



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Newcastle College

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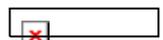
**Basic information about the college**



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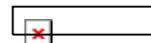
Name of college:	Newcastle College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Jackie Fisher
Address of college:	Ryehill Campus Scotswood Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA
Telephone number:	0191 200 4000
Fax number:	0191 200 4517
Chair of governors:	Leo Finn
Unique reference number:	130552
Name of reporting inspector:	Colin Evans HMI
Dates of inspection:	26-30 April and 4-6 May 2004

**Part A: Summary**



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## Information about the college



Newcastle College is an important regional education centre for the north east of England. Some 45% of Newcastle's school pupils live in wards which are amongst the 10% most deprived in England. In 2003, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more passes at grades A\* to G and A\* to C was 81.1% and 39.9%, respectively, compared with 88.8% and 52.9% nationally. In Newcastle, double the proportion of pupils achieve no passes; 10.1% compared with 5.2% nationally. Newcastle is the only local education authority (LEA) in Tyne and Wear where education maintenance allowances are not available. The area is depressed economically. The unemployment level is above the national average. Approximately 6% of the population in Tyne and Wear are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The main areas of employment are manufacturing, public services, and wholesale and retail trades. Employment in manufacturing has declined.

The college is a large general further education (FE) college. The main site and residential accommodation are on the Ryehill campus about one mile west of the city centre. Hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality and catering are at a second major site in Sandyford in the city centre. Specialist music and performing arts courses are in Waterloo House in the city centre and in the John Marley centre which is about three miles from the main campus. Outreach facilities in Cramlington and Hexham provide information and a range of courses. Courses are provided in several community bases. The college is a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) for culinary excellence.

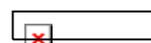
Within 10 miles of the college, there are four other general FE colleges. There are 11 LEA-funded 11 to 18 schools and seven independent schools with sixth forms in Newcastle. Nearly all of the Newcastle college's students aged 16 to 18 come from the LEA-funded schools.

About 36,000 of the 40,000 students are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Full-time LSC-funded students number 4,400; two thirds of whom are aged 16 to 18. Approximately 87% of the students are aged over 19. In 2002, 88% of students declared themselves as white and 9% as from minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 54% were female. The college provides courses in all 14 areas of learning. In two areas of learning, land-based provision and retail, customer service and transport, there are few students.

The college has 10 academic schools and a number of cross-college service units. One of the schools, the sixth form college, provides mainly academic courses. Directors of the schools, finance, quality, management information, estates, student services, human resources, marketing, and corporate development comprise the senior management team. Many key functions such as programme delivery, staff development, and quality assurance are devolved to the schools with an element of central co-ordination. The larger schools are divided into sections, each responsible for a designated curriculum area. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,661 staff, 341 of whom were permanent teachers and 704 were employed part time.

The college's mission is to develop people through learning and achievement for the benefit of themselves, society and the economy. The college aims to widen participation in FE and meet the needs of students from increasingly diverse the backgrounds.

## How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching and learning and students' achievements to be outstanding in six curriculum areas, good in four and satisfactory in one. Work-based learning in construction is satisfactory. The college's key strengths and weaknesses and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

***Key strengths***

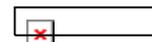
- high adult pass and retention rates
  
- high pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 2
  
- much good adult teaching and learning
  
- very good teaching and learning at entry level and levels 1 and 2
  
- outstanding provision in six curriculum areas
  
- outstanding specialist and general resources
  
- the wide range of provision which meets the needs of the community served
  
- the outstanding approach to inclusion and support for students
  
- outstanding leadership and management.

***What should be improved***

- lower than expected achievements of GCE students on some courses, in relation to their incoming levels of attainment
  
- inconsistent application and use of individual learning plans.

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

## Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high on vocational science courses and on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Teaching is well planned and effective. Accommodation is good. The monitoring of students' progress is rigorous. Retention rates on some courses are low. Pass rates on mathematics courses are low.
Construction	<b>Good.</b> Work-based learning is <b>satisfactory</b> . Pass rates on some courses are high. Teaching is good. The range of provision is wide. Specialist resources are of high quality. On-site assessment and reviews are effective. Achievement of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. Internal verification arrangements are unsatisfactory.
Business	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass and retention rates are high. Teaching is good. Trade union studies and distance learning provision is outstanding. Learning support is of high quality. Assessment and feedback of students' progress are thorough. Strategies to improve provision are effective. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons and links with business on some courses are underdeveloped.
Information and communications technology	<b>Good.</b> Adult retention rates at levels 1 and 2 are high. Pass rates on level 2 courses are high. Attainment and learning on courses at levels 1 and 2 are good. Teaching of adults is very good. Retention rates on several level 3 courses are low. Some level 3 lessons for students aged 16 to 18 lack sufficient challenge. Individual learning plans for part-time students are underdeveloped.
Hospitality, catering, leisure, travel and sport	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Retention rates are high at levels 1 and 2 in 2003. Success rates are high on level 2 sport, leisure and tourism courses. Teaching is good in travel and tourism. Specialist resources are excellent. Support for students is good. Links with employers are strong and enhance learning. Some pass rates are low. Some teaching in sport and hospitality is unchallenging. Poor punctuality disrupts learning.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention rates are high. Pass rates are high on hairdressing and some beauty therapy courses. Students develop good practical skills. Teaching inspires the students. Resources are outstanding. Support for students is excellent. Curriculum management is very good. Beauty therapy pass rates at national

	vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3 have declined and are now low.
Health and social care	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass rates are high. Much of the teaching is good or better. Partnership arrangements widen participation. The range of provision is extensive. Support and guidance are effective. Leadership and management are very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass and retention rates are high. Much of the teaching is good or better. Practical work is excellent. Resources are good in art and design. Support for students is outstanding. There is an extensive range of enrichment opportunities. Leadership and management are strong and responsive.
English and humanities	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high in English and most humanities subjects. Students learn well. Access and pre-access courses for adults are highly effective. The wide range of courses meets students' needs well. Individual students receive good support. Retention rates in English subjects are low. Opportunities for private study are limited at peak times.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching and learning are outstanding. Students achieve skills which are well matched to their individual needs. Resources are good. Support for students is excellent. Leadership and management are strong and effective.
Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass and retention rates are high. Much of the teaching is good. Support for students is excellent. Staff are well qualified. Resources and accommodation are excellent. In English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision, assessment, target setting and monitoring of progress are rigorous. The range of ESOL provision is broad. The use of individual learning targets and progress recording are underdeveloped in discrete literacy and numeracy provision. Leadership and management are excellent.

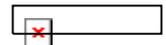
#### How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are outstanding. The strong and energetic leadership provided by the principal, senior management team and corporation has helped the college to address successfully all the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Challenging targets for improvement are set and generally met. The quality of teaching and learning, and success rates, have improved since the last inspection. Curriculum management is very good. Excellent equal opportunities practices underpin the college's mission. Quality assurance is effective. The self-assessment report accurately describes the college's strengths and weaknesses and the judgements made on the quality of teaching broadly agree with the observations at this inspection. The college's management information system (MIS) provides reliable data which are used effectively throughout the college. Governance is very good. Governors exercise their duty to monitor the college's academic and financial health assiduously. Financial management is excellent and the college provides excellent value for money.

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

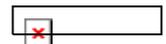
The college's response to education and social inclusion is outstanding. The provision is wide ranging and well matched to the needs of the communities it serves. There is substantial provision for asylum seekers. Advice and guidance provided to prospective students is good. A high proportion of students are recruited at the lower levels of attainment. A high proportion of enrolled students achieve their qualifications. Support for students is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good overall and well matched to the needs of each student. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in ESOL and in literacy and numeracy is outstanding. Equal opportunities practices are excellent. The college is fulfilling its commitments under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA).

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



Guidance and support are outstanding. There is a well-planned strategy for student support and guidance and the services are managed effectively and efficiently. A team of student advisers offer high-quality impartial advice and guidance which is effective in directing students on to appropriate courses. Induction is planned effectively and provides a good introduction to the college and course requirements. Partnership arrangements with the Connexions service are strong. Tutorial arrangements are effective. An extensive tutor handbook and study skills packs support tutorial activities. The monitoring of students' attendance is rigorous. Teachers provide much additional academic and pastoral support outside lessons. Students' views on the quality of the services are vigorously sought, analysed and acted upon. Support to meet individual students' needs is excellent. The integration of literacy and numeracy support into vocational schools is effective. Support for dyslexia, emotional and behavioural difficulties, physical difficulties, and sensory impairment is effective. The college has responded well to the requirements of the recent legislation on child protection.

### **Students' views of the college**



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

#### ***What students like about the college***

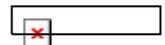
- friendly and supportive relations they have with their teachers
  
- good specialist and general resources
  
- welcoming and safe learning environment
  
- being treated fairly and as adults

- good tutorial support.

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

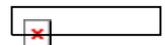
- price of food in the canteen
- access to some computer facilities at peak times and their speed of response
- enrichment programmes
- car parking space
- timetabling of key skills lessons.

**Other information**



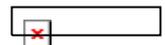
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must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

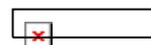


Aspect and student type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	67	31	2
19+ and WBL*	86	13	1
Learning 16-18	68	29	3
19+ and WBL*	88	12	0

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



1. Students work at or above the level required for their course of study. In a higher proportion of lessons than is usually the case, students work above the required standard and in very few lessons is attainment lower than should be expected. Attainment in theory lessons is especially high. For example, access students are able to apply calculus to complex trigonometric expressions, and catering students show a high level of understanding of tempering processes for chocolate. In a few lessons, students show lower levels of attainment than should be expected, taking too long, for example, to complete relatively simple tasks.

2. Students show a good appreciation of health and safety and perform practical work to high standards. Roofing students calculate quantities of materials and prepare and fix tiles to softwood laths to industrial standards and within specified tolerances. Computing students show good levels of skill in using a variety of software applications. Art students produce high-quality practical work. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve demanding individual learning goals and work well both independently and in groups. In a few cases, skills levels are not of the appropriate standards.

3. Attendance in lessons is slightly above the average for similar colleges; 78% compared with 76% nationally. It is high, above 80%, in five curriculum areas, business, ILT, health and social care, arts and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and below 70% in one, hair and beauty therapy.

4. In the following paragraphs on college achievements, the college rates are compared with all general FE/tertiary colleges in England.

#### 16 to 18 year olds

5. Retention rates are close to national averages at levels 2 and 3. The level 1 retention rate has improved significantly, from being well below national averages in 2001 and 2002 to be in the top 10% of colleges in 2003.

6. Pass rates are high for long courses at levels 1 and 2. At level 2, the college has been in the top 25% of colleges in each of the four years to 2003. At level 1, the pass rate has been well above average in three of these four years. It was close to the average in 2002. At level 3, the pass rate has been close to the average in the three years to 2003.

7. Success rates, the proportion of enrolled students who achieve their qualification, were high at levels 1 and 2 in 2003. For courses at level 2, the success rate has been high in each of the three years to 2003; in the top 10% of colleges in 2001 and in the top 25% in the other years. The level 1 rate was close to the average in 2001 and 2002 and high, in the top 10%, in 2003. At level 3, the success rate has been close to the sector average in each of the four years to 2003.

8. The college achieves good results on short courses. Retention rates have improved and were high in 2003. Pass rates are consistently high.

9. Retention rates on AS-level qualifications are close to the national average. On GCE A-level courses, they were at the average in 2002, but well below average in 2003. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are similar to the national averages for general FE/tertiary colleges. Students' performance at AS level and GCE A level is less good, overall, than that which is predicted by their incoming levels of attainment in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). When compared with other general FE/tertiary colleges, using this measure, performance is similar to that predicted in nearly all GCE A2 subjects. At AS level, it is similar to that predicted in 24 of the 30 subjects, and less good in 6.

### **Adult students**

10. Retention rates are high on long courses. Retention rates have improved markedly over the three years to 2003 and in 2003 they were high at all three levels. At level 1, the college was in the top 10% of colleges in 2003 and at both levels 2 and 3 the college was in the top 25% for this measure in this year. Excluding qualifications studied by distance learning methods, retention rates have been well above average at all three levels for each of the years 2002 and 2003.

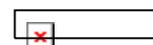
11. The college does a significant amount of adult work by distance learning. Pass rates for this work are low. In 2002, for example, only 31% of the 8,659 enrolments taught by this mode resulted in the achievement of target qualifications. In 2003, only 23% of the 4,598 enrolments were similarly successful. The college has looked at the reasons for the low pass rates and has revised the course content to better suit the many students who obtain only partial achievements.

12. Pass rates at levels 1 and 3 have been consistently well above average in the three years to 2003. At level 2, the influence of qualifications studied by distance learning depresses the pass rate significantly to a position in the bottom 10% of similar colleges. When the distance learning enrolments are extracted, pass rates at level 2 are close to the average in 2003 and well above average in 2002 and 2001.

