



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Mid Kent College

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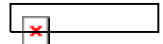
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Basic information about the college

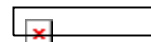


Name of college:	Mid Kent College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Jane Jones
Address of college:	Horsted Centre Maidstone Road Chatham Kent ME5 9UQ
Telephone number:	01634 830633
Fax number:	01634 827007
Chair of governors:	Denis Turner MBE
Unique reference number:	130726
Name of reporting inspector:	Peter Nelson HMI
Dates of inspection:	28 February-4 March 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



Mid Kent college is one of seven further education (FE) colleges in the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) area covering Kent and Medway. The college has three main centres: Oakwood Park in Maidstone, Horsted at Chatham and City Way in Rochester. A new building was opened in September 2004 at the Maidstone centre and there are plans to relocate the two Medway centres on to a single new site by 2007.

The college has a budget of £25 million and, in 2002/03, enrolled nearly 17,000 students. Of these, 4,616 were aged 16 to 18, of whom 70% were full-time students. Of the 12,373 adult students, 75% were studying part time. Some 6% of students were of minority ethnic origin, higher than the local profile, where 4% of residents are from a minority ethnic background.

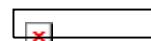
The college provides programmes in all 14 areas of learning. The areas of learning with the highest number of guided learning hours are construction, business administration, hair and beauty, health and social care, and visual and performing arts. Work-based learning is largely concentrated in construction, engineering, business, and hairdressing. The college has a mobile learning service which provides short training courses at employers' premises and in rural and isolated community venues throughout Kent and Medway.

The college is situated in two areas of Kent: Maidstone and the Medway Towns. Whilst both have areas of deprivation and of prosperity there are, between the two, some distinct features in terms of socio-economic characteristics, industries, employment patterns, cultures and local authorities.

The Medway area is governed by a unitary authority and has a population of around 250,000. Its economy, traditionally associated with heavy industry and the Armed Forces, declined in the 1980s and early 1990s. Now, falling as it does within the Thames Gateway region, considerable investment in the region has begun and more is planned. There has been a shift towards the service sector which now accounts for 72.4% of all jobs in the area. The unemployment rate in Medway is 3.2%, higher than the South East's average of 2.7%. In 2001, the take-up rate of higher education (HE) in Medway was one of the lowest in the country prompting government investment in the area through the Universities for Medway project which comprises the University of Kent, Greenwich University, Canterbury Christ Church University College and Mid Kent College. Medway, like neighbouring Kent, operates a system of selective education at 11-plus and there are 6 grammar schools within the authority.

Maidstone is generally a prosperous area. It has a population of just over 136,000. The town is Kent's largest office centre and a major location for business, consultancy and professional services. The borough of Maidstone has 4,500 businesses, most of which are small and medium-sized enterprises with 82% employing fewer than 10 people. The town is ranked in the top five shopping centres in the South East. There are, however, pockets of social deprivation. Two wards in the south of the town are placed in the top 10% of deprived wards in England. There are 12 schools in the town including 4 grammar schools. Most of the high schools have sixth forms although some are very small. In 2003, 55.6% of school leavers in Kent Local Education Authority (LEA) obtained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at A* to C.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors graded the quality of provision in 10 curriculum areas and 4 work-based areas. Inspectors judged the provision to be good in one curriculum area, satisfactory in eight curriculum areas and unsatisfactory in one curriculum area. The quality of work-based learning was unsatisfactory in all four areas inspected. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high retention and pass rates for adults

- good development of students' practical skills

- good specialist facilities in some areas

- strong and effective links with schools and employers

- good personal support for students

- good strategic partnerships and planning.

What should be improved

- the quality of teaching

- accommodation at the Medway campuses

- assessment practices in some areas

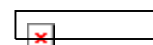
- the rigour of quality assurance processes at course level

- management of work-based learning

- o the monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities practices.

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

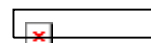


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Satisfactory. Students develop good practical skills in lessons. There is a broad range of high-quality equipment, good technician support and good individual support for students. There are low pass rates on many advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Students' attendance is unsatisfactory and the accommodation at the Horsted centre is unsuitable for small group work in science.
Construction	Unsatisfactory. The contributory grade for electrical installation is satisfactory . The contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory . There are high pass rates on levels 1 and 2 in plumbing and level 1 electrical installation courses, but low pass rates on the national diploma in construction, and national vocational qualification (NVQ) in carpentry and joinery, as well as low framework achievement of apprenticeships. There is much unsatisfactory and uninspiring teaching. There is a broad range of courses, with good internal progression opportunities. Assessment practices are unsatisfactory and there is some ineffective management of college-based and work-based provision.
Engineering	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory . Retention and pass rates are high on level 1 motor vehicle and national certificate in engineering courses, but there are low and declining retention rates on some level 2 courses, and low framework achievement of apprenticeships. There are good specialist workshop facilities, strong and effective links with local employers and schools, and good tutorial support for students. There is, however, too much unsatisfactory teaching, poorly developed internal verification processes, lack of rigour in self-assessment and unsatisfactory management of work-based learning.
Business, management and professional	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory . There are high pass rates on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) business, GCE A-level business and word-processing courses, but low pass rates on accounting programmes, AS-level and advanced vocational certificate of

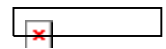
	education (AVCE) business. Framework achievement of apprenticeships are is low. There is a broad range of provision, which benefits from good additional learning support. Planning of lessons to cater for students' individual needs and access to information and learning technology (ILT) are insufficient; there is weak management of work-based learning.
Information and communications technology	Good. There are high pass rates on many full-time vocational courses with students making good progress relative to prior attainment. The quality of teaching on full-time programmes is high and the department is focused strongly on strategies to achieve ongoing improvements. Insufficient access to resources adversely affects learning at times.
Hospitality, sport and travel	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on many courses but low pass rates on AVCE travel and tourism, with low and declining retention rates. There is good development of professionalism on NVQ programmes and good individual support for students. However, there is insufficient challenge to students' learning in theory lessons and inadequate monitoring of quality within the provision.
Hair and beauty	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for beauty therapy is good . The contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory . The retention rate is very high on NVQ level 1 hair and Indian head massage and there are very high pass rates on NVQ levels 2 and 3 in beauty therapy, however, framework completion for work-based learners is unsatisfactory. Students produce a high standard of practical work in beauty therapy and there is good support for students. In some lessons, there are insufficient resources relative to the group size, and unsatisfactory assessment practices. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory.
Health, social care and public services	Satisfactory. There are high retention rates on childcare and public services courses, and high pass rates on childcare and level 2 counselling courses. Retention and pass rates are low on some level 1 and level 3 courses. There is good promotion of current vocational practice and good support for students. Some classroom activities are managed poorly. The standard of accommodation at the Horsted campus is unsatisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory. Retention rates in media and performing arts are unsatisfactory. Students produce a good standard of practical work in performing arts. There is a high standard of specialist equipment and accommodation, and a broad range of appropriate full-time courses. There is insufficiently challenging and stimulating teaching in some lessons which fails to engage students fully.
Foundation	Satisfactory. There is good progression for supported learning students. Accommodation and resources available in the key skills centres are good. However, there are poor pass rates on key skills communications, and application of number at levels 1 and 2. There is insufficient differentiation in key skills lessons, and ineffective use of individual learning plans in assessment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

How well is the college led and managed?



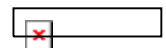
Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and managers provide a clear strategic direction for the college. Communication is good. The college has been successful, through its partnerships with schools, employers and HE institutions, in providing an appropriate range of courses to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student community. The college has made good progress in addressing many of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. However, weaknesses in students' achievements, in the quality of teaching and learning on some courses and in quality assurance at course level persist. The college's self-assessment report was produced as a result of extensive consultation within the institution, but resulted in the college overestimating the quality of its provision in five of the areas inspected. The college's arrangements for promoting and monitoring equality and diversity are unsatisfactory. The financial management of the college is good. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



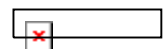
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. It provides an appropriate range of programmes which cater for local priorities. In particular, the college has significantly expanded its provision at entry level and level 1. There is a large, successful Increased Flexibility (IF) programme for pupils aged 14 to 16 and a wide range of link courses with schools. Provision for employers and adults at work is good. The college responds well to meet local employers' training needs and has achieved 'Action for Business' college accreditation. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive satisfactory support. However, the college's failure to provide adequate plans and monitoring arrangements makes it non-compliant with its responsibilities under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA).

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Effective information and guidance processes ensure that students are recruited to appropriate courses. The quality of induction programmes varies between different areas of learning. There is a good programme of additional support available for students who require help with literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, physical disabilities, or for whom English is a second language. Few part-time students receive an initial assessment to identify additional support needs, however, students are made aware of additional learning and personal tutorial support is available. Group tutorials are not always planned well. Parents receive timely information of students' progress. Careers education is satisfactory.

Students' views of the college



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

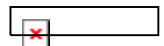
What students like about the college

- being treated as an adult and valued as an individual
- the teachers and their teaching
- the good support received
- meeting other students with similar interests
- family-friendly atmosphere.

What they feel could be improved

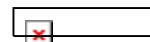
- organisation and delivery of key skills
- the quality of resources and accommodation at the Medway campuses
- course organisation and communication
- the quality and quantity of social activities.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



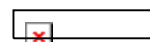
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	54	36	10
Learning 16-18	53	38	9

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. Data on students' achievements were drawn from the individualised student/learner records (ISR/ILR) for 2001/02 and 2002/03 provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2003/04. Inspectors also used additional data held by the college for work-based learning. The overall attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was 72%. Whilst this figure would normally be considered to be significantly lower than the national average for general FE colleges, severe weather conditions during the inspection had a significant impact on attendance rates during inspection week, to such an extent that the college was closed for part of the week.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at all levels are broadly in line with national averages. However, level 3 pass rates have declined over the last two years and are now 8 percentage points below the national average in 2003/04.

3. Some key skills retention rates are well above the national average, but pass rates are low. For example, in 2003/04, the pass rates on level 1 application of number and level 3 communications were 9 percentage points below the national average; for level 1 communications and for level 2 application of number, the pass rates were 16 percentage points below the national average.

4. The standard of students' work is broadly satisfactory in most areas of learning. Inspectors observed good attainment in information and communications technology (ICT) and a high standard of technical work in motor vehicle maintenance competitions. Practical work is good in holistic therapies. However, in art and design, students' drawing skills are underdeveloped.

