

Huddersfield New College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

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

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Business and economics](#)

[Visual and performing arts and media](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Social sciences and health and social care](#)

[English and modern foreign languages](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

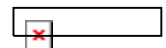
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

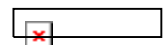
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

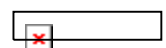


Name of college:	Huddersfield New College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Philip Forrest
Address of college:	New Hey Road Huddersfield HD3 4GL
Telephone number:	01484 652341
Fax number:	01484 647184
Chair of governors:	Hilary Thornton
Unique reference number:	130539
Name of reporting inspector:	Sandra Tweedie HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 October 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



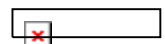
Huddersfield New College is a sixth form college located to the north of the town on a 30-acre green field site. Within Huddersfield there is another sixth form college and a general further education (FE) college. Huddersfield New College is in the metropolitan borough of Kirklees, from which it draws the majority of its students. Kirklees is a vibrant multicultural community and this is reflected in the college where 33% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with 27% of young people aged 16 to 18 in the local population. Participation in FE in the Kirklees area is low at 66% and the college is working with schools and Connexions to increase the proportion of young people in post-16 education. At general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), the average scores on entry to advanced level courses place students in the lowest 10 percentile of all sixth form colleges. The college has been recognised for widening participation through its foundation programme.

The college provides courses from foundation to advanced level covering a wide range of subjects, including vocational courses available at all levels. At advanced level, 38 subjects are offered; vocational subjects are available in 8 areas and are offered as part, single, or double awards. At level 2, awards are available in seven subjects. The foundation course gives students an opportunity to improve literacy and numeracy and sample business, information technology (IT) and science. In 2003, the college reviewed the vocational advanced curriculum offer for students. As a result, the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) double award courses will be replaced in most areas with national diploma programmes. Other proposals include increasing the number of students following a combination of general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), or advanced subsidiary level (AS level) with GCSE subjects. The 'Aim Higher' initiative encourages the most able students to reach their potential. The college is developing a regional centre of excellence for sport.

The college is oversubscribed; student numbers have increased over the last two years by approximately 14%, partly due to an increase in the school population in Year 11. The college has exceeded targets for growth and in 2002/03 recruited 1,440 students. According to college figures for 2004/05, there are 1,640 full-time students, almost all of whom are aged 16 to 18.

The college's mission states that 'Huddersfield New College is a sixth form college committed to enabling individual students to achieve their potential in a supportive and inclusive environment'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged that provision is outstanding in two of the six curriculum areas inspected. It is good in the remaining four areas. The provision for music and media courses is good and for modern foreign languages it is satisfactory and contributory grades are awarded in these curriculum areas. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- highly effective strategic leadership and management

- shared values and good communication between managers, teachers and students

- provision that is socially and educationally inclusive

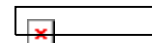
- students' achievements above predicted levels
- high standards of teaching
- outstanding pastoral and subject support
- good student progression, both within the college and into higher education (HE) and employment
- good management at course level
- excellent management information system
- productive links with the community, schools, colleges and industry
- accurate self-assessment and effective quality assurance framework.

What should be improved

- retention rates at level 3, especially on AS-level courses
- timetable periods which are too short for some practical subjects
- more challenge for the most able students
- the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in much of the teaching.

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	Good. Students achieve well on GCSE mathematics and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate science courses with very good achievement in relation to prior attainment on AS-level mathematics and AS-level chemistry courses. There is much good teaching and, in science lessons, effective use of ILT. Pass rates are low on several science courses. The college provides very good access to science and mathematics courses.
Business and economics	Good. Teaching is good and there are high pass rates on vocational courses. An ethos of support for students underpins all of the curriculum area. Industry links are strong on vocational courses. Students make good progress in their learning. There was a fall in pass rates on AS-level courses in 2004. Differentiated activity in lessons to meet students' needs is underdeveloped.
Visual and performing arts and media	Outstanding. The contributory grade for music and media courses is good. Pass rates are high in GCE A-level subjects. Practical work is of a very high standard, particularly in art and performing arts. Teaching is very good in all subjects and some is outstanding. Courses are well managed and teams are effective in developing and sharing high-quality resources. There is poor soundproofing in the performing arts area.
Humanities	Good. There is a good level of achievement, with some high pass rates, but retention rates are low for AS-level law and classical civilisation. Teaching and learning are good in all subjects. Student progress is rigorously monitored with very effective subject support. There is insufficient extension work for the most able students. The curriculum is enhanced by a broad enrichment programme.
Social sciences and health and social care	Good. Health and social care students make very good progress. Pass rates are also high in GCE A-level psychology. Pass rates are low for AS-level and GCSE psychology and GCSE sociology in 2004. Subject support for students with low prior achievement is very good, but there is insufficient challenge for GCE A-level students in sociology and psychology to encourage them to reach higher examination grades.
English and modern foreign languages	Outstanding. The contributory grade for modern foreign languages is satisfactory . Pass rates are outstanding in GCSE English and good or better on other English courses. Pass rates are declining in French and German. Teaching is very effective in meeting the particular needs of the group and takes into account different learning styles,

	however, there is insufficient differentiation for students of high ability. There is excellent pastoral and academic support for students.
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How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. The college has excellent leadership with a very clear mission that ensures the college remains inclusive and caters for students of widely differing abilities. Senior managers are consultative and have an open management style. Staff enthusiastically support the vision for the college. There is a strong team spirit. Financial management is very good and there is good value for money. The management information system is excellent. The quality assurance framework is applied assiduously and has led to generally accurate self-assessment reports at subject level. There is insufficient evaluation of the impact of the staff training that takes place. Curriculum management is good. The quality of team meeting minutes varies and planned actions are not always taken. Governance is effective. However, there are insufficient formal links with staff and students and the training needs of governors are not formally ascertained. The college's equal opportunities policy is applied well. Staff and students feel highly valued.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

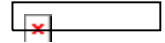
The college's response to education and social inclusion is outstanding. Its value for individuals is reflected in all aspects of its work. The strategic objective to promote an ethos of respect and parity of esteem for all at the college is clearly met. There are a high proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and from deprived areas. These and all other students are given exceptional pastoral and academic support. Many students start at the college with low levels of prior achievement and make very good progress. The college is oversubscribed, but entry requirements have not been raised and all students who wish to study at the college are given an equal chance of starting appropriate courses. The arrangements for religious worship for the students and staff of various faiths are very good. The college meets its statutory duties under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Staffing levels, enrolments and students achievements are monitored closely according to gender, ethnicity and disability. The requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) are also met. Much of the accommodation has been upgraded and there are no substantial areas that can not be easily reached by those with physical disabilities.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Students at Huddersfield New College receive outstanding guidance and support. The college has strong support systems that nurture the achievement of the substantial numbers of students who have low prior attainment. Learning support is promoted and delivered in an inclusive manner and there is very good take up by students on all levels of courses. Extensive subject support is available outside the classroom. The team of specialist personal tutors sets high expectations of attendance and work rate, closely monitors and reviews students' progress and helps them manage their

support with personal issues. The careers guidance and education programme is effective in raising the aspirations of students and supporting the many successful applications to employment and FE and HE.

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

- supportive teachers and tutors who help students to achieve

- the friendly and relaxed atmosphere

- the study centre

- the range of courses

- opportunities for trips abroad.

