. LSC students are not given any form of assessment. The residential training unit students undertake a questionnaire to assess their employability needs. However, this is not used to plan an individual programme of learning. Lesson plans are not written to meet the specific needs of students. Learning goals are very generalised and are not broken down into any form which can measure individual achievement. Individual learning plans do not contain any records of how best to meet a need identified in the workplace by a placement provider. Progress reviews are insufficiently detailed.

111. Good use is made of the college enterprises to provide work experience, which in some cases leads to jobs; 40% of the staff employed in these enterprises are former students. They offer a positive role model and understand the barriers to work faced by visually impaired people. Further development in the enterprises is expected particularly in the area of sign production as businesses meet the requirements of the disability discrimination act. However, the provision for employability is not coherent. This is in part because the programme is delivered by staff in different sections of the college. There is little liaison between staff and work is sometimes duplicated. Some of the topics in employability lessons, for example, production of a curriculum vitae and a personal profile, have often already been covered in the students' vocational area. Others may have been covered or planned in life skills. There is very little focus in the employability programme on the development of personal and learning skills, which for many students present considerable barriers to employment. The timetabled mobility lessons meet the individual needs of the students. However, there is no coherent structure in place to record the further development of these skills within the extended curriculum.

112. There are good and productive links with other organisations leading to work placements and employment in some cases. There is good promotion of the needs of those with a visual impairment and other disabilities in the wider community. For example, staff visit employers to raise their awareness and to give them guidance. They will, if necessary, support students in the workplace to ensure a satisfactory job outcome.

Leadership and management

113. There is no coherent strategy for the provision of employability across the college. There are no formal links with life skills. Staff would welcome a closer working relationship in order to share the development of students' personal and social skills and to avoid duplication of lesson content. Mobility would also benefit from being more closely linked to employability and life skills. Change that affects mobility are sometimes managed ineptly. The main entrance stairs and ramp do not meet the needs of all students who are blind or partially sighted. There is no clear colour contrast. Handrails overhang the start of the stairs causing confusion for some students. Trees used as orientation landmarks by students were felled and replaced with fencing. This disorientated students, as the mobility department and students were not informed in advance. The self-assessment report noted some of the key strengths and weaknesses but contains very little in-depth analysis. There is very little sharing of best practice across the subject areas. The grades given for in-house staff observation do not realistically reflect the quality of the learning experience for the individual student. There is no regular cycle of staff appraisal. Staff have received good training in relation to disability legislation, and promote aspects of disability equality very well. However, there has been little explicit promotion of race or gender equality.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Office for
Standards
in Education

