Wilberforce College

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Wilberforce College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Dr Stephan Jungnitz
Address of college:	Wilberforce College
	Saltshouse Road
	Hull
	HU8 9HD
Telephone number:	01482 711688
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Chair of governors:	Ms Patricia Mould
Unique reference number:	130580
Name of reporting inspector:	Jan Bennett HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 October 2004

Part A: Summary
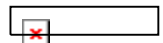
Information about the college
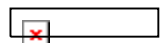
city has a population of around a quarter of a million, 98% of whom are white. Some 97% of the population were born in the United Kingdom and only 2% were born outside the European Union. National comparisons show that Hull has high levels of crime, low levels of achievement at secondary level and high levels of teenage pregnancy. In 2003, the proportion of 16 year-old school leavers obtaining five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades A* to C was 32% which is around 20% below the national average. The unemployment rate in the city is 6% which is more than double the national rate.

Wilberforce College is one of two sixth form colleges in the city which also has a large general further education (FE) college. The college's primary provision is for full-time 16 to 18 year olds and the majority of the provision is at advanced level. Nearly 80% of enrolments are by students aged 16 to 18. Over the last four years, the number of full-time 16 to 18 year olds has risen from around 900 to 1,200, whereas the number of adult students has not grown, but the college intends to maintain the adult provision in order to meet the needs of its local community. Over the last few years, the college has recruited a significantly increasing proportion of its students from socially and economically deprived areas.

The college's mission is to become an educational resource of the highest quality, encouraging and enabling the fulfilment of individual potential and working with the community to increase aspirations, participation and achievement.

How effective is the college?
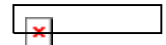
The college provides good opportunities for learning for most of its students. Retention rates are around the national average and pass rates are generally high. Advanced level students achieve significantly higher grades than expected based on their performance at GCSE. The college has developed strong partnership arrangements which are effectively attracting students from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. Provision is good in two of the six curriculum areas inspected. Provision in social sciences is outstanding and it is satisfactory in the other three curriculum areas. Inspectors also judged the provision in mathematics to be outstanding and awarded a contributory grade. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- o improving achievement

- o very strong links with partner schools and the local university

- o good enrichment opportunities

- o very good academic support for students

- o very good support for adult students

- o effective curriculum strategy to widen participation

- o sound financial management and governance.

What should be improved

- o uninspiring teaching in a number of areas

- o facilities for students between lessons

- o rigour of the teaching observation system

- o self-assessment in some areas

- o sharing of good practice within and between curriculum areas.

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

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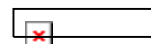
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	**Good.** Mathematics contributory grade: **outstanding**. Science contributory grade: **satisfactory**. Pass rates are high on most mathematics and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) science courses, but they are low on many advanced

|	subsidiary-level (AS-level) science courses. Teaching is generally good with much excellent and innovative teaching in mathematics, but some science teaching does not challenge students sufficiently. Learning materials, including computer-based resources, are good in science and mathematics. Leadership and management are strong.
Computing and information and communications technology	**Satisfactory.** Retention and pass rates are satisfactory overall, but the pass rate on the AS-level information and communications technology (ICT) course is very low. Teaching is satisfactory or better in most lessons and students' practical skills are well developed, but there is too much uninspiring teaching on advanced-level courses. There is good monitoring of students' progress.
Visual and performing arts and media	**Satisfactory.** The standard of students' work is high in textiles, graphics and media. There are high pass rates on GCE A2 media studies and film studies courses, but retention rates on AS-level performance studies courses and GCSE photography courses are unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but some lessons lack sufficient focus and pace. Specialist resources are good in both the visual and performing arts areas.
Humanities	**Good.** Pass rates are generally high. Most teaching and learning are good or better. In a few lessons, however, there is too much note taking and insufficient use of computers and other learning resources. There is good academic and pastoral support for students. Strategies that have been implemented to improve retention rates and teaching are effective.
Social sciences	**Outstanding.** Pass rates are very high. Much of the teaching in psychology is outstanding, but in a small minority of lessons, teaching is not meeting the needs of the students. High-quality learning materials have been developed that are improving and enhancing learning. There is excellent academic support for students.
English and modern foreign languages	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates on GCE A-level English courses are high, but students on GCE A-level English and French courses achieve lower grades than expected on the basis of their GCSE performance. In English, teaching is satisfactory or better, but often fails to challenge the more able students. There is effective use of learning resources in modern foreign languages and teaching is good in the range of courses in both English and modern foreign languages.