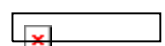
What they feel could be improved

- overcrowded social spaces

- the quality of food in the canteen

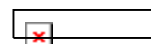
- unreliable buses.

Other information



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC 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

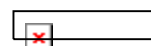


Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	78	22	0
Learning 16-18	72	28	0

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

Achievement and standards



1. Significant proportions of the students start level 3 courses at the college with the minimum entry requirements. At GCE A level, students perform very well when compared to predictions based upon their entry qualifications. The overall 'value added' score for the college is consistently above average and, in 2003/04, these measures put the college in the top 10% of sixth form colleges in the country. There are very few students aged over 19. Most of these have progressed through the college from lower-level courses.

2. Approximately 2% of all students are on the foundation course at level 1. The retention and pass rates on this course are high. Approximately two thirds of students on these courses are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college's careful analysis of the data indicates that all students do well and that those from minority ethnic backgrounds are particularly successful.

3. Retention and pass rates on level 2 courses are consistently above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Analysis of different cohorts of students again indicates that all but one of the minority ethnic groups achieve well. Students on intermediate GNVQ courses are particularly successful. The proportion of students on these courses achieving high grades is above the average for sixth form colleges. On GCSE courses in 2003/04, the proportion of students that achieved A* to C grades was good at 62.4%. Of particular note is the outstanding English result where 79% of the 217 students

entered for the examination achieved such grades compared to a national figure of 55%. In mathematics, 57.2% of the 194 entries achieved the higher grades compared to a national figure of 42%.

4. Retention rates on level 3 courses have improved steadily over the last four years. However, they remain approximately 8 percentage points below the national average of 88%. In 2003, the pass rate on level 3 courses was comparable with the national average. There has been a considerable difference in the pass rates of courses leading to specific qualifications. For example, at AS level, the pass rate dropped to below the national average in 2004. This is mainly as a consequence of a very poor result in general studies taken by most advanced level students. Historically, retention and pass rates have been comparable with the national average for sixth form colleges. However, in 2004, the pass rate fell to 51%, well below the national figure. GCE A-level general studies retention and pass rates are 84% and 88%, respectively.

5. The college's overall target pass rate at AS level was not achieved. For GCE A level, however, the pass rate has improved to 97% and has met the college target. The college identified as a weakness low retention rates on AVCE courses. They have now replaced many of these courses with national diploma courses in order to try to increase student motivation and pass rates. The retention rates on the AVCE course has now improved to 69% and the pass rate of 97% is significantly above the national average.

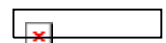
6. Students on GCE A-level and vocational courses at level 3 make good or very good progress. AS-level students perform generally as expected from their GCSE results. Approximately 80% of all students completing level 3 courses at the college progress to appropriate HE courses. In addition, on completion of their level 2 courses, 89% of students progress to FE courses. Students with lower GCSE scores of below 4.7 have also been very successful in moving through qualification levels and 33% of this group gained HE places in 2003.

7. Key skills have retention and pass rates that are low. For many students at level 3, the communications, application of number and IT qualification is not a high priority and the results are unsatisfactory. A considerable number of students have not succeeded in completing portfolios, even though they have passed the external test. However, retention and pass rates on courses leading to the wider key skills of improving own learning and performance, problem solving and working with others are high.

8. Attendance during the inspection was very good, at 90%. It was highest in humanities at 92% and also high for business and economics, and science and mathematics at 91%. The inspection took place relatively early in the academic year, but already it was clear that in many lessons, students produce work of a good standard. They work hard; they are polite and have a very good working rapport with their teachers and tutors. The values of inclusion and respect for others are followed in lessons and by students in the college.

9. Students are very successful in sporting events, art exhibitions and drama productions and in their contributions to the community through work experience and voluntary work. In lessons, many students are confident and can articulate ideas and consider concepts well. For example, foundation course students showed good comprehension of the different functions of business organisations. Many students in English participate enthusiastically in class work and use appropriate technical vocabulary with ease and fluency to explain and describe their work.

Quality of education and training



10. Teaching was good or better in 78% of the 88 lessons observed and satisfactory in 21%. No

but overall grades for AS-level and GCSE lessons are very good. Much of the teaching in visual and performing arts and media and humanities is good or very good. In three curriculum areas, visual and performing arts and media, humanities and science and mathematics, there is some outstanding teaching.

11. Many students make good or at least satisfactory progress in lessons. In the best lessons, teaching and learning are very well organised, and the activity and the pace of the lesson are carefully considered to keep work interesting and stimulating. For example, lessons in humanities, business and health and social care include group work, debate, pair work and decision making activities. In English, teaching is very well matched to individual needs. Many teachers of English and languages make particularly good use of the whiteboard, often using schematic and diagrammatic notes to aid students who learn visually. In the sciences and visual and performing arts, teachers are confident and skilful in using demonstration to explain a process or bring alive a dramatic point in a script. In some lessons, the teacher runs out of time and a review of learning and activity is consequently rushed, with students often packing away and the teacher telling, rather than asking, the students what they have learned. In the short 'one-hour' lesson in the timetable, it is difficult for students and teachers to do involved practical and creative work. In science and mathematics, Spanish and art and design, there are good examples of extension activities to support the most able students but, in several curriculum areas, this is not always the case. These students are not always encouraged to do work that is more difficult or research further when they complete work early.

12. Teachers provide subject support which is valued highly by students. The study centre is very well used. There is good use of ILT in lessons in science and geography. In a number of curriculum areas, there are few ILT resources or where they are new; teachers have yet to develop confidence to use them more in teaching.

13. Teachers and support staff are well qualified for the work they do. Almost all full-time teachers hold a relevant teaching qualification. The few who do not are being supported to gain one. The accommodation is attractive and welcoming. The facilities have been well planned to suit their purpose. Displays of students' art work enhance the whole college. There is good specialist accommodation for most curriculum areas with stimulating displays of students' work. However, the soundproofing in performing arts is poor. In art and design, there is insufficient space for large-scale work. The upgraded sports hall, all weather pitch and fitness suite provide excellent resources for students, staff and members of the public. Other notable developments include the IT, guidance and conference centres. Although improvements have been made to the dining and common areas, these become crowded at peak times. All accommodation except one small, raised section of the library is accessible for students with restricted mobility. Arrangements are made for items to be retrieved when necessary.

14. Specialist learning resources are good. Adaptive technology and software is provided to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including laptop computer workstations for students to borrow. There is a good range of equipment for science. Interactive whiteboard and data projection equipment has recently been installed in many curriculum areas. Training has been provided and the use made of these resources to enhance learning is growing. Handouts are of a high quality in social sciences and health and social care.

15. The library provision, the study centre and the IT centre offer students well-resourced facilities that support their learning. The materials available through the virtual learning environment are increasingly being used by staff and students in particular in science, mathematics and geography. Staff and students have ready access to up-to-date computer workstations and can also book IT resources, but they are not available for use in the classroom in all curriculum areas. In surveys of their views, students report high levels of satisfaction with the learning resources and accommodation.