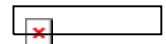
5. The completion of apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Of the 283 advanced apprentices who have started since 2001/02, only 20% achieved the full framework, 59% left without completing the full framework and 21% are still in learning. Of the 720 apprentices who have started since 2001, only

13% completed the full framework, 57% left and did not gain the full framework and 30% are still on the course. In particular, few apprentices achieve the key skills element of their framework. More than a third of learners on NVQ programmes leave without achieving their qualification. Of the 127 learners who started NVQ courses since 2001, only 37% achieved their NVQ, 28% are still in learning and 35% left without a qualification.

Adult learners

6. Retention rates for adults on level 3 long courses and most short courses have remained consistently above the national average between 2000/01 and 2003/04. For level 3 long courses, retention rates were approximately 9% above the national average and pass rates were 11% above the national average. Adult retention rates on level 2 long courses are improving. They have improved to 7% above the national average in 2002/03. Pass rates for adults at level 2 are on average, 5% above the national rate. Retention rates for adults on level 1 long courses have fluctuated but are broadly above the national average. Pass rates declined in 2003/04 to 10% below the 2002/03 figure.

Quality of education and training



7. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 177 lessons. Inspectors judged that teaching was good or better in only 54% of the lessons observed, satisfactory in 36% and less than satisfactory in 10%. The profile is below that of similar colleges, with significantly less good or better teaching and more teaching that is unsatisfactory. Teaching was strongest in ICT and foundation programmes, and weakest in construction and engineering.

8. The profile of teaching for students aged 16 to 18 was higher than for adults. The largest proportion of teaching that was good or better was at entry level and level 3, whilst the largest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was at level 1.

9. There are detailed and creatively designed schemes of work and lesson plans for the best teaching. Teachers define clear and appropriate aims and objectives which they communicate with students as part of the lesson introduction. They ensure that work is responsive to the individual needs of students and is chosen to stimulate and motivate the group. The best lessons are designed to teach students how to learn, in particular by focusing on the development of problem solving, the use of differentiated learning styles, group work, the development of study skills, and effective classroom management. For example, in business and art and design, students have the opportunity of working on vocationally relevant assignments, drawing upon and sharing their own professional and industrial experiences to enhance the quality and context of the learning. Good use is made of ILT in science, mathematics and ICT.

10. In the weakest lessons, the teaching lacks sufficient structure and detail and is not demanding enough. Teachers set vague and unmeasurable targets and fail to provide work which is designed to capture the interest of students, build on their prior learning or cater for their individual needs. They also fail to develop students' critical and analytical skills appropriately. In some of these lessons, teachers talk too much and do not make sufficient opportunities for students to become involved in practical or group activities. Teachers do not check whether students are learning and students gain little from the lessons. On occasions, teachers' management of the lesson, and in particular of the time available, is poor. This allows students to stray from the task in hand, distract each other, and make poor use of the limited time available with the necessary specialist resources. There are also some examples, particularly in key skills lessons, where class sizes are too big relative to the number of staff available.

11. Most provision is located on the three main campuses, with a small minority of courses run in satellite centres, workplaces and community venues using mobile learning resources. Some

accommodation is good, including a new £3.8 million extension at Maidstone, opened in September 2004. Much of the accommodation at the Medway campuses is old and of a low standard. Plans are currently being drawn up to develop a single, purpose-built Medway campus on a new site by 2007. Most general teaching areas are adequate, although many are in poor decorative repair. There are some very good specialist resources including those in engineering, motor vehicle and electrical engineering. Some resources, including hospitality training areas, are drab and not up to industrial standard. There are insufficient specialist resources in some areas, including holistic therapy.

12. Each site has good learning and information resource centres with adequate stocks of a broad range of up-to-date and relevant learning materials. Curriculum managers receive good support to identify and acquire appropriate resources for existing and new courses. The college has an adequate number of computers with suitable software to meet the general and specialist learning needs of most students. On occasions, the computer network is unreliable, which adversely affects teaching and learning. Whilst the college has a number of portable data projectors and interactive display projectors, they are underused, particularly in ICT lessons. There is insufficient access to, and use of, ILT in teaching and learning in several areas.

13. There is an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff. Many vocational staff have recent and relevant industrial experience. However, there is no programme of commercial updating for full-time business teachers. Of full-time and regularly employed part-time staff, 76% hold teaching qualifications and 8% are working towards them. There are insufficient literacy and numeracy staff with specialist qualifications and insufficient work-based assessors in construction and engineering. There is a large staff development programme focused on improving teaching and learning and use of ILT. This includes good initial training and support for new teachers. This is not yet, however, having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

14. The quality, accuracy and rigour of assessment and feedback to students across the college are varied but broadly satisfactory. Most curriculum areas set clear guidelines for assessment and students are informed appropriately about assessment criteria. In most cases, assessment schedules are planned to ensure balanced workloads for students. In performing arts, there are particularly good examples of the extensive use of the virtual learning environment to increase the amount of assessment that students undertake. In construction and much work-based learning, assessment planning is unsatisfactory. The monitoring of students' assessment grades is generally satisfactory, but in a few curriculum areas students' work is sometimes over-graded. On occasions, students do not receive suitably detailed feedback on their work and insufficient attention is given to correcting spelling, grammar or punctuation.

15. There are well-established links between personal tutors and subject teachers. A review of students' progress is a standing agenda item at most team meetings. Full-time students have four individual tutorials a year at which their progress is monitored. The quality of target setting on students' individual learning plans is variable. In health and social care, individual learning plans are detailed and in hospitality and sport programmes target setting is good. In business, target setting is weak and in foundation programmes insufficient use is made of individual learning plans.

16. College policies, procedures and role responsibilities for assessment and internal verification are clear. Internal verification procedures meet awarding body requirements in most areas and action plans for improvement are monitored by management. The implementation of internal verification procedures across the college varies. There are good internal verification procedures in health and social care but, in engineering, internal verification is poor and in hospitality there is insufficient moderation of assessment. Direct certificate status was withdrawn recently in motor vehicle due to inconsistencies in internal verification practice.

17. The college offers a broad range of provision which caters well for the diverse needs of the local community, employers and local education and training priorities. Entry level and level 1 provision have been increased significantly, in response to local needs, with a corresponding reduction in level 3 provision. There is little provision below level 2 in media, sport, holistic therapies and science. In most areas, part-time and work-based learning opportunities are available for young people and adults. Most courses are offered at both the Medway and Maidstone campuses. Progression opportunities within the college to HE and employment are good, and benefit from strong local

partnership arrangements and employment links. Provision for employers and adults at work is good. The college responds well to meet local employers' training needs.

18. The college markets its provision through clear prospectuses, promotional leaflets, a broad range of open days and attendance at external careers events. It also carries out effective joint marketing with schools in Maidstone to encourage progression to FE. Images in promotional materials reflect the age range and ethnic diversity of the college. No publicity materials are produced in languages other than English.

19. The college collaborates extensively with schools. There are 307 pupils aged 14 to 16 who are studying in a wide range of vocational areas on GCSE, NVQ level 1 and entry level courses, as part of the IF programme. Achievement and progression of these pupils to FE are good. The college has established electrical installation, construction and hair design workshops on school premises in two locations. It offers vocational taster courses to approximately 380 year 10 pupils each year. A significant proportion of these then progress on to the IF programme. The college also runs short courses to increase the motivation of disaffected school pupils.

20. Enrichment activities for students aged 16 to 18 include wider key skills, study skills, careers advice, employability skills and HE progression support. An adequate range of social and charity events is organised through the students' union on each site. Many vocational courses, including those in holistic therapy, care and public services and engineering are enhanced by additional learning activities and visits.

21. The quality of advice and guidance received by students is satisfactory. There is a good telephone advice line service. College staff visit many local schools, careers events and job fairs to provide advice and guidance on courses and promote education and training opportunities to potential students. All full-time applicants are invited to attend an interview at which they receive detailed information about the college and its courses. This process assists them in making appropriate decisions about course options. Qualified initial advice and guidance staff are available on all college sites.

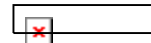
22. The quality of students' induction programmes is satisfactory. Staff utilise a well-prepared induction handbook, which offers a range of activities for staff to use with students to familiarise them with both the college and their chosen course of study.

23. The college employs 27 personal tutors to provide individual and group tutorial services. In a few cases, group tutorials were poorly planned. In 2003/04, attendance at group tutorials was low at 71%. The college runs an innovative evening tutorial service for part-time adult students which offers general support and guidance on academic and pastoral matters. In the first term of the academic year, this service was used by 116 students.

24. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to diagnose and provide additional support for students. All students aged 16 to 18 are screened to identify possible support needs. Results of this initial assessment are shared with teachers and personal tutors. All applicants identified with additional learning support needs receive further, more detailed, diagnostic testing to ensure that their particular support needs are identified accurately. For adult students, screening to identify additional needs takes place either as a result of self-referral or referral by teachers. The college provides good support to students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning support facilitators are used effectively to assist individual students in most lessons, though in a few lessons, the specialist facilitators are underused. There is good communication between support staff and personal tutors in monitoring progress for students in receipt of additional support.

25. Students have ample access to specialist counselling support if required. In 2003/04, 245 students used the counselling services and, at the time of the inspection, 129 students had benefited from access to the service during the academic year.

Leadership and management



26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Achievements are generally satisfactory for students aged 16 to 18 and are good for adults. The college has met most of its key performance targets for enrolment, retention and pass rates during the years 2002 to 2004. The college has made good progress in addressing many of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. However, weaknesses in students' achievement, in quality assurance at course level, and the quality of teaching and learning on some courses persist. The standard of teaching is below the national average for general FE colleges.

27. Until recently, the college has enjoyed a period of stability in its staffing at senior management level. However, recent changes, including the appointment of a new principal, and the college's preparations for its relocation to a new site in Chatham, mean that it is anticipating a period of significant development. Effective communication throughout the organisation has ensured that staff are well prepared for change and morale is high. Governors and managers have clear strategies for meeting local priorities. The college has successful partnerships with local schools and also HE institutions, which give a firm base for its role in the Medway Multiversity initiative. Its extensive work with local schools includes the development of vocational skills centres in Gillingham and Chatham. The curriculum has been realigned to provide increased opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 and students at foundation level while expanding provision in key vocational areas such as construction and engineering.

28. Curriculum management is mostly satisfactory. Schemes of work are generally detailed and team meetings provide an appropriate focus on students' performance. Courses performing poorly are identified through the course review process. However, operational planning is not well established. Curriculum teams have yet to establish reliable mechanisms to link strategic objectives with key weaknesses identified through self-assessment or, in too many cases, to monitor and measure the impact of their actions. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Management changes in this area, implemented at the start of the current academic year, have not yet resulted in improvements in achievement rates of apprenticeship frameworks. Responsibility for learners remains unclear and management of work-based assessment is poor.