13. Success rates are high. For level 3 courses, they have placed the college in the top 10% of colleges in each of the three years to 2003. At level 1, success rates have improved from well below average in 2001 to be well above average in 2003; also positioning the college in the top 10%. At level 2, with distance courses removed, the success rate has been well above average in both 2002 and 2003.

14. Retention rates on short courses are satisfactory. They have been close to the national average in each of the three years to 2003. Pass rates on these courses fluctuate; well above national averages in 2001 and 2003 and close to the average in 2002.

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



15. Teaching and students' learning are good. They were graded by inspectors in 242 lessons. Teaching is good or better in 76% of lessons, satisfactory in 22% and less than satisfactory in only

2002/03, when 62% of lessons were good or better, and 7% were less than satisfactory. The proportion of very good or outstanding lessons is also larger, 34% compared with 25% nationally. The grade profile for learning in the college is similar to that for teaching and also considerably better than the national profile.

16. Teaching and learning are significantly better than the national picture in almost all the curriculum areas inspected. In six areas, the proportion of good teaching is over 10% better than the relevant national average. In only one curriculum area, this proportion is smaller than the national picture. In seven curriculum areas, no teaching is less than satisfactory. In no curriculum area is the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching higher than the national average. The quality of teaching and learning is good in theory lessons, in practical work and where a mix of these is used. Teaching is better than the national average at all levels. It is especially good at levels 1 and 2 and at entry levels.

17. The college does well, when compared to similar colleges, in its teaching of theory. Theory lessons are well planned, teachers make good use of an appropriate variety of activity, check carefully on students' understanding and provide appropriate individual support to ensure students, whatever their levels of attainment, are learning. In a level 2 science lesson on the structure of the eye, high-quality booklets and an appropriate range of teaching strategies, including questioning, encouragement and demonstration, succeeded in engaging the students' interest and produced effective learning.

18. Practical work is also well planned, and of high quality. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety. A lesson on the setting of hair was well organised. An introductory period made good use of questioning and appropriate reference to health and safety. Frequent reference was made to professional practice. The students participated well in the questioning, worked diligently and produced work of a high standard. Good use is made of practical work set in vocational contexts. For example, in horticulture and catering, to enable students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to learn new skills and develop confidence as well as improve their life skills.

19. Close attention is paid to the learning needs of each student. In construction, for example, learning materials are designed to help students of differing levels of attainment. In business, extension exercises are provided for the more able. In information and communications technology (ICT), the diverse needs of adult students are given special attention, for example, by teaching Internet shopping to a student who is largely house-bound. In most lessons, teachers make good use of questioning to ascertain that all students understand. In business, a special feature is the effective use of praise to encourage students. In lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teaching is carefully planned to match the individual needs of each student. In a few lessons, teaching does not reflect adequately the needs of all the students. The language used, for example, is not always pitched at the right level for students with weak language skills.

20. The use of ILT is variable. In hair and beauty therapy, good use is made of a computerized reception facility which is linked to the salons, and interactive whiteboards are used effectively in teaching. In business, good use is made of a commercial website to gather information. In some other areas, for example, science, the use of the college intranet is in the early stages of development. In construction, there is only limited use of learning technologies in lessons. In some business lessons, the absence of a data projector linked to the computer limits the teaching of database skills.

21. Following an audit of provision undertaken in 2001, which revealed weaknesses in key skills provision, the management and delivery of key skills were improved during 2002/03. Responsibility is devolved to each academic school and is overseen by strong cross-college leadership, co-ordination, support and quality control. During 2003, teams of key skills specialists were established in each school and provided with appropriate staff development. Key skills workshops have been established and procedures documented thoroughly. The degree to which key skills is integrated with the vocational curriculum differs between schools, reflecting the nature of the curriculum and its delivery. In the sixth form college, for example, key skills provision is separated from subject teaching. In art and design, the provision is integrated with the vocational curriculum.

22. The quality of the teaching of key skills is similar to that for the teaching of vocational and academic work. Much of the teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory. Students work diligently, at appropriate levels of attainment, and demonstrate good levels of understanding. Teachers provide good support and regularly check students' understanding. In most curriculum areas, attendance is similar to that for other lessons. In two areas, attendance is low; below 35%. Qualification aim success rates have improved markedly, from 13% in 2002 to 40% in 2003, well above the average for similar colleges. A demanding target of 64% has been set for 2004. External moderator reports on students' portfolios have been increasingly positive.

23. The college provides a high standard of accommodation at its four main sites. In most of the 50 learning centres within the community, resources are good and in some, for example, in Newcastle United Football Club, they are outstanding. Accommodation is clean and well maintained. Most of the accommodation is accessible to students with restricted mobility. The college has conducted an audit of the accessibility of its premises and has recently gained approval to invest some £1 million on improving access. There are well-designed modern catering outlets, many refurbished to a high standard.

24. Estates planning and management are outstanding. The college is in the second year of an ambitious accommodation strategy which includes the development of a high quality performing arts academy. Specialist facilities are excellent. They include an airport academy, computer networking workshop, facilities for speakers of other languages which include a digital language laboratory, and specialist hair and beauty therapy facilities. The CoVE in culinary skills includes a new purpose-built kitchen and restaurant facilities.

25. The college's ILT strategy is comprehensive and includes plans to develop the use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning. The ICT infrastructure is resilient. Network and equipment problems are rare and quickly remedied. Industry-standard software is used throughout the college. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students has been improved since the last inspection from 1:8 to 1:4. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent staff is also good, at 1:1. Other teaching aids such as digital projectors, interactive whiteboards, DVD and video players are readily available.

26. College libraries and learning resource bases are well managed and generously resourced. They provide a comfortable and welcoming environment. At peak times, libraries are heavily used, and students sometimes find it difficult to gain easy access to a computer.

27. The resources used to support the college's extensive distance learning provision are excellent. The college uses its Cramlington site to support both distance learning students and students who study on a flexible basis. There are nine full-time support workers who communicate with students by telephone or e-mail and over 200 part-time assessors. The MIS holds accurate data on student support, retention rates, progression, and pass rates.

28. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Some 83% of the full-time teachers and 62% of the part-time teachers hold teaching qualifications; most of the rest are working towards appropriate qualifications. Some 239 learning support staff directly support learning. Arrangements for industrial updating are well managed, 87% of teachers have undertaken such activities in the last two years. Opportunities for professional development are extensive and linked appropriately to the school planning processes.

29. Full-time students, part-time students who study for a substantial number of hours, and work-based learners receive thorough initial assessment which includes diagnostic tests and assessment of the work they produce during induction. Students also complete a learning styles questionnaire which is used to identify their preferred learning style. Students studying GCE A-level and AS-level subjects are given minimum target grades to aim for which are based on their attainment at entry. Teachers use these systematically and effectively to review each student's progress and to devise appropriate action plans to help improve performance. The use of individual learning plans and individual target setting is excellent in some vocational areas, for example, the school of art and design. It is underdeveloped in others. The college has recognized this and, following staff development, each area is now piloting new approaches appropriate to their students' needs.

30. Assessment procedures and practices are rigorous and thorough. Assignments are generally well designed and include clear instructions on what to do. Assignments are marked and returned within strict time limits. Marking of the majority of assessed work is thorough. It includes constructive feedback and points for improvement. In a small minority of cases, spelling, grammar and punctuation errors are not corrected. Moderators' reports confirm the accuracy of the marking and grading of coursework. In most curriculum areas, internal verification and moderation are well managed and usually meets the requirements of awarding bodies. In construction, internal verification is unsatisfactory. The staff in this curriculum area are currently engaged in work to rectify this situation.

31. The monitoring of students' academic progress is thorough and effective. Teachers have detailed knowledge of individual students and use this to good effect. Parents and employers receive regular, detailed and informative reports on students' progress. There are particularly effective systems in place to monitor and track the progress of distance learning students.

32. The college provides a very broad range of programmes from pre-entry level to level 4 and higher. Students may choose from a wide range of modes of attendance, study methods and places at which to study. They are able to access courses and learning which enable them to build effectively on what they have already achieved. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of a high quality. Opportunities for students to progress to higher levels of study and to employment are excellent. There are good enrichment opportunities to stimulate and enhance learning. Curriculum planning is effective, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of students. It is well informed by creative and innovative market research.

33. The sixth form college makes good provision for students who wish to follow an AS-level and GCE A-level programme and offers a wide range of subjects. This centre also offers a wide range of adult access to higher education (HE) provision. The schools of vocational learning effectively meet the learning needs of students aged 14 and over, from entry to level 3, including modern apprenticeships and also provide a wide range of HE. The colleges' culinary academy is a CoVE. It works with internationally famous chefs, local restaurants and employers.

34. Provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 is good. Partnership arrangements with the participating high schools are excellent. Teachers work collaboratively on course materials and content. Teachers use a variety of methods to engage and maintain students' interest. The high quality learning support makes a significant contribution to the development of the pupils' learning and social skills. Their enhanced motivation leads to improved performance and attendance.

35. The school of flexible and distance learning offers a small range of courses which has proved very popular. There are around 15,000 enrolments on electronic or other distance learning programmes. These students are provided with good telephone and online support. Courses are provided, for example, in performance coaching and a 'fit to run' course which is linked to the Great North Run. Community provision is good. Success rates are consistently high. There are currently around 8,000 enrolments on short courses in 57 locations across the region. Partnership arrangements with the community are strong and productive. Provision delivered through the Trade Union education centre is of high quality and has more than 2,000 enrolments. Learndirect activity is responsive and linked to the Trade Union sector hub and has around 3,500 enrolments annually. The college is succeeding in widening the participation of adults to FE. Provision for those returning to study or who have basic skills or language needs is good.

36. Provision in many curriculum areas is significantly enhanced by partnership and collaborative arrangements with public and private sector external agencies, business and industry. Collaborative arrangements in the care sector are outstanding and significantly impact on student success rates. Work experience in many areas is of a high quality and enables students to relate theory to workplace practices. The aviation academy at Newcastle airport is a highly effective partnership between the college, Bristol College and Kingston University and offers provision from level 2 to HE in a range of aviation associated occupations. Partners speak highly of the college provision, its responsiveness and the willingness of the college to work in partnership with others.

37. The strategy for student support and guidance is well conceived and the services are effectively

and efficiently managed. They provide a comprehensive advice and guidance service. A team of student advisers offers high-quality impartial advice and guidance which is effective in directing students on to appropriate courses. All students are interviewed by trained staff. Materials to support guidance activities are of high quality. The college holds regular monthly advice and guidance events and summer enrolment activities. A good range of liaison activities is undertaken with local schools. These include visits to school events, college summer schools, demonstrations and vocational taster activities. The partnership with the Connexions service is strong. Connexions staff attend the college four mornings a week to provide advice and guidance. Careers advice is also provided through the tutorial curriculum and is of high quality. Students' views on the quality of services are vigorously sought, carefully analysed and acted upon. A day nursery provides for some 25 children. Alternative arrangements exist if demand exceeds this number.

38. Student induction is effectively planned and provides a good introduction to the college and to course requirements. It includes an appropriate range of activities including analysis of students' learning styles, portfolio building, introductory assignments and visits. The college has an intranet-based induction for students who enrol after the main induction period. The student handbook and a welcome letter outlining the purpose of language assessment are available in 13 languages.

39. Support for students' individual needs is excellent. The college provides a highly effective mix of school-based and central support for students. Literacy and numeracy support is effectively integrated within the operation of each vocational school. Centrally, the college provides highly effective support for dyslexia, emotional and behavioural difficulties, physical difficulties, sensory impairment and mental health. A wide range of equipment to support students is provided, including equipment to help students with dyslexia. Students who receive help have high retention and pass rates. In 2002/03, 1,400 students received support of at least five hours duration, 94% were retained and 92% achieved their target qualification. A retention, achievement and progression team provides mentoring and study skills support to students who are deemed at risk of not completing their studies. Support systems for distance learning students are highly effective. Good individual support is given to pupils aged 14 to 16, in lessons, by a team of 20 specialist support staff. Work-based students are well supported. In the sixth form centre, some 17 students have been trained to mentor other students.

40. Monitoring of students' attendance is rigorous and benefits from clear and effective procedures. The college has a minimum attendance target of 80%. Tutors have ready access to attendance records and staff meetings feature student attendance as a standing item. Absent students receive swift communication by telephone and by postcard automatically produced by the MIS. The analysis of the impact of attendance monitoring is detailed. In 2002/03, of 123 students identified as being 'at risk' of not completing their studies and supported by the retention, achievement and progression team, 94 successfully achieved their qualifications.

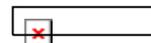
41. The college provides good training for staff. For example, the 40 school-based additional learning support and key skills staff are being trained to Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) level 4 standards and ESOL staff are qualified to at least level 4. Cross-college development days contain a wide range of issues linked to support, including strategies for supporting students with autism and the promotion of dyslexia and mental health awareness.

