



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



## Winstanley College

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### **Basic information about the college**

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Name of college:	Winstanley College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Kevin Watson
Address of college:	Winstanley Road Billinge Wigan Lancashire WN5 7XF
Telephone number:	01695 633 244
Fax number:	01695 633 409
Chair of governors:	David Rosbottom
Unique reference number:	130522
Name of reporting inspector:	Glad Capewell HMI
Dates of inspection:	4-8 October 2004

### **Part A: Summary**

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## Information about the college

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Winstanley College occupies a semi-rural location between Wigan and St Helens within the borough of Wigan. Wigan is the largest of the 10 boroughs within Greater Manchester and has a population of around 311,000 residents. The Wigan employment rate is 59.8%, lower than the England and Wales average of 60.6%. The proportion of unemployed people aged 16 to 24 is higher in Wigan than both Greater Manchester and England and Wales. Wigan has the lowest percentage of its population that have level 3 qualifications in the Greater Manchester area. Some 37% of students aged 16 to 18 travel to the college from outside Wigan Local Education Authority (LEA) boundaries, mainly from Lancashire and St Helens. Following the college's inspection by the Further Education and Funding Council (FEFC) in 1999, it was awarded Beacon College status.

In 2002/03, the college made provision in nine of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) areas of learning. The total number of students enrolled was 2,228, of whom 1,626 were full-time students aged 16 to 18. There were 643 adults enrolled on evening courses, most of which were information technology (IT) or leisure based. The gender profile showed that just under 60% of students aged 16 to 18 were female. Less than 3% of the college's students were from minority ethnic backgrounds, broadly reflecting the ethnic profile of the local population. Some 99% of full-time students studied at level 3, the vast majority on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Around 100 students studied vocational courses at level 3 in health and social care and business in addition to their AS-level and GCE A-level programmes. The college is oversubscribed and selects its full-time students on the basis of their general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) scores.

## How effective is the college?

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The quality of provision is outstanding in six of the seven curriculum areas inspected and good in one area. There is no unsatisfactory provision. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

### **Key strengths**

- excellent achievements of full-time students
- very high retention rates
- lively, skilful teaching
- very good development of students' capacity for independent learning
- bright, welcoming and well-maintained accommodation
- thorough monitoring of full-time students' progress
- extensive enrichment opportunities
- very good personal and academic support for students
- strong commitment by staff and governors to a culture of continuous improvement
- outstanding leadership and management.

### **What should be improved**

- cramped accommodation in a few areas
- some aspects of adult education.

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

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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	<b>Outstanding.</b> There are high pass and retention rates on all science courses. Teaching is excellent, with high-quality teaching resources and very good use of information and learning technology (ILT). There is good progression to higher education (HE) in scientific disciplines. Leadership and management are outstanding.
Mathematics	<b>Outstanding.</b> Well-motivated students are supported by enthusiastic teachers to achieve excellent examination successes. Teaching and learning are enhanced by high-quality learning resources and good use of ILT. The management of mathematics is very good. Cramped accommodation affects learning in some lessons.
Information and communications technology	<b>Good.</b> There are high pass and retention rates on all level 3 courses. Teaching is effective in the development of students' practical skills. Assessment practices and support for individual students are good. Links with the information and communications technology (ICT) industry are underdeveloped. There is insufficient challenge and inspiration in theory lessons.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Outstanding.</b> Students' achievements, teaching and learning are all of a consistently high standard. The excellent enrichment programme underpins and enhances students' learning. Leadership and management are very good. The new art and design accommodation is an excellent facility. Other accommodation and resources are good, but too many demands are made upon them.
Humanities	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates are high. Teaching and learning are very good. There is effective assessment and very good subject and personal tutorial support. Outstanding leadership and management are effectively focused on students' learning. The well-planned general studies programme promotes effective study skills. Some accommodation is cramped.
Social sciences	<b>Outstanding.</b> Students' achievements on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are excellent. Teaching is very good and assessment on GCE courses is effective in raising the aspirations of students. Very good resources are used imaginatively by teachers and students. Management and leadership of GCE courses are outstanding, but the quality assurance of adult access courses is unsatisfactory.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Outstanding.</b> There are very good and sometimes outstanding students' achievements with very good value added scores. Teaching and learning are very good and assessment is thorough and rigorous. Outstanding leadership and management have fostered a culture of continuous improvement.

## How well is the college led and managed?

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Leadership and management are outstanding. The importance of effective leadership and management is well understood by staff at all levels. There are rigorous quality assurance, course review and self-assessment processes which are applied effectively for students aged 16 to 18. Staff value highly the clarity in communications and lines of accountability. They enjoy outstanding opportunities for professional development. There is a relentless focus on the quality of teaching, students' learning experiences and their achievements. The governors make an outstanding contribution to the development of the college and have addressed fully the weaknesses in governance identified at the previous inspection. There is a strong commitment to equality and diversity. The college is held in high esteem in the communities that it serves. It has a carefully considered, transparent strategy for allocation of resources and a strong financial position. The college provides good value for money. Some aspects of the college's adult education programme are not well developed.

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

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The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. All students are encouraged to have high aspirations. Appropriate arrangements are in place to promote the college to under-represented groups. Good links with feeder schools ensure students' individual needs are identified prior to enrolment. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and related topics feature strongly in tutorial and teaching programmes. Course planning takes account of the full range of students' preferred methods of learning and additional learning needs. In many tutorials and enrichment activities, teachers promote effective understanding of moral and cultural issues. Support for students with physical disabilities is good and there is appropriate access to nearly all buildings. Resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. The college meets statutory requirements in relation to race relations and special educational needs and disabilities. It is making appropriate progress in its arrangements for safeguarding young people in education. A useful analysis is carried out on applications and recruitment by gender and ethnicity. However, the analysis of the achievements of students from minority ethnic groups is not comprehensive.

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

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Full-time students receive outstanding guidance and support. The college provides impartial pre-course information and guidance and its links with its partner schools are effective. Induction procedures are thorough. Information and advice on welfare matters are readily available. The well-managed tutorial provision has a strong emphasis on developing students' skills. Group and individual tutorials are of high quality and some are excellent. Tutors formally review the progress of students each term. Parents are kept well informed through information evenings, consultations with tutors, and progress reports. The arrangements for the provision of support for students who have additional learning needs are particularly successful. Students' additional learning needs are assessed during induction and learning support tutors provide good help to students. Teaching materials are adapted to ensure that they are appropriate for all students. There is very good support from subject tutors, although the targeting of this support in a few subjects is not systematic. Counselling and welfare arrangements are well co-ordinated. Careers guidance for HE entry is very good. Adult part-time students are also given an initial assessment and have access to good

developed than those for full-time students.

## Students' views of the college

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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*

- welcoming environment
- good resources and facilities, such as the library and computer suites
- friendly, supportive staff
- lessons and enthusiastic teaching
- everyone wants to learn
- enrichment activities illuminate learning and create a lively atmosphere
- assignments marked and returned promptly
- good relationships between students and staff
- good guidance and support
- being treated as an adult and with mutual respect
- cleanliness and the lack of graffiti and litter.

### *What they feel could be improved*

- more social spaces including in the cafeteria
- price of meals
- transport problems with buses
- not enough hand driers in the women's toilets
- some cramped accommodation.

## Other information

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The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local 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

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

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Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	88	12	0
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0
Learning 16-18	92	8	0
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0

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

\*work-based learning

## Achievement and standards

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1. Data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised learner records (ILR) for 2001/02 and 2002/03 are provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college are used for 2003/04. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievement and standards on particular courses.