How well is the college led and managed?
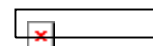
Leadership and management are good. Pass rates are generally high, and have improved over the last three years, but retention rates remain around national averages. Progression to higher education (HE) is good. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed by inspectors was slightly below the average for sixth form colleges. Strategies to attract students from socially and economically deprived areas are very effective. The college has a strong commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity. The college has responded appropriately to the obligations of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Quality assurance arrangements have been effective in raising overall pass rates, but the self-assessment report lacks rigour and fails to identify weaknesses in several areas, particularly in teaching. Communication throughout the college is good. The management information system provides accurate and reliable data. Governance is good, financial management is very effective and the college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?
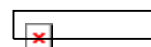
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. There are effective strategies for widening participation and the college recruits a large number of students from economically and socially deprived backgrounds. The college works very effectively with a number of partners to raise the aspirations of young people and to encourage them to stay on in education. The college is also successfully raising the aspirations of, and increasing access for adults in the area. The college regularly monitors students' performance by gender, but is not systematically analysing performance data by ethnicity or disability. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is low, but reflects that of the local population. Access to buildings for students with restricted mobility and other physical disabilities is good. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the SENDA, and has made appropriate progress in prioritising and implementing arrangements for safeguarding children in education.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?
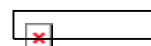
Support for students is good. All students have access to a wide range of effective support services. Thorough and objective pre-entry advice and guidance help students choose the right programme of study. The college has made a number of changes to improve its support services, which although not yet fully evaluated, are beginning to have positive impacts. The percentage of students achieving their target grade on their main programme of study is higher amongst those receiving learning support than it is for other students. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and there are effective working relationships between academic and support staff. Students value greatly the support given by tutors out of lesson time. High-quality advice and guidance are available for those students applying to HE or employment. A well-structured central tutorial programme and wide range of materials have been developed to support tutorial delivery. A significant minority of tutorial delivery, however, is poor. Support for adult students is very good.

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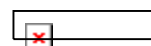
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the college

- o   supportive staff

- o   friendly atmosphere

- being treated with respect

- teaching

- trips and enrichment activities

- computer facilities

- advice about HE

- feedback on work.

What they feel could be improved

- key skills

- facilities in the common room

- delivery of topics in tutorials

- canteen facilities

- parking

- toilets.

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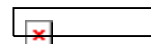
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The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

Part B: The college as a whole
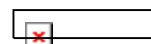
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect 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	71	23	6
19+ and WBL*	71	29	0
Learning 16-18	68	27	5
19+ and WBL*	57	43	0

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards
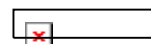
1. As tables 1 and 2 in Part D illustrate, 77% of the enrolments at the college are by students aged 16 to 18, around 64% of whom are studying at advanced level. Of the adult enrolments, the majority are at level 1.

16 to 18 year olds

2. During the period from 2001 to 2004, retention rates have been around the national averages except at level 1 where the retention rate fell in 2003/04. High retention rates were recorded in

English, and science and mathematics.

3. The data on achievement prepared by the college show that pass rates on GCE A-level courses in 2004 are high. In 2004, the overall pass rate at GCE A level was 97%, excluding general studies. At AS level and GCE A level, pass rates were high in media, general studies, psychology and mathematics. Pass rates on GCSE courses vary. In 2004, the proportion of students obtaining a grade A* to C in mathematics was well above the national average, but in English and science, however, the proportion was well below national averages.