42. The college is meeting its responsibilities with regards to child protection. A policy and clear reporting procedure have been developed and implemented in consultation with the LEA and social services. A nominated member of staff holds overall responsibility for child protection issues. There is also a nominated staff member in each school. An LEA welfare officer assisted in developing the staff development programme.

43. Tutorial arrangements are highly effective. Individual tutorials occur with appropriate frequency and are used effectively to monitor students' progress. The group tutorial curriculum includes an appropriate core of activities which includes study skills and careers and HE progression. In addition to delivering this core of activity, schools develop and deliver a tutorial programme which is appropriate to meet their students' needs. In some areas, tutorial activities are fully integrated into the vocational curriculum. In others, separate group tutorials are timetabled. A tutor handbook and a pack of learning materials for study skills development support tutorial activities. Teachers provide

extensive additional academic and pastoral support outside lessons. Activities include support for gifted and talented students in preparing for HE entrance, and visits to the University of Northumbria for interview practice.

## Leadership and management



44. Leadership and management are outstanding. The strong and energetic leadership provided by the principal, senior managers and corporation has helped to transform the college from an institution characterised by satisfactory provision into a college where much of the curriculum provision is outstanding. All of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed and many former weaknesses, for example, the effectiveness of quality assurance, the reliability of management information and the governors' oversight of college business, have become significant strengths. Challenging targets for improvement are set and generally met. The quality of teaching and learning, students' success rates and financial management have all improved. The college's financial management is excellent and its financial position secure. Curriculum management is very good.

45. Governors, the principal and senior managers provide a clear strategic direction for the college which reflects its mission. Planning procedures are extremely thorough. There are strong links between strategic planning, financial control and performance monitoring. Monitoring of performance against agreed targets and objectives contained in business plans is rigorous and has underpinned improvements in teaching and learning, students' achievements and the extent to which the needs of different groups of students are met.

46. The college has a well-established management structure and clear lines of accountability. Management is very good at all levels within the institution and contributes significantly to the continuing improvements in the quality of the students' experience at the college. Communication is good. Effective quality assurance has helped the college to secure improvements in students' retention and pass rates, and in the overall quality of teaching and learning. Current procedures are described fully in the college's quality reference manual and are well understood by staff. The appointment of a quality manager in each school and regular quality review meetings help to ensure that quality assurance procedures are applied consistently. All staff are involved in self-assessment and the process is rigorous. Self-assessment grades for the curriculum are broadly consistent with those reported by inspectors. Self-assessment reports and associated development plans place a strong focus on teaching and learning. The college conducts large numbers of lesson observations and provides appropriately detailed feedback to teachers. The college's overall lesson grade profile is similar to that obtained through this inspection.

47. The college's MIS provides accurate information. Managers have access to all of the information they need, online, to inform their decisions and help them to set targets. Careful analysis of performance data is a key aspect of the college's comprehensive performance reviews. Staff are well aware of the importance the principal and senior managers attach to improving standards and are highly motivated to achieving them. Interventions by senior managers, when standards are not improving, are swift and effective. The principal is personally involved in identifying and providing support for courses which are underperforming. In most cases, this intervention has been successful. However, the college acknowledges that its initiatives to improve the performance of students in AS-level and GCE A-level subjects to above the national average have not yet had sufficient impact.

48. Staff development and appraisal are very good. New staff benefit from a comprehensive induction that provides an effective introduction to the college, its mission and procedures. Appraisal for teachers uses the outcomes of lesson observations to help assess their performance against individual targets and to identify areas where further training is needed. As a result, managers are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. Staff development is clearly linked

to the outcomes of appraisal and has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching in the college.

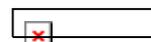
49. The college has excellent procedures for ensuring that students are treated equally. Policies covering race equality, valuing diversity, dignity, respect, and combating harassment and bullying are comprehensive and are monitored carefully by governors and senior managers. Each school produces an annual equal opportunities action plan which provides details on how it will amend its provision to take into account cultural diversity. Appropriately detailed reports on the enrolment and academic performance of different groups of students are produced. The proportion of students at the college from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than that in the local population. Analysis shows that students from minority ethnic groups achieve at least as well as other students. In surveys of their views, students report high levels of satisfaction with the way they are treated. Cultural diversity is celebrated through college-wide presentations and competitions and through the range of texts and learning materials used to support learning. Many college documents have been translated into 13 minority languages. Students of all backgrounds appreciate the safe and stimulating environment which the college provides for them. The college's procedures for dealing with complaints are clear and accessible. Details of the procedures are contained in the student handbook. The college responds promptly to the complaints it receives and produces a detailed analysis each year which is widely circulated within the college.

50. The college has been particularly active in developing partnerships to address the need for economic regeneration in Newcastle, to widen participation and to meet community needs. Despite local competition for students aged 16 to 18, the college is working successfully with some 19 local schools to improve provision for students aged 14 to 16. The college works in collaboration with two other FE providers to deliver workforce development programmes for employees of small and medium enterprises. Through an extensive range of projects with local public and voluntary sector agencies, the college has doubled the number of students following basic skills programmes within the last two years.

51. Governance is very good. Members of the corporation operate within a secure framework for governance. Monthly meetings of the full board, supported by detailed and accurate reports, enable governors to rigorously monitor the progress which the college is making towards achieving its strategic objectives. Governors are drawn from a variety of backgrounds, appropriately reflecting the diverse community which the college serves. They work well with senior managers, providing them with support where needed and when necessary challenge them to justify their recommendations. Induction for new members of the corporation is effective and highly valued by them. Governors' attendance at corporation meetings, averaging nearly 90%, is high.

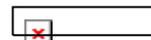
52. Financial management is excellent. The college has invested heavily in improvements to its buildings and resources yet still enjoys a secure financial position. The LSC judges that the college is in a strong financial position; category A for financial health. Financial control procedures are comprehensive and robust. Applications for capital expenditure are considered carefully and detailed post-investment reviews ensure that spending has been effective and has resulted in measurable benefits for students. The improving achievements of students, effective budgeting and the thorough evaluation of the impact of capital expenditure ensure that the college provides excellent value for money.

## **Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas**



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### **Science and mathematics**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on science courses
  
- well-planned and effective teaching
  
- good accommodation and teaching resources
  
- wide range of courses providing good progression routes
  
- effective monitoring of students' progress.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low student retention rates on some courses
  
- low pass rates on mathematics courses.

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

53. GCE A-level and AS-level subjects are offered in biology, chemistry, environmental science, mathematics and physics. There are GCSE programmes in mathematics and in human physiology and health. Many students following access courses undertake science and mathematics options. Level 2 and level 3 vocational programmes are available in science and in dental technology. Some 580 students are enrolled on science and mathematics courses. Two thirds study full time and 60% are aged 16 to 18.

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

54. The average attendance in all lessons observed was 78% which is close to the national average in this curriculum area. Retention rates on the access courses and on most of the vocational courses have improved and are now satisfactory. Retention rates on the GCE A-level courses in biology and mathematics have been below the national average for the last three years. For example, the retention rate in biology was 80% in 2003 compared to a national average of 93%. The retention rates for the GCSE courses in human physiology and health, and in science were well below the national average in 2003.

55. Pass rates on the AS-level and GCE A-level science courses have improved over the last three years and all are above the national average. For example, in 2003, the pass rates in GCE A-level biology and chemistry were, respectively, 96% and 94% and in AS-level physics was 100%. Pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics were below the national average in 2003. The proportion of AS-level and GCE A-level students achieving A to B grades is low. In 2003, only AS-level and GCE A-level physics and chemistry students achieved a higher proportion of higher grades than the national average. Students achieve the advanced level grades predicted by their GCSE attainment in science subjects, but not in mathematics.

56. Pass rates on the vocational courses are good. For example, there was a 100% pass rate on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate science course and on the national certificate courses in science and in dental technology in 2003. Pass rates on the access courses science and mathematics options are at the national average. The higher grade (A\* to C) pass rate in GCSE mathematics has been below the national average in the last three years.

57. Students are well motivated, work productively and make effective contributions in lessons. The quality of students' work is good and students demonstrate good academic knowledge and understanding. Students develop a wide range of skills in their practical assignments through critical thinking and sound evaluation. Students' attainment is good. For example, access students in mathematical studies, who started the year undertaking simple algebra tasks, were, at the time of the inspection, attaining levels appropriate for entry to a university mathematics degree course and solving complex trigonometric equations.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics A*-C	2	No. of starts	198	149	207
		% retention	66	74	71
		% pass rate	34	35	36
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	56	53	30
		% retention	55*	87	80
		% pass rate	65	87	96
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	59	34	42
		% retention	27*	88	86
		% pass rate	94	53	61
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	51	45	47
		% retention	75	78	79
		% pass rate	61	66	78
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	86	69	86
		% retention	54	83	84
		% pass rate	54	54	43
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	30	35	28
		% retention	73	86	96
		% pass rate	73	87	100
National certificate in dental science	3	No. of starts	32	20	24
		% retention	34	75	83
		% pass rate	100	93	100

Access to HE quantitative methods**	3	No. of starts	118	202	247
		% retention	81	83	86
		% pass rate	85	83	68

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* retention rates over two year

\*\* college data

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

58. The majority of the teaching observed is good or better and none is unsatisfactory. Lessons are well structured and have clear learning objectives. Course content is covered at an appropriate pace. Consolidation and reflection are strong features of lessons. Effective use is made of high-quality, purposely-designed learning materials, some of which are produced as booklets. Teachers make good use of questioning to check students' understanding and to encourage them to apply their learning.

59. In mathematics, the teaching is generally good, but often the methods employed by teachers are limited to lecturing, writing on the whiteboard and setting exercises from a book or worksheet. The best lessons encourage students' interest, participation and learning. Additional mathematics tuition is available for students who require this support.

60. Science students pursue practical experiments with care and enthusiasm. Proper emphasis is given to safe working. Effective use is made of experimental work to reinforce theory. For example, in a first diploma science lesson, the teacher demonstrated effectively the tri-chromatic theory of colour. The students stared at a bright red triangle for two minutes and, on its removal, they saw a green triangle for some time, illustrating that when the red colour codes in the eye are 'overworked', the green ones will seek to compensate.

61. Teachers are making increasing use of ILT to enliven teaching. For example, in one GCSE mathematics lesson on the properties of circles, the teacher was able to adjust electronically the size of the angles and chords within a circle. The students saw that in all cases, the angle subtended by an arc at the centre of the circle is twice the angle subtended at any point on the circumference, and that for a semi-circle this angle is always a right angle. Most teachers made effective use of data projectors to include computer-based presentations with their lessons. Science learning materials on the college's intranet are still in the early stages of development.

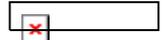
62. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach and technician support is good. The accommodation is of high quality and provides a stimulating learning environment. The laboratories have been refurbished since the last inspection and are well equipped with good levels of scientific equipment and modern laboratory furniture. Mathematics teaching takes place in high-quality classrooms. Good use is made of a workshop equipped with modern networked computers. All the teaching rooms contain posters or wall charts. The library is stocked with a good range of books. A few are outdated.

63. Students' work is usually marked rigorously and teachers provide constructive comments where appropriate. Teachers are approachable, friendly and supportive. Students value the system of weekly tutorials. Students' progress is effectively monitored. Predicted outcomes are determined either from their GCSE grades on entry or by negotiation with the student. Study clinics provide further support for weaker students. Teachers respond appropriately to the learning needs of individual students. For example, in one lesson, the teacher took into account the learning difficulties of students suffering from Asperger's Syndrome and dyslexia.

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

64. Leadership and management are good. Day-to-day management is delegated to section leaders for science and mathematics. Both the director of school and the head of mathematics are new in post. Communications between managers and teachers are good. Courses are reviewed annually and teachers appreciate the importance of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Action plans arising from a well-developed, self-assessment process are monitored regularly. Inspectors agreed with the main judgements made in the self-assessment report. Appropriate management action is taken to address weaknesses.

### **Construction**



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on some courses
  
- high-quality teaching
  
- good specialist resources
  
- effective on-site assessment and review
  
- good range of provision.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
  
- unsatisfactory internal verification.

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

65. The college offers construction craft courses at entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These include NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in trowel trades, wood trades, decorative occupations, plumbing and electrical installation. Specialist provision is provided in roof slating and tiling. Technician and professional courses are also offered and include national certificates and diplomas, higher national certificates (HNC) and courses in computer-aided design (CAD). At the time of inspection, 122 students aged 16 to 18 and 118 adults were studying on full-time courses, and 113 students aged 16 to 18 and 562 adults were enrolled on part-time courses. Foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships are followed by 100 students. Approximately 140 pupils aged 14 to 16 from 14 local schools attend the college for between 3 and 6 hours a week, undertaking modules of the foundation construction award.