2. Students' achievements overall are excellent. Pass and retention rates, the percentages of students gaining high grades on AS-level and GCE A-level courses and the number of students achieving the grades expected of them on the basis of their GCSE results have risen steadily over a few years to levels which are high compared to national values. Students' attainment in lessons is very good.

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

3. Pass rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 are high and rising. In 2003, the college was in the top 10% of sixth form colleges for pass rates on long courses at levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates on all course types at level 3 were high. They were significantly above national averages on AS-level courses and on vocational courses where a significant improvement was achieved. In 2004, the overall pass rate on GCE A-level courses was 99.5% and on the majority of courses all students passed the examination. On the art foundation course, students achieved 22 distinctions, 2 merits and 1 pass. The percentage of students gaining high grades on AS-level and GCE A-level courses has increased significantly over a three-year period and in most subjects is above sector averages. Over a period of three years, the gap between the pass rates for male and female students on GCE A-level courses has narrowed, although there was a significant difference in their achievement of high grades in 2004. At level 2 in 2003 and 2004, the pass rate for students aged 16 to 18 was 100%. The pass rate in 2003 on short courses for this age group was low, declining to 64%. This was due to the low pass rate on the critical thinking course taken by many students to broaden their studies, but which is no longer offered. The pass rate on key skills level 2 IT in 2004 was significantly higher than the national average. Low numbers gain key skills accreditation at level 3.

4. The average points score for each student on GCE and vocational certificate of education (VCE)

courses is high. The average points score for each student in 2003 was 354.2 compared to a national value of 258.9. The average points score for each entry was close to the national value at 77.2. In 2003, the college was ranked 7 out of 450 colleges for its performance on advanced level courses. Value added scores on GCE A-level courses are excellent. The college has sustained a steady improvement in value added measures over a three-year period. Over 90% of students on GCE A-level courses achieved the minimum acceptable grade set for them by the college on the basis of their GCSE results. On AS-level courses, the value added scores overall were very good although, on a minority of these courses, the proportion of students reaching or exceeding the college's minimum acceptable grade was small.

5. Retention rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 have been maintained at high levels over a four-year period. The proportion of students progressing from AS-level to GCE A-level courses has increased each year since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. Almost 80% of students progressed from AS-level to GCE A-level courses in 2004. High levels of progression to HE have been maintained over a three-year period. Around 80% of students progress to HE, many to courses where the competition for places is high, for example, in performing arts.

6. There are many examples of excellent achievements in enrichment activities. In performing arts, students of dance won a trophy from the International Dance Grand Prix. Performers represented the college in the National Theatre's *Connections* festival. A number of students have been awarded Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) acting certificates. In sport, many students represent county and national teams, for example, in badminton, rugby union, netball and hockey. The sports teams are successful in leagues, often finishing in first or second place. In 2002, the netball team won in the All England National Schools' under 19 championships. Growing numbers of students achieve well in the Duke of Edinburgh award.

7. The percentage of lessons where students' attainment is good or better is very high, at 89%. In lessons, students use and develop their research, analytical and practical skills well. There is very effective development of students' capacity for independent learning and their written work is well presented. Students attend well and are punctual. The attendance rate is 91%.

### **Adult learners**

8. In 2003, adult students represented approximately 4% of students. The percentage of adult students this year is significantly lower. In 2003, pass rates for adult students at levels 2 and 3 on long courses were high, placing the college in the top 10% of colleges at level 3 for this age group. Retention rates on level 2 long courses were also high. In the same year, at level 1 and on short courses, pass rates were below national averages. Retention rates on long level 3 courses were also low. Although rising, the retention rate on short courses was below the national average.

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



9. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 96 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 89% of these and satisfactory in 11%. No unsatisfactory teaching or learning was observed. Teaching was very good or excellent in 54% of lessons observed. All lessons were good or better in visual and performing arts and media, and in English and modern foreign languages. In a third of all lessons observed in social sciences, the teaching was outstanding. A high percentage of teaching in science and in English and modern foreign languages is outstanding. Teaching is equally effective for students aged 16 to 18 and adults and by full-time and part-time teachers. Higher percentages of good or better teaching and learning were observed in lessons that involved a mixture of group, individual and whole class activities.

10. In the majority of lessons, teaching is lively, skilful and characterised by effective planning, clearly stated aims and a variety of methods used by teachers. Lesson planning addresses the



needs of different students. In English and modern foreign languages, lesson plans include detailed information on how different needs will be met. Teachers provide clear explanations and make effective use of question and answer sessions. There is much effective use of ILT, some of it outstanding. For example, very good and some outstanding use is made of interactive whiteboards in psychology and in sciences. Teacher-written handouts and other resources are of high quality. Particularly good use of teacher-written handouts is made in mathematics. Good academic support for students is evident in lessons and teachers make effective checks on learning.

11. Learning is good or better in over 90% of lessons. Students are well motivated and develop well their research, analytical and practical skills. In ICT, for example, students' practical skills are developed and applied effectively. Students in all areas show confidence and most participate effectively in class debate. In humanities, for example, students use technical terms appropriately and confidently in discussions. Students show good understanding of their work. They work well in groups and also develop quickly their capacity for independent learning and critical analysis. In visual and performing arts and media, students engage enthusiastically in group work and review each other's work effectively.

12. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching is just satisfactory, aims are not clearly stated, or there are not enough checks on learning. In a few cases, teachers' use of questions is not effective, explanations are too long or not enough use is made of group work. Some theory lessons in ICT present insufficient challenge. Cramped accommodation limits the range of methods that teachers can use in a number of areas.

13. Teachers are well qualified with 98% holding qualified teacher status. The college has a comprehensive staff development programme closely linked to the annual cycle of staff appraisals and the internal lesson observation system. Newly appointed teachers have a thorough induction programme and are mentored effectively. The principal observes all new staff during the first half term of each college year.

14. The college has addressed the majority of accommodation issues raised in the previous inspection. Some £4.8 million has been invested in impressive new facilities, including outstanding accommodation for art and design. A further £1.8 million has been allocated to improve existing facilities and achieve compliancy with the Disability and Discrimination Act. New accommodation is under construction for English, politics, law, sociology and a new staff room. College premises are exceptionally clean and well maintained. Students' art work and pictures of enrichment activities festoon the college, enhancing a welcoming and stimulating environment. Most classrooms are well equipped and decorated with lively displays. There are a number of rooms which are too small for the number of students using them, limiting the range of teaching methods. Performing arts facilities are used for examinations, which impinges on performance planning. Student social areas are overcrowded at lunchtimes.

15. Resources are of a very high standard. The ratio of computers to full-time students is 1:4.2. Some 47% of classrooms have interactive whiteboards and data projectors which are used to good and sometimes outstanding effect. The college has a well-used intranet containing subject notes, video, presentations, revision exercises and numerous websites. Across the curriculum, there is a good standard of materials to aid learning and good technical support. The excellent learning resource centre comprises a well-used library, computer area and silent-study room. Centre staff are exceptionally responsive and ensure a purposeful learning environment. There is a comprehensive periodical list and book stock.

16. Students' learning needs are accurately identified through initial assessment. All full-time students undertake initial assessment at the start of their studies to identify their preferred ways of learning and additional learning needs. Assessment results are reliable in identifying students' needs and are appropriately recorded in individual learning plans.