29. The college has a well-established quality assurance system that is underpinned by its self-assessment process. Inspectors agree with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the individual curriculum self-assessment reports, but considered that the college's self-assessment grades are too generous. The inspection graded five areas of learning lower than those grades awarded by the college through the self-assessment process. All curriculum areas undertake an extensive programme of lesson observations, both to identify areas where teaching could be improved and to inform judgements on the quality of teaching and learning for the self-assessment report. The lesson observations provide useful information to inform the college's staff development and training proposals and to compare the quality of teaching by different groups of teachers and on different types of courses. The grades given by the college in its lesson observations generally agreed with those awarded by inspectors.

30. Managers' commitment to improving teaching is supported by substantial investment in staff development. The college recognises that many of its teachers are increasingly required to teach pupils aged 14 to 16, who exhibit challenging behaviour or who are entering the college with few qualifications, and it plans staff development activities accordingly. There are effective programmes to support teachers who are new to the profession or who teach for only a few hours a week. Evaluation of the impact of staff development is thorough and helps confirm that, in the majority of cases, the activities have improved the quality of teaching. Overall, however, the quality of teaching has not improved significantly since the last inspection.

31. Management information is reliable and easily accessible. Managers have confidence in the data they receive and are beginning to use data more effectively in course reviews and resource

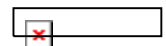
management. However, the use of data in target setting for the performance of individual courses is not well established in most curriculum areas. Procedures for monitoring the progress of staff against their identified development plans are unsatisfactory.

32. The college's arrangements for promoting and monitoring equality and diversity are unsatisfactory. It is not compliant with current race relations legislation. The equal opportunities policy awaits revision. Its associated development plan does not identify a sufficient range of actions to promote equality and has no effective procedures for measuring the impact of any actions. The value of useful policies on child protection, disability and harassment is reduced significantly by the lack of mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their impact. Although most staff have attended training on the requirements of the SENDA, the college has not produced its required action plan. The college has made reasonable adjustments to its accommodation and is beginning to make use of the data it collects about students' ethnicity, gender, disability and age. However, current surveys do not provide the college with information on the views of its students with disabilities or those of minority ethnic origin. The college recognises that the promotion of equal opportunities is given insufficient priority within the curriculum. Arrangements to monitor the appointment and subsequent career progression, outcomes from appraisal and access to staff development of teachers from minority groups are unsatisfactory. The college's child protection policy is satisfactory and was updated in January 2005. The college has two named members of staff who act as designated college nominees on child protection matters. Criminal record checks are carried out on all new staff working with young people. Most staff have received recent training in child protection issues.

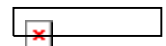
33. Governance is satisfactory. Careful selection has ensured that board members have relevant business, public sector and education expertise, as well as local knowledge and sufficient time to devote to the college. Governors have a good understanding of the strategic issues facing the college and a clear vision of how it should develop. However, governors' understanding of the academic performance of the college and their monitoring of its performance in relation to key policies, particularly those related to equal opportunities, is not well established.

34. Financial management is good. Managers and governors receive accurate and informative financial statements. The strong, centralised control of the budget has enabled the college to manage its financial position effectively. Value for money is satisfactory. The college uses a costing model to ensure that teachers are deployed efficiently, while reducing its dependence on sessional teachers.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good development of students' practical skills

- good use of technician support

- good range and quantity of scientific equipment

- good individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in the majority of AS-level and GCE A2 science and mathematics subjects

- poor attendance

- insufficient accommodation for small group work in science at Horsted.

Scope of provision

35. The college offers an adequate range of courses at levels 2 and 3, including GCSE mathematics, first and national diplomas in applied science, access to HE in applied science, AS-level and GCE A-level biology, chemistry, human biology, physics and environmental science. The GCE A-level provision is available full time and part time. There is no level 1 provision in this area of learning. There are 264 students aged 16 to 18 and 367 adults studying, of whom 416 are full time.

Achievement and standards

36. Students' achievement in science and mathematics is unsatisfactory. There are low pass rates in the majority of AS-level and GCE A2 science and mathematics subjects. However, retention rates on the national diploma in science and GCSE mathematics are above national averages.

37. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. In some subjects, students produce well-presented written work making appropriate use of IT and application of number. Science students exhibit good development of practical skills, which they use well, particularly in laboratory situations, to extend their learning. Some first diploma and GCSE science work is below the level expected of students at that stage of their course. Written, practical and oral work of other students is mostly appropriate for the level. Work available to extend the learning of more able students is not routinely available in most subjects. However, in a GCE A2 chemistry lesson, students were enthusiastic about their extended individual investigations and were keen to talk about their research and progress, which they did ably. Progression to HE is satisfactory. Attendance is low and has a negative impact on those students who attend regularly. Attendance in 2003/04 in this area of learning was low at only 64%. There has been some improvement in 2004/05 but the attendance is still low.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	250	193	186
		% retention	76	69	75
		% pass rate	29	35	44
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	38	43	37
		% retention	87	91	81
		% pass rate	55	64	50
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	24	48	46
		% retention	83	79	78
		% pass rate	45	42	58
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	26	20	31
		% retention	62	80	84
		% pass rate	38	56	62
AS-level applied mathematics	3	No. of starts	19	54	48
		% retention	68	76	77
		% pass rate	77	44	46
GCE A2 biology	3	No. of starts	24	31	26
		% retention	88	87	85
		% pass rate	57	85	64

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

Quality of education and training

38. Teaching and learning in both science and mathematics are satisfactory. Questioning is used effectively to develop understanding and to challenge and extend students' understanding. Staff make good use of ILT resources. Some have a considerable collection of well-designed resources on the virtual learning environment and, in chemistry and biology, the Scholar ILT programme is used to good effect. In science and mathematics, teachers use well-designed practical tasks and small-group work to extend students' learning. The college takes part in the Department for Education and Skill's (DfES's) mathematics Standards Unit initiative to help raise the quality of teaching and learning. This has resulted in some innovative teaching and learning methods being used by teachers. Students are generally attentive in lessons and respond positively when asked direct questions. Schemes of work for teaching are well planned and lessons are usually well organised and managed.

39. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory. Science laboratories at Horsted are of a traditional nature with large fixed benches, which tend to hinder small group work. At Oakwood Park the accommodation is good. There are subject base rooms and a good range and quantity of equipment. There is an instrument room, readily available to students, which contains specialist equipment such as ultra-violet and infra-red spectrophotometers and nuclear magnetic resonators. The rooms are well maintained and incorporate interesting displays of subject-specific posters and students' work. There are adequate IT facilities in this area, including a digital projector and a portable interactive whiteboard. There are 12 laptops at each campus that are available for loan to students, but there is strong competition for these. All staff in this area have a college laptop. Students have no problems gaining access to other IT facilities, however, on occasions, the network is very slow, hampering learning. The learning resource centre is well stocked with books and other media, and is useful to students and staff. Teachers are knowledgeable of their subject and the standards expected in national examinations. They are well qualified and over 90% have a teaching

qualification. Staff have ready access to professional development opportunities. Technician support for the area is good; it promotes good health and safety practices, maintains laboratories and classrooms in good order and provides good opportunities for students to develop their practical skills.

40. Overall, the assessment of students' work is good. Staff set homework regularly, on a weekly basis, and mark it promptly and accurately. Students receive helpful feedback. Procedures exist to identify students at risk of failure and information is passed to their personal tutor to enable support to be provided. Staff use assessment procedures effectively to inform the process of individual target setting for students. There are clear internal verification procedures in place. Teachers respond well to internal and external verification reports and develop subject and individual action plans to improve assessment. There is little use of diagnostic assessment of key skills in subject teaching.

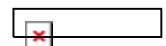
41. Formal links with schools and employers are insufficient. However, some staff maintain links with industry on an individual basis and this benefits students in their practical work. There is a very good range of enrichment activities, including trips to careers exhibitions, the forensic science conference at Nottingham university, and the study experience science conference at a theme park in Paris. The enrichment opportunities stimulate students' interest, and give students a very good insight into HE and employment opportunities. The range of different arrangements for attendance at courses enable students with differing requirements to attend college for daytime, twilight, or evening modes of study. The access to HE course in science is designed to be accessible to students with family commitments.

42. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Teachers, tutors and technician staff are very approachable and provide good support for students requesting assistance. Students have individual learning plans that are agreed and maintained by tutors, in discussion with students and other teaching staff. Knowledge of specific individual learning needs of students is not always known by individual teachers and is often not incorporated into lesson planning.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management in science and mathematics are satisfactory. All courses have well-devised schemes of work, self-assessment reports and development plans which incorporate realistic target setting. There is a good focus on driving up standards through improved teaching and learning and the development of the use of ILT in the curriculum. The science and mathematics manager carries out regular lesson observations each week. Teachers receive a full feedback and an action plan after each observation. Data analysing students' progress, relative to their prior attainment, has only been obtained recently and, as yet, has not been used effectively for target setting for individual students. Staff have a positive approach to equal opportunity and diversity but this is not promoted through the curriculum. Health and safety practices are good in laboratories. There are weekly briefing meetings for the department and each month these are longer with a formal agenda and occasionally an outside speaker.

Construction



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

Contributory grade for electrical installation is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

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

Strengths

- high pass rates at levels 1 and 2 in plumbing and on the level 1 electrical installation course
- good practical resources in electrical installation
- wide range of courses with good internal progression opportunities.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on the national diploma in construction and NVQ level 2 carpentry and joinery courses
- low retention rates on the intermediate construction award and NVQ level 2 building craft courses
- low achievement of apprenticeship frameworks
- much unsatisfactory and uninspiring teaching
- unsatisfactory assessment practices
- some ineffective curriculum management and poor management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

44. The college offers courses in carpentry and joinery, plumbing, brickwork, painting and decorating, and electrical installation. Technician courses are available in building and construction. There are also short courses for industry. Courses are run in most subjects at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The electrical programme area is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE); it meets the needs of the majority of learners and local employers and fulfils many of the CoVE criteria. Some level 2 programmes take place in community venues and attract students from a wide range of backgrounds, including some that have recently returned to learning or training. There are 1,172 students on construction programmes; 590 are full time and 582 are part time. Of the part-time enrolments, 94 are on work-based learning programmes. There are 545 students aged 16 to 18 and 590 adult students. Several local schools send pupils aged 14 to 16 to

sample construction education and training.