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

66. Retention rates on many courses have steadily improved over the last three years. However, they remain below the national averages for the City and Guilds electrical installation and NVQ level 2 plumbing courses. Retention rate data for 2003/04 show that, for most courses, retention rates have improved. Students' success in achieving targets is generally good. Pass rates on some courses are high. For example, the pass rates in 2002/03 on the City and Guilds electrical installation part 1 course and the NVQ level 2 in painting and decorating course were considerably higher than the national averages.

67. The pass rates for the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks are low. Of the 43 foundation modern apprentices who started in 2001/02, only 5 completed the framework and 10 gained NVQs. Similarly, of the 19 advanced modern apprentices who started in 2000/01, 3 completed the framework and 7 gained NVQs. Whilst not achieving the full framework, apprentices are developing good vocational skills. The achievement of key skills qualifications has significantly improved. In 2001/02, the 4% pass rate for level 1 in communication and application of number increased to 59% in each of these key skills in 2003.

68. Students work well in theory and practical lessons. In workshops, they develop a good range of hand skills. For example, in one practical lesson, students on the intermediate construction award in bricklaying, constructed detached piers in stretcher bond, cavity walls and chimney breasts. The quality of the construction work was good and in most cases met the specified industry standards. Students' written assignment work is of a satisfactory standard. Most assignments on the technician courses are word-processed. Students' portfolios of evidence are generally satisfactory. The better-quality portfolios contain well-written assignments, cross-referencing evidence against performance objectives, assessment plans and photographic evidence of the projects.

69. Students' progress to relevant FE or HE, training or employment is satisfactory. For example, in 2002/03, 24 of the 40 completers on the national certificate courses progressed to higher national courses and 29% of level 2 construction craft students progressed to level 3.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
City and Guilds 2360-06 electrical installation part 1	1	No. of starts	50	29	22
		% retention	48	41	68
		% pass rate	96	83	87
City and Guilds 2360-08 electrical installation part 2	2	No. of starts	22	28	21
		% retention	82	64	90
		% pass rate	17	28	58
NVQ plumbing	2	No. of starts	25	78	65
		% retention	12	36	42

		% pass rate	67	79	70
NVQ painting and decorating	2	No. of starts	35	18	46
		% retention	71	72	91
		% pass rate	80	77	95
National certificate in civil engineering	3	No. of starts	23	26	30
		% retention	70	85	87
		% pass rate	100	91	81
NVQ wood occupations	3	No. of starts	21	16	33
		% retention	95	94	91
		% pass rate	95	93	83

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

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

70. Teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons. Lessons are well planned. Learning outcomes are clearly specified and shared with students. An appropriate variety of teaching methods is used that includes case studies, demonstration of scaled models of structures such as roof trusses, and simple experiments to reinforce learning. In one theory lesson, civil engineering national certificate students carried out an experiment to demonstrate the triangle of forces and Bow's notation. They set up 'force boards', accurately transferred information from the force boards to paper in order to form vector diagrams, and determined the unknown forces. The experiment helped them to understand struts and ties. Theory and practice are well integrated in many lessons. Teachers make appropriate references to the current building legislation and codes of practice. They regularly check students' progress and understanding by making effective use of questioning. Good use is made of differentiated learning materials to help students of differing levels of attainment. Workshop activities relate closely to situations found in the workplace. Teachers make insufficient use of specialist computer software to illuminate theory teaching and workshop activity. Key skills are developed effectively within the vocational teaching.

71. Human and physical resources are good. Teachers are well qualified. The construction area has a good range of workshops. Workbooks, handouts and other learning materials for practical activities are of high quality. Computer-aided design equipment is of industry standard. Classrooms are well furnished. Some are equipped with data projectors for computer-based presentations. The display of relevant technical information, charts, posters and students' work on the walls of the classrooms contributes to a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. The construction resource and study area is staffed by key skills staff and other learning specialists and is well equipped.

72. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Students have good workbooks in which practical assignments and industry standards are appropriately specified. The quality of assessors' written feedback is inconsistent. In some cases, it is detailed and helps students to improve their work. In other cases, it is less helpful and too brief. Progress charts displayed in the workshops and teacher feedback, particularly in practical sessions, are effective in enabling students to know the progress they are making. Assessment on technician courses is well planned and follows the awarding bodies' requirements. On these courses, students' work is thoroughly commented upon and the feedback provided by the teachers is constructive and helpful. On-site assessments and reviews are good. Targets are clearly specified and helpful milestones are set for apprentices during the review process. Internal verification is unsatisfactory. On the technician courses, internal verification of assignment briefs and assessment decisions is confined to the ticking of boxes. The process of internal verification is insufficiently well prescribed; internal verifiers, for example, do not provide assessors with formal feedback. On two craft courses, as a result of inadequate internal verification, an awarding body has recently imposed sanctions, delaying the certification of some students' qualifications.

73. Links with industry are productive. To address local skill shortages, and in partnership with the Association of Building Engineers, the college introduced modern apprenticeships in technical design, technical site support, construction contracting and surveying support. The association delivers the NVQ element and the college delivers the technical certificates and key skills. 'Fast-track' on-site assessment and training at NVQ level 2, supporting local companies' training plans, is currently provided to 290 experienced workers.

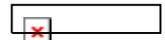
74. Support for students is good. Full-time and part-time students undertake early diagnostic assessment in communication and application of number. Induction programmes are effectively planned and incorporate health and safety issues. Construction craft students have regular individual tutorials during which progress is discussed and targets for improvement are set and monitored. Work-based students are well supported by their employers. When required, students are moved between jobs to ensure they have the opportunity to develop the range of competences required.

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

75. Curriculum management is effective. The management of the school and the construction division were restructured in December 2003 when a new head of school was appointed. The roles and responsibility of section leaders have been expanded to include team building and to improve lines of communication. Curriculum review processes are now more thorough. Performance against targets, including targets for retention and pass rates, is closely monitored. Course teams are set action plans for improvement, and their implementation is carefully monitored. The quality of the provision and the resources are steadily improving. Students have, for example, noticed improvements in the quality of assignments and assessment. Key skills provision has improved as a result of strong management.

76. Course team meetings are held regularly. Termly course monitoring reports include much valuable information, but do not evaluate sufficiently data on retention and pass rates. Course files are comprehensive and well organised. The self-assessment report is accurate in its identification of strengths and weaknesses. Strategies to address the weaknesses in internal verification are in place. The management arrangements for work-based learning have improved significantly. Procedures, and communication between the curriculum area and the school of workforce development, are now good. On-site reviews are completed on time. It is too early to judge the impact on the modern apprenticeship completion rate.

## **Business**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on most courses
  
- much good teaching and learning
  
- thorough assessment and feedback to students

- outstanding trade union provision
  
- well-managed and responsive distance learning provision
  
- high-quality learning support
  
- effective strategies to continually improve business provision.

### ***Weaknesses***

- underdeveloped use of ILT in some lessons.

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

77. The college offers courses in business from foundation level to HE. Vocational provision is provided by the school of business, management and computing, AS-level and GCE A-level courses in business and accounting by the sixth form college, distance learning and trade union courses by the school of flexible learning. Vocational provision includes NVQs in administration, accounting and call handling, GNVQ intermediate in business and level 3 national courses in business. Single-subject courses include word and text processing, and professional courses in management, marketing, personnel and legal studies. Courses studied by distance learning include two courses designed and written by the college in life coaching and performance coaching. These enrol large numbers of students. In the three years to 2003, enrolments for performance coaching exceeded 19,000. Trade union courses include union learning representative courses and occupational health and safety. The college is the national provider for courses in running trade union learning centres, and has been appointed as the national trade union organising academy. There are 350 full-time and 1,300 part-time students. The full-time students are predominantly aged 16 to 18, and part-time students are mostly aged 19 and over. There are over 10,000 distance learning students. A small number of learners are taking modern apprenticeships. Ten were enrolled in 2002/03.

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

78. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. On the single subject word and text processing courses at levels 1 to 3 they are consistently above the national average. NVQ administration courses at levels 1 to 3, have had pass rates at least 20% above national averages in the three years to 2003. The retention rate on the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) level 3 course was 94% in 2003, against a national average of 82%. Retention and pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level subjects are generally at or above national averages, although the AS-level business pass rate declined significantly in 2003. Pass and retention rates on trade union courses are very high. Retention rates on the distance learning courses are high. The rate of achievement of full qualifications is low.

79. The standard of students' work is high. Students at all levels are confident in the use of business terminology and understand business concepts well. In a national certificate business lesson on human resources, students were able to apply human relations concepts and legislation to a topical

case study on a professional football club. In a well attended key skills lesson, students confidently answered questions on the measurement of shapes and they all correctly completed the class exercises. Part-time adult students make very good use of their employment experience. They share it readily and thereby extend the group's knowledge and understanding. In a management lesson, for example, students compared recruitment and selection models from their organisations.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Word processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	29	21	44
		% retention	69	100	93
		% pass rate	100	86	98
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	20	28	30
		% retention	65	75	93
		% pass rate	46	76	79
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	42	21	22
		% retention	83	86	91
		% pass rate	94	89	90
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	72	68	103
		% retention	61	82	84
		% pass rate	91	80	49
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	18	42	43
		% retention	94	86	88
		% pass rate	100	92	97
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	81**	28	23
		% retention	51**	86	91
		% pass rate	88**	100	90
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	*	49	48
		% retention	*	88	98
		% pass rate	*	63	72

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

\*\* two-year course

***Quality of education and training***

80. A very high proportion of the teaching and learning is good. In none of the lessons is learning unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and have clear aims and learning outcomes. Courses have detailed and thorough schemes of work. In the best lessons, teachers take full account of students with differing levels of attainment and provide good extension exercises for the more able. Teachers in the business unit have benefited from their involvement in a DfES standards unit project on improving differentiation in teaching of business. In a GCE A-level business lesson, for example, the exercises provided for the students were differentiated so that the students who were also studying AS-level or GCE A-level accounting were required to think more deeply about the topic. The use of

ILT is uneven. In one lesson, students made good use of a major supermarket website to gather information for a project. In another, on database queries, the teacher used an overhead projector to display the computer screen rather than a data projector.

81. Teachers promote a strong learning culture and students are actively engaged in their learning. In most lessons, teachers are skilful in using question and answer techniques to encourage learning and they consistently praise students for their contributions in class. In some accounting lessons with large groups of students, teachers are particularly skilled at eliciting responses from all students. In a key skills lesson on the application of number, the teacher skilfully included weaker students in class discussions. Most students are well motivated. They work well individually and in groups confidently participating in discussions and preparing feedback materials. The quality of teaching on trade union courses is high. In one outstanding lesson, for example, group activities and discussions were managed skilfully to ensure appropriate contributions from all the students. New students were swiftly involved, and all students drew productively on their own experiences to further the learning. In another introductory session for a new group of students, good use was made of 'ice-breakers' to introduce each student and to identify their learning objectives.

82. Teaching and learning resources are good. In particular, the distance learning and trade union education courses have high-quality accommodation and very good levels of staffing to support students. The call centre is well equipped and laid out to encourage group work.

83. Flexibly managed AAT programmes allow students to attend by different patterns and enable the most able students to complete the qualification more quickly. There are good links with a local building society where over 30 students are studying NVQs in call handling, administration and management. On some courses, for example, the intermediate GNVQ in business, there are insufficient links with business. The course does not include work experience and with the exception of visits to retail outlets, most of the work-related activities are not linked securely enough to other learning activity.

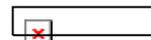
84. Students are set clear learning targets and their progress towards achieving these targets is closely monitored. Work is set and marked regularly and returned promptly. Marked work includes clear and constructive feedback. Teachers take care to correct grammatical and spelling errors. Internal moderation is well planned and accurate. Full-time students' progress is monitored very effectively.

85. The learning support provided for individual students is of high quality. For example, in one lesson, the teacher and the learning support tutor worked well as a team to manage a potentially disruptive student. The sensitive and skilful manner adopted improved the learning of all students in the group. Individual tutorial support is excellent and complements the learning support provision by following up and monitoring the learning support needs of students.

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

86. Leadership and management are effective. Communications flows are open and teachers and other staff are well informed. The head of school attends all section meetings and is readily accessible to staff. Strategies to improve business provision are appropriate and are implemented effectively. For example, the national certificate in business has been introduced to provide a more appropriate qualification for business students. Following substantial research into the reasons why many distance learning students achieved only part of the qualifications, the qualification structure has been redesigned to be more appropriate. The distance learning provision is very well managed. Students receive frequent and good telephone and e-mail advice, guidance and support from the distance learning team. A bespoke MIS enables thorough student tracking. Assessment and internal verification arrangements are effective. There are good arrangements to celebrate the achievement of students.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

### **Strengths**

- high adult retention rates at levels 1 and 2
  
- high pass rates on most level 2 courses
  
- good learning and attainment in lessons at levels 1 and 2
  
- very good teaching to adults
  
- courses which are very responsive to the needs of the community.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on several level 3 courses
  
- some level 3 lessons to students aged 16 to 18 lack sufficient challenge
  
- underdeveloped use of individual learning plans for part-time students.