17. Assessment is thorough, fair and accurate and meets the needs of awarding bodies. Students receive prompt and comprehensive comments on the standard of their work and how it can be improved. Students are aware of assessment requirements. Assessment is well planned with clear assessment schedules which have interim and final submission dates, enabling students to plan

their work effectively. Assessment outcomes are systematically recorded and linked to course objectives. There are examples of excellent assessment practice, for example, in social sciences and English and modern foreign languages. In social science lessons, teachers use very imaginative assessments to help students improve their learning. Art and design students are given very good exemplar assessment materials and effectively evaluate their own work. Mature use of peer assessment is widespread in art and design. There are effective moderations of teachers' assessments.

18. The monitoring and tracking of the progress of students aged 16 to 18 is particularly thorough. Students' progress is reviewed carefully and effectively each term against minimum acceptable grades set for them on the basis of their GCSE results. The use of target setting and action planning in reviews is well developed. Students are given helpful action plans with challenging targets to help them to improve their performance. Regular reports to parents make clear judgements and accurately reflect students' progress.

19. There is a broad curriculum of AS-level and GCE A-level courses with some 40 subjects offered. The college responded to student interest for greater variety at level 3 following the introduction of Curriculum 2000. Provision at level 2 for full-time students is restricted to GCSE re-sit courses in English and mathematics. There remains a limited curriculum at level 3 for vocational courses with courses offered in business and health and social care.

20. Students benefit from outstanding enrichment opportunities. The range and ambition of the programme illuminate teaching and learning and promote individual development. Activities include numerous visits abroad. Last year's visits included a biology trip to Australia and a performing arts excursion to New York as well as many more national and local trips. A variety of student clubs meet at lunchtimes, often with visiting speakers. There are numerous performances and sports events. Approximately 21% of students participate in sport activities.

21. Management of key skills is good. Inspectors noted the integration of key skills within the curriculum and the enthusiasm of many students to develop communication skills. New students respond well to the introductory course on research and presentation skills. Participation in the achievement of key skills qualifications at level 3 was low in 2004. Students who have not achieved level 2 in IT are tutored by enthusiastic key skills staff.

22. The college seeks to be responsive to its local communities. Recently, the college has become involved with two clusters of schools in Wigan and Lancashire as part of an initiative to raise school students' aspirations to progress to further education (FE) and HE. Local strategies to develop links to address the needs of students aged 14 to 16 are at an early stage of development. Work placement partnerships are in place in a number of areas with very good links with the health services. Last year, there were 170 placements; however, opportunities for developing placements have not been sufficiently promoted within the ICT area. The college has responded to its local adult community by providing evening provision in languages, ICT, access and leisure.

23. Guidance and support for full-time students are outstanding. The college provides very good, impartial pre-course information and guidance to students. Prospectuses are colourful and informative. Effective pre-enrolment, guidance and recruitment activities help students to settle quickly into their courses. The college's links with its partner schools are strong. The college has a team with responsibility to increase the range of curriculum links with high schools and to assist in the monitoring and support of students from schools. Induction procedures are thorough and are helpful to students. Information and advice on welfare matters are readily available. Effective partnerships with Connexions ensure good careers and guidance and information. Guidance on progression to HE is very good. The college carefully analyses students' destinations.

24. The tutorial provision is well managed, broad and imaginative. Guidance materials for tutors are comprehensive and include helpful, well-illustrated handouts and exercises. Many of these materials are available in larger print and with useful audio voice-overs. Tutorials are effective in helping students to identify weaknesses and to develop action plans to make progress. They have a strong emphasis on developing students' learning and study skills. Tutors formally review the progress of their students three times a year. Group and individual tutorials are valued by students. The quality

of tutorials is carefully monitored; some are outstanding. Students' attendance is monitored closely and absences followed-up quickly.

25. Guidance and support given to students by subject staff are very good. Target setting in curriculum areas is thorough and effective in helping students to improve. Teachers give generously of their time to help students who have problems or who are preparing for examinations and interviews. Students receive good subject support through the use of e-mails and the intranet. However, the arrangements for individual support in a few subjects rely on informal arrangements and, while staff give freely of their own time, the targeting of support in these areas is less effective. Results from the assessment of students' preferred learning styles are used by individual students to help them to understand how to learn more effectively. However, while lesson planning generally addresses a variety of preferred ways of learning, the results of these assessments are not aggregated and used directly by curriculum areas to determine teaching methods for particular groups. Parents are kept well informed about students' progress through information evenings, consultations with tutors, and regular progress reports.

26. Students identified as needing learning support are referred to specialist staff. There is a well-qualified team of learning support staff who provide very good support for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Learning support tutors help students to meet the high expectations set by their teachers. The self-confidence of students is developed effectively. Most students take up the offer of additional learning support and others request extra help. Learning support resources are very good and available to all students. Teaching materials are adapted to ensure that they are appropriate for all students. Managers make good use of management information to quality assure learning support activities. The achievements of students who receive additional learning support are carefully monitored and compare well with those of other students. Counselling and welfare arrangements are well co-ordinated and sensitively managed. Adult and part-time students are given an initial assessment and have access to good learning support. However, their progress is not formally reviewed and recorded.

## Leadership and management

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27. Leadership and management are outstanding. Their importance is well understood throughout the college. The college has developed strongly since the last inspection when management and quality assurance were already judged to be outstanding. There is a clear commitment to the growth of all members of the college community. Governors and staff are committed to the college's values and ethos. The college's commitment to professional development is very strong. Levels of staff satisfaction and morale are high. Staff turnover and absence are significantly below sector norms. The college is categorised as excellent by the Greater Manchester LSC. The principal's leadership and support for staff at all levels is held in high regard.

28. There are rigorous quality assurance, course review and self-assessment processes which are effectively implemented for students aged 16 to 18. In addition to annual appraisal, all staff review the quality of their work as part of their team's self-assessment, which contributes to the college self-assessment report. There is a strong commitment to teamwork and sharing of good practice. A self-critical culture in pursuit of improving performance is encouraged through the operating statements of a three-year development plan. The college's self-assessment report is an accurate reflection of the quality of the college's work for students aged 16 to 18. Performance review is well-informed by a range of benchmarked data produced by an in-house management information system which is used well by staff at all levels. The college does not routinely collect global attendance figures or analyse retention rates by gender or ethnicity.

29. Communications and lines of accountability are clear. Through an early morning gathering of all staff, regular meetings of curriculum teams and cross-college groups, and through the college intranet, staff are kept fully informed and have regular opportunities for informal contact. Line

managers are accessible and supportive. All staff enjoy outstanding and varied opportunities for professional development, the primary purpose of which is to promote high-quality teaching and learning. An impressive example is a certificated middle management course, run in conjunction with Liverpool John Moore's University, which has been enthusiastically welcomed by significant numbers of teaching and support staff. The principal is the lead tutor on the course through which staff undertake analytical studies of their role in the college and of wider college life. They also participate in a group presentation to the corporation and the senior management team. A significant number of teaching and support staff hold a management qualification.

30. There is a relentless focus on the quality of teaching, students' learning experiences and their achievements. The college's value added scheme for allocating minimum acceptable grades plays an integral role in this respect. Senior and middle managers' leadership of the curriculum, including general studies, key skills and enrichment activities, is impressive. Examination results, retention rates and value added calculations for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses are excellent and have improved significantly from their already high values at the last inspection. Student support and guidance are given high priority and students are well supported. The student voice is highly valued. In a recent survey, 93% of students said that they were pleased to have chosen Winstanley College.