Achievement and standards

45. There are high pass rates at levels 1 and 2 in plumbing and on electrical installation courses. Retention and pass rates for the last three years for both plumbing and electrical courses have been at, or above national benchmarks. Notably for the level 1 plumbing course and for NVQ level 2 electrical installation course within the CoVE the pass rates for 2003/04 were 100%. However, there are low pass rates on the national diploma in construction and the NVQ level 2 in carpentry and joinery. For example, the national diploma in construction has declining pass rates over the last three years and, in 2003/04, had a pass rate of only 27% against a national average of 77%. On the carpentry and joinery NVQ level 2 course in 2003/04, none of the 43 students who started the course achieved a qualification. Retention rates for the intermediate construction award and for NVQs at level 2 in building craft courses are low. The achievements of apprenticeship frameworks for work-based learners are low. Of 151 learners, who started programmes in 2002 and 2003, 104 learners have left the programme. Only 18 have achieved the full framework and a further 26 have achieved the NVQ component of the framework, but the remaining learners are still in learning.

46. The standard of students' work, both within the CoVE and within other programme areas, is satisfactory. Practical work is completed to acceptable standards which are comparable to those expected within the industry. Students make satisfactory progress in most practical sessions, developing their hand and tool skills competently. In brickwork, however, the standard of work completed by some students is unsatisfactory. For example, excess mortar was not cleaned from wall cavities or from around the practical work, pointing was poor and walls were not checked for line and level. There are some breaches of health and safety in brickwork and in plumbing.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation, part 1	1	No. of starts	53	61	100
		% retention	55	44	53
		% pass rate	97	48	81
Certificate in plumbing, heating and ventilation	1	No. of starts	18	48	*
		% retention	83	77	*
		% pass rate	100	81	*
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	43	36	39
		% retention	49	22	5
		% pass rate	57	38	100
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	62	60	43
		% retention	50	7	0
		% pass rate	94	100	0
NVQ mechanical engineering services (plumbing)	2	No. of starts	*	56	70
		% retention	*	43	63
		% pass rate	*	71	86
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	19	18	*
		% retention	68	17	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*

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

**course not available*

Quality of education and training

47. Teaching is unsatisfactory and much of it uninspiring. Many lessons are not structured sufficiently and rarely have aims and objectives that are measurable. Lessons are not introduced, concluded or summarised effectively. Teachers do not differentiate the work to take account of the different abilities of students and, in some lessons, there is little student participation, interaction or involvement. For example, in one practical lesson, students watched a demonstration for too long without carrying out any appropriate learning activity. Learning is not checked frequently. In some theory lessons, teaching is dull and uninspiring. Teaching and learning within the CoVE are satisfactory.

48. Within the electrical installation CoVE resources are good. Workshops are well stocked with a wide range of specialist tools and equipment. The activity bays are well designed and allow training and assessment to take place in a realistic environment. Workshops and stores are well managed and controlled. A good achievement measurement 2 (AM2) test centre has been developed and is now operational. Resources within the other subject areas are generally satisfactory, however, in brickwork, there are insufficient suitable areas to allow bricks to dry out prior to their reuse.

49. Assessment practices are unsatisfactory. Assessment planning in many areas is inadequate and comprehensive assessment and internal verification plans lack required detail. This has also been identified and highlighted to the college by awarding body external verifiers in some subject areas. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace, especially in the building craft programme areas. Links between on-the-job and off-the-job training and assessment are poor. Monitoring and recording of assessments is not well established in some areas, especially for work-based learners. For example, there is no effective system for tracking framework component completion for learners. Systems that are in use for tracking and monitoring are not used effectively to plan future assessment. Key skills assessment is variable across the area and is monitored poorly for work-based learners. The standard of assessment that is conducted is satisfactory and fair, and results are recorded.

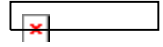
50. There is a wide range of courses with good internal progression opportunities. Many construction courses are offered across foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. There are good links with several local schools that send pupils aged 14 to 16 on construction taster courses. The courses are taught at various locations across all three main college sites and also within satellite centres. These centres effectively serve the needs of the communities where they are based.

51. Support for students is satisfactory. Effective working relationships are established between staff and students, who speak highly of the friendly, helpful and supportive staff. There are satisfactory support services in place, including a careers adviser and a number of learning support facilitators. Help is available for students who require learning support.

Leadership and management

52. Management of the electrical installation CoVE is satisfactory, but across the area of learning leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Quality assurance systems are not well established. Course files and records are not effectively monitored or audited, or kept at an appropriate standard across the subject areas within construction. Communication within course teams is ineffective. Staff have little awareness of targets at course level and there are insufficient opportunities for all staff to meet and share good practices. There is poor resource management in some areas and some poor health and safety practice. The self-assessment reports do not recognise sufficiently the significance of the weaknesses identified and many are not rigorous. For example, little effective evaluation or judgements are made about work-based learning. The management and co-ordination of work-based learning are very weak. Roles and responsibilities of staff are not clear to staff or learners. Systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress are inadequate and target setting is limited. Learners and employers do not have a sufficient understanding of the requirements of apprenticeship frameworks.

Engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for level 1 motor vehicle and national certificate courses

- good specialist workshop facilities

- strong and effective links with local employers and schools

- good tutorial support.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates on some level 2 courses

- low achievement of apprenticeship frameworks

- too much unsatisfactory teaching

- poor internal verification processes

- lack of rigour in self-assessment of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

53. Engineering provision is located across three college sites. Craft courses are run at City Way in Rochester, electronic and hardware courses at Horsted in Chatham and motor vehicle courses at Oakwood Park in Maidstone. Courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3 with adequate progression opportunities to HE. Programmes cover manufacture, process, electrical, electronic, hardware, motor vehicle and sound engineering. Adults represent about a third of enrolments and most students are on part-time programmes. Apprenticeship programmes are run in engineering production, motor vehicle repair and vehicle body and paint operations. School link programmes include the GCSE in engineering as well as level 1 craft courses. At the time of the inspection there were 675 students on college-based courses and 85 work-based learners. There were 99 pupils aged 14 to 16.

Achievement and standards

54. Pass rates are high on most courses, but retention rates are low on some. Retention and pass rates across level one provision increased to well above the national average in the last three years. Retention rates on national diploma courses decreased to below the national average whereas retention rates are high for adults on level 3 courses. Pass rates have decreased over the last three years across level 3 courses and for adults on level 2 courses. The achievement of full frameworks for apprentices is poor. Of 131 learners enrolled on apprenticeships between 2000/01 and 2002/03, only 14 have achieved the full framework within the planned duration. Key skills achievement has been poor although recent changes for motor vehicle students have resulted in significant improvement.

55. Students are well motivated and produce a high standard of written and practical work. There is good development of skills in the workplace and portfolio work is often well presented. There has been some success for motor vehicle students in national competitions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 4100/6956 motor vehicle servicing and repair	1	No. of starts	38	49	42
		% retention	71	84	83
		% pass rate	78	95	100
First diploma in engineering	2	No. of starts	*	28	24
		% retention	*	86	63
		% pass rate	*	75	87
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	**	23	26
		% retention	**	39	92
		% pass rate	**	78	83
City and Guilds 4100/6956 motor vehicle servicing and repair	2	No. of starts	**	15	39
		% retention	**	73	36
		% pass rate	**	100	93
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	80	72	75
		% retention	76	78	72
		% pass rate	95	96	91
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	34	32	54
		% retention	56	66	46
		% pass rate	79	62	76

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

*course not available

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

56. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning. In the weaker lessons, there is little challenge, group tasks are briefed poorly and there is little checking of learning. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate high curriculum expertise, use question and answer techniques well to check learning and set clear learning objectives. In the less effective lessons, there is poor lesson planning, with schemes of work that lack detail. There is little evidence of teachers setting work in lessons which takes account of the different needs of students or of the use of ILT to aid learning. Teachers sometimes use the experience of students to good effect to amplify points they have introduced. The enthusiasm of some teachers is reflected in the contributions students make in their lessons and in their overall progress. In a lesson on vector diagrams, simple models were used to good effect with diagrams developed for applications of increasing complexity as the lesson progressed. Poor attention to health and safety was observed in a motor vehicle practical lesson. Despite poor weather during the inspection, attendance in lessons was close to the national average of 79%. Records show that attendance is normally significantly better than this.

57. Specialist resources are of high quality in many areas. There are impressive workshops and classrooms in the new facility at Oakwood Park. Workshops at City Way and Horsted are well equipped and fit for purpose although many classrooms are shabby. Support given to students in workshops during practical lessons is good. The allocation of rooms is sometimes inappropriate. For example, students studying communications were observed producing technical drawings in a room that was not equipped for the purpose. A large class was timetabled for a theory lesson in a laboratory adjacent to a connecting classroom without partitioning; the level of noise and its impact on learning was distracting to students. Staff are well qualified with most having a teaching qualification and relevant vocational experience, and many holding assessor awards. Library resources are generally good although there are some outdated texts at the City Way site. There are some examples of unsatisfactory attention to health and safety practices. For example, a cable trailed across a walkway in one lesson and a student operated a motor vehicle ramp without regard to the presence of others in the vicinity.

58. There is good assessment practice and thorough monitoring of progress both for college-based and work-based learners. Students are issued with an assignment schedule at the start of their course and these are also displayed on bulletin boards. Key dates for the submission and return of assignment work are included in schemes of work. Assignment return dates are sometimes negotiated with students. Assessed work is returned within agreed periods with generally supportive and detailed feedback. Teachers make effective use of a computer-based system for tracking students' progress. Thorough and frequent work-based reviews take place, although outcomes are sometimes recorded poorly. There is some unsatisfactory internal verification in both college and work-based learning. Poor assessment practice in the motor vehicle area has resulted in the withdrawal of certification. Some good practice is now in place but this is a recent development. There is little evidence of observation of the assessment process. In some areas, there is no formal internal verification plan and meetings are often not recorded suitably.

59. There is a broad range of appropriate courses and progression opportunities for full-time and part-time students from entry level to HE. Links with local schools are good. Motor vehicle and practical engineering courses are offered as well as the vocational GCSE in engineering. These attract large numbers of pupils aged 14 to 16 and provide them with a valuable progression route to other college courses. There are excellent links with local employers and the curriculum offer is influenced by their needs. For example, a collaborative approach has been used to develop specialist national certificate units in paper manufacturing which have gained national accreditation. There is regular and effective communication with employers. Enrichment opportunities are used well to enhance the learning of students and develop their key skills.