### **Scope of provision**

87. Some 458 students are currently studying full time, a quarter of whom are aged 19 or over. A further 2,500 students study part time, over 90% of whom are aged 19 or over. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are provided by the sixth form college, and vocational courses by the school of business, management and computing and the school of flexible learning.

88. The range of provision is wide. Full-time and part-time courses are available from entry level to foundation degree. Full-time courses include AS level and GCE A level, access to HE, and vocational courses such as the GNVQ foundation in ICT, the first diploma and national certificates and diplomas. Part-time courses include computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), CLAIT plus, European computer driving licence (ECDL), ECDL advanced, inside your PC, Start IT, and Internet online. Courses are provided in many centres including 10 flexible workshops. A certificate for information technology (IT) users is provided for local employers by the school of

workforce development. There are a small number of New Deal clients and modern apprentices.

**Achievement and standards**

89. Retention rates on the GNVQ foundation in ICT improved markedly last year to 96%. Retention rates for adults at levels 1 and 2 are high; consistently above national averages in the three years to 2003. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on several level 3 courses including computing at AS level, the national diploma in computing and the discontinued advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in ICT. Pass rates are high on most level 2 courses. They have been well above the national average in each of the three years to 2003. For example, the pass rate on the first diploma for IT practitioners has steadily improved and was 100% in 2003.

90. Attendance rates and punctuality are satisfactory. Students achieve appropriate levels of practical IT skills. Most students achieve the learning objectives of their lessons and attain appropriate standard of work. Adult part-time students are particularly well motivated.

91. Students are encouraged to develop collaborative working skills on many courses. Most students enjoy and are challenged by the learning activities. For example, students on the GNVQ foundation course enjoyed inserting voiceovers into their own web pages and presentations. A role play exercise involving encrypting and decrypting messages enabled first diploma students to understand security issues and national certificate students were able to adapt visual basic code to navigate between images.

**A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2001 to 2003**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	828	363	167
		% retention	82	82	86
		% pass rate	80	76	65
GNVQ foundation ICT	1	No. of starts	17	36	28
		% retention	65	61	96
		% pass rate	55	77	59
Inside your PC (short)	1	No. of starts	165	145	209
		% retention	81	98	96
		% pass rate	90	90	95
ECDL (one year)	2	No. of starts	181	287	234
		% retention	79	85	88
		% pass rate	81	92	71
First diploma for IT practitioners	2	No. of starts	15	26	46
		% retention	87	62	89
		% pass rate	85	88	100
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	56	42	39
		% retention	71	71	72
		% pass rate	68	77	89
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	63	61	113
		% retention	70	64	81

		% pass rate	61	62	73
National diploma computing	3	No. of starts	*	74	99
		% retention	*	50	57
		% pass rate	*	76	96

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

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

92. Most of the teaching is good or better. Lessons for young people are well planned and frequently provide a variety of activities which succeed in holding the students' attention. Teachers begin lessons with a clear overview of the work to be covered and usually take time to review the previous lesson's work and place the new work in context.

93. Learning is particularly good in lessons at levels 1 and 2. Students are encouraged to relate the work to their own experiences. They are often keen to investigate further and experiment with software features to incorporate their ideas. This often results in good work. Some lessons at level 3 are uninspiring and the work set undemanding and lacking in intellectual challenge. These lessons fail to motivate students sufficiently. For example, advanced students spend too much time pasting information gained from the Internet into their assignments.

94. The teaching of adult students is often very good. At its best, it is closely related to students' individual needs. For example, stroke patients gain in confidence and communication skills. A largely housebound student learned how to shop using the Internet. Another student has gained the necessary skills and confidence to feel able to volunteer to run an IT help desk in a charity organisation. Good progress is being made by adult students who are, for example, building their own computers or using software for editing digital photographs.

95. Almost all resources are good. Accommodation at the main site is of appropriate size and well resourced. The use of data projectors to demonstrate skills is widespread. The intranet is used to distribute learning materials, but the use of its interactive facilities is not yet fully developed. Accommodation in some outreach centres is of outstanding quality. Teachers demonstrate expertise, subject knowledge and flexibility. Student-teacher ratios are satisfactory. In larger adult groups, teachers often teach in teams of two or three. Many workbooks are well designed. Some digital photography software is out of date.

96. Flexible learning programmes are very responsive to the needs of the community. There are productive links with local and national organisations such as Age Concern, trade unions and with Newcastle United Football Club. Students make good progress in these centres and, for some, learning has a significant impact on their lives. Attendance in some key skills lessons is low.

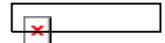
97. Work is appropriately marked and verified and students are provided with useful feedback. Individual tutorials are used well to monitor students' progress. There is appropriate discussion, for example, about attendance, performance, and working to deadlines and new targets for these agreed. Some of these targets are too vague, lacking, for example, timescales and measurable outcomes. The use of individual learning plans for adult students is underdeveloped. These plans have been introduced recently and often lack sufficient detail. They often record skills development, but not the specific learning needs of the student.

98. Students aged 16 to 18 receive appropriate initial guidance and helpful induction. The results of initial diagnostic assessment inform the provision of additional support for appropriate full-time students. The support provided for students is good. Computing students praise the extra study clinics provided by their teacher and appreciate the direct e-mail access provided. Relations between students and teachers are friendly and supportive.

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

99. Curriculum management is responsive and effective in all the schools involved in the provision of computing and IT courses. Monitoring systems to track students' performance have recently been introduced. Management across the curriculum area pays appropriate attention to teaching and learning and managers work closely with teachers to improve teaching. All staff contribute to the self-assessment report and to target setting processes. Staff share resources and expertise within their curriculum teams. The management of resources in the learning centres is very good. Centre managers pay close attention to recruitment and success rates and the quality of provision is closely monitored. There are very productive partnerships with a range of outside groups.

### **Hospitality, catering, leisure, travel and sport**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high retention rates at levels 1 and 2 in 2003
- high pass rates on level 2 sport, leisure and tourism courses
- very good and outstanding teaching in some travel and tourism lessons
- excellent specialist resources
- good support for students
- strong employer links which enhance students' learning.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on some courses
- some unchallenging teaching in sport and hospitality

- poor punctuality which disrupts learning.

### **Scope of provision**

100. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in hospitality and catering, sports, travel and tourism, and provides progression opportunities from entry to advanced and higher levels. Courses include Association of British Travel Agency (ABTA) courses (primary), AS-level physical education, patisserie, national certificate in airline and airport operations, and the national certificate in sport. Courses leading to NVQs are provided at levels 1 to 3. Foundation and intermediate level GNVQs, and national diploma courses in hospitality, sports, travel and tourism, which have replaced the previously provided AVCE courses, are also offered.

101. Some 1,350 students are enrolled, 60% study part time and 40% are students aged 16 to 18. Almost 80% of the 531 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Nearly 90% of the part-time students are adults. The full-time equivalent student total is 582. In addition, nearly 5,300 adult students are enrolled on distance learning courses equating to 60 full-time equivalent. There are 19 hospitality modern apprentices. In addition, a short 'fit to run' course, available through distance learning was offered for the first time in 2003. It has proved very popular; nearly 1,600 students were enrolled in that year.

### **Achievement and standards**

102. Retention rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 were high in 2003. On the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course, for example, the retention rate was 11% above the national average in this year and on the NVQ level 2 in food preparation and cooking course, it was 9% above. At level 3, retention rates have fluctuated. In 2003, they were in line with national averages on the national diploma in science and on the NVQ level 3 in food preparation and cooking, higher in 2002 and lower in 2001. On the AVCE courses in hospitality, leisure, recreation and tourism, retention rates were low in both 2002 and 2003. The college has, in 2003/04, replaced this AVCE provision with alternative courses.

103. Pass rates are variable. On some courses, for example, the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism, and the NVQ level 3 in food preparation and cooking, they have been high in each of the three years up to 2003. On others they are low. For example, on the NVQ level 2 in food preparation and cooking, they have been low in each of the three years up to 2003, and on the AVCE courses they were low in 2002 and 2003. No apprentice has achieved a full apprenticeship framework in the four years to 2003. Only 5% have achieved the NVQ qualification.

104. Attendance is similar to the national average of 78% for this area of learning. The punctuality of some students is poor. In many of the lessons observed, commencing at various times of the day, students arrived late, adversely affecting their own learning and that of others. Students' levels of attainment in lessons are satisfactory overall and high in travel and tourism. In these lessons students showed good levels of knowledge and understanding, for example, in their knowledge of travel destinations. Some hospitality and catering students demonstrate poor basic technical skills and inappropriate food preparation procedures, including the use of incorrect knives for cutting and chopping vegetables, and inappropriate use of some small cooking utensils.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, catering, leisure, travel and sport, 2001 to 2003**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	17	25	17

leisure and tourism		% retention	71	44	88
		% pass rate	92	82	73
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	57	55	44
		% retention	74	80	86
		% pass rate	90	84	84
City and Guilds 6951 progression award: sport and leisure	2	No. of starts	*	21	15
		% retention	*	76	80
		% pass rate	*	75	83
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	45	59	48
		% retention	7	78	85
		% pass rate	67	63	51
Basic food hygiene certificate (short course)	2	No. of starts	40	159	78
		% retention	98	100	100
		% pass rate	100	97	94
National diploma in science (sports studies)	3	No. of starts	50	38	49
		% retention	42	68	59
		% pass rate	90	77	90
NVQ food preparation and cooking	3	No. of starts	27	12	19
		% retention	30	100	47
		% pass rate	100	92	100
AVCE hospitality, leisure and recreation, travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	87**	113	98
		% retention	74	40	36
		% pass rate	83	53	74

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

\*\* national diploma

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

105. A slightly smaller proportion of lessons is good or better than is the case nationally. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons are appropriately planned. Practical demonstrations are well organised, clear and technically accurate. Some of the teaching in travel and tourism lessons is very good or outstanding. A wide range of teaching and learning strategies is employed to engage students and add variety. In one lesson, for example, students worked well in teams to investigate the features of Crete, producing high-quality annotated maps for presentation to the rest of the group. Students enjoy practical activities which allow them to develop and practise their skills. For example, in a lesson on resort representative responsibilities, they practised their selling techniques enthusiastically. In a lesson on cabin crew work, they made on-board audio announcements. Sports lessons are well planned, with teaching building on previous work and using well-prepared learning materials. In the better lessons, there is a wide variety of activity and students demonstrate a good understanding of the topic. For example, the students' comments on a video clip of a particular coaching style showed a good understanding of the relevant issues. In some lessons, some students offer only limited answers when questioned. In one lesson, some students were poorly

prepared for the planned activity, adversely affecting their learning.

106. Students generally enjoy their lessons and work diligently on their allotted tasks. A good feature of the teaching is the link between theory and modern commercial practice. In one lesson, the teacher provided a history of ethnic food and cooking styles, engaging the students' interest and reinforcing learning. Guest speakers, for example, in lessons on modern desserts and on cabin crew services, brought a wealth of current knowledge and experience to the teaching.

107. Some learning activities in level 3 lessons do not provide sufficient challenge or develop the higher level skills expected at this level. In some lessons, students provide only very limited answers to questions and in others teachers fail to ensure all students are contributing appropriately. In some, key learning points are not recorded in students' notes. When working in the college's catering restaurant, owing to insufficient customers, there is not enough work to keep all the students busy and inadequate opportunity to practise and reinforce skills. The use of pre-prepared and convenience food also limits the experience gained by students. In a few lessons, poor time-management results in rushed activities or failure to review the learning properly. Teachers miss opportunities to include evidence arising in the vocational work in students' key skills portfolios.

108. Staff are appropriately qualified and have relevant and recent industrial knowledge. Most hold teaching qualifications. They have strong links with employers. Learning resources are good. A new bespoke production kitchen and restaurant meet industry standards. The restaurant is modern and designed to reflect modern service trends. The production kitchen contains equipment that can be used to produce a range of international cuisine. Practical classrooms are adequate for use, but dated. Specialist resources for travel and tourism programmes are excellent. They include an on-site commercial travel agency and a 737 aircraft based at the aviation academy at Newcastle airport. Resources for sport are excellent. They include a large, well-stocked fitness room, a sports hall, fitness testing labs, and lecture theatres. Many classrooms contain ILT equipment. Many rooms display students' work, and provide good learning environments. The library is adequately stocked with textbooks and ILT facilities and there is a good range of journals.

109. Students receive good support. Support workers provide close support within lessons. There is a good rapport between staff and students. Tutorials are well planned and are effectively used to evaluate student performance and achievements. Some individual learning plans are incomplete. These do not provide time-frames for achievement, long-term planning or short-term learning targets. They are not used effectively to measure performance.