31. The contribution made by the governors to the development of the college is outstanding. The weaknesses in governance identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed. The chair of governors and the clerk ensure that business is conducted in a professional manner. There is a clear understanding of the distinction between the role of governors and managers. The corporation is involved in strategic planning and risk management assessment and carefully monitors targets for recruitment, retention rates, examination results and financial performance, using national averages to assist in this process. There is strong commitment to equality and diversity issues and a firm understanding of value for money. The corporation expects to be informed about weak performance and to monitor senior management's response. There are regular skill audits of governors and a rigorous process for the selection of new governors who participate in a comprehensive induction programme. Governors evaluate their own performance through a self-assessment report. The ongoing governor training programme has not yet been agreed for the current academic year. Governors plan to include training on child protection in the coming term. An 80% target is set for governors' attendance and invariably met. Governors take pride in their membership of the corporation and in the college's achievements.

32. There is a strong commitment to equality and diversity. A range of policies and implementation plans, overseen by the Equality and Diversity Steering Committee, respond to the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA), although the latter is not explicitly mentioned in college literature. The parent of a student with visual impairment spoke of his appreciation of the college's work in this area. Awareness has been raised and appropriate action taken through such initiatives as a curriculum audit, One World Week, visiting speakers, films, a buildings disability audit and staff in-service education and training. The college is involved in a programme to promote HE to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and in another to provide for the needs of those who are gifted and talented. It carefully monitors publicity to prospective students. There are specific arrangements to encourage applications from pupils at schools which are at present under-represented at the college. Recruitment, retention rates and performance trends are analysed by a partner school.

33. The college is held in high esteem in the communities which it serves. Stakeholders spoke positively about the welcoming atmosphere, the valuing of students and stakeholders, the college's commitment to excellence, and the superb enrichment programme. The college shows good commitment to working with other agencies concerned with progression, raising aspirations and widening participation. The college has recently trebled the number of work experience and voluntary work placements to 300. Reciprocal visits by employers to the college's subject departments have increased significantly. The college's adult education programme engages the local community and promotes the use of college premises in the evenings. Students value the variety of courses available in the programme and teaching and learning on these courses are good. Quality assurance processes are sometimes applied with less rigour than for students aged 16 to 18. Some retention and pass rates fall below college targets.

34. The college has a carefully considered and transparent strategy for allocation of resources. The college's financial position is very strong and it is one of few colleges in the national programme of reduced audit. Governors and senior staff carefully monitor the budget on a regular basis. Curriculum and other college teams are clear how their budgets are set. There is an ambitious accommodation strategy and £6.6 million has been invested in the last four years. Staff and other resources are effectively and efficiently deployed and student recruitment, retention and pass rates are high. During the inspection, the average class size in observed lessons was high at 17.5. The college gives good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

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### Science

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

#### **Strengths**

- high retention and pass rates on all courses
- excellent teaching
- very good use of ILT
- good teaching resources
- good progression to HE in related disciplines
- strong leadership and management.

#### **Weaknesses**

- no significant weaknesses.

#### **Scope of provision**

35. There are approximately 1,200 enrolments on science courses. AS levels and GCE A levels are offered in biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science and geology. Recruitment to science courses has increased significantly over the last two years. A large proportion of students on AS-level courses progress to GCE A level. GCE A-level biology and physics students are able to choose from a range of options in the second year. A number of biology and chemistry students take the Advanced Extension Award.

#### **Achievement and standards**

36. Retention and pass rates are high. In 2004, the pass rates for AS-level biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science and geology were above national averages. On GCE A-level courses, more than 96% passed the examination. Higher-grade pass rates have been above national averages for the past three years in biology, chemistry and physics. The high-grade pass rates in environmental science and geology are low. On all advanced level courses, students perform at the level expected based on their entry qualifications.

37. Students enjoy studying science and make very good progress in lessons, producing high-quality work. They answer questions confidently and use technical terms appropriately. Across all subjects,

their practical skills are good. Students are well prepared for further study and the percentage of students who progress to HE is high, with 70% progressing to science-related courses. There is a very good programme of visits and enrichment activities that raises students' aspirations. The annual science conference, organised by teachers, provides an excellent opportunity for students to hear lectures from speakers in HE and meet with professionals from industry. There have been science trips to Australia and France. Students produce detailed articles on their own area of scientific interest for a science magazine.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2002 to 2004***

Qualification	level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	260	278	286
		% retention	93	97	96
		% pass rate	92	91	96
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	186	175	210
		% retention	98	97	99
		% pass rate	96	99	99
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	132	168	198
		% retention	95	98	96
		% pass rate	78	88	91
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	79	69	107
		% retention	99	97	97
		% pass rate	94	100	97
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	87	71	103
		% retention	98	89	95
		% pass rate	94	90	89
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	67	62	45
		% retention	99	97	98
		% pass rate	98	98	98

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

***Quality of education and training***

38. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned, with a wide range of teaching methods to address students' preferred ways of learning. Objectives are stated clearly and shared with students. Interactive whiteboards have recently been installed in all laboratories and teachers use them confidently and to good effect. In one lesson, students learned about the processes involved in the light dependent and independent reactions for photosynthesis. This was reinforced first by an interactive animation on the whiteboard, and then by an exercise carried out by the students to sequence the stages. This helped students to visualise the process before attempting assessment questions. In many lessons, laboratory work is used effectively to consolidate theory and to develop students' practical skills. In a chemistry lesson, students applied their practical skills and knowledge well to identify an unknown solution. They used a good range of analytical methods to confirm which carbonyl group the sample came from. Students work with due regard for health and safety.

39. In many lessons, high-quality teaching resources are used. All topics have excellent study guides produced by teachers to help students to learn on their own. The study guides contain a

wealth of supporting material including teaching notes, extension material, further reading and summaries. These resources are critically reviewed and revised based on students' comments. Students use extensively the wide range of science resources on the intranet, including teaching notes, teacher-produced videos, online tests and discussion boards. In biology, a teacher is successfully using this material to support a problem-based approach to learning.

40. Staff in science are experienced and well qualified. Teachers demonstrate thorough understanding of awarding body requirements and provide students with helpful advice on how to gain full marks in examinations. All laboratories have interesting displays, including information on the destinations of previous students. Laboratories have been refurbished recently and are well equipped and maintained by experienced, well-qualified technicians. Technicians and teachers work well together to maintain a good health and safety record.

41. Assessment is effective and meets awarding body requirements. Marking and teachers' comments on homework are thorough. Teachers assess students' progress regularly against a minimum acceptable grade which is based on their achievements at GCSE. Assignments are standardised to ensure that teachers' marking is accurate. Students performing below their minimum acceptable grade are identified and appropriate targets for improvement agreed. There are useful informal revision and support sessions run at lunchtime in teachers' spare time. In biology, a recently appointed learning assistant is further improving the effectiveness of support.

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

42. Leadership and management are outstanding. Heads of department manage the provision effectively, keeping a clear focus on continuous improvement. Within each department, there is excellent teamwork. Teachers share good practice within departments and across the sciences. The self-assessment reports provide an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses in science. All teachers are involved by reviewing the performance of each student and class. Teachers and managers use management information well to monitor students' achievement. Appropriate development plans are produced, although formal monitoring of these plans is weak. Teachers give good consideration to issues of equality and diversity and are well aware of the needs of individual students.

## **Mathematics**

 **CONTENTS**

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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates
- high retention rates
- good use of ILT in teaching
- high-quality learning resources
- very good management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some cramped accommodation.

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

43. Recruitment to GCE mathematics courses is high. There are currently 442 students, nearly all of them aged 16 to 18. In the first year, students on AS-level courses follow a common course and can

then choose from discrete mathematics, statistics or mechanics options in their second year. Some able students study GCE A-level mathematics in their first year and AS-level or GCE A-level further mathematics in their second year. Students who did not reach grade C in GCSE mathematics are required to re-sit the qualification. There is no level 2 application of number alternative. A small proportion of students take level 3 application of number.