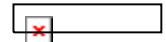
60. Students are well guided and supported. Effective initial assessment is used as a base for

learning plans. Students are tested to identify additional support needs and key skills levels on entry. However, some students are made to work on key skills at an inappropriately low level. There is good tutorial support for full-time students and, in some cases, for part-time students. Female students are encouraged to join engineering programmes and are, additionally, allocated a female tutor from the vocational area. The effectiveness of additional support arrangements is mixed although diagnosis of need and take up are good.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory but managers have recently identified a number of key issues that need to be addressed. Their strong focus on students is evident in the response to surveys and the involvement of students in the course review process. Improvement strategies have been initiated and are beginning to have an impact. For example, the motor vehicle national diploma course is now partly taught at a motor sports centre. This has attracted national attention and has been well received by students. In-year retention rates are showing improvement. Project work around such themes as buggy racing has been introduced into the curriculum in order to stimulate students' interests. The lack of clear responsibility for the management of work-based learning is beginning to be addressed. There is a positive approach to the need for, and management of, change. Detailed action plans are in place to address recent problems associated with internal verification in some areas. Although the departmental self-assessment reports acknowledge some of the issues surrounding work-based learning, they are not reflected in the area of learning self-assessment report. There is confusion over the management structure of work-based learning.

Business, management and professional



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GNVQ business programmes, in GCE A2 business and in word processing

- good development of students' personal and business skills

- broad range of provision

- good use of additional learning support in lessons.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on accounting programmes, at AS level and in AVCE business

- low achievement of apprenticeship frameworks

- insufficient planning for individual needs of students

- insufficient access to ICT

- weak management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

62. The college provides a broad range of full-time and part-time courses across the business and professional area. There are good progression routes from foundation to advanced and higher levels using a range of modes of study, including day-release, part-time day and evening, and flexible learning. Vocational full-time courses are offered in business and administration. Specialist part-time courses include marketing, personnel, legal studies, accounting, purchasing and management. Specialist medical and legal secretarial programmes are run on a modular basis. Access to HE pathways are offered in business studies and teaching. There are 308 students aged 16 to 18, mainly on full-time courses, and 1,319 adults, mainly on part-time courses. There are 62 learners on work-based programmes following apprenticeships in accounting and administration.

Achievement and standards

63. Pass rates are high on foundation and intermediate GNVQ business courses, GCE A2 business, legal secretaries' certificate, certificate in personnel practice and word processing. Pass rates are below national averages on the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) law diploma, certificate in administration, AS-level and AVCE business and on all levels of NVQs in accounting. Achievement on apprenticeship programmes has been poor for learners starting programmes between 2001 and 2003, at around 15%. Pass rates for NVQs at levels 2 and 4 in work-based learning are low at 35%, but satisfactory at level 3. Pass rates for key skills are low. Retention rates on most courses are broadly in line with national averages and are high for Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), AVCE, secretarial and GNVQ courses.

64. Many students produce work of a high standard. Management and professional students present detailed and thorough assignments on work-related issues. They discuss and compare work practices knowledgeably. The standard of NVQ portfolios is high for work-based learners. Full-time students are well motivated and demonstrate good skills in group work and individual research. They are competent in the use of IT. Assignments are well presented, but insufficient attention is given to accuracy in language, and to report structure. Students are confident in contributing to discussions in lessons. Many students on part-time courses progress to higher level courses in accounting, management and secretarial skills. Progression to HE by full-time students is low at only 5%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
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GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	47	33	33
		% retention	72	94	82
		% pass rate	65	90	93
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	99	73	50
		% retention	80	74	74
		% pass rate	72	87	49
Legal secretaries certificate	2	No. of starts	75	84	68
		% retention	96	81	88
		% pass rate	94	96	92
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	63	68	80
		% retention	79	90	88
		% pass rate	64	61	37
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	69	67	73
		% retention	93	94	77
		% pass rate	59	71	68
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	44	22	40
		% retention	95	100	93
		% pass rate	60	68	24

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

Quality of education and training

65. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned with a suitable range of activities to engage and motivate students. In the best lessons, teachers use up-to-date examples to illustrate business concepts and enable students to develop research and analytical skills. Students develop good personal and business skills. GNVQ students undertake an extensive project where they run a cruise company. This interesting and challenging project helps to develop a wide range of teamwork and office skills. Teachers make good use of questioning to check and reinforce learning. Teachers on management and professional courses skilfully facilitate high-level debates and the sharing of workplace practices and expertise. Work-based learners quickly become confident in their job roles as their communication and teamwork skills develop through effective on-the-job coaching and training. One accounting apprentice runs training sessions for local community organisations on how to complete computerised claims for regeneration and other funding. Full-time business students develop financial and organisational skills through innovative business projects linked to local industry. In the weakest lessons, teachers fail to plan work which meets the needs of individual students and it is not always demanding enough. For example, in one lesson students were repeating tasks that were already familiar to them in their jobs. Lessons do not always build on previous learning and students' progress is slow. There is insufficient use of ICT.

66. Resources are satisfactory. Access to all buildings is good for students with restricted mobility. Accommodation is adequate, but drab. The learning resource centres on all sites are well stocked with a good range of learning materials. Access to computer facilities is inadequate. Few rooms are equipped with smart boards or digital projectors. Software and computers are unreliable, although technician support is good. E-learning is in the early stages of development. Some information is available on the college's virtual learning environment for full-time students but has yet to be developed for part-time students. Staff are appropriately qualified. Although many part-time staff have up-to-date commercial experience, there is no programme of commercial updating for full-time staff.

67. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Assignments are appropriate and work is set and marked with timely feedback that indicates how students can improve their performance. Assessment is systematic and planned at appropriate times throughout the year. Assignments are challenging and based on real business issues. Portfolios for work-based learners in administration contain a wide range of diverse evidence. Short-term assessment planning is good on administration NVQs. The internal verification and moderation process is satisfactory and meets the needs of awarding bodies. Individual learning plans for work-based learning are inadequate. There is insufficient target setting for full-time students. Parents' evenings are held for full-time courses but employers who sponsor part-time students receive information on trainee progress only on request.

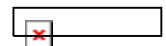
68. Full-time students have an appropriate range of business-related enrichment activities which are integrated within their courses. Visits to local companies form the basis of an AVCE assignment. AVCE students produced the programme for the Mayor's Ball. All administration students have work experience, which prepares them well for employment.

69. Additional learning support is good. Following thorough initial assessment, appropriate support is provided by learning facilitators in lessons for full-time students. In most cases, there is good liaison between the teacher and the facilitator. Good individual support for key skills is provided in the workplace for apprentices by a visiting key skills teacher. The group tutorial programme for full-time students is relevant and comprehensive. The personal tutor process is not effective in maintaining close communication with teachers and timely follow-up of issues of attendance and progress. Part-time students do not receive tutorials except by personal request.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Internal communication is good. There is a regular cycle of meetings at team and management levels. Staff make little use of management information for monitoring and planning. Management of work-based learning is weak. Roles and responsibilities for work-based learning are unclear and there is insufficient ownership of work-based learning by departments. There is insufficient planning and co-ordination of the various parts of apprenticeship programmes. Teaching of key skills is effective. Equality of opportunity is not actively promoted or monitored, but is reinforced in work-based learning progress reviews. Students have a basic understanding of their rights and responsibilities and feel protected from bullying and harassment. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Good practice is shared by staff teaching on similar programmes offered across the various sites. Staff are involved fully in the self-assessment process. Internal lesson observations help raise the standard of teaching.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on full-time vocational courses

- good teaching on full-time vocational courses

- students making very good progress

- strong departmental focus on improvement.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory resources adversely affecting learning

- insufficient links with local industry

- ineffective use of support staff.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers an appropriate range of full-time and part-time courses. These include courses aimed at professional IT users and practitioners, generally on a full-time basis. Other departments provide courses for more traditional user qualifications on a part-time basis such as computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). There are also short ICT courses designed for industry and customised courses for employers. Flexible opportunities for studying are available at the learning shops in Horsted, City Way, and the two outreach centres, Westree Learning Centre in Maidstone and Brompton Barracks in Chatham. The college also operates mobile learning units, providing ICT training in the community and the workplace across Kent. There are 448 full-time and 261 part-time students. Of the full-time students, 354 are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

72. Achievement is high and the majority of students are successful. Students make good progress, relative to prior attainment. Full-time students, particularly those on vocational courses, have high pass rates and the number of higher grades is above the national average. GNVQ foundation students achieve well and, for the last three years, all students who have completed the course have passed. Students on the AS-level and GCE A-level courses achieve pass rates above national averages, but retention rates on these courses, although they have shown recent improvement, remain below national averages.

73. The standard of students' work is high. Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma students demonstrate good research skills when looking for information on networks and incorporate their results effectively into Powerpoint presentations. Second year AVCE students gain a good understanding of subjective and objective testing when evaluating identity cards they produce. Key skills are integrated successfully with the students' main course. GNVQ foundation students show very high levels of achievement. For example, in one lesson, students were competently installing printer drivers and setting up printers on computers constructed in the department. Students have a good attitude to work and, although weather conditions were difficult during the inspection, attendance at lessons was inline with the national average and most students arrived punctually.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	44	33	39
		% retention	80	79	82
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Certificate for IT users	1	No. of starts	*	163	300
		% retention	*	87	83
		% pass rate	*	69	64
ECDL	2	No. of starts	396	516	249
		% retention	55	76	66
		% pass rate	53	84	70
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	79	79	49
		% retention	80	81	86
		% pass rate	86	80	95
AVCE (double award) in ICT	3	No. of starts	54	74	74
		% retention	65	54	66
		% pass rate	100	93	98

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

*course not available

Quality of education and training

74. Most teaching is good, well planned and responsive to the needs of individual students. Teachers encourage and support students well. They are good at identifying students' needs and intervene well to help students solve problems. Teachers manage students well using a mixture of firmness and good humour, ensuring that students remain productively engaged. Students' learning is good. They are interested, enthusiastic and motivated, working well together and making useful contributions during lessons. Teachers have a broad range of appropriate technical skills, a good knowledge of their subjects and make good use of the limited range of teaching aids. Where available, the data projectors and interactive whiteboards are used well to support teaching and learning. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of methods to maintain students' interest and ensure that all students understand new topics. In these lessons, students work with interest and perseverance and make good progress. In a GNVQ foundation lesson, students demonstrated a broad range of competences, using a digital camera to take pictures, transferring the image files to a computer, modifying the images using a graphics package and integrating the results into a display poster.

75. Some aspects of resources are unsatisfactory. There are enough qualified and experienced staff and the good professional development of staff contributes to their effectiveness. Operating systems and applications software meet current industrial standards, but there are significant weaknesses with the hardware. The computers crash without warning and the network is unreliable. These two factors lead to students losing their work. The accommodation does not provide a suitable setting for teaching and learning. Many rooms do not have appropriate chairs, and the lack of ready access to data projectors and interactive whiteboards limits learning opportunities and contributes to some unsatisfactory teaching practice. Good ILT is available, but the poor network limits its effective use. The college has a variety of adaptive technologies and all students can participate fully in their

courses.