110. Employers are supportive of their modern apprentices and provide good training opportunities. Some apprentices are employed at establishments that do not allow them to carry out the full range of activities required to achieve the NVQ. Reviews of students' progress are ineffective. They do not help students progress quickly enough. New systems have been introduced recently which are designed to improve work-based assessment, review and target setting processes.

111. The teachers have strong links with employers. Travel teachers, for example, have strong links with an airline at Newcastle airport enabling cabin crew students to use the crew rooms and check-in desks. There are good opportunities for students to represent the college through the football, rugby union and basketball academy teams in local and regional fixtures. A number of students play sport at regional and national levels. The college is in its first year of full CoVE status for its centre for culinary excellence. The CoVE works with other colleges to disseminate good practice. It is developing new courses, for example, the chef's diploma course, to address skills shortages identified by the regional development agency.

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

112. Curriculum management is effective. Communication within the school is good. Course teams work well together. The performance of the school is closely monitored and quality assurance processes closely followed. Strategies are in place to address weaknesses in retention and pass rates and the low work-based learning achievements. Equal opportunities issues are given appropriate attention during student induction. Innovative teaching methods are employed to

address these issues, for example, through the creation of poems and songs. Travel and tourism students recently won a college competition for their work on equal opportunities. Managers work closely with industry to ensure that planned new facilities will meet local and regional economic needs.

## **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**



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

### ***Strengths***

- improved and now high retention rates
- high pass rates on hairdressing and some beauty courses
- students' good practical skills
- very good teaching which inspires students
- outstanding resources
- a wide range of programmes
- excellent support for students
- very good curriculum management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- declining and now low pass rates in NVQ level 3 beauty therapy.

### **Scope of provision**

113. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies. There are 245 full-time and 562 part-time students. Nearly 70% of the full-time students and 14% of the part-time students are aged 16 to 18. Some 6% of the students are male. Full-time courses are available from levels 1 to 3 and include NVQs, and a national diploma in applied science (beauty therapy). Part-time courses include a wide range of holistic therapies, a beauty specialist diploma, nail courses, a range of make-up courses and NVQs in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. Local school pupils, aged 14 to 16, attend taster courses in hairdressing. A few hairdressing students are work-based learners.

### **Achievement and standards**

114. Retention rates on NVQ hairdressing courses have improved significantly in the three years to 2003. In 2003, they were high at both level 1 and level 2, 15% above national averages. Retention rates were high on the level 3 body massage and national diploma courses in 2003. On the NVQ beauty therapy courses, retention rates have improved and were close to the national averages in 2003.

115. Pass rates on most courses were high in 2003. On the NVQ courses at levels 1 and 2 in hairdressing, they have been high for the three years to 2003 and were particularly high, 95% or above, in 2003. The pass rate on the body massage certificate is consistently high, 10% above national averages, for example, in 2003. On the NVQ level 3 course in beauty therapy, the pass rate has declined significantly and in 2003 was well below the national average. The combination of high pass and retention rates on many courses means that a high proportion of the students who start these courses successfully achieve the qualification. For example, 86% of the 42 students who started the NVQ level 1 or level 2 courses in hairdressing achieved the qualification, compared with a national average of 57%.

116. Practical work is of a high standard. In body massage lessons, for example, the techniques used are above the standard expected. In hairdressing, students produce good sets and work with confidence. Students' answers to questions demonstrate high levels of understanding and an exceptional grasp of appropriate terminology. Written work, in portfolios and other written work, is of a high standard. Student work displayed in the salons is highly creative and demonstrates practical work of a professional standard. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	33	46	17
		% retention	58	72	88
		% pass rate	95	97	100
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	15	56	25
		% retention	60	70	88
		% pass rate	89	85	95
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	44	79	42
		% retention	68	76	74
		% pass rate	100	83	84
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	32	34	36
		% retention	75	79	83
		% pass rate	88	78	57

Beauty specialist diploma	2	No. of starts	43	57	41
		% retention	88	77	88
		% pass rate	89	89	92
Diploma in advanced nail techniques	2	No. of starts	78	115	94
		% retention	82	98	100
		% pass rate	95	92	96
Body massage certificate	3	No. of starts	103	70	96
		% retention	83	84	92
		% pass rate	98	93	95
National diploma in applied science (beauty therapy)	3	No. of starts	23	33	36
		% retention	70	55	72
		% pass rate	100	94	85

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

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

117. Much of the teaching is good. None is unsatisfactory. A high proportion, almost half, is very good or excellent. Lessons are very well planned, practical work is well organised, and teaching is well matched to the needs of individual students. Teachers create a learning environment in which high levels of skill are expected and in which students are encouraged to work confidently on their own. Students respond well, show interest, participate well in role play and discussion and work diligently in practical activity. A well-organised lesson on the setting of hair made good use of a variety of activity including demonstration, observation of finished sets and regular questioning to ensure that the students were engaged, understood the underlying knowledge, quickly appreciated the basic techniques and produced work of a high standard.

118. Teachers use their high levels of theoretical knowledge, expert practical skills and commercial experience to good effect. In one sports massage lesson, the teacher's knowledge was outstanding and inspired and captivated students. In a lesson on how to deal with customer complaints, the teacher made good use of role play and drew effectively on her own experiences to reinforce the learning and place it in a commercial context. Theory and practical work are linked together well, reinforcing students' understanding. In one theory lesson in hairdressing, frequent reference was made to the practical activity undertaken earlier in the day, providing a reference for the theory and placing it into a vocational context.

119. Teachers are enthusiastic, and are appropriately qualified and have or are working towards teaching qualifications. Specialist facilities in hairdressing and beauty therapy are outstanding. The training salons and the 'Retreat', a highly professional realistic working environment, are of industry standard. Students use professional products and up-to-date equipment in their treatment of clients, enhancing their employability. In one lesson in the 'retreat' a student carried out a micro-dermabrasion treatment on a client, displaying skills which are above course requirements. Information technology is used effectively to support the curriculum. A computerised reception is networked to the salons and used very effectively by the students to help manage the salons. Classrooms have interactive white boards which are well used by the teachers and help them maintain a high level of student interest and a brisk pace to learning.

120. The extensive range of courses meets the needs of students well. There are strong links with industry. These are used well to enhance learning, for example, by using guest speakers, providing demonstrations of products and providing work placements in prestigious health spas and salons. The school provides courses for school pupils aged 14 to 16 enabling them to sample activity in the area before they choose their career route. There are also introductory courses in beauty therapy for

students who speak English as their second language. Teaching is timetabled in a flexible manner to take account of individual students needs, for example, the need to care for their children.

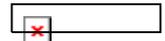
121. Assessment and marking of students' work are carried out frequently and teachers provide useful feedback on each student's performance. Procedures to monitor attendance are used effectively. Support for students is excellent. Teachers provide support on an individual basis when required. Additional learning support is available from central college services.

122. Teachers keep good records of students' progress, review performance effectively and set clear targets for future learning.

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

123. Curriculum leadership and management are very good. Regular team meetings are used effectively to share views, review progress and discuss issues. They are minuted and actions recorded clearly. Staff are well informed of senior management decisions. Communication amongst staff is excellent and they share good practice effectively. The self-assessment report is accurate. The tutorial programme helps students develop their understanding of equality and diversity issues. Equality of opportunity is promoted well, and staff report high levels of satisfaction of the way they are treated. Many courses are suited to male students who are made welcome. The salons are unisex and the products and décor reflect this.

### **Health and social care**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates
- much good teaching
- exceptionally productive partnership arrangements
- an excellent range of provision and good progression opportunities
- effective support and guidance
- very good leadership and management.

## **Weaknesses**

- there are no significant weaknesses.

## **Scope of provision**

124. The college offers a comprehensive range of full-time and part-time provision from entry level to level 4, provided by the school of health, care, and public services, the school of workforce development and the school of corporate development. Students following full-time courses in childcare and health and social care are predominantly aged 16 to 18. Part-time provision, mainly followed by adult students, is taught both on-site and off-site. Work-based learning opportunities are available in a variety of care homes and National Health Service (NHS) trusts. The provision includes a full range of counselling, care and early years' courses including access to HE courses, health and social care and nursing. Progression routes are available to the diploma in nursing at Northumbria University and to the college's higher national diploma (HND), the foundation degree programmes and the level 4 registered managers award. Short course provision meets the needs of individual employers. The college makes provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 in early years and health care. There are 2,804 current students, a quarter of whom study full time. Nearly three quarters of the full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Nearly all the part-time students are adults.

## **Achievement and standards**

125. Retention rates are at or above the national averages. There are high retention rates on the diploma in childcare and education, first aid at work and basic health and safety courses. Pass rates are high on many courses. For example, in 2003, pass rates on the certificate in childcare and education, the diploma in childcare and education, the AVCE double award in health and social care, the national diploma in health studies and the first diploma in caring courses were all well above national averages. Attendance has improved and is now slightly above national averages for this programme area.

126. The standard of work produced in class is good and reflects the interest and care that students demonstrate in their lessons. In both childcare, and health and social care, students are able to link theory to workplace practices. For example, a certificate in childcare and education class related prejudice and discrimination to the way this had affected children in their work placements. Progression to further study and employment is good.

## **A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
First aid at work (short course)	1	No. of starts	92	162	43
		% retention	97	99	100
		% pass rate	100	94	100
Basic health and safety certificate (short course)	1	No. of starts	97	139	82
		% retention	89	97	100
		% pass rate	63	95	93
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	45	25	44
		% retention	78	72	80
		% pass rate	91	100	97

First diploma in caring	2	No. of starts	20	19	29
		% retention	75	79	79
		% pass rate	93	100	100
AVCE double award in health and social care	3	No. of starts	*	19	31
		% retention	*	58	68
		% pass rate	*	100	95
National diploma in health studies	3	No. of starts	55	53	61
		% retention	64	57	54
		% pass rate	100	70	88
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	76	81	80
		% retention	76	62	66
		% pass rate	98	92	88

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

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

127. There is much good teaching. None is unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and purposeful and have clear aims and objectives which are shared with students. Teachers use a wide variety of methods including case studies, visits and visiting speakers. In a 'skills for working life' lesson, a visiting police officer discussed issues of personal protection and safety in the home using case studies well to highlight possible risks and preventative measures. Some teachers have recent, relevant industrial experience and use good examples from their professional life to help students learn effectively. In a lesson on employment, the teacher gave valuable advice on curriculum vitae demonstrating their use in screening job applicants. Teachers modify their teaching methods appropriately to suit students' specific learning needs. They involve students in a range of activities that provide opportunities for developing their practical skills and knowledge of theory. In a childcare lesson, students discussed ways of successfully introducing children who had had difficult experiences into a new nursery setting. Their clear presentations demonstrated their ability to deal effectively with sensitive issues.

128. Students work, sometimes by placement, in a range of different organisations and share their experiences with each other productively. In a lesson on early years care and education, a student shared with the group how she had used picture exchange to help the language development of autistic children. Adult students use their personal and professional experiences to effectively underpin their learning and enrich the learning of others. In a small minority of lessons, learning is not fully developed. Aspects are pitched too high for students with weak language skills or are not sufficiently challenging for more able students

129. Teachers are well qualified vocationally and all have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Accommodation is good. There are specialist practical rooms for care and childcare classes containing an appropriate range of equipment. The purpose-built accommodation at Horsley House, provides an effective learning centre for NHS staff. There is a good supply of consumables for practical work. Resource material used in class is of a good standard. The library is well stocked.

130. Assessment of students' work is good. Work is carefully and regularly marked. It includes useful feedback to help students to improve. Teachers use question-and-answer techniques effectively in lessons to assess and extend students' knowledge and understanding. Monitoring of written work in lessons is generally sound. External moderator reports confirm the accuracy and effectiveness of course delivery and assessment in college and on work placements. Initial assessment is thorough

and quickly identifies students requiring additional support.

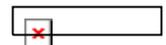
131. Partnership arrangements with work placement providers, professional agencies, employers, the local community and adjacent sectors in education are excellent. These provide an effective setting for training and acquisition of skills required in the health, care and early years sectors. Representatives from these sectors contribute to in-service training for college staff and integrate current professional practice into teaching and learning.

132. Support and guidance for students are of a high standard. Personal and academic targets are set and carefully monitored. Actions to improve performance are identified. Learning support assistants work effectively with teachers to support students both in lessons and individually. Students appreciate the support given to them. The programme of group tutorials is comprehensive and includes outside speakers and visits. The induction programme enables students to settle quickly into their course. Careers' advice is good and includes contributions from employers and representatives from local universities.