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

44. Pass rates on mathematics courses are high. On the AS-level mathematics course, the pass rate has consistently remained close to 90%, with 50% of students gaining high grades. Pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics courses were high, at 97%, for two years and rose further to 100% in 2004. Around 65% of students gained high grades in each of the past three years. GCE A-level further mathematics pass rates have been 100% for the last two years. Value added scores are good on most courses. Pass rates on the GCSE mathematics course have been exemplary, with over of 80% of students achieving A to C grades. Retention rates are above national average on all courses. Progression rates of students to university are high. In 2004, 161 students who had taken GCE A-level mathematics went on to HE courses. Of these, 41 went into mathematics courses and 12 into engineering.

45. Students are very well motivated towards their studies. Their written work is carefully presented and provides good explanation of their methods. Attendance rates in lessons are very high and students arrive punctually.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2002 to 2004***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	41	39	17
		% retention	98	79	94
		% pass rate	83	81	81
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	258	251	285
		% retention	96	94	96
		% pass rate	87	92	88
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	128	180	181
		% retention	99	99	98
		% pass rate	97	97	100
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	14*	31	13
		% retention	93*	97	92
		% pass rate	100*	100	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

\* college data

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

46. The overall standard of teaching is good. Teachers are confident and enthusiastic. There is a strong sense of trust and respect between teachers and students. Teachers and students set high expectations and they work together productively.

47. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Strong teamwork has led to improvements in teaching and learning. Textbooks have been replaced by high-quality booklets produced by



teachers, sets of which cover all mathematics and further mathematics modules. These booklets form the main resource used by teachers, thereby ensuring a consistent standard of teaching. They include teaching resources, sets of problems for class work and more demanding review and homework exercises. Staff mark these using a common mark scheme. Some teachers use a range of methods to enrich learning but in other cases teachers adhere to a single method of teacher-led presentation followed by student exercises. While students learn successfully in these lessons, there is less variety in their experience of learning. Some accommodation is very cramped. The lack of space in some rooms reduces the scope for teachers to use different teaching methods.

48. The recent introduction of additional ILT resources is promoting improvements in teaching and learning. All rooms are equipped with a data projector, computer and standard software. Half of the rooms also have an interactive whiteboard. Standard mathematics software is available in all rooms. Substantial staff development in the use of the technology has been beneficial, although some teachers have yet to explore the full potential of these resources. In lessons, the relevant booklet is projected and students fill in gaps in their own copy as ideas are developed, building up an invaluable resource for revision. Some good use is made of the interactive whiteboard. In one lesson, ideas concerning the intersection of a circle with a line were illustrated clearly using interactive graphics. In another lesson, the convergence and divergence of numerical iterations were followed graphically on the interactive board. Students use the mathematics intranet to obtain copies of booklets and past examination papers. Electronic presentations of mathematics topics provide a useful resource for revision and extra study. In order for students to use computers in lessons, a room must be booked elsewhere in the college. There is only one computer in each mathematics room and no use of computers by students was seen in observed lessons.

49. Assessment is thorough. Much homework is set and students respond well to the challenge. They are aware of, and know what is needed to match, the high performance of previous students. Students are highly motivated and set themselves challenging goals. Students' work is carefully and promptly marked and helpful comments are given where improvement is needed. Excellent records are maintained of students' progress. Colour coded marks keep teachers aware of students' performance against their minimum acceptable grades.

50. Teachers provide very good support for students. Students are appreciative of the extra help available to them in break and lunchtime periods when teachers give generously of their own time. They speak highly of the help and encouragement they receive. Teachers give extra help to those whose work or performance against targets is giving concern. However, there is no structured mathematics support, reducing the effectiveness of the targeting of this support.

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

51. Leadership and management are very good. Clearly defined responsibilities promote strong teamwork. Each teacher takes responsibility for some modules, including the authorship of the booklets and assessments. One teacher has responsibility for key skills and has developed the team's strategy to meet the college's target for level 3 application of number completions. The self-assessment report is thorough and evaluative resulting in a short but well-focused development plan. All teachers are involved in self-assessment and conduct an annual review of each course on which they teach. Reviews are conducted in an open and honest manner and individuals decide what they need to do to improve their own, and their students' performance. Staff development focuses appropriately on improvements in teaching and learning, and career development. Four members of the team have attended, or are attending, the college's management course.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates on level 3 courses
- high retention rates on level 3 courses
- effective development of students' practical skills
- good assessment practices
- good individual support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient challenge and inspiration in theory lessons
- underdeveloped commercial and business links.

### **Scope of provision**

52. Full-time courses include AS levels and GCE A levels in ICT and computing. There is no vocational provision. A number of evening ICT courses are offered to adult part-time students. These include new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and some introductory computer courses. Approximately 240 students are enrolled on full-time courses and 83 on part-time courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

53. Pass rates on all level 3 courses have been consistently good over the past three years. A large proportion of students on GCE A-level computing and ICT courses achieve high grades. Value added scores on AS-level and GCE A-level computing courses have been satisfactory over a three-year period, and have improved to be excellent on GCE A-level ICT. Retention rates on full-time and most part-time courses are high, with all courses at or above national averages. The retention rate on the level 1 'Using ICT' course for adult students is just satisfactory, mainly because students choose not to complete the assessment. The college has taken steps to address this issue.

54. Progression rates from AS level to GCE A level in ICT are low. Progression rates from full-time courses to HE in ICT and computing-related courses are excellent. The attendance rate at the lessons observed during the inspection was 91%.

55. Achievement in practical lessons is good. Some individual student projects are of a very high standard. For example, one GCE A-level computing student was implementing a driving lesson booking and progress-tracking system which demonstrated excellent design and programming skills.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2002 to 2004**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Using ICT	1	No. of starts	47	101	64
		% retention	79	84	69
		% pass rate	59	67	59
New CLAIT	2	No. of starts	64	42	34
		% retention	86	83	82
		% pass rate	76	80	93
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	50	52	38
		% retention	94	94	97
		% pass rate	98	98	97

GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	66	52	43
		% retention	88	98	95
		% pass rate	95	100	95
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	98	73	62
		% retention	90	93	94
		% pass rate	91	90	86
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	104	102	85
		% retention	94	91	93
		% pass rate	95	95	91

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

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

56. Teaching is mostly good and none is unsatisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers involve students in a range of activities and make good use of well-designed notes and workbooks. Some teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards and multimedia projectors in lessons. For example, in one lesson, a teacher gave a presentation on uses of the Internet using a variety of well-chosen, contrasting websites. Students are given printed copies of teachers' presentations, although few students make any additional notes or annotate these with the examples provided. Teaching of adults is good. Recently enrolled adult students make rapid progress in developing word-processing or spreadsheet skills. In practical sessions, teachers make good use of exemplar material from a range of sources. Good emphasis is placed on developing basic techniques, giving students a good basis for developing more advanced skills. Students develop a good range of projects; many are excellent and innovative. For example, one student devised and implemented an extensive website which enables emerging rock bands to publish music and promote concerts.

57. Some theory lessons are less effective. In these lessons, teachers do not encourage or inspire students to participate fully. Some students only contribute to discussion when asked directed questions. Sometimes teachers do not take sufficient account of students' prior knowledge and skills in their lesson planning. In some lessons, there are not enough opportunities for students to work in groups.