76. Assessment and monitoring practices are good. Assessments are marked accurately and an appropriate number validated internally. Good verbal and written feedback is provided to students to help them improve the quality of their coursework. Students' work is monitored effectively on full-time courses and teachers develop good individual learning plans that are informed by initial assessment. There is some good use of data on the AVCE course, but assessment information, including the analysis of performance of different groups of students, is rarely used to guide course and programme development.

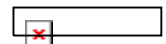
77. Full-time students have the opportunity to follow an appropriate range of courses, but the part-time courses do not include current interests such as digital imaging, web design or computer maintenance. Students have good opportunities to broaden their experiences and enhance their personal development through a variety of extra-curricular enrichment activities, such as trips to theme parks, including a theme park abroad, and the local bowling alleys. Programmes of work take little account of community and employers' needs. There are some visits to local employers for level 3 students, but there is no work experience on vocational ICT courses.

78. Support for students' personal and academic needs is good. Initial assessment is thorough. Impartial guidance, provided by the prospectus, open evening and induction week, enables students to choose and verify that they are on the appropriate course for their needs. Individual learning needs are diagnosed accurately and students have access to effective additional support throughout their studies. Through their personal tutor, students receive effective support to help them to complete their course, including access to specialist support services. There is insufficient emphasis on careers education and guidance. Support is sensitive to factors such as gender, race and ethnicity.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course team leaders keep their course files up to date and the annual course reviews have meaningful action plans for improvement with target dates for completion. However, quality assurance and management decisions are based rarely on a full analysis of the available data. Staff work well together and good practice is recognised and shared. There is a clear focus on raising teachers' effectiveness through a programme of continuous professional development. All staff are encouraged to update their professional qualifications. Although support staff perform a useful function in most lessons, their input is not well planned and, as a result, support staff sometimes have little to do and their expertise is underutilised. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Most lessons use good non-stereotypical examples to reinforce learning. Adaptive software and hardware are available to support the specific learning needs of students.

Hospitality, sport and travel



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- good development of professionalism on NVQ programmes

- good individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on the national diploma in sport and exercise science
- low and declining retention rates on the AVCE travel and tourism course
- insufficient challenge to learning in some theory lessons
- inadequate quality monitoring within the provision.

Scope of provision

80. The college provides a small range of courses in hospitality and catering from level 1 to level 3. NVQ programmes are available in food preparation and cooking and food service levels 1 to 3. Provision of part-time courses is narrow. The range of sports courses includes national diploma in sport and exercise science, national diploma in sports development and fitness, and a first diploma in sport. Travel and tourism courses are offered in AVCE travel and tourism, NVQ travel services, International Air Ticketing Agency (IATA) external examination and the certificate in travel. Additional qualifications include food hygiene, sports coaching awards and travel agency certificates. Good links exist with local schools. Year 10 pupils attend a range of short taster sessions and year 11 pupils work towards recognised qualifications in hospitality, sport or travel. Some are recruited to full-time courses on leaving school. There are 405 students aged 16 to 18 and 114 adults in this area of learning. The majority of students are on full-time courses. There are 6 apprentices in hospitality and catering.

Achievement and standards

81. Pass rates are high on many courses. On NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking and NVQ level 2 travel services, pass rates have been consistently high for the past three years. Retention rates on most courses are inconsistent. Retention rates on the AVCE double award travel and tourism course are unsatisfactory and have declined over the past 3 years. The pass rates on the national diploma in sport and exercise science are low and have declined over the past 3 years. The college has introduced new level 1 qualifications and revised level 2 and level 3 qualifications in 2005/06 to resolve this. Pass rates on key skills are low. The college has recognised this and now integrates key skills with projects or class work. Retention and framework achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes are low. Students make satisfactory progress relative to prior attainment. In sports, many students compete at local, regional and national level, some in less popular sports such as British rally driving and korfbal. In sport, travel and tourism there is low progression to HE.

82. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory. Effective use of ICT supports good presentation of work. On NVQ programmes, students develop good practical skills and professional

work ethics, and apply these well at work. Students demonstrate professionalism in their attitudes and approach to teamwork, communication and customer service practice. In travel, students display a professional, industrial standard image. However, in hospitality students dress inappropriately.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sports and travel, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ catering and hospitality (2 year)	2	No. of starts	61	17	36
		% retention	36	65	86
		% pass rate	95	91	97
NVQ catering and hospitality serving food and drink (1 year)	2	No. of starts	42	31	30
		% retention	79	90	80
		% pass rate	100	93	92
NVQ travel services	2	No. of starts	31	22	42
		% retention	94	91	81
		% pass rate	100	90	79
Galileo IATA external exam	2	No. of starts	66	55	41
		% retention	77	90	80
		% pass rate	75	83	88
AVCE travel and tourism double award (2 year)	3	No. of starts	41	40	40
		% retention	76	65	55
		% pass rate	90	42	85
National diploma in sciences/sport and exercise science	3	No. of starts	60	42	40
		% retention	53	52	61
		% pass rate	100	86	74

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

Quality of education and training

83. Teaching is generally satisfactory or better. Comprehensive schemes of work identify topics to be covered in individual lessons and all teaching and learning activities. Objectives are clearly stated and usually shared with students at the start of each lesson. In the best lessons, students are engaged fully and are well motivated by the activities. For example, in one lesson, they showed high levels of knowledge about customer service and service standards, and confidently presented findings from a customer satisfaction survey to the other students. In some lessons, teachers use inappropriate teaching and learning activities which do not always challenge students and do not extend their development of analytical skills. Teachers do not plan or use learning activities which take account of the different needs and abilities of students.

84. Resources are satisfactory. Most teaching rooms are welcoming with good displays of students' work. Staff update their industrial knowledge annually as part of professional development. New members of staff take initial teacher training. College on-site travel agencies are staffed by experienced travel professionals. They provide good assessment opportunities for the NVQ in travel services. Resources for food preparation and service are adequate. There has been recent investment in sports facilities, but this is insufficient to ensure a consistent student experience at all three sites.

85. Recording and monitoring of individual students' progress in hospitality and sport are good.

Information is collected centrally and used to plan assessments. Internal verification is appropriate and meets the requirements of the NVQ awarding body. The awarding body for travel and tourism and sport identified some poor assessment practice. This had not been identified during internal moderation. Initial assessment of learning support needs is good and reflected in course documentation and planning of some lessons. In hospitality, travel and tourism, reviews include academic progress, but in sport they do not.

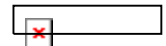
86. The provision in sport, travel and tourism is narrow. There are no qualifications at entry level and few level 1 qualifications, part-time or short courses. The range of enrichment activities is also narrow. There are good community links in sport to support coaching skills. A developing football school is linked to strategies for improving retention and pass rates. Students who apply are given a trial to show that they meet a semi-professional or county standard. Hospitality, travel and tourism provide school taster courses for year 10 pupils.

87. There is good individual support for students, provided by pastoral tutors and academic staff. Students value contact with their non-teaching personal tutor to discuss any issues that affect performance. At reviews, an action plan is agreed and a copy sent to the course tutor. The results of initial assessment are used effectively to plan support. In travel and tourism, in-class support for students with identified needs enables them to fulfil their potential. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of personal tutorials across the curriculum area.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management in hospitality, sport and travel are generally satisfactory. However, the monitoring of quality in the provision, including course management files, course reviews and self-assessment lacks critical analysis, evaluation and rigour. The quality assurance process for academic qualifications is not well established. Regular team meetings occur in all areas and communication is satisfactory.

Hair and beauty



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

Contributory grade for beauty therapy is **good (grade 2)**

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

Strengths

- very high retention rates on NVQ level 1 hair, Indian head massage and aromatherapy courses

- very high pass rates on NVQ level 1 hairdressing, and NVQ levels 2 and 3 beauty therapy and aromatherapy courses

- high standard of practical work on the level 3 beauty therapy course

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates and framework completion for work-based learners
- much unchallenging and some unsatisfactory teaching in hairdressing
- insufficient resources relative to group sizes
- unsatisfactory assessment practices
- unsatisfactory management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

89. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies at two of the college's three sites. City and Guilds hairdressing and vocational training charitable trust (VTCT) beauty and holistic therapy qualifications are offered at NVQ levels 1, 2, and 3. The college has links with 17 local schools. About 50 pupils from schools take level 1 or taster courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are 44 apprentices and 3 advanced apprentices based in 35 local salons. There are 516 full-time students and 332 part-time students in the area of learning, of whom 246 full-time students are on hairdressing programmes and 179 full-time students are on beauty therapy programmes. There are 195 part-time hairdressing students and 242 part-time beauty therapy students.

Achievement and standards

90. Achievement in level 1 hairdressing and some beauty therapy programmes is good. On NVQ level 1 hairdressing, the retention rate was 86% for 2001/02 and 2002/03. This increased to 100% in 2003/04. Retention rates in Indian head massage have been consistently high for the last three years. Retention rates in aromatherapy are also high. Pass rates at NVQ level 1 in hairdressing have been consistently high for three years. The one-year NVQ level 2 programme in beauty therapy has had high pass rates in two of the last three years. Aromatherapy had a pass rate of 100% in 2001/02 and 2002/03. Retention rates on hairdressing NVQ level 2 two-year programmes have improved over the past three years, but pass rates have fallen to 66%. A large proportion of these students have exceeded their planned completion date. Key skills achievement is low. Retention rates and framework completion are low for work-based learners.

91. Students who progress from level 2 to level 3 in beauty therapy demonstrate good practical skills. They work confidently on their clients and show professionalism. Full-time level 1 hairdressing

students demonstrate good skills, particularly, in one example observed, in preparation for a competition. Level 1 hairdressing and beauty students make good progress. Other full-time hairdressing students demonstrate satisfactory skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	1	No. of starts	28	36	32
		% retention	86	86	94
		% pass rate	100	100	93
NVQ hairdressing (2 years)	2	No. of starts	106	128	83
		% retention	49	49	73
		% pass rate	79	83	66
Beauty therapy (1 year)	2	No. of starts	92	111	104
		% retention	76	79	82
		% pass rate	99	80	93
Beauty therapy (2 years)	2	No. of starts	116	30	31
		% retention	68	70	61
		% pass rate	80	90	95
NVQ beauty therapy (1 year)	3	No. of starts	40	37	36
		% retention	78	95	89
		% pass rate	81	86	97
Body massage certificate (1 year)	3	No. of starts	18	46	59
		% retention	61	83	80
		% pass rate	100	100	85

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

Quality of education and training

92. Teaching in beauty therapy is generally good. In the best lessons, teaching is delivered enthusiastically and to a high standard. Classrooms are managed effectively and lessons are well planned to meet differing needs of students; and beauty therapy staff act as good role models. There is, however, some unsatisfactory teaching, and much unchallenging teaching, particularly in hairdressing. In the weakest lessons, students waste significant time preparing areas for practical work and are not given clear, timely guidance on how to prioritise their activities. In several lessons planning is weak. Students are not set challenging tasks or appropriate targets, and there is insufficient checking of students' learning. There are no planned additional activities for more able students who finish early. In these circumstances, students that finish early tend to distract those still working. In one lesson, the teacher had insufficient vocational knowledge to ask relevant questions. Students gather an insufficient amount of evidence for key skills portfolios.