4. National value added systems, which compare students' results at GCE A level with their performance at GCSE, show that students are achieving significantly higher grades than might be expected. They also show a significant improvement in performance in the last three years especially for male students. Value added scores for individual GCE A-level subjects show that students on GCE A-level psychology, general studies, expressive arts and textiles courses consistently achieve higher grades than predicted on the basis of their GCSE performance. Students of English language, computing and Spanish tend to achieve below their expected grades. Value added measures show that the most and least able students perform especially well.

Adult learners

5. Retention rates on adult courses were around, or above, the national average from 2001 to 2003. The retention rate on courses at levels 1 and 2 fell in 2003/04, however, to well below the national averages. By contrast, the retention rate at level 3 rose to well above the national average in 2003/04. Retention rates on short courses have been around, or above, the national average for the past three years.

6. Pass rates were below the national average on courses at levels 1 and 2 from 2001 to 2003, but there has been a significant improvement in 2003/04 and pass rates are around the national average. Pass rates on short courses also improved significantly in 2003/04 to around the national average.

7. The quality of students' work of all ages is generally high. In psychology, students are confident when analysing information and presenting arguments. In one AS-level lesson, they were able to discuss complex and competing theories on perception. In computing and ICT, the quality of the oral, written and practical work of full-time students is high. Students in visual and performing arts and media produce work of a high standard. For example, textile students use a wide range of materials and design imaginative collages that include computer generated images, and film studies students use digital cameras and video editing to produce sophisticated advertisements. In mathematics, students confidently discuss difficult mathematical concepts and question each other's understanding. They produce attractive and informative posters as part of their group work. In science, the quality of work is more variable. In English, students are attentive in lessons and their oral feedback is comprehensive. In modern foreign languages, students' levels of comprehension are high, but many students need to extend their range of vocabulary. In humanities, students enjoy engaging with real issues and they gain confidence in using technical vocabulary.

8. Attendance during the inspection was 86% which is around the national average. It was highest in social sciences at 89%, and lowest in visual and performing arts and media, at 83%.

9. Over the last three years, the number of students progressing to HE has increased significantly from 153 to 211. In 2004, 65% of students who completed a level 3 course progressed to HE. Progression from level 1 to level 2 is good, but the percentage of students progressing from level 2 to level 3 is low.

Quality of education and training
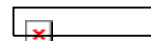
10. The quality of teaching and learning across the college is uneven. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 91 lessons. Teaching was observed to be good or better in 71% of lessons, satisfactory in 23% and less than satisfactory in 6%. This profile is slightly below the national average for sixth form colleges. Teaching was judged excellent in 11% of lessons and much of this was observed on advanced level courses. Of the 6% of unsatisfactory lessons observed, most affected students on level 2 programmes. Too much teaching across all curriculum areas and levels, however, does not sufficiently challenge or stretch students' ability and much passive learning takes place. A higher percentage of good or better teaching is in lessons taught by full-time teachers.

11. Teaching is good in humanities and modern foreign languages, with much outstanding teaching and learning in mathematics and psychology subjects. Teaching and learning are weakest in computing and ICT, and visual and performing arts and media. Across the college, lessons are generally well planned and staff build good working relationships with their students. Teachers make good use of their industrial experience to relate theory to practice. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is very effective in social sciences, science and mathematics. In humanities and visual and performing arts, however, the use of technology is underdeveloped and opportunities to stimulate and extend students' understanding are missed. Not all teachers are using extension activities effectively to improve students' performance.

12. In the most effective lessons, students respond enthusiastically and learn rapidly. Sessions are structured well and take careful account of students' individual learning needs and abilities. Teachers use a variety of activities and resources to successfully enhance students' learning and motivation. In lessons that are satisfactory or less than satisfactory, activities are frequently too prescriptive, with students insufficiently involved in their own learning and problem solving. The pace of the lessons is often slow and teachers do not take full account of the range of their students' abilities. In many cases, there is ineffective use of questioning to check students' learning. There is a number of very highly skilled and inspirational teachers at the college, but their good practice is not shared effectively within their departments or across the college as a whole.