58. Staff are well qualified. Staff development for full-time staff is appropriately focused on the requirements of awarding bodies and the use of ILT. Printed learning materials and handouts are good. The department's intranet site provides a good range of learning resources, including schemes of work, project guidelines and key skills guidance. Lesson notes and assignments are also available; these are used by students as supplementary reading material or to catch up when they miss lessons. However, there are not enough self-study tests available for student use.

59. The layout of the main classroom used for theory lessons is poor; this limits the opportunity for effective class discussion and group work. Practical rooms are well furnished and equipped; the layout enables teachers to monitor individuals' work effectively. The majority of rooms are equipped with high-quality interactive whiteboards or projectors. The ICT systems are supported by a reliable and robust network infrastructure. Students have access to a good range of applications software. Specialist hardware, for example, bar code readers, are available for project use. Internet access is very good.

60. Teachers set and mark assignments regularly; these are promptly returned to students with appropriate comments identifying areas for improvement. The use of poor English, spelling mistakes and inappropriate technical terminology are corrected. Students are given rigorously enforced interim submission deadlines for practical projects. Assessment criteria are clear. Students monitor their own progress against target grades. Teachers provide good additional support to students in lunchtime workshops or informal discussions.

61. Links with the ICT industry are underdeveloped. There are few visiting speakers or links with local employers. Teachers do not draw on the experience of students' part-time employment to illustrate theoretical concepts. The take-up of work experience opportunities by students is poor. Opportunities to demonstrate key skills in communication are limited to project documentation.

62. Teachers regularly monitor students' progress towards achieving their minimum acceptable grade. Students who need additional support are given effective help. Students have formal progress reviews at which appropriate actions are identified to enable them to achieve their targets. The progress of students on part-time programmes is effectively monitored. The learning support needs of adult students are identified and met. Full-time students receive good guidance and support in selecting appropriate courses and HE institutions.

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

63. Leadership and management are effective. There are clear lines of responsibility for each of the age groups. The full-time team meet regularly to discuss course delivery and student progress. Actions arising from these meetings are recorded and followed through. The part-time team meet more informally. Appropriate action has been taken to address the weaknesses in retention rates on the adult 'Using IT' course. The two teams do not share good practice. All staff are appraised on an annual basis. There is good participation in staff development by both full-time and part-time staff. All staff are involved in self-assessment and departmental planning. Management information is used effectively to evaluate students' and the department's performance and to develop action plans.

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

 **CONTENTS**

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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on all courses
- high standard of students' work and performance
- excellent progression to specialist HE institutions
- very good teaching
- outstanding accommodation and facilities in art and design
- valuable and stimulating enrichment programme
- good curriculum management.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient accommodation for performing arts and media.

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

64. There are currently 1,067 students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in dance, media, music, music technology, performing studies, theatre studies and several art and design options. There is no vocational provision apart from the pre-degree art foundation course.

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

65. There are high pass and retention rates on all courses. Pass rates are consistently above national averages. For example, the pass rate on GCE A-level music technology has been at 100% for the last three years. Retention rates are also consistently above national averages. On the AS-level course in art design in 2004, the retention rate was 92% and in drama it was 94%, which was

11% above the national average. Students' achievements on the art foundation course are excellent. Value added data indicate that most students make good progress and achieve at least the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. Value added scores are lower, however, in AS-level theatre studies and music technology.

66. The standard of students' work and performance is high. Their work is often challenging and exciting. Dance students have won international awards for their performances. Student progression to specialist and prestigious HE institutions, where the competition for entry is intense, is often exceptional. Punctuality and attendance are very good. During the inspection, the attendance rate was 90%.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2002 to 2004***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
AS-level art and design	3	No. of starts	113	153	187
		% retention	96	92	95
		% pass rate	98	99	99
AS-level dance	3	No. of starts	25	38	32
		% retention	96	95	94
		% pass rate	100	92	90
AS-level drama	3	No. of starts	52	55	45
		% retention	92	95	94
		% pass rate	98	98	93
GCE A-level music technology	3	No. of starts	21	16	17
		% retention	90	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	130	160	128
		% retention	97	95	98
		% pass rate	100	99	99
GCE A2 performance arts studies	3	No. of starts	58	62	61
		% retention	95	97	95
		% pass rate	100	98	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

***Quality of education and training***

67. Teaching is consistently very good and some is excellent. Teachers demonstrate expert subject knowledge and have high expectations of students. Teachers use question and answer sessions effectively and provide challenge using time-constrained exercises. Much emphasis is placed on group exercises. Much of the teaching is exciting and students are provided with experiences that are beyond examination requirements. The outstanding enrichment programme underpins teaching and supports students' learning in their core subjects.

68. The skills and knowledge gained by students on all courses are exceptional. In a media lesson, students were able to debate the merits of film censorship with maturity and insight. Drama students successfully extended their understanding of the complexities of Lorca's *Yerma* through rehearsing the play in preparation for public performance. The work produced by art students is often challenging and stimulating. Students take responsibility for their own learning effectively.

69. Resources are good overall and outstanding in art and design. The new art and design building is an exceptional facility and has a strongly beneficial effect on learning. Performance facilities are also good and allow for a variety of production styles. The curriculum area loses the use of the performance space and studio during examination periods and through other, wider college demands. This makes performance planning difficult. Dance studios have been created by imaginative conversion of existing accommodation. Media and film classrooms are visually stimulating and benefit from having ready access to associated technology. However, there are too many students for the available spaces, which affects teaching and learning. Students have good access to ILT facilities. Interactive whiteboards and data projection are used effectively to enhance visual presentations. Staff are well qualified and several have experience as professional practitioners.

70. Assessment is effective. Work is marked and returned promptly with helpful and critical comments. Performance and progress are monitored rigorously against students' minimum acceptable grades. Staff moderate each other's assessment successfully. Where appropriate, students assess each other's work. They do this with accuracy and maturity. There is an ethos of continuous self-improvement through review and evaluation.

71. The range of provision is good. Visual arts students can specialise or choose from a wide range of options. Prior experience of a subject is not a pre-requisite of entry and the curriculum is inclusive. The arrangements for key skills are appropriate and integrated into assignments. The opportunities afforded by the enrichment programme are exceptional and a key strength of the provision. For example, media and film students have visited Hollywood and New York, while art students regularly have the opportunity to visit European cities to further their experience of art. Students can attend individual tuition lessons in music and drama. There is an extensive range of drama, musical theatre, opera and choral concerts in which all students can participate.

72. Guidance and support are good. Pre-entry information, advice and guidance are comprehensive. Students receive good advice and guidance from their teachers and make good use of teachers' availability to discuss personal and academic issues. Personal tutors monitor performance effectively and quickly identify students who are underachieving.

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

73. The management of the curriculum area is very good. Staff have confidence in the senior managers, who are easily accessible and approachable. Heads of department effectively communicate with staff in their teams. Teams meet regularly with clear agendas. Subsequent actions are effectively implemented and monitored. Quality assurance processes are understood. Improvements in teaching and learning have resulted from the observations carried out by managers and peers. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Staff take advantage of the opportunity to update their qualifications and all requests for professional development are supported.

## **Humanities**

 **CONTENTS**

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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates
- very good teaching and learning
- effective assessment supporting learning
- well-planned general studies programme promoting effective study skills
- very good subject and personal support

- o outstanding leadership and management focused on students' learning.

**Weaknesses**

- o some cramped accommodation.

**Scope of provision**

74. Philosophy, philosophy and religion, geography, medieval, 17<sup>th</sup> Century and modern history are offered at AS level and GCE A level. Currently, 618 students are enrolled on these courses. All full-time students study AS-level general studies in their first year and GCE A level in the second, as part of the tutorial programme. Some students take GCE A-level philosophy and religion in one year as an additional GCE A level. Others begin philosophy and religion in the second term on an accelerated AS-level programme.