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

133. Curriculum leadership and management are very good. Communication across the area is strong, purposeful and professional. The comprehensive meeting structure ensures coverage of curriculum and development issues. The strategies in place to improve retention and pass rates are appropriate and are implemented effectively. Performance data are purposefully analysed and used to inform planning. Quality assurance is robust and focuses on raising standards of teaching and learning. Continuing professional development is available and its uptake encouraged. The self-assessment process is rigorous and accurate. All course teams make a positive contribution to the identification of strengths and areas for development. Actions to bring about improvement are identified and progress monitored at regular intervals. The curriculum area development plan is comprehensive and regularly monitored. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted and firmly embedded in practice.

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



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good student pass and retention rates
  
- high standards of teaching
  
- excellent practical work
  
- good resources in art and design

- outstanding level of support for students
  
- strong and responsive school leadership and management
  
- extensive range of enrichment activities.

### ***Weaknesses***

- there are no significant weaknesses.

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

134. The schools of performing arts, and art and design had a total of 2458 students on roll at the time of the inspection. Some 1,251 were studying full time, three quarters of whom were aged 16 to 18. Part-time students numbered 1,207, almost all of whom were adult. The range of courses allows progression from entry level to degree level. In performing arts, full-time courses start at entry level and progressively specialise at levels 2 and 3. In art and design, the full-time national diploma in design and the diploma in foundation studies (art and design) form the core of the provision with 563 students. Entry, foundation and intermediate level courses provide progression opportunities to level 3. Full-time level 3 students undertake qualifications additional to their main course, at levels 2 and 3 in a variety of art, design and craft subjects. The college also provides higher national courses and foundation degrees.

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

135. On most courses, a high proportion of the students who originally enrol achieve their qualifications. Retention and pass rates on most courses are high. There are consistently high pass rates, and improving and now high retention rates, for example, on the national diploma in performing arts, resulting in a success rate of 80% in 2003, which is almost double the national average. Pass and retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in performing arts were close to the national averages in 2001 and 2002. Its replacement course, the first diploma in performing arts, has achieved a very high pass rate, 97%, in 2003, its first year of operation. The entry-level, profile of achievement award has achieved 100% retention and pass rates for the two years to 2003.

136. Student practical work is excellent. Primary research in sketch and work books is extensive, thorough and very creative. Idea exploration is fresh and exciting. Creative approaches are rigorously analysed and evaluated, final artworks and artefacts are exceptionally well presented. In performing arts, practical work is characterised by the professional approach and expectations of both teachers and students. In one rehearsal lesson on the opening number of the musical *Working*, students quickly picked up and assimilated the direction given. They worked with energy and enthusiasm and performed with total commitment even though they were in the initial stages of rehearsal.

137. There is good progression both within the college and on to HE. In 2002/03, for example, 69% of level 2 performing arts students progressed to level 3 courses. In art and design 78% of level 3 students progressed to HE. In art and design, most students achieve their aim of progression to HE on the basis of their high-quality portfolios of work. These achievements, quality and progression are

similarly gained by the significant minority of students who are admitted to level 3 courses because they show creative potential, even though they do not possess the minimum entry requirements for the course.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
City and Guilds 3791 profile of achievement	entry	No. of starts	*	20	22
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Art and design studies	2	No. of starts	384	471	254
		% retention	88	85	75
		% pass rate	97	96	87
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	112	88	67
		% retention	54	63	82
		% pass rate	93	98	98
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	149	142	141
		% retention	64	70	66
		% pass rate	95	92	90
Diploma in foundation studies	3	No. of starts	203	198	216
		% retention	87	97	87
		% pass rate	99	88	97
AS-level fine art	3	No. of starts	132	66	31
		% retention	77	77	77
		% pass rate	67	80	83
AVCE art and design	3	No. of starts	48	54	50
		% retention	48	69	74
		% pass rate	100	97	84

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

***Quality of education and training***

138. The standard of teaching is high. Lessons are well planned and structured. A variety of methods is used to stimulate and motivate students. These include individual projects, performance work, group work, illustrated lectures and visits from practising professionals. Expert teachers deliver a coherent learning experience through a common curriculum planning process. Teachers work hard to get the best out of the students. Teaching is challenging and programmes ensure students have appropriate opportunities to meet the assessment criteria and to cover course requirements. In an entry level performing arts lesson, the students considered the requirements of ensemble work by moving collectively as an iceberg through geographical points of emotion. In an AVCE art and design lesson, students were designing expressive furniture. They researched art movements to which they provided contemporary references. There was some excellent idea exploration including one student who was investigating the structure of a water lily as an inspiration for a floating chair. In all lessons, work is valued and individual contributions respected.

139. In art and design, key skills practice is excellent. These skills are fully integrated and assessed through the project work. In performing arts, the success of key skills delivery and achievement is inconsistent, at least partly because the key skills are delivered on a different campus to the vocational teaching.

140. Art and design learning resources are good. There is a comprehensive range of large studios and workshops, technical support and dedicated ICT provision with 104 workstations of industry standard, and additional ICT 'pods' sited close to course bases. All have design, animation and digital imaging software, are networked across the school and students can access their work on any machine. There is also an art and design library within the main building. A new performance academy will be opened in August 2004. In addition to an impressive list of specialist studios and smaller venues accommodating a range of creative activities, is a 250-seat theatre with fly tower. The performance academy will bring together all aspects of the creative industry in a real working environment. These facilities will remedy the current deficiencies in accommodation in performing arts.

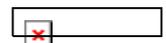
141. Students value the outstanding support they receive for academic and personal issues. School learning support teams provide literacy and numeracy support. The identification of, and provision for, individual learning needs is accurate and thorough. Initial assessment provides a sound basis for planning students' programmes of work. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Progress is rigorously monitored and feedback from teachers is timely, and informative. Assessment is clear, valid and reliable. It fulfils a vital function in the teaching and learning process and underpins the highly effective tutorial system. Formative and summative assessment is strong and supports learning. There are well-structured and robust systems for internal verification.

142. The range of courses in both art and design and in performing arts is wide. It provides good opportunities for increasing specialisation and progression from entry to degree levels. There is a comprehensive programme of enrichment activities. Students from all courses undertake external visits to live performances as well as attending an exciting array of events which take place within the college. During the inspection, performing arts students had the opportunity to watch a rehearsal by Sting and in December 2003 all acting students attended a master class taken by Richard Wilson. Students on the national diploma in 3-D design went on a five-day residential where they worked alongside Andy Goldsworthy to build a sculpture trail and interpretation centre in a Scottish glen.

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

143. Curriculum leadership and management are strong and responsive. There is a clear vision and shared ethos. Both teachers and students feel valued within the system and recognise the role they play in raising achievement and supporting all students. Performance is rigorously monitored at course and school level. Management information is effectively used to inform decisions. There is a comprehensive system for quality assurance and actions taken to secure improvement clearly work. The promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent. Governors take an active interest in the work of the schools. The general manager of the Theatre Royal is a governor and provides industry links to underpin the professional ethos of the school.

### **English and humanities**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in English and most humanities subjects

- much good learning
  
- highly effective access/pre-access provision for adults
  
- a wide range of courses that meets the needs of students
  
- good support for individual students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates in English subjects
  
- limited opportunities for private study at peak times.

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

144. There are over 2,000 enrolments to humanities and English subjects, equating to nearly 800 full-time equivalent students. Over 850 students study full time, three quarters of whom are aged 16 to 18. Nearly 1,250 study part time, 85% of whom are adults. Over 80 accredited courses are offered. Subjects are provided at AS level and GCE A level. There is also GCSE English and a large daytime and evening adult learning provision at levels 2 and 3. Most of the provision is managed and taught in the college's sixth form college.

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

145. Pass rates are high in English and many humanities subjects. For example, in GCE A-level sociology, the pass rate was 12% above the national average in 2003. In GCE A-level English literature, the pass rate was 100% in 2002 and 96% in 2003. In AS-level English language, the rate has been well above the national average in each of the three years to 2003. Pass rates on access to HE and pre-access courses are consistently high. Higher grade (A to B) pass rates in GCE subjects are slightly below national averages. In some, GCE A-level psychology for example, these higher grade pass rates have been above national averages in each of the last two years. In others, for example, AS-level law, they are consistently below average. In general, the students who complete their courses achieve advanced level grades which are in line with those predicted by their incoming GCSE attainment levels. In 2003, the higher grade (A to C) pass rate in GCSE English was well above the national average. A high proportion of students on access to HE courses progress to local degree courses.

146. Retention rates vary widely. For example, they are high in GCE A-level sociology and low, well below national averages, in many of the English subjects.

147. Most students' work shows a steady improvement in standards over the duration of the course. Students make good progress in lessons. They participate well verbally, responding sensitively to teacher questioning. Students on a literature access course demonstrated skills of detailed textual analysis and awareness of genre, when asked to predict the ending of a short story. In many English lessons, students show good knowledge of the language of critical analysis. In philosophy and law, students respond well to intellectual challenge. In a few lessons, students are reluctant to participate in discussions or presentations. Students' work is mostly at the level expected. The work in a few students' folders is poorly organised.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in English and humanities, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	117	149	145
		% retention	67	72	64
		% pass rate	54	41	59
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	81	82	101
		% retention	70	70	65
		% pass rate	98	89	92
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	102	93	80
		% retention	71	74	79
		% pass rate	96	81	90
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	54	82	107
		% retention	74	76	79
		% pass rate	73	71	75
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	51	43	61
		% retention	43*	93	85
		% pass rate	91	100	96
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	93	60	39
		% retention	39*	92	85
		% pass rate	94	100	97
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	72	51	81
		% retention	67*	90	90
		% pass rate	67	93	86
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	69	35	41
		% retention	78	86	90
		% pass rate	70	80	89
Access to HE sociology	3	No. of starts	40	34	55
		% retention	70	96	64
		% pass rate	85	95	80

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* retention rates over two years

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

148. Much of the teaching is good and there is little that is unsatisfactory. Teaching is generally well planned, includes an appropriate variety of activity and is supported by good learning materials. In a lesson on textual analysis, an initial lively presentation was followed by productive pairs work, fast-paced questioning by the teacher, and positive use of praise. Teachers of GCSE English lessons use a wide variety of learning media to prepare for forthcoming examinations. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and experience of assessment to increase students' interest and guide revision. For example, in one lesson, the teacher drew on her extensive legal knowledge to answer students' questioning clearly and productively and in another, the teacher provided good advice on what should be included in an answer to a philosophy question on Descartes' Meditations text.

149. Learning is good in a much higher proportion of lessons than is the case nationally. Students respond well to questioning, contribute productively in discussion and participate constructively in group work. In a GCE A-level English language lesson, the teacher engaged students in a lively and inclusive question and answer session, and expected, and received, a good level of participation from all. GCE A-level lawyers grappled intelligently and enthusiastically with the problem of the defence of duress. At the end of the lesson, the teacher's questioning confirmed that the students had understood the lesson content.

150. In a few lessons, for example, in small pockets of English literature and psychology, the teaching is not well suited to the learning needs of the less able. In some, the pace is too quick and in others the level of challenge is too high.

151. Humanities and English teachers in the sixth form centre are generally well qualified and very committed to their subjects, as well as to the students they teach. The accommodation is of a very high standard. Opportunities for private study are sometimes limited. For example, the library is sometimes noisy and crowded at times of peak use.

152. The sixth form centre provides a wide, and increasingly broad, range of GCE A-level courses in humanities and English. There is an unusual range of minority subjects, such as AS-level and GCE A-level archaeology, philosophy and religious studies. There are several access and pre-access courses for adults wishing to return to learning. Staff offer good enrichment opportunities for their students and encourage progression to FE or HE. Many AS-level and GCE A-level students undertake visits to study conferences and universities, funded by the 'Aim Higher' government initiative and speak very highly of the experience.

153. Assessment of students' work is good, with teachers making concise, relevant and encouraging comments in their marking. Some students report a slow turn around of marked coursework or essays. Students' progress is monitored effectively. A value added, target-setting system is in the early stages of development. Support for students is very effective. Many students speak highly of the support personal tutors provide for them.

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

154. Leadership and management are good overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the management of some subjects. The new managers of the sixth form centre are developing structures which should remove these inconsistencies, by for example, strengthening induction and private study arrangements. Professional development is well planned. It is provided, where needed, following lesson observation, and performance management meetings. It is also provided to help teachers cope with changes in curriculum and assessment.

### **Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**

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

### ***Strengths***

- outstanding teaching and learning
- very good achievement of relevant skills
- good resources
- excellent student support
- strong and effective leadership and management.

***Weaknesses***

- there are no key weaknesses.

***Scope of provision***

155. At the time of the inspection, 85 students attended college-based courses which include 'towards independence', and courses in life skills, vocational options, and employability skills. In addition, 789 students attended courses run by other providers through franchise arrangements. These include specialist provision for people with head injuries, and the provision of community-based courses for people with learning difficulties.

***Achievement and standards***

156. Students' achievements are very good. Each student's learning is based upon an individual learning plan. These plans are comprehensive, detailed and demanding. In 2002/03, almost all these plans were achieved satisfactorily.