16. The progress of students is very closely monitored by personal tutors and teachers through a cycle of performance and subject reviews. Minimum target grades are set for all students at the induction review and their performance relative to these is reported on at regular intervals. Parents are kept well informed. Students find the review process helpful and motivating. Helpful induction

reviews check progress, build self-esteem, reinforce the college's high expectations about attendance and work rate and extra support is arranged where required. Sometimes tutors talk too much and do not allow students enough opportunity to contribute. The opportunity is not taken at this stage to agree and record action to put right any shortcomings, for example, in attendance and punctuality. Action points written by students later in the year are often too general to be of any use in helping them raise their standards.

17. The college's internal verification procedures successfully ensure that assignments and assessment activities meet the awarding bodies' criteria and that students' work is assessed to a consistent and fair standard. Common documentation is used and the process is well co-ordinated. External verifiers' and moderators' reports are scrutinised by senior management and responded to promptly. Course guides are issued to students and describe the pattern of assessment and the appeals procedure. A cross-college assessment calendar is published with deadlines to avoid overloading students at particular times.

18. The college does not evaluate the quality of assessment in its self-assessment report. The college-wide assessment policy does not contain minimum quality standards for the frequency, marking and return of work. Not all subject areas have formulated standards and some curriculum inspectors noted unhelpful variations of practice within programme areas. Most teachers set assignments regularly and return them promptly with helpful comments that indicate how to improve. There is exemplary marking of work in art and design, with copious comments to help raise standards.

19. The college provides a wide range of academic and general vocational courses from foundation to advanced level for students aged 16 to 18. Equal value is given to different types of courses. Around 600 students use transport provided by the college, some of them travelling for as much as an hour to reach the college. The college is a popular choice for students. The curriculum is reviewed each year and changed in response to students' needs. For example, a range of national diploma courses is being offered for the first time this year. Flexible programmes allow students to choose from a wide range of options. Around 100 students are studying combinations of courses at levels 2 and 3. The college provides good opportunities for progression to FE and HE and employment from courses at all levels. The strong partnerships with local schools and universities benefit students. The sports academies offer students a good range of opportunities to succeed in football, basketball and cricket. For example, three students have won soccer scholarships at American universities this year. Nine students have been selected to play for the North East British Colleges representative squad.

20. In addition to their main studies, students can choose from a comprehensive range of enhancement activities. These include sporting and cultural activities as well as outdoor pursuits, overseas exchange visits, community service, young enterprise and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's award. Some 450 students are already taking part this year. Students in humanities, and visual and performing arts benefit from cultural and commercial visits and overseas links. For example, geography students have undertaken a study visit to Morocco; performing arts students take part in local arts events and the college production. Students on vocational courses undertake work experience and other students are encouraged to take part. Last year, 277 students took part in work placements. In business, the effective links with employers enrich students' experience and learning.

21. The development of students' key skills is seen as an integral part of their learning. All students are encouraged to develop their skills in communication, application of number, IT and the three wider key skills through their main studies and attendance at additional workshop sessions. Co-ordination and organisation are good. Greater priority is given to providing students with opportunities to achieve a high grade pass in GCSE English and mathematics.

22. The college makes good arrangements for students to familiarise themselves with the college at open days and taster days. This year, as part of the college's commitment to widening participation, it arranged for a group of students from one of the lowest achieving schools to visit their former school to talk about college life and the courses available. All prospective students are given an interview at which an initial choice of course is made. Schools are asked at the admissions stage to

draw the college's attention to any vulnerable students. Students receive good advice at enrolment from impartial and well-informed staff. Subject specialists and careers advisers are available to assist students who are uncertain in their choices.

23. There are very thorough arrangements for the initial assessment of individual learning needs. All students take a diagnostic test in communication. Students for whom English is not their main language have their needs for support carefully assessed. The needs of students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities are identified through the admissions process and through the close links with schools. Subject-specific needs are assessed by a variety of exercises set by teachers during the four-week induction period when all students also assess their study habits and their preferred ways of learning. Personal tutors discuss the outcomes of these assessments with students and agree an individual learning plan with each student. Appropriate support is quickly put in place.

24. The college has strong learning support systems for the substantial numbers of students who have low prior attainment. The focal point for most out-of-class support is the study centre which promotes its service as 'learning support for all students in a flexible working environment'. This inclusive approach has encouraged students to have a very positive perception of the centre and there is very good take up of the services offered from students on all course levels. Only eight students declined the offer of help last year. Each subject area offers timetabled subject workshops or one-to-one sessions in the centre. A high level of additional support is provided for GCSE English and mathematics, including an Easter revision school. All foundation students are timetabled for sessions in the centre which help them develop the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported. The college currently supports 76 students with dyslexia and 17 with other specific needs. All college staff have had recent training in how to work effectively with these students. The college's own evaluation of the support indicates its effectiveness in retaining students and in contributing to their success. For example, 97% of students receiving support in English in 2003/04 completed the course. Last year, 29 boys from minority ethnic backgrounds who were at risk of underachievement were supported by a community worker in a project that was successful in retaining 24 of them and helping many to achieve their minimum target grade.

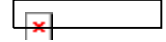
25. Students are well supported by 23 specialist personal tutors. They meet their tutor twice a week for an effective group or individual tutorial. The tutor's main role is to help the students manage their learning successfully. Relationships are friendly and supportive and tutors know their students well. Tutors monitor attendance closely, investigate rigorously the reasons for unacceptable levels of absence and inform parents/carers at an early stage. For students on level 3 courses, the group tutorial programme also covers the syllabus for AS-level and GCE A-level general studies. The topics chosen often raise moral and social issues and support the college's commitment to promoting a culture of respect and parity of esteem for all members of the community. In a session on morality and religion, students engaged in thoughtful and respectful discussion of values within the Muslim and the Christian faiths. The programme for students on foundation and intermediate courses covers similar topics and the supporting material is adapted well to suit their needs. These students are particularly well supported and achieve well.

26. Students have a wide range of staff to which they can turn for support with personal issues. The centrally located guidance and welfare team offer an open-door confidential service that is well used by students. Contraception and sexual health services are provided on-site weekly by the primary healthcare trust. Good links have been established with external agencies. Very few of the college staff have professional qualifications in counselling, but appointments can be made with a counsellor within a week. All personal tutors and guidance staff have received appropriate training about child protection issues.

27. The college's careers guidance and education service is successful in raising the aspirations of students and supporting their applications to employment and FE and HE. Some 73% of level 3 students achieved places at university in 2003/04, an impressive figure in light of their prior attainment. Parents are invited to a HE information evening and also have a valuable opportunity to make an individual appointment with a careers adviser. Students have easy access to a very well-resourced careers library, including specialist software packages. Destination data is collected,

analysed and used to inform future guidance.

Leadership and management



28. Leadership and management at Huddersfield New College are good. Governors, the principal and senior managers provide excellent leadership. The mission gives the college a role that is inclusive, catering for students with widely differing abilities. Approximately one third of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the number of students from deprived areas has risen to 31%. Analysis of the students' entry qualifications for level 3 courses place the college in the bottom 10% of sixth form colleges nationally. The curriculum offer is carefully planned to meet the needs of these students. The policy to start the majority of level 3 students on four AS-level courses even when they have the minimum entry qualifications requires students to work very hard. Students perform considerably better than the predictions based upon their entry qualifications. However, the number of students who drop one AS-level subject is high, leading to a retention rate at level 3 that is below the national average for sixth form colleges.