93. Resources in hairdressing are satisfactory. The department opened new facilities at Oakwood Park in September 2004. Training salons are large, bright and spacious, and have sufficient workstations. Facilities in beauty therapy are of a satisfactory quality, but there are insufficient work areas for all students to work on clients. Some beauty salons have insufficient storage space. In both hair and beauty, there are too few clients to place students under commercial pressure. Beauty students often have to work on one another. There is unsatisfactory housekeeping in some work areas. Staff are well qualified and a sufficient number of staff have assessor and verifier

qualifications. Library facilities at Oakwood Park are good. Only 5 of the 35 work-based hairdressing salons have active assessors. The college has only partly resolved this weakness through the use of the college's own work-based assessors.

94. Assessment practices are unsatisfactory. Too much assessment is left until the latter part of the students' course and, as a result, some students are half way through their course with little or no assessment. Candidate log books are not used consistently to record and monitor progress. Consequently, some students have no evidence of competence in hair or beauty and students who leave early are unable to claim unit accreditation. Some assessments are carried out on friends and relatives acting as clients, which does not create a sufficiently realistic assessment situation. Work-based learners make slow progress. Target setting and monitoring of progress in work-based learning are poor. Targets are often vague. Internal verification is generally satisfactory, but has not identified key weaknesses in the assessment processes. Some assessments have not been internally verified four months after completion.

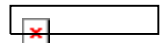
95. The department offers a wide range of enrichment activities for all students. A number of commercial companies give product demonstrations and provide additional training opportunities. Students visit national trade shows and exhibitions. Participation in fund raising events for charities enhances students' wider college experience. The department has been responsive to pupils aged 14 to 16 through a programme of vocational taster courses. This has encouraged pupils to progress to full-time programmes after leaving school.

96. Support with literacy skills or dyslexia is good. Students are referred for support by their tutor. Some staff have studied sign language to support students who have a hearing impairment. Students' attendance is monitored and checks are made on students who are absent. The college contacts salon owners promptly if work-based learners are absent for off-the-job training.

Leadership and management

97. Leadership and management of college-based programmes are satisfactory, but management of work-based training is unsatisfactory. Managers hold regular, effective staff meetings. Effective management information is used for course reviews. Tutors report monthly about any student retention issues. Some of the examples of good practice observed in beauty therapy have not been shared effectively with hairdressing. The self-assessment report is self-critical, but lacks sufficient focus on all key questions and their impact on students. There is insufficient co-ordination between on-the-job and off-the-job training. Employers have a poor understanding of the college's training programme and the requirements of apprenticeship frameworks. There was insufficient focus and analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of work-based training in the self-assessment process.

Health, social care and public services



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on certificate in childcare and public services courses

- high pass rates on childcare and counselling level 2 courses

- very effective promotion of current vocational practice
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some level 1 and level 3 courses
- poor management of teaching activities in lessons
- poor co-ordination of key skills
- low standard of accommodation at the Horsted site.

Scope of provision

98. The college offers courses from entry level to level 3 in health and social care, level 2 to level 3 in childcare, levels 1 to 3 in public services, levels 2 and 3 in counselling and a level 3 access programme. Most provision takes place on two main college sites during the daytime, with some counselling and access tuition during the evening. There is a large outreach provision for adults studying first aid, NVQs in care, early years and childminding. There are 526 full-time and 739 part-time students enrolled on courses in health and social care, early years, public services, counselling and access to health care. There are 423 students aged 16 to 18 and 112 adults who attend full time. In addition, there are 15 pupils aged 14 to 16 who are studying on public services and health and social care courses in partnership with local schools.

Achievement and standards

99. Retention rates on the GNVQ foundation level course, the certificate in childcare and education, and the public service national diploma are high. Pass rates are high on level 2 courses. However, pass rates on level 1 courses were low in 2003/04, significantly below national averages. Key skills results are very low in application of number and communications. The full-time programme at all levels promotes the development of good interpersonal skills in preparation for progression into employment.

100. Students' work is satisfactory on all courses. A varied programme of challenging assignments places a strong emphasis on the development of presentation skills and personal development. Students are articulate, confident and able to take responsibility for their own learning. Progression is good, both between levels and into relevant employment or HE. At the Oakwood Park site, a morning drill exercise, involving all public service students, is managed by students on a rota basis. This has improved punctuality and attendance, and developed a stronger team spirit by providing

opportunities for students to show leadership and take responsibility.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	28	18	37
		% retention	68	72	89
		% pass rate	84	46	58
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	17	20	*
		% retention	47	75	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
Certificate in counselling studies	2	No. of starts	*	24	18
		% retention	*	79	89
		% pass rate	*	89	100
First diploma public services	2	No. of starts	23	47	55
		% retention	91	81	82
		% pass rate	86	71	73
Access to health care (and precursors 1 year)	3	No. of starts	68	62	74
		% retention	79	73	51
		% pass rate	81	98	97
National diploma public services	3	No. of starts	45	51	43
		% retention	56	67	63
		% pass rate	68	56	85

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

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

101. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned and purposeful, with clear aims and objectives which are shared with students. Teachers make good use of the diverse experiences of adult students. Individual learning styles are recognised and teaching methods adapted to suit specific learning needs. Additional work is available for all students. In the weakest lessons, there is little focus on learning, poor organisation of group activities and insufficient awareness of individual learning needs. There is little use of ILT. In all public service lessons, theory and vocational practices are emphasised continuously. Work placements in early years and health and social care link theory and practical elements of the course.

102. A broad range of high-quality vocational resources is available to support learning. Students make good use of craft materials, handouts and other learning aids in care and early years. There is a well-stocked library with a range of texts and videos. Staff are well qualified and experienced; many have teaching qualifications. Key members of the public service team have extensive and varied service histories which assist with access to community-based resources and experiences relevant to the curriculum area. Accommodation at the Horsted site is poor. Rooms are in a poor state of decoration and there are heating and ventilation problems. Access to IT for teaching and independent study is limited. The gym is very small and the sports hall is a former bricklaying workshop with insufficient adaptation. The Oakwood Park site has a small adapted space that acts as a sports hall, a small but well equipped gym and an exercise area with an attached classroom.

103. Assessment and monitoring of learning are satisfactory. Initial assessment identifies additional support needs effectively and there is good in-class support. Assessed work is marked carefully and regularly in care and childcare, but written comments on public services students' work lack sufficient detail to students on occasions. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always corrected appropriately for care and childcare students. Monitoring of students' progress is satisfactory in most areas, with regular reports and progress reviews. Individual learning plans are agreed at the beginning of the course and reviewed in tutorials.

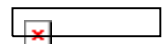
104. The range of provision is satisfactory. Progression opportunities in childcare, health and social care, public services and counselling are good. Effective links with employers, professional agencies and the education sector provide students with a broad range of work placement opportunities. Enrichment activities enhance careers prospects and help broaden students' experience. There is a wide range of visits and visiting speakers for public service students which include visits to the police training centre and the army assault course. There are further enrichment opportunities which provide the chance for students to take additional vocational qualifications including first aid, basic food hygiene and junior sports leader award.

105. Personal support for students is good. The prospectus provides ample detail on the range of courses. The interview process is designed to ensure students are appropriately placed to meet individual needs and career aspirations. The induction programme enables students to settle quickly. There are good arrangements for those who start late. The programme of group tutorials for full-time students is extensive and individual reviews in most courses highlight actions to improve performance.

Leadership and management

106. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams work well together. Although there was considerable staff absence through sickness during the inspection, cover arrangements were effective. Quality assurance is satisfactory, with mechanisms in place for internal verification of assessments and the review of courses throughout the year. Self-assessment is detailed and involves all staff. Many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report were confirmed in the inspection. The development plan is monitored regularly, but there are no clear dates fixed for review. There are good opportunities for continuous professional development, which are linked to the development planning process. Equality of opportunity is an integral part of the curriculum. It is promoted in lessons and through some displays of students' work in classrooms and corridors.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high standard of practical work in performing arts

- good specialist equipment and accommodation

- very good range of full-time courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in media and performing arts

- insufficiently challenging and stimulating teaching

- unsatisfactory integration of key skills in art and design and media

- insufficiently self-critical approach to improving provision.

Scope of provision

107. The college offers a comprehensive range of courses in visual and performing arts and media. Performing arts courses are situated at the main Horsted site whilst media and art and design are offered at both of the college's other sites. First diplomas are offered in dance, drama, popular music and art and design. National diplomas are available in dance, drama, music practice, music technology, technical theatre and theatre production as well as art and design, media and publishing. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in dance, music, theatre studies, drama, film, photography, media, and art and design. There is an intermediate GNVQ in media and part-time courses in theatre make-up, DJ, technology and video, sound engineering, photography and intermediate contemporary dance. A wide range of specialist and vocational short courses is available. There are 387 students aged 16 to 18 and 180 adults studying in this area of learning.

Achievement and standards

108. Pass rates vary considerably and retention rates are low. Pass rates in level 2 art and design programmes have been low for the last two years with just over half of the retained students gaining their qualifications. Pass rates in AS-level art have halved in the last two years. Those in AS-level photography have declined significantly over the last three years. National diplomas in performing arts and popular music had very high pass rates in 2003/04 and all students gained their qualification in GCE A-level dance. Retention rates in media are low. In 2004, only 2 of the original 18 students taking AS-level media were retained. Retention rates on other media courses are significantly below the national average. Retention rates in performing arts have been at the national average for three years, but withdrawal rates have been high. In some cases, over half the students have left their course.