157. Attainment is good or better in almost all the lessons. Students make very good progress in lessons. They are aware of their own learning targets and achievements. For example, students with severe learning difficulties can decide what they need in order to play a table-based board game, and can find equipment and organise themselves to play. Students reliably carry messages to staff in rooms on other floors and in other buildings, developing high-level independence skills. Students following courses in horticulture engage in purposeful work-related tasks and make substantial personal progress. In particular, students develop exceptional levels of self-confidence.

158. Most students on franchised provision, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and those with brain injury, make good incremental progress whilst others maintain their skill level.

***Quality of education and training***

159. Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent. In many lessons, two teachers work

well together to cover the curriculum area and work on literacy, numeracy and essential living skills. The use of individual learning plans is good in literacy, numeracy and life skills. These plans are carefully designed to reflect individual need and the teaching is planned to ensure that learning activities are closely related to these development needs. The plans are regularly updated. A few learning targets are expressed too loosely. In many lessons, learning targets are also identified for the subject or vocational curriculum undertaken. In a few lessons, the planning of this work is less effective, being based too much on listed activities for the group rather than planned learning for individuals. In these lessons, students are less successful in developing their curriculum area skills than they are in literacy, numeracy and living skills.

160. In the best lessons, detailed individual planning is matched by drive, enthusiasm and imagination and students enjoy exceeding their own expectations. Courses are well matched to meet students' needs.

161. There are good learning resources. Students' achievements are celebrated and displays of work are used by students to support their learning. For example, a group working on employment skills consulted photographs they had taken which identified transferable skills they had learned on a residential activity week. Good use is made of computers which are available in many classrooms. Students make effective use of the wider community and are confident and independent in using the city centre, the leisure complex and undertaking out-of-town shopping.

162. There is a very good range of high-quality accommodation. Classrooms are attractive and well decorated, in central and accessible locations in the college. An on-site horticulture unit has indoor and outdoor working areas and greenhouses. A two-bedroom flat near the college is used to develop life skills in context. Other domestic skills, such as cooking and laundry and some performing arts activities, are taught at the John Marley Centre. Staffing levels are realistic and appropriate to the needs of students. They provide good support for the students. Staff have specialist qualifications and have a good understanding of teaching and learning. Many support staff hold teaching qualifications. Staff development is readily available for both teachers and learning support staff.

163. Franchise partners operate within effective curriculum structures and documentation, which are shared with the college. Franchise provision is in varied locations including a new and well-designed facility for people with brain injuries.

164. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are thorough and effective. The initial assessment process lasts for six weeks and incorporates residential activities. Teachers devote sufficient time to assessment and monitoring activity and to establishing good communications with parents and others. Teachers monitor students' progress very well. Students are exceptionally well aware of their progress. They are able to discuss the progress they are making cogently. Parents are fully and effectively involved in the review process.

165. There is a wide range of provision. Support for students in college and on franchised courses is very good. It is sensitive and effective, and focuses clearly on learning. Recruitment and enrolment processes are well managed and successful. There are good links with schools and taster courses are available. The process of identifying individual learning needs is well monitored.

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

166. Leadership and management are strong, clear and effective. Staff have undertaken substantial training and development work on teaching and learning. Lesson planning is consistent and includes an impressive level of detail. There is a very positive team ethos and staff communicate well. They are allocated sufficient time to undertake the tasks that need doing. All staff show commitment to the process of individual learning planning. Course team meetings pay appropriate attention to the progress and needs of individual students.

167. Quality assurance processes are implemented thoroughly. A large number of teaching observations has been conducted and has led to substantial improvements in teaching and learning. The self-assessment process has yielded an accurate and critical view of the provision and has led

to appropriate action and measurable improvement. Areas for development, which have been identified through lesson observation and through performance review meetings, are addressed through appropriate staff development.

168. The area has a high profile in the college. Senior managers give the area appropriate support and ensure that good facilities and resources are available. Students with disabilities are valued throughout the college.

### **Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages**

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

#### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
  
- much good teaching
  
- excellent individual support for students
  
- well-qualified staff with relevant training in literacy and numeracy
  
- very good resources and accommodation
  
- rigorous assessment, target setting and monitoring of progress in ESOL
  
- very good range of courses and qualifications for ESOL/EFL (English as a foreign language) students
  
- excellent leadership and management.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- underdeveloped individual target setting and progress recording in discrete literacy and numeracy.

### **Scope of provision**

169. Full-time and part-time courses in ESOL and in EFL are available during the day and in the evening. Students can progress through six levels in ESOL, from pre-entry to level 2 and from preliminary level to level 3 in EFL. Additional support is provided for students with language needs on vocational courses. At the time of inspection, there were 1,374 students on ESOL/EFL courses and 15 receiving language support. Nearly all are aged over 19.

170. There are 315 part-time adult students on discrete literacy and numeracy courses. These courses are available from pre-entry levels to level 2, both during the day and in the evening. There are 40 full-time students aged 16 to 18 on a progression award or on a course leading to GCSE study. Most provision is based at the main campus. A small number of courses are held in community venues and an increasing number of courses provided in the workplace. Almost 800 students on vocational or academic courses are receiving additional literacy and numeracy support or support for dyslexia.

### **Achievement and standards**

171. Students' achievements are very good. In 2002/03, retention and pass rates on all ESOL and EFL courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications were significantly above the national averages. Retention and pass rates on literacy and numeracy courses are excellent. Students make good progress in lessons. The achievement of individual targets is good. Staff-student ratios provide a supportive learning environment which enables progression and the achievement of personal goals. Students are highly motivated, gain in confidence and self-esteem and are productively involved in their learning. They develop a wide range of skills such as writing letters, measurement and personal writing. Students of ESOL and EFL develop very good language and IT skills. In additional language support lessons, students develop good levels of language skill. For example, in one lesson, an art student developed her oral and literacy skills effectively during a role play exercise in which she discussed her art portfolio. Standards of written and oral work are high.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
ESOL (basic short)	entry	No. of starts	92	200	112
		% retention	58	94	100
		% pass rate	57	86	88
ESOL (elementary short)	entry	No. of starts	71	183	100
		% retention	65	92	100
		% pass rate	100	74	60
ESOL level 1	entry	No. of starts	216	192	*
		% retention	72	68	*
		% pass rate	74	56	*
Preliminary English test (EFL)	entry	No. of starts	59	26	**
		% retention	64	81	**
		% pass rate	95	38	**
First certificate in English (EFL)	1	No. of starts	85	66	54
		% retention	60	67	100
		% pass rate	76	73	93

Certificate in advanced English (EFL)	2	No. of starts	39	35	19
		% retention	64	62	100
		% pass rate	80	55	89
International English Language Testing System	3	No. of starts	40	144	74
		% retention	88	81	100
		% pass rate	100	67	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

\*\*fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

172. Much of the teaching and learning is good or better. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Most lesson plans and schemes of work are detailed and thorough. A wide range of teaching methods and learning resources are used. ESOL students work productively in pairs and small groups, benefiting from opportunities to share and debate ideas and correct each other's language and grammar. The use of real objects enables students to practice language structures, extend their vocabulary and develop an understanding of concepts. For example, in a literacy lesson, students used adhesive labels to build up a pictogram in a clear and visual way. In a pre-entry ESOL lesson, the effective use of groceries enabled students to consolidate language and extend vocabulary. Many teachers, especially those of ESOL/EFL challenge and inspire students. In most lessons, teachers ensure the activities are relevant and interesting. Students speak confidently about their work, the progress they are making and the skills they are learning. Computers and specialist software are readily available. In a few lessons in literacy and numeracy, teachers miss opportunities to use them.

173. Teachers are well qualified and trained. Some 40 teachers are undertaking specialist level 4 training in literacy or numeracy. ESOL teachers bring with them a rich variety of experience of teaching and work in other contexts. Resources are excellent. Good resources are used effectively in most lessons. Clear and well-printed handouts and worksheets support the learning. Materials are up to date and appropriate to students' needs and interests. In ESOL provision they are excellent. In-house readers and other materials, particularly at the lower levels of provision, are used effectively to develop spelling, literacy and study skills. Students have good access to and enjoy using the specialist facilities including literacy and IT workshops and the two language laboratories. A room in the library, dedicated to ESOL work, has a large stock of good learning materials. All classrooms are clean and attractive and have excellent displays of posters and students' work.

174. Written work is marked promptly and accurately. Teachers' comments are encouraging and constructive. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is very good. Diagnostic assessment is undertaken for all students and is used effectively to identify students' levels of attainment. On ESOL courses, this is used well to ensure the correct placement of students. ESOL and EFL students benefit from rigorous assessment, target-setting and monitoring of progress. Students' individual needs are assessed regularly, achievements carefully recorded, and individual targets identified and updated in order to inform teaching plans and students' progression. Individual target setting and progress recording in discrete literacy and numeracy courses are underdeveloped. Targets are either not sufficiently specific or are written in language that is not easy for students to understand. Progress recording is often just a list of work done and contains little evaluation of the skills developed.

175. The range of ESOL/EFL courses is comprehensive. There is a growing range of literacy and numeracy courses. The ESOL curriculum is very well designed to meet students' needs and interests whilst also meeting national standards and awarding body requirements. The college's

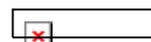
commitment to widen and develop the curriculum has helped students to progress on to mainstream courses. This has resulted in effective collaborative teaching and planning between vocational staff in, for example, beauty therapy, business and catering, and ESOL staff. In one excellent pedicure lesson for ESOL students, excellent opportunities were provided both to learn about foot care problems and to develop language skills and widen vocabulary. Students of ESOL and EFL are offered opportunities to gain a wide range of qualifications at all levels. There are few courses in community venues. The college has been proactive in developing literacy and numeracy provision in the workplace. Enrichment activities including visits to theatres and other places of interest, such as Edinburgh and Hadrian's wall, enhance ESOL students' knowledge and understanding of British culture, history and language.

176. Guidance and support for students are outstanding. Students benefit greatly from the personal support they receive in lessons and individual tutorials. They speak highly of the attention they get. The results of the monitoring of the impact of the support students receive indicate that those students who receive support are more likely to be retained and achieve their target qualification.

### **Leadership and management**

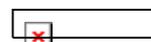
177. Leadership and management are excellent. They provide clear direction and thorough planning and impact positively on the quality of the provision. Roles and responsibilities are clearly allocated and co-ordination of the provision is effective. Co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the college, for example, is very good. Good practice in one area is shared supportively with others. Team meetings are held regularly, are well attended and contribute to raising standards. There is a strong commitment and good access to regular staff development leading to consistently good teaching. Team teaching, mentoring, and lesson observation are well established and, together with rigorously implemented quality assurance procedures have led to improvements in teaching and learning. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Action plans to address weaknesses are implemented energetically. Challenging recruitment targets for literacy and numeracy provision have been achieved. The close monitoring of students' attendance and punctuality has led to significant improvements in retention rates, particularly for students of ESOL.

## **Part D: College data**



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

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	27	26
2	30	36
3	41	11
4/5	0	1
Other	2	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



*Source: provided by the college in spring 2004*

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

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	809	501	2
Land-based provision	18	63	0
Construction	311	828	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	444	440	2
Business administration, management and professional	516	13,735	24
Information and communication technology	1,350	4,674	10
Retailing, customer service and transportation	74	30	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	607	4,591	9
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	485	773	2
Health, social care and public services	688	3,268	7
Visual and performing arts and media	2,268	2,670	8
Humanities	891	2,054	5
English, languages and communication	888	766	3
Foundation programmes	1,507	9,411	19
Unknown curriculum area	0	3,594	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,856</b>	<b>47,398</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Course)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,442	917	761	8,966	3,649	3,835

	Retention rate %	59	66	86	45	63	89
	National average %	75	76	*	69	70	*
	Pass rate %	81	74	78	74	76	79
	National average %	69	71	*	68	71	*
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	2,295	2,077	1,862	10,735	10,871	6,726
	Retention rate %	72	75	72	57	53	78
	National average %	70	72	*	68	68	*
	Pass rate %	86	79	79	60	68	42
	National average %	69	71	*	68	72	*
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	3,991	3,341	3,688	3,684	2,881	3,568
	Retention rate %	63	74	75	69	76	78
	National average %	71	77	*	68	70	*
	Pass rate %	80	79	81	84	81	77
	National average %	77	79	*	69	72	*
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	**	**	**	122	174	170
	Retention rate %	**	**	**	30	71	84
	National average %	*	*	*	67	67	*
	Pass rate %	**	**	**	86	70	51
	National average %	*	*	*	55	56	*

*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.*

*\* data unavailable*

*\*\* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory	

	%		%	
Level 3 (advanced)	67	31	2	115
Level 2 (intermediate)	82	16	2	57
Level 1 (foundation)	85	11	4	27
Other sessions*	84	16	0	43
<b>Totals</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>242</b>

\* mainly at entry levels

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