29. The college has grown by over 40 percentage points since the last inspection in 1999. The accommodation has been much improved. The weaknesses identified then included poor access for students with physical disabilities, an inadequate replacement policy and poor sports facilities. All of these have now been addressed. The failure of strategies at that time to lead to better pass rates in some GCE A-level subjects has also been dealt with successfully.

30. Senior managers work in an open and consultative manner. Staff and governors are well informed. The heavy workload of some senior staff is being addressed by the introduction of a new middle management tier. Roles and responsibilities are well understood. Staff support enthusiastically the mission of the college. The strategic objectives are translated into operational objectives that form the basis for college and programme area plans. The college has effective links with external bodies. There is a good working relationship with the local LSC. School links are well developed. Links with industry and commerce are good and used to enrich the vocational courses with work experiences for both students and staff.

31. Financial management is very good. A course-costing model is used effectively. Many capital projects have been well managed leading to a pleasant, modern site with good access for all students. Staff utilisation is very carefully monitored and controlled. The average class size during inspection was 14.3, which compares favourably to the national average for sixth form colleges of 13.1. The retention and pass rates along with high average class sizes and good management of physical and human resources result in good value for money.

32. Curriculum management is good. The areas inspected have been judged as good or better. English and visual and performing arts are outstanding. Team spirit is high in all areas; teachers and support staff work well together. The quality of team meetings and their minutes vary considerably from one programme to another. Planned actions are not always carried out. There is early intervention where students are at risk of not achieving their potential. The central management information system is excellent. It supplies reports for external bodies accurately and on time. Staff have access to the information they need and use it extensively to monitor students' progress, set targets for students, courses and the college. It is also very well used for tracking students' qualifications, updating targets and keeping students informed of their progress.

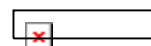
33. The quality assurance framework is good. It is applied assiduously and has led to valuable and generally accurate subject self-assessment reports. Annual performance review meetings inform each programme's development plan. A training and development plan meets the needs of individuals, groups of staff and the college's strategic priorities. Priorities include the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning and management training for middle managers. However, as identified in the last inspection, there has been insufficient evaluation of the impact of the training.

There is a three-tier lesson observation scheme. The least formal is observation by peers, which leads to considerable discussion of teaching methodologies. Observation by line managers and by an external group of observers forms the basis for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. The college-wide, self-assessment report is accurate, but does not make sufficiently clear judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.

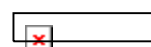
34. Governance is effective. Members of the board have contributed greatly to the mission and the strategic objectives of the college. Their expertise is used effectively. They have an objective view of the performance of the college. A firmly held view of the inclusive nature of the college leads them to be justly proud of the success of the students. There is a very good working relationship with senior and middle managers. However, there are few formal links with teaching staff or students. The last skills audit of the governors took place in early 2002, whereas best practice suggests it should be carried out every year. As identified in the last inspection, there is no formal identification of their training needs. There is no record of training for governors in the college's training and development plan.

35. The college is inclusive and promotes equal opportunities well. The policy is comprehensive and has supporting policies on, disability, race equality and harassment. Action plans for the implementation of the Race Relations (amendment) Act and SENDA are well established and used. There has been considerable training for staff in these areas. The proportion of staff from minority ethnic groups and their distribution through management compares well with local and national figures. The careful analysis of students' achievements by minority ethnic groups and gender indicates that there is little difference between the outcomes for these groups. Facilities for prayer and religious worship have been in existence for some time. However, the facilities for ablution have not been sufficient. The college, along with external support from the Muslim community, is converting a classroom so that these needs are fully met. There is much support from senior and middle managers. This along with an active Christian Union ensures that the legal requirements for religious worship are met.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on GCSE mathematics courses
- very good pass rates on GNVQ intermediate science course
- very good progress in relation to prior attainment on GCE A-level and AS-level mathematics and AS-level chemistry courses

- much good teaching

- effective use of ILT in science lessons

- very good access to science and mathematics courses at all levels.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level environmental science

- poor retention rates on AS-level chemistry, AS-level physics and AVCE double award science courses.

Scope of provision

36. There is a wide range of provision in science and mathematics. There is a science unit on the foundation GNVQ course. At level 2, there is vocational and academic provision including the intermediate GNVQ science course and GCSEs in science, biology and mathematics. At level 3, a full range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses is offered in both science and mathematics. There are currently 432 students studying on GCSE mathematics courses, 126 on level 3 mathematics courses and 268 on science courses.

Achievement and standards

37. Overall retention and pass rates are good. Pass rates on the GCSE mathematics course have been well above the national average for the last three years, with pass rates at grades A* to C of 50%, 52% and 57% compared to a national average in 2003 of 42%. The very good retention and pass rates on the intermediate GNVQ science course have been above the national average for the last three years. Progress in relation to prior achievement is outstanding on AS-level mathematics and AS-level chemistry courses, with value added measures which put the college in the top 10% compared with similar colleges. However, pass rates in AS-level mathematics have declined during the past three years from 100% to 77%, which is 2% above the national average.

38. Pass rates are poor on AS-level physics and environmental science courses, below the national average for the last three years. Retention rates on the AVCE double award science course have been below the national average for the last three years, at 60%, 56% and 36% compared to a national average of 79%.

39. Students' work is generally of a satisfactory standard in relation to their learning goals. In most lessons good learning takes place, however, students do not always consolidate previous work. Personal and learning skills are developed through a variety of activities which include individual and group work, problem solving and carrying out practical and research activities. Attendance during the inspection week was very good, at 91%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics grades A* to C	2	No. of starts	251	238	269
		% retention	74	82	79
		% pass rate	50	52	57
GNVQ intermediate science	2	No. of starts	16	*	18
		% retention	94	*	94
		% pass rate	93	*	94
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	57	47	75
		% retention	56	89	80
		% pass rate	100	93	77
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	16	28	34
		% retention	100	96	94
		% pass rate	94	93	97
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	*	24	24
		% retention	*	96	92
		% pass rate	*	83	100
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	40	47	43
		% retention	88	74	74
		% pass rate	51	80	78
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	21	30	22
		% retention	95	100	100
		% pass rate	100	83	91

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

40. There is much good teaching. Effective use is made of ILT in science lessons for demonstrations to the whole class. Physics students studying capacitors watched discharge curves plotted on the board using a digital projector and data logger connected to the circuit. In one outstanding biology lesson, a data logger and spirometer were used to plot a graph showing the tidal volume of a student's lungs on the board. In these lessons, all students were able to see easily what was happening and this facilitated learning. Staff and students show a good awareness of health and safety issues. In most lessons, there is planned differentiation to support the most able students. In mathematics lessons, there is effective explanation of topics by the teacher followed by students working individually on problems with good one-to-one support from the teacher. Learning is checked by question and answer sessions, but this does not always include all students and some of the lessons lack variety.

41. There is some ineffective lesson planning. In some lessons, the objectives are not shared with the students, or the teacher writes them on the board but does not refer to them. Many lesson plans do not give timings, and in a number of lessons the teacher runs out of time at the end. The review of these lessons is consequently rushed, with students preparing to leave for the next lesson and the

teacher telling, rather than asking, the students what they have learned.