**Achievement and standards**

75. Pass rates in humanities are high and have increased steadily over three years. In 2004, on GCE A-level history, geography and philosophy courses, the pass rates was 100%. Retention rates are also high on most courses, with the exception of AS-level philosophy and religion. Data from a national value added scheme show that students achieve very well in relation to the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results on all courses except GCE A-level general studies.

76. The standard of students' work is high across the provision. Students demonstrate good study skills and work well both in groups and on their own. They are articulate and use technical terms confidently and accurately. Their research, analytical and evaluative skills are well developed. Lessons start punctually with good levels of attendance. The attendance rate during the inspection was over 92%. Rates of progression to HE are high.

**A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2002 to 2004**

Qualification	level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level general studies	3	No. of starts	*	*	835
		% retention	*	*	97
		% pass rate	*	*	98
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	159	160	152
		% retention	98	96	98
		% pass rate	93	97	93
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	93	93	89
		% retention	99	94	94
		% pass rate	99	97	96
GCE A2 general studies	3	No. of starts	691	779	782
		% retention	92	91	91
		% pass rate	75	81	90
GCE A2 history	3	No. of starts	80	112	103
		% retention	95	95	100
		% pass rate	91	98	99
GCE A2 religious	3	No. of starts	55	61	69

studies	% retention	93	97	94
	% pass rate	86	93	98

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

\* course not running

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

77. There is very good teaching and learning across all humanities courses. Lessons are well planned and objectives clearly stated. Teachers build on students' prior knowledge. In one AS-level geography lesson, the teacher successfully used a prior knowledge checklist to identify students who had not previously studied drainage basins so that they could be given additional resources. There is a strong emphasis on developing students' understanding and engaging their interest in the subject rather than a narrow focus on examination requirements. Good links are made between topics. In a medieval history lesson, the teacher effectively linked the blood libel with Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*. Different teaching methods are used effectively to stretch the more able students and to build confidence in the less able.

78. There are good relationships between students and teachers. Students ask pertinent questions confidently to develop, clarify and extend their learning. Students make good use of the readily available help and advice provided by teachers, including that for students who have missed work. Teachers challenge students to extend their understanding and knowledge. In a GCE A-level philosophy lesson, Ryle's philosophical behaviourism was introduced and the teacher provoked lively debate between students in which they were able to apply Ryle's terminology quickly and appropriately. Learning was enhanced by a well-crafted worksheet and additional resources on the intranet. In a few lessons, quieter or less confident students are not sufficiently involved in discussions.

79. Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified. Each department has a principal examiner on the staff. Many high-quality learning resources are produced by the teachers for students' use. The learning resource area is well stocked and well used by students. The college intranet contains helpful additional material and exercises. Well-functioning computer suites are available for use on a booking system. Half of the rooms in this curriculum area are too small to allow for a wide range of teaching methods. Teachers are restricted in the individual attention that they can give to students and group work is inhibited. The use of some audio-visual items in cramped rooms presents a safety hazard.

80. Assessment is effectively used to enhance teaching and learning. Students are regularly assessed so that they know how well they are progressing. Homework is set regularly and marked and returned quickly. Self-assessment is used effectively to develop students' understanding. In a GCE A-level geography lesson, an exercise gave rise to a debate about possible answers to a problem. A student presented his idea to the rest of the class. Another student, who had proposed a different answer, compared and evaluated his response. Written assessments are carefully designed within schemes of work.

81. A very wide range of enrichment activities complements teaching and learning. Enrichment is used well to allow students to relate their learning to real-world contexts. The general studies course is well planned. It is integrated successfully into tutorials as part of the college's skills development programme. Students enhance their study skills and large numbers gain a useful qualification at the same time.

82. There is very good subject and personal tutorial support. Personal tutorials are well planned, resourced and delivered. Students feel very well supported and appreciate the very quick intervention made by personal tutors if there is a problem. Personal tutors can refer students to an effective counselling service.



## ***Leadership and management***

83. Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff work co-operatively in subject teams. They are well led by heads of department who are committed to continuous improvement in students' learning. Heads of department and some classroom teachers are taking a post-graduate certificate in educational management or professional practice. Staff at all levels enjoy good support, encouragement and trust from senior management. Staff teams thoughtfully evaluate and review courses. General studies is well managed by a senior member of staff who provides training and the resources to deliver the programme. Equality and diversity are promoted through teaching, classroom displays and a programme of visiting speakers in the general studies programme.

## **Social sciences**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses
- very good teaching
- imaginative and effective use of resources
- excellent assessment practices
- very good enrichment programme
- outstanding management and leadership of AS-level and GCE A-level courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- unsatisfactory management of access courses.

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

84. There are 1,085 students aged 16 to 18 on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in government and politics, law, psychology and sociology. Of these, 614 students are studying psychology at AS level or GCE A level. A total of 39 adult students are enrolled on two part-time evening access courses in criminology and psychology.

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

85. Pass and retention rates of students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are high. The percentage of students achieving high grades has been rising and above or considerably above the national average for three years. There has also been a steady rise in the percentage of students achieving AS-level and GCE A-level grades which are higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE scores. Retention rates for all AS-level and GCE A-level courses are consistently close to or above the national rates. Retention rates for adults on the access social sciences course are unsatisfactory.

86. Students produce written work that is well researched and shows good powers of critical analysis and ability to evaluate evidence. In lessons, students confidently use good debating skills. In an AS-level law lesson, students analysed a case study using the definition of blackmail contained in the Theft Act of 1968. New developments were added to the case and revised judgements had to be made. They used the definitions and interpretations of blackmail in the Act accurately and explained their judgements with confidence.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences, 2002 to 2004***

Qualification	level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	51	53	59
		% retention	94	91	92
		% pass rate	96	98	98
AS-level law 1 year	3	No. of starts	117	129	134
		% retention	96	95	90
		% pass rate	96	92	93
AS-level psychology 1 year	3	No. of starts	274	336	361
		% retention	93	95	96
		% pass rate	92	94	95
AS-level sociology 1 year	3	No. of starts	53	65	50
		% retention	89	89	96
		% pass rate	96	95	98
GCE A-level law 1 year	3	No. of starts	52	103	88
		% retention	96	97	100
		% pass rate	98	100	99
GCE A-level psychology 1 year	3	No. of starts	116	178	219
		% retention	98	96	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

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

87. Teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations of students and plan classes effectively to include a wide range of activities. Students develop good subject knowledge and understanding. In one lesson on different kinds of memory, the interactive whiteboard was used very effectively to develop a quiz that illustrated the validity of a model of one form of memory. Later in the lesson, students were asked to play a variety of games such as clapping games and making a 'cat's cradle'. These activities illustrated the validity of a different model of memory. The students' understanding of the models was deepened by these activities and they then felt confident to challenge the purity of the models. There is good rapport between staff and students who are responsive and demonstrate an enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, learning.

88. Staff are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. They continually develop their knowledge and skills to improve their effectiveness. Classroom and learning resources are very good and used to skilful effect to develop and support students' learning. All psychology classrooms are equipped with excellent ILT and this is used imaginatively to develop a wider range of teaching strategies which improve the learning experiences of all students. Teachers and students produce excellent learning resources for class use which are made available on the college intranet. The library has a very good stock of appropriate texts and journals and these are used well by students.