109. Standards of practical work in performing arts are high. Students work hard and master technical and performance skills. They perform confidently and creatively. Dance students have good core stability, placement, and movement memory. They demonstrate good contemporary techniques and are able to produce imaginative choreography. Drama students show good improvisation skills, characterisation and vocal techniques. Music students are confident instrumentally and vocally, and are able to use music technology creatively. Media students produce work of commercial production quality. The standard of practical work in art and design is variable. Some students show individual creativity. First diploma sketchbooks are investigative and experimental. Diploma students have a sound grasp of painting techniques but some drawing is weak. The work of GCE A-level students is often unresolved and unexciting. Students' design

development and technical skills are underdeveloped.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First diploma performing arts	2	No. of starts	56	33	45
		% retention	77	70	71
		% pass rate	91	91	81
First diploma in design	2	No. of starts	21	30	34
		% retention	81	80	71
		% pass rate	82	54	58
National diploma performing arts	3	No. of starts	46	49	55
		% retention	50	67	69
		% pass rate	83	88	97
National diploma media	3	No. of starts	63	46	48
		% retention	51	78	58
		% pass rate	100	69	86
National diploma popular music	3	No. of starts	25	26	20
		% retention	44	58	70
		% pass rate	100	87	92
AS-level art	3	No. of starts	131	66	80
		% retention	77	89	81
		% pass rate	95	71	52

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

Quality of education and training

110. Teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers foster independent learning and establish professional standards. Teachers are well prepared and use a variety of teaching methods for students with a range of abilities. A variety of teaching methods extends and challenges the learning of students. However, in most lessons, there is insufficient challenging and stimulating teaching to engage all students' needs and abilities. Teachers do not pay appropriate regard to pitching the content, level and pace of work to students. There are often no summaries of learning. In some lessons, where students work individually, there is no introduction or conclusion. There is little questioning of individual students to check their understanding. Some slower students are not given appropriate tasks. The integration of key skills varies in extent from course to course. Performing arts staff have made substantial efforts to integrate key skills within vocational specialisms and curriculum staff teach the majority of the lessons. This initiative is proving successful in significantly improving attendance and achievement.

111. Resources are good. Art and design and media resources are available on two sites to provide for the wide catchment area. Accommodation on the Horsted and City Way sites is drab but fit for purpose. The well-equipped new studios and workshops at Oakwood Park provide good facilities for a wide range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional work. Media equipment is very good on both sites. Music studios and rehearsal rooms are well equipped and have good technical support. The sequencing laboratory has 16 work stations with up-to-date software. The performing arts department has two performance spaces, and two dance studios with appropriate floors, mirrors and fixed sound systems. However, one of the dance studios has no heating and is unsuitable for

dancers on very cold days. The library stock is well maintained and includes a good selection of relevant and up-to-date books and videos. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified, vocationally experienced and have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. They attend staff development activities regularly.

112. Systems for monitoring performance and progress are satisfactory. Assessment is thorough, reliable and provides direction and help to students in their learning. There is some good critical individual feedback during practical lessons. Students do not always receive prompt feedback on assignments. The internal verification system is sound. A variety of assessment methods, including students' assessment of each other, is used successfully.

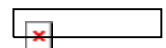
113. Students benefit from a well-planned programme of external visits and speakers, as well as workshops from professionals. An annual visit to New York is arranged, and students also visit Paris and galleries and theatres in London. The college arranges workshops led by, for example, dance companies.

114. Support for students from academic staff is good. Tutorials are conducted by a curriculum specialist and all students have a pastoral tutor. Additional support is good. Students with specific support needs have access to support workers who make a significant contribution to students' learning and achievement. Pre-entry advice and guidance are satisfactory. Initial assessment is effective.

Leadership and management

115. Leadership and Management are satisfactory. Curriculum management roles are clearly defined and understood. Communications are generally good. Staff development is well supported by staff and management. There is an insufficiently critical approach to improving the provision. Some course reviews fail to identify key weaknesses and actions are not identified to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is too little sharing of good practice across the whole area of learning. Opportunities for cross-curricular initiatives are missed. The observation system has focused on teaching and learning, and has produced some benefits. Equality of opportunity is not specifically promoted in the curriculum.

Foundation



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

Strengths

- good progress of students receiving support in learning

- good accommodation and resources in key skills centres

- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in key skills communications and application of number at levels 1 and 2

- insufficient differentiation in key skills lessons

- ineffective use of individual learning plans in the planning, monitoring and assessment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Scope of provision

116. All full-time students on courses at levels 1 and 2 undertake the three core key skills, as part of their main programme, to develop their literacy, numeracy and IT skills. Around 3,000 students are enrolled on communications at level 1 or level 2 or application of number level 1 or 2. A further 300 students from departments where application of number results have been particularly disappointing are taking the managing money pilot as a substitute for application of number. The supported learning programme area offers both full-time and part-time courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are 95 full-time students and 25 part-time students. Additional qualifications are available, for example, basic food hygiene, adult literacy and numeracy and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) workright qualifications. Some 25 learners are on entry to employment (E2E) provision. A number of these have additional challenging behaviour issues. Over 200 adult students are on part-time basic skills programmes provided in community or workplace settings. Outreach provision is available in 37 venues and has benefited from the profit from learning project. There are 100 full-time and 30 part-time students on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes. Additional ESOL support for 66 students is currently being offered on mainstream courses.

117. The college is developing the adult part-time provision to meet the needs of the local community. Additionally, the college plans to meet the needs of students with particularly complex needs, to reduce the need for out-of-county placements. Students are based in the City Way and Oakwood Park campuses.

Achievement and standards

118. Retention rates in key skills are high, but pass rates at levels 1 and 2 in application of number and communications are low. Achievement in key skills communications is improving, but is still below the national average. Retention and pass rates in GCSE English, and ESOL at level 1, are high and well above the national average. Retention and pass rates in ESOL at level 2 are below the national averages. Retention rates are average and pass rates high for programmes in supported learning.

119. Students develop many skills that help them move into mainstream vocational programmes, employment or voluntary work. They show improved social skills and confidence at work placements and on work tasters. Students' work files are well ordered and the standard of work is satisfactory. Students achieve additional qualifications as appropriate to their ability. Many ESOL students are asylum seekers and make exceptionally good progress. For example, one asylum seeker enrolled at the college in 2001. He developed his English quickly and, by the end of the year, he was able to join the councils' community language interpretation service. His good progress was recognised through a college prize for the most improved student in public services. He has since been

promoted in his employment and maintains good contact with the college to motivate other students with his experiences.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Basic life skills (1 year)	entry	No. of starts	64	61	83
		% retention	83	87	86
		% pass rate	100	100	97
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	797	689	1,229
		% retention	81	81	88
		% pass rate	22	7	15
ESOL (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	27	20
		% retention	*	52	93
		% pass rate	*	86	93
ESOL (1 year)	2	No. of starts	16	24	26
		% retention	88	75	50
		% pass rate	50	72	54
Key skills application of number	2	No. of starts	1,156	1,272	1,378
		% retention	81	81	88
		% pass rate	11	4	10
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	162	153	159
		% retention	66	78	72
		% pass rate	95	90	97

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

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

120. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most lessons are planned to include a variety of activities to meet students' individual interests and needs. In the best lessons, teachers differentiate the work carefully to take account of the diverse abilities of students but, in many lessons, there is too much whole-class teaching. Some key skills classes are too big for effective teaching to take place. For example, one key skills level 1 communications class had 22 students and only one learning facilitator. Students had to wait too long to get help. Some finished early and chatted; others grew frustrated by their inability to complete the task.

121. In general, resources for teaching and learning are good. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They have relevant professional development and training opportunities such as training on makaton, the SENDA, hearing impairments, core curricula and race relations. The best classrooms have visually stimulating displays of students' work. Other displays re-enforce literacy and numeracy skills or health and safety. Teaching rooms for some ESOL lessons are unsatisfactory. Noise from the heating system makes it impossible to hear properly and is a significant barrier to learning. Resources for learning are good within the key skills resource areas.

122. Monitoring of students' progress is unsatisfactory. Feedback to students is mostly about the

tasks they have completed, not learning. Initial assessment is completed and targets set and recorded on students' individual learning plans. However, the results of diagnostic work are mostly held by learning support tutors and not shared effectively with vocational subject staff. Sometimes targets are too general to be useful for assessment purposes. They do not identify the small steps students need to complete to achieve success.

123. There is good information and guidance offered on programmes. Prospective students are encouraged to attend induction in the summer and are given very good support by staff. Students are well supported through tutorials and regular contact with committed and well-informed staff. Support for students on work placement is good. The effective use of facilitators in some lessons allows access to the curriculum for students who could otherwise be excluded. However, although facilitators are skilled in supporting students, there are not enough of them in some lessons to meet the individual needs of students. Some teachers do not make best use of the additional facilitators in lessons. This reduces their effectiveness, particularly in whole-class activities.

Leadership and management

124. Management of this area is good. Curriculum leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of their students. Managers and teachers are responsive to change and have a commitment to continuous professional development through participation in a number of national pilots and curriculum initiatives. Cross-college support from vocational managers is improving and facilitates programme development, in particular for key skills. Staff hold regular weekly team meetings. The whole team contributed to the rigorous self-assessment report and used it to set development priorities. However, many developments are insufficiently established to have made a significant impact at this stage.

Part D: College data

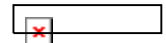
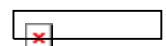


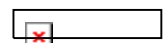
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	26	26
2	31	32
3	12	23
4/5	0	5
Other	31	14
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	2,242	863	12
Land-based provision	52	35	1
Construction	523	315	3
Engineering, technology and manufacture	251	329	2
Business administration, management and professional	1,048	1,369	9
Information and communication technology	2,129	712	11
Retailing, customer service and transportation	56	42	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	387	177	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	253	273	2
Health, social care and public services	365	1,525	7
Visual and performing arts and media	386	147	2
Humanities	400	231	2
English, languages and communication	1,683	577	9
Foundation programmes	2,500	1,011	13
Unknown area of learning	5,396	1,185	25
Total	17,671	8,791	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

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	725	673	792	460	405	498
	Retention rate %	81	80	77	79	73	51
	National average %	76	75	76	73	69	70
	Pass rate %	84	73	70	82	72	73
	National average %	65	69	71	66	68	71

2	Starters excluding transfers	2,630	2,522	2,090	15,687	12,214	2,790
	Retention rate %	64	68	69	43	46	40
	National average %	72	70	72	70	68	68
	Pass rate %	74	70	79	20	20	74
	National average %	67	69	71	64	68	72
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,720	2,559	2,288	1,795	2,706	2,066
	Retention rate %	68	65	73	68	76	80
	National average %	67	71	77	69	68	70
	Pass rate %	77	76	77	72	76	87
	National average %	75	77	79	66	69	72
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	35	38	2	458	400	342
	Retention rate %	74	82	50	71	74	75
	National average %	66	73	71	67	67	67
	Pass rate %	65	68	100	71	49	60
	National average %	65	54	53	58	55	56

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges). Where applicable, the national rates used in the table are for GFE colleges which are grouped in the LSC benchmarking data as colleges with a high widening participation factor.

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 2000/01 to 2002/03: College ISR.

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)	55	36	9	67
Level 2 (intermediate)	52	42	6	64
Level 1 (foundation)	46	31	23	26
Other sessions	70	25	5	20

Totals	54	36	10	177
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