42. Staff are well qualified and experienced and their relationships with students are very good. Technical support for science is exceptionally good. Resources for science and mathematics are good. ILT resources are readily available and are used effectively to aid learning. Mathematics classrooms and science laboratories are spacious with good displays of students' work and useful information on the walls providing a pleasant working environment. A good range of material is available for students to access in a virtual learning environment. This includes revision notes, crosswords, videos of practical exercises and suggested websites for further study. The library has a good range of texts for mathematics and science and science periodicals are available.

43. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Academic progress is monitored through regular homework and tests. Students report that homework is returned promptly, but the amount and quality of written feedback is variable. The internal moderation system on vocational courses is good. The external verifiers' and moderators' reports show that no action was required to improve the assessment. Students' attendance is carefully monitored and absence is followed up. Parents are informed promptly when a student's attendance or behaviour gives cause for concern.

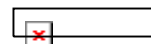
44. The provision in science and mathematics is very flexible and meets the needs of students. For example, students may take GCSE and AS-level mathematics as either one-year or two-year courses. Students studying AS-level chemistry and AS-level physics who have lower grades in GCSE double award science on entry are offered the opportunity to study higher-level GCSE single subject science courses in parallel with their science courses.

45. Support and guidance for students are good. During most lessons, teachers provide good one-to-one support to students, both when carrying out practical exercises and when working individually on problems. Students' progress is carefully monitored and those experiencing difficulties are offered extra help in the study centre. Not all students take advantage of this help, but those who do achieve better grades. Additional revision classes are available in most subjects before examinations. The students are very positive about the help they receive.

Leadership and management

46. The management of science and mathematics courses is good. The performance of different student groups is carefully monitored. A wide range and style of courses has been developed to meet the needs of students. The self-assessment reports are accurate, although there is a lack of focus on weaknesses in teaching and learning. Although informal discussion takes place, there is little formal sharing of good practice in teaching. Shared worksheets, ILT presentations and schemes of work are available to all staff.

Business and economics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on vocational courses

- good teaching

- strong academic and pastoral support for students

- effective industry links on vocational courses

- inclusive curriculum range.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level business in 2004 and in AS-level economics

- insufficient differentiation in some lessons.

Scope of provision

47. Most of the 419 students studying business courses are aged 16 to 18. The business team offer AS level and GCE A levels in business and economics and vocational awards at three levels. At the time of inspection, there were approximately 120 students studying AS-level business. Advanced-level vocational courses include the single and double award AVCEs and a national diploma. Foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses provide progression opportunities to advanced level.

Achievement and standards

48. Pass rates for vocational courses are high. In the last three years, pass rates on the foundation and intermediate GNVQ and the AVCE double award courses have all been well above national averages. GCE A-level business pass rates are close to the national average. However, pass rates on AS-level business fell sharply in 2004 and AS-level economics courses show a declining trend to 38% below the national average in 2004. Retention rates on the majority of programmes are at or close to the national average, with the exception of economics courses, where the rates for the smaller numbers of students are below the national average. Students make good progress. For example, 83% of foundation students progressed to level 2 courses and 79% of level 2 students moved on to level 3 in 2004. Students make better progress than predicted from their prior attainment.

49. At the time of inspection, attendance was very good at 91%. Students are punctual, rarely miss lessons, and are well motivated. In the first few weeks of their course, students can confidently use business vocabulary and grasp key concepts. On the foundation course, students showed good comprehension of the different functions of business organisations and were able to perform accurate calculations to prepare profit summaries. In a finance lesson, level 3 students used different techniques to appraise a variety of investment opportunities.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business and economics, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation business	1	No. of starts	33	32	36
		% retention	85	97	81
		% pass rate	100	94	100
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	36	24	38
		% retention	94	88	87
		% pass rate	85	100	94
AVCE single award business	3	No. of starts	18	27	36
		% retention	56	33	67
		% pass rate	90	56	100
AVCE double award business	3	No. of starts	41	31	27
		% retention	61	55	59
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	70	70	69
		% retention	96	97	93
		% pass rate	91	96	95
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	134	129	120
		% retention	80	88	82
		% pass rate	93	89	68
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	23	33	*
		% retention	87	85	*
		% pass rate	80	75	*

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

50. Teaching is good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and carefully constructed to allow students to work in groups, in pairs and independently. Teachers attend to the specific needs of their students, and students show good recall of previous learning. A variety of lesson activities sustains interest. For example, in the first few minutes of one lesson, students enjoyed a domino game to help them review their knowledge of key business terms. In another lesson, level 3 students produced job applications in silence, worked animatedly in groups, applying previously learned theory to select the most appropriate candidate, then moved back to their places and contributed confidently to a final plenary session. Students make presentations to the whole class which builds confidence and develops communication skills. Teachers regularly praise students for their efforts. Lesson objectives are always clearly shared at the beginning, but the ends of lessons are often rushed and opportunities to test the achievement of the learning objectives are sometimes missed. Differentiated activity is clearly recorded on lesson plans, but not always effectively implemented. Questions often test recall rather than extend understanding. The teaching team are already working on strategies to address this.

51. Teaching takes place in large, bright classrooms. The whole area is enlivened by attractive displays in rooms and on notice boards in the corridors. Students make good use of a well-stocked library with up-to-date texts, periodicals and journals. There is ample access to computers outside

lessons and notes of lessons are available online. In some classrooms, there is no modern technology for teachers' use. Staff are well qualified and regularly attend appropriate training. New teachers appreciate the availability of good, shared lesson resources.

52. Monitoring of learning is very thorough. At the end of a four-week induction period, an assessed piece of work is used to identify individual students' learning needs. Students' progress towards their target grades is rigorously reviewed by subject teachers and personal tutors. One-to-one reviews with personal tutors twice a term keep students on track. Staff make good use of online management information that includes a full history of every student. Any student whose progress gives cause for concern is referred to the study support centre by subject tutors. Students often identify their own needs for support and they value the extra help they receive. Parents are kept well informed. Students' progress is rigorously monitored by gender and ethnicity. Staff are currently working on strategies to improve the performance of Pakistani males.

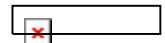
53. Robust support for students is a strong feature of the business curriculum area. The induction period allows time for students to confirm their choice of course. Guidance on preparing university or job applications is very good. Several business students have gained employment through job vacancies advertised in the college's careers centre. Students are extremely appreciative of the personal support they receive from their teachers.

54. There are excellent opportunities for students with low prior achievement to join and succeed on business courses. On vocational programmes, in particular, there is a much higher representation of students of minority ethnic heritage than in the college as a whole or the local area. The curriculum is enriched by strong links with employers in local organisations and a programme of conferences, study visits, day trips and overseas visits. All vocational assignments are set in the context of local business organisations. A small group of business students is taking part in a young enterprise programme.

Leadership and management

55. Three programme leaders give good curriculum leadership. A strong team of staff work collaboratively to deliver the business curriculum. New staff benefit from being part of this enthusiastic and highly motivated team. They meet regularly to discuss students' progress. Detailed minutes are kept, widely circulated and shared on the intranet. The self-assessment process is thorough and most judgements are accurate. Good use is made of students' feedback and improvements have been made to course structure and timetabling as a result. Very good use is made of data and management information. The team have diligently analysed the reasons for the drop in pass rates at AS level and have strategies in place to address this. Staff value the senior management's open door policy and are well informed on strategic issues.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Contributory grade for music and media courses is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in art, media, drama and performance studies

- very good achievement in most subjects

- outstanding and very good teaching

- high standards of practical work in art and design, drama, music technology and performance studies

- good management of all courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most AS-level courses

- poor soundproofing in performing arts area.