89. Assessment practices are outstanding. The assessment of written work is rigorous and fair, and the recording, tracking and analysis of results are meticulous. Informal assessment methods in class are imaginative and include quizzes and games and students assessing their own and other students' work.

90. There is a very good enrichment programme to support and broaden the learning on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. The programme includes subject-related work placements, many trips

and visits to places such as the Freud museum and Parliament. Visits to Paris and Brussels develop students' knowledge of the European Parliament and trips to the United States of America bring to life studies of the American constitution. There is an extensive list of visiting speakers including practising barristers, solicitors, Members of Parliament and clinical psychologists. Key skills are well integrated to support students' achievement of the qualifications.

91. Personal and academic support are very good and based on the identification of students' needs at induction and through the tutorial system. GCE tutors make effective use of attendance and punctuality data and progress reports which monitor support programmes for students who are underachieving. There is good communication between specialist support services and teaching staff to ensure that all students have the support they need to complete their course successfully.

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

92. Leadership and management on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are outstanding. There is rigorous and effective self-assessment. Clear values, targets and actions for improvement are set with the full collaboration of all staff. Very good use is made of management information for analysis to inform on improvement strategies in achievement, retention rates and teaching and learning. Extensive staff development and effective systems of staff review and peer observation enable staff to share good practice. Equal opportunities strategies are reviewed and action taken to improve all aspects of anti-discriminatory behaviour and practices. The management of access courses is unsatisfactory. On these courses, although teaching and learning are effective, there is no rigorous tracking, monitoring and recording of student support and progress or effective strategies to improve retention rates.

## **English and modern foreign languages**

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

### ***Strengths***

- very good and sometimes outstanding students' achievements
- high retention rates
- high proportion of high grade pass rates
- very good value added
- very good teaching and learning
- thorough and rigorous assessment
- outstanding leadership and management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- no significant weaknesses.

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

93. The college provides courses at AS level and GCE A level in English language, English language and literature, English literature, French, German and Spanish. There is a small evening provision for part-time adults in French and Spanish conversation. There are 580 students enrolled on AS-level courses, 398 on GCE A-level courses and 61 on part-time evening courses. There is a GCSE English re-sit course, and a one-year GCE A-level English language course for students who have failed an AS-level subject.

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

94. Students' achievements are very good and sometimes outstanding. On almost all courses, pass rates have been at or above national average rates for three years, sometimes by a substantial margin. For example, in GCE A-level French, the pass rate has been 100% in each of the past three years and in several other subjects there have been 100% pass rates in one or more of these years. In AS-level French, the pass rate was 14% above the national average in both 2002 and 2003, and 16% above it in 2004. Higher-grade pass rates are also high. The AS-level English language pass rate was 26% above the national average in 2003/04, and in GCE A2 French it was 41% above. Pass rates on part-time adult programmes are low.

95. Retention rates are high, sometimes significantly above national averages. For example, the retention rate in AS-level English language has been 7% above national average rates in each of the past three years, and AS-level French at least 8% above. There are low retention rates on adult programmes. A very high percentage of students achieve or exceed their college minimum acceptable grade in most subjects. Student attainment both in written work and in lessons is well above what might be expected for the stage of the course reached.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2002 to 2004***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Certificate in practical languages	1	No. of starts	*	34	28
		% retention	*	68	39
		% pass rate	*	56	36
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	190	162	149
		% retention	97	97	97
		% pass rate	99	100	100
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	97	98	85
		% retention	98	97	95
		% pass rate	99	99	99
AS-level German	3	No. of starts	25	21	27
		% retention	96	95	100
		% pass rate	96	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	77	81	113
		% retention	97	96	96
		% pass rate	96	100	99
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	35	46	41
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	34	36	40
		% retention	94	94	93
		% pass rate	100	97	97

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

96. Teaching and learning are very good. All teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good or better. Lesson plans are detailed and incorporate methods that enable students of different abilities to perform to their full potential. The teachers' lively and humorous approach promotes student participation. Lessons contain a good range of activities. For example, in a GCE A-level Spanish lesson, students first listened to an exposition by the teacher on the transition of Spain from dictatorship to monarchy, then listened to an audio tape on the same subject. They conducted a debate on monarchy versus dictatorship entirely in Spanish. In a AS-level English language lesson, students considered the characteristics of spoken narrative, and then prepared spoken narratives of their own which were analysed by the rest of the group. Learning is supported by good college-produced resource booklets. In modern foreign languages, teachers use the language being taught wherever possible.

97. Resources are satisfactory. All teachers are well qualified. Some have post graduate qualifications and others are working towards them. Most modern foreign languages teachers are native speakers of the language which they teach. Resources for English in the learning resource centre are good and those for modern foreign languages are adequate. The intranet has many useful resources and students make good use of them from home. Classrooms contain attractive displays of students' work, but some rooms are too small for the number of students using them. This limits the range of potential teaching methods. Few rooms are equipped for the use of ICT. The language laboratory has too few stations for some classes. The college is aware of these weaknesses and they are currently being addressed by new buildings which are scheduled for completion in December 2004.

98. Assessment of students' progress is very good. There is a detailed and rigorous assessment policy in English and samples of work are moderated to ensure consistency. Written work is thoroughly marked, helpfully annotated to indicate areas for improvement and promptly returned. Awarding bodies comment favourably on the quality and accuracy of marking and moderation. In modern foreign languages, marking is thorough and all major errors of grammar and spelling are corrected.

99. There is a good range of courses at AS level and GCE A level. Opportunities for the acquisition of key skills are indicated in schemes of work and incorporated into some English lessons. The English department plans to enable 150 students this year to achieve level 3 key skills communication. The range of enrichment activities is extensive and includes foreign visits, theatre trips, talks by visiting speakers and a lively reading group. In response to local need, there is a small evening provision of adult classes in French and Spanish conversation.

100. Support for students is good. Student absence is closely monitored and there is a well-documented system for the early identification of students meeting difficulties. Lesson plans take into account learning support needs and preferred learning styles. The reviewing process is very thorough and students' views are taken into account in course planning. Staff give freely of their own time to provide good individual support.

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

101. Leadership and management are outstanding. The self-assessment report is thorough. Actions to be taken include clear responsibilities and timescales. Progress of actions is closely monitored and updated in a current position statement. Communication between staff is good and there are clear and well-understood lines of responsibility. Meetings to share good practice are frequent and well documented, and there is a rigorous appraisal system. Equal opportunities issues are incorporated into schemes of work. There is an extensive staff development programme. Through effective leadership there is a culture of continuous improvement to which all staff are fully committed.

## **Part D: College data**

**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**

level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	24
2	1	11
3	99	7
4/5	0	3
Other	0	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2004


**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,500	266	23
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	51	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	241	45	4
Information and communication technology	297	208	6
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	208	243	6
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	7	0
Health, social care and public services	68	34	1
Visual and performing arts and media	1,064	1	14
Humanities	2,507	56	32
English, languages and communication	985	43	13
Foundation programmes	0	0	0

<b>Total</b>	<b>6,921</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>100</b>
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Source: provided by the college in 2004

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

							
level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	*	92	73
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	*	70	74
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	*	75	67
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	52	95	68	*	*	43
	Retention rate %	87	86	93	*	*	79
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	100**	100	100	*	*	94
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	6,007	5,960	6,508	39	70	59
	Retention rate %	88	94	95	62	66	64
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	91	91	95	71	83	97
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR.

\*fewer than 15 students enrolled

\*\*college data

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

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Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
level 3 (advanced)	89	11	0	90
level 2 (intermediate)	75	25	0	4
level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	1
Other sessions	100	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>96</b>

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