Scope of provision

56. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art, graphics, media studies, film studies, performance studies, dance, drama and theatre studies, music and music technology. For students who do not have sufficient GCSEs for AS level and GCE A level, there are GCSE media studies and the recently introduced first diploma in performing arts. There are 643 students currently studying on art and design, performing arts, and media and film courses. The majority of these students are aged 16 to 18 and all are studying full time. There are 183 art and design students, 201 performing arts students and 259 media and film students.

Achievement and standards

57. Achievement is very good. There are high pass rates for most GCE A-level and AS-level subjects. Retention rates for AS-level subjects are low. Pass rates and the percentage of high grades achieved for GCE A-level art and design have been consistently high. Students make good progress relative to their prior achievement, except in music and music technology. Pass rates for GCE A levels in performance studies and drama have improved significantly. For GCSE media, higher grade passes in 2004 are below the national average. Progression to HE specialist study is very good in art and design; most students go on to a foundation in art and design diploma course or directly to HE. Progression to HE from performing arts and media is satisfactory.

58. Standards of work are high. In art and design, much of the work is developed from primary sources and the study of the work of other artists and peers. Line drawing is sensitively observed, with a lively development of images using textile collages, colour and print. Students have produced some outstanding art work which is celebrated in well-designed displays throughout the college. Media and film students produce well-presented analytical written work and printed materials using appropriate computer software. Video production work by media students demonstrates satisfactory awareness of camera movement and editing skills, but is limited in its creativity. GCSE media students are too dependent on demonstrating what they know and can do through essays, which restricts their opportunity to undertake more practical investigations. In art and design, drama, dance and music the work is very disciplined. Students enjoy themselves and give very thorough

responses to the challenges set by teachers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art * includes graphic design	3	No. of starts	63	63	127*
		% retention	84	75	76
		% pass rate	100	100	99
AS-level media	3	No. of starts	126	122	139
		% retention	83	86	81
		% pass rate	93	93	96
AS-level drama	3	No. of starts	24	28	34
		% retention	71	75	76
		% pass rate	94	86	100
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	31	39	36
		% retention	94	95	92
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	55	79	73
		% retention	95	97	97
		% pass rate	98	99	99
GCE A-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	32	29	21
		% retention	97	93	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

59. Teaching is very good and some is outstanding. In the outstanding and very good lessons, teachers in all areas are confident about their subject and are particularly expert in the use of demonstration. In one drama lesson, students identified for themselves key points in Lorca's *Yerma*. Sight-reading skills were well developed and students were able to act out the scene for the first time and develop the atmosphere for that scene. The teacher moved appropriately in and out of role. In a media studies lesson, students were required to deconstruct posters for 1950s science fiction films. The task was clearly identified and required a full use of media studies terminology. In art and graphics teaching, the staff team work closely together. The approach is structured, and processes and ideas are clearly explained allowing students to be inventive and lively in their work. Students work with very good application.

60. Specialist resources are good. The accommodation is generally of a good standard, particularly in the recently opened IT centre where media lessons take place. The studios for art are quite cramped with heavy furniture. The lack of space restricts the scope to do large-scale work. There is a good range of computers with specialist software. Art and design staff have devised good electronic materials to support a new course in digital photography. Performing arts and music spaces create a professional working atmosphere. There are several recording studios and a well-equipped spacious theatre called The Boilerhouse. However, sound from one area intrudes on the learning in the adjoining spaces affecting the quality of learning throughout the area. Teachers are experienced and use their professional subject skills in their teaching. Many of them have links with arts practitioners which they use to good effect. Technical staff contribute to team planning and

provide good support where it is required.

61. Assessment is rigorous, leading to students being aware of the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve. In all subjects, target setting helps to motivate and maintain the commitment of all students. In art, there is a very careful approach by teachers to check the consistency of marking. Media teachers provide written formative assessment, ensuring that students have a clear understanding of terminology, scope and structure. Parents are informed of the progress of their son/daughter formally, but they are also kept aware of achievements or problems when these arise.

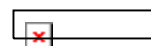
62. The range of GCE A-level and AS-level courses offers students choice and depth. The first diploma in performing arts (acting) has been recently introduced for students who do not have sufficient GCSEs for AS level. Performing arts and music students have good access to additional subject activities. Visits are made to theatre productions regionally; local arts events and students participate in the college production. Art students have an enriching programme of visits to exhibitions.

63. Students are motivated to work with commitment and self-discipline. This is assisted greatly by the good working relationships with subject and personal tutors. In art and design subjects, students use drop-in sessions to either catch up or extend their work. Music technology students also have additional time to help develop their music theory knowledge. Students value the individual support they can call on if they need advice, support or counselling.

Leadership and management

64. Curriculum management is good in each of the three programme areas. Staff value the support that they get from their managers. There are effective processes to inform them about the issues and priorities of the college. New staff are well supported and are part of strong teams in each area. Resources are shared. The self-assessment process is effective. Team meetings are held regularly and assist managers to identify emerging issues. There is, however, a lack of clear action for reviewing the performance of students on GCSE media studies.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE A-level classical civilisation and government and politics, and history

- good student achievement based on GCSE attainment

- good teaching and learning

- good monitoring of student progress

- extensive subject support

- broad enrichment programme.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AS-level law and classical civilisation

- insufficient challenge for the most able students.

Scope of provision

65. The college offers GCE A-level and AS-level courses in medieval and modern history, government and politics, classical civilisation, law, geography and GCSE law. There are currently 508 enrolments on these courses. There are 226 enrolments for GCE A-level and AS-level law and 122 for history. Geography has 84 enrolments with smaller numbers in classics and government and politics.

Achievement and standards

66. Pass rates are consistently very high in AS-level classical civilisation, government and politics and GCE A-level history. In most other subjects, pass rates are improving. The proportion of high grades achieved is below the national average. Overall achievement is good when compared to prior GCSE attainment for all GCE A-level subjects and most AS-level subjects. Retention rates are satisfactory in most subjects, but they are low in AS-level law and classical civilisation.

67. The standard of students' work is good. Many students produce written work of high quality. There is good general level of understanding for students of all abilities. Some students' oral and written work shows a profound understanding of the subject matter. During discussions, students are able to think laterally and to use information in a variety of circumstances for possible, probable and actual outcomes. For example, in law, students played the role of civil jurors in high-profile libel cases. This engendered argument and analysis of each situation and an assessment of each case on its merits. Students are well motivated in lessons. Attendance is very good, punctuality is satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level classical civilisation	3	No. of starts	20	17	20
		% retention	80	71	75

		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	131	108	122
		% retention	76	82	76
		% pass rate	47	92	81
AS-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	15	*	28
		% retention	80	*	93
		% pass rate	67	*	96
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	63	64	102
		% retention	83	88	92
		% pass rate	92	89	82
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	38	53	70
		% retention	87	92	96
		% pass rate	91	90	96
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	28	38	32
		% retention	100	95	88
		% pass rate	86	100	100
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	27	40	42
		% retention	100	98	93
		% pass rate	96	100	95

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

68. Much of the teaching is good or better in all subjects. Lessons are well planned. Teachers hold the attention of the students and often stimulate and inspire them. In lessons, question and answer sessions are handled sensitively. When planning the range of activities, students' different learning preferences are often taken into account. Students in a geography lesson used investigation and evaluative techniques as they studied earthquakes and plate tectonics. This enabled them to assess risk factors and understand the concepts. In a classical civilisation lesson, one student group tackled the intricacies of the Julio-Claudian dynasty as an introduction to Roman Imperial history. The work was challenging and students wrestled with complex family relationships which required use of logic, concentration and analysis to understand and explain the family developments. However, more able students are not always presented with the opportunity to pursue differentiated and challenging work. The self-assessment report for the area identifies this as a focus for development, but there is little evidence of extension materials, accelerated learning and extra activities for these students. Material is available in the resource centre, but is not referred to during lessons. ILT is used extensively in geography teaching and provides a good aid to learning. Video clips, newsreels and graphics are used effectively. Politics students use information and communications technology (ICT) for their project work, but in other subject areas teachers rely on handouts and overhead projectors and miss opportunities to enhance learning further with technological aids.

69. Resources are satisfactory for all subjects. Each subject area has a small number of resources. The library holds a reasonable stock, with a good range of periodicals and relevant press reports on major events. Some library stock is old and the usage record indicates that apart from law, it is not used frequently. Classrooms are suitable for their purpose. Displays in most rooms include students' work. In a few instances, the displays have been in place for some time and are not always relevant.

70. Work is marked thoroughly. Cover sheets provide helpful comments on areas for improvement. This is not standardised across subjects and some teachers provide greater detail than others. Work is handed back promptly and each subject has a thorough homework policy which is applied consistently.

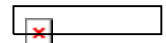
71. Students' progress is monitored rigorously in a well-documented support system. A detailed reporting process involves an assessment of progress against targets and an action plan. This is sufficiently robust as a follow-up to review. Communication is good between tutors, subject teachers, curriculum leaders and the study centre. Each subject area provides good academic support and this is enhanced by the work of study centre staff. Pastoral support for students is good and students find their tutors approachable and helpful. Careers and HE advice is good.

72. Students comment favourably on the range of courses. This includes two history courses, and the opportunity to study classical civilisations and to work in a vibrant politics department. Through the broad enrichment programme students take part in residentials, field trips, visits and conferences. Key skills are integrated within each subject and are well organised.

Leadership and management

73. The management of humanities subjects is good. Teaching staff are appreciative of the 'open-door' policy of senior managers and feel that they are able to influence developments. There are excellent working relationships with curriculum managers. Each area is organised efficiently and there is a strong sense of commitment and dedication to achieving high standards. Curriculum organisation and planning is thorough. Communication is good. Staff contribute to the self-assessment process and make a careful assessment of necessary actions. For example, the self-assessment report for law is thorough, structured and detailed. It is realistic and addresses the issues as well as identifying the strengths. Geography records of meetings have clearly ascribed actions which are time constrained and monitored. Students' comments are taken account of in planning. The principles associated with diversity and equality for all are understood and implemented.

Social sciences and health and social care



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

Strengths

- outstanding achievement in health and social care and GCE A-level psychology
- excellent academic support for students with low prior attainment
- very well-structured learning in health and social care
- good learning materials.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rates in GCSE and AS-level psychology and GCSE sociology in 2004
- insufficient challenge for most able students in psychology and sociology.

Scope of provision

74. GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in psychology and sociology. In health and social care, there is provision for the intermediate GNVQ and the single and double award AVCE in health and social care. There are 540 students studying in this curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

75. There are outstanding pass rates in health and social care and GCE A-level psychology even though students have significantly lower prior attainment than the national average. Pass rates for GCSE and AS-level psychology and GCSE sociology in 2004 are unsatisfactory. The pass rate has improved in AS-level sociology in 2004, but retention rates are low. Several courses, including the AVCE single award, lose a significant number of students during the year, but a large proportion of those who complete their course gain merits and distinctions. Many students go on to HE.

76. Students develop good collaborative skills in their group work and help support each others' learning. GCE A-level psychology students who were working on essay planning showed a good grasp of the topic on relationships. Sociology students make good contributions to debate and discussion. Health and social care students work with good application. Much of the work in health and social care is good.

77. Many students have poor note-taking skills. Much work in files is poorly stored, untidy and not easily accessible for revision. Students generally arrive punctually to lessons. They are very positive about the college and their course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences and health and social care, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	21	25	16
		% retention	81	87	87
		% pass rate	47	50	33
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	*	24	23
		% retention	*	75	83
		% pass rate	*	94	100
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	233	216	254
		% retention	80	86	83
		% pass rate	88	79	74

AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	116	99	133
		% retention	74	84	75
		% pass rate	66	72	90
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	93	120	109
		% retention	95	98	91
		% pass rate	98	97	100
Advanced single award health and social care	3	No. of starts	18	*	32
		% retention	39	*	63
		% pass rate	100	*	100

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

78. Teaching is well planned and includes an appropriate range of classroom learning activities. Some of the teaching is dynamic and exciting. In a GCSE sociology lesson, students read out 'raps' illustrating different reactions to racial prejudice. They then studied photographs before engaging in a stimulating debate about their own experiences of prejudice. In a GCE A-level psychology lesson on the evolution of theories of intelligence, students were provided with an excellent range of resources and worked in carefully planned groups on different theories. Regular feedback to the class was required and at the end of the lesson groups had to e-mail their findings to the teacher to print out for next lesson. However, it is often several weeks before students are required to produce any written analysis and by this time some of their awareness and understanding has been lost.

79. Teachers provide a great amount of support for students with low prior attainment through additional teaching in the study centre, informal tutorials and revision lessons prior to the exams. However, there is less awareness of the need to provide extra challenge and pressure for the most able. In health and social care, the development of the skills necessary to produce assignments is very well structured so that all students are helped to become independent learners and to achieve their potential. Health and social care students have well-planned work experience built into their course. They enjoy this time and their reflections upon it are built into their next assignment. The quality of the handouts provided in sociology and psychology is excellent, but students' over-reliance on them limits the extent to which they develop good research skills. Teachers give appropriate guidance on examination techniques and provide opportunities for students to practise these skills. Regular, timed essays are a particular feature in psychology lessons.

80. Classrooms are of an appropriate size, well equipped and contain stimulating and relevant displays as well as examples of students' work. The health and social care rooms are equipped with computers which students use as a normal part of their learning. This is not yet the case in psychology and sociology, although students are referred extensively to use Internet sites. The psychology and sociology section of the study centre is well equipped with paper-based resources including handouts, student guides, reading and Internet sites and relevant articles from periodicals. Computer-based materials are less developed.

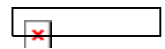
81. Students generally receive helpful feedback on their work with constructive suggestions as to how they can improve. Teachers always seek to be positive and encouraging in their assessments and they do this well in psychology and sociology while still setting standards appropriate for the course. The verification of coursework in health and social care is thorough. The GCSE and intermediate provision provide valuable routes into level 3 work for students.

82. Course induction programmes are much valued by students. Teachers and tutors work closely together to help students with learning or personal problems and to follow up poor attendance or failure to complete their work.

Leadership and management

83. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are well aware of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and they work together effectively to resolve them. However, low retention rates are still an issue on some courses. Curriculum managers set good examples in the classroom and give clear guidance to their teams on teaching strategies and schemes of work. Equality of opportunity is generally very well addressed in the curriculum, but three quarters of the students are female. Teachers in sociology and psychology are very conscious of this and are reviewing their practices to encourage more male applicants. Most students in health and social care are female. Formal lesson observations take place annually and informal peer observations with feedback supplement this. Regular team meetings take place, but it is not clear that procedures are in place to ensure that issues are fully followed through.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Contributory grade for modern foreign languages is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- outstanding achievement of high grades in GCSE English

- very effective teaching

- very good progression from level 1 English courses to advanced level programmes

- very good levels of subject and pastoral support for students

- good achievement based on prior GCSE attainment on most GCE English courses and Spanish.

Weaknesses

- insufficient differentiation for students of high ability

- low pass rates in French and German

- no provision in French and German at levels 1 and 2.

Scope of provision

84. Most students are aged 16 to 18. There are currently 26 students on foundation level English courses and 263 students on English GCSE courses. Some 72 students are on combined English language and literature courses at AS level and 47 are on combined English language and literature at GCE A level. English language currently has 100 at AS level and 49 students at GCE A level. English literature has 63 students at AS level and 36 on GCE A level. In Spanish, there are 8 students on GCSE courses, with 19 students on AS-level courses and six on GCE A level. There are 40 students on GCE A-level and AS-level French courses. German has 10 students at AS level and 5 at GCE A level.

Achievement and standards

85. The college encourages all students to achieve GCSE English and mathematics in line with government policy. Achievements for GCSE English are outstanding. They show an improving trend and are currently 24% points above the national average. College data show that results and retention rates over the last three years have been around the national average for AS-level and GCE A-level English. However, there are low and declining pass rates in French and German.

86. The majority of students make very good progress. Value added calculations show that a good proportion of students of English and Spanish achieve better grades than predicted. The majority of students on GCE A-level courses go into HE on completion of their studies.

87. There is very good progression from level 1 to level 3 in English. Some 79% of students continue to GCSE from foundation and of these 68% achieve a GCSE pass at grades A to C; 44% of these continue to advanced study.

88. Most students studying English demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Many participate enthusiastically in class work and use appropriate technical vocabulary with ease and fluency to explain and describe their work. Most students demonstrate an excellent awareness of appropriate register for both written and oral expression. Listening skills continue to be developed through team-working exercises.

89. Students in language classes are generally making good or satisfactory progress. Most students show a good understanding of their target language, both written and spoken. However, their speaking skills are generally less well developed.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English language 1 year	2	No. of starts	236	239	260
		% retention	85	81	88
		% pass rate	45	67	79
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	115	75	97
		% retention	86	83	86
		% pass rate	90	95	90
AS-level English	3	No. of starts	58	56	53

literature		% retention	81	84	89
		% pass rate	96	96	96
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	23	21	17
		% retention	96	86	88
		% pass rate	86	83	67
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	*	41	43
		% retention	*	95	95
		% pass rate	*	100	95
GCE A-level English language (B)	3	No. of starts	67	63	56
		% retention	93	94	93
		% pass rate	92	100	100
GCE A-level English literature (A)	3	No. of starts	26	25	41
		% retention	96	96	98
		% pass rate	100	100	98

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

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

90. Teaching and learning are very good. Schemes of work in both English and languages are well constructed, and most are used very effectively as working documents. Many teachers of English and languages make particularly good use of the whiteboard, often using schematic and diagrammatic notes to aid students who learn visually. Teachers have a very good awareness of different learning styles, and often incorporate pertinent kinaesthetic, phonic, dramatic and visual devices in to lessons. This keeps students fully engaged and helps them to reinforce their learning in the most appropriate way. Teaching styles are very well matched to the needs of the group. Teachers know their students well, are aware of how they learn, and ensure that their lessons reflect this. Teachers often personalise the learning to help their students to relate to it better. For example, in an English literature lesson on First World War poetry where poetry was being compared and contrasted with letters, a student brought a series of personal letters between members of her family, including the last letter her great-grandfather wrote to her great-grandmother before he was killed in action. This was followed by a lively class discussion allowing students to express extremely complex and mature responses to the materials. Many lessons are very well managed, facilitating active participation without allowing any one group or individual to dominate.

91. Some language lessons give students little opportunity to expand on their oral skills in an experimental way. In these lessons, most spoken contributions are answers to teachers' specific questions. Students' errors in grammar and pronunciation are not always corrected immediately. However, students work with language assistants to address these errors. There is insufficient use of the target language in some lessons, especially with individual students. In some English and languages lessons, some students finish tasks ahead of others and are left with nothing to do while their peers complete exercises. This is not the case with Spanish, where there is very good differentiation and individual students are always addressed in Spanish individually in the most appropriate and challenging way.

92. Staff in both English and languages are well qualified and competent. Classrooms are well equipped for teaching and include a language laboratory. ILT is used in both English and languages. Students have access to the Internet and the college intranet. Additional exercises are available for students on the intranet. Library resources are kept up to date. There are good resources such as books in Braille for students with disabilities.

93. Assessment practice is good; students know their starting point and the progress they are making. There is much good feedback to students. Students are well able to map their progress against examination criteria and understand exactly what they have to do in order to achieve. Work is thoroughly and sensitively marked in both English and languages. The college has good strategies for ensuring that students who miss lessons can catch up with minimum disruption.

94. There are very high levels of subject and pastoral support in both English and languages. Students attend the study centre and members of staff frequently give up their time to help them further. Performance coaching takes place outside college hours to help students reach their potential. In English, teachers maintain close contact with parents and carers, not just to follow up problems, but also to celebrate success, for example, when students are always punctual or when they produce a good piece of work.

95. There is a very good range of courses in English and Spanish. There is no provision at level 1 or level 2 in French and German. A minority of students join AS-level languages courses with low or no GCSE passes.

Leadership and management

96. College courses are administered effectively and efficiently. Curriculum management is very good in English and satisfactory in languages. The self-assessment report correctly recognised most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in inspection. There are some good strategies for sharing good practice, both through formal meetings and training events, and informally between staff. The college is particularly good at supporting students with disabilities or with particular needs, and the ethos of lessons is very inclusive.

Part D: College data

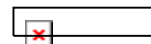
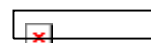


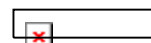
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	2	0
2	14	12
3	83	88
4/5	0	0
Other	1	0
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	718	24	13
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	145	2	3
Business administration, management and professional	359	9	6
Information and communication technology	286	4	5
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	290	2	5
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	104	0	2
Visual and performing arts and media	661	7	11
Humanities	2,345	55	41
English, languages and communication	717	16	13
Foundation programmes	38	0	1
Total	5,663	119	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	175	91	83	*	*	*
	Retention rate %	83	87	87	*	*	*
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	90	96	97	*	*	*
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,026	930	934	19	*	*

	Retention rate %	83	79	81	79	*	*
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	95	94	96	93	*	*
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,161	3,935	4,365	52	74	85
	Retention rate %	68	81	80	46	54	75
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	78	82	85	79	83	83
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

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

Sources of information:

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

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

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)	78	22	0	71
Level 2 (intermediate)	77	23	0	13
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	4
Totals	78	22	0	88

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