13. Resources are good and are deployed effectively. Most teachers are academically well qualified especially in humanities and mathematics. All staff have an annual review of their performance. There are clear links between staff development and strategic planning. Staff development activities are evaluated and shared with other teachers within departments. Many teachers have recently developed relevant vocational expertise.

14. Specialist resources in most areas are good. For example, visual art and performance students benefit from a very well-resourced photography darkroom and spacious drama studio. The library has sufficient books, software packages and project materials to support students' learning. Liaison between library staff and most curriculum areas ensures that appropriate learning resources are available. The college has made a major investment in equipment and staff training to support the development of ICT. Staff and students can easily access the college e-mail facility and on-line learning resources from home. All subject areas within the college have access to the good on-line learning materials and they are well used. Computer workshops are located in all college blocks and there is satisfactory technical support. Many of the chairs for computer users are unsuitable.

15. The college is carrying out a major redevelopment of accommodation. Space and accommodation throughout the site are utilised well and most rooms are well decorated and furnished. Students' artwork is utilised effectively to decorate the corridors and the reception areas. Access to most buildings is good for students with restricted mobility and other physical disabilities, but they have to obtain a key to operate the access lifts and find this onerous. The refectory facilities have been improved recently and are satisfactory, but the students' common room is stark and gets very congested during busy times. There are a few areas where the accommodation remains drab.

16. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good especially for adult students. Course teams have developed sound assessment practices that are tailored to the needs of their

subject and students in most areas. Internal verification and standardisation systems are generally sound, but there are some weaknesses in the systems used in visual and performing arts, and in science. The quality of the feedback given to students varies. It is particularly good in mathematics, but in ICT feedback is sometimes inadequate and does not help students to understand how to improve their work.

17. The initial assessment of students aged 16 to 18 was carried out electronically for the first time this year. Numeracy testing was not fully effective, but the electronic tests enabled learning support to be provided very quickly. Full-time students are set minimum target grades and progress is formally reviewed against target grades twice in the year. Personal tutors also monitor progress regularly as part of the tutorial system. Reports are sent out to parents of students aged 16 to 18 twice each year prior to parents' evenings. The monitoring of attendance is rigorous. Students' attendance records are available electronically and any unexplained absence is followed up by a telephone call on the same day. Fortnightly attendance reports are sent to tutors enabling them to identify and address any issues.

18. The college is responsive to local demands and has been successful in developing the curriculum to meet community needs. There is a strong ethos of improving access to education and staff work hard to help students with a range of abilities. The college offers a good range of courses at level 3 and an appropriate range at levels 1 and 2. The provision at entry level and level 1 is small, but is meeting the needs of the local community effectively. Progression opportunities are adequate and the college has well-developed plans to broaden these further.

19. Extra-curricular enrichment activities for full-time students are good and enhance students' learning effectively. Most courses offer a comprehensive range of curriculum related enrichment opportunities that broaden students' experience. Cross-college enrichment activities are also good and include an appropriate variety of sports, a good range of community initiatives, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, British sign language and a very popular driving theory test course. Provision for key skills is integrated well at level 1. Recently adopted strategies have raised understanding of key skills and have improved attendance, retention and pass rates. At levels 2 and 3, however, key skills training is not linked sufficiently with the main qualification and some students remain unsure about the purpose of key skills.

20. Links with partner schools are strong and well established. A widely distributed, well-presented prospectus provides school pupils with good information on a range of courses. Close liaison with schools provides prospective students with good advice and guidance, and furnishes the college with useful information about trends. Several projects involve working closely with school pupils. For example, 70 pupils from local schools attend the college each week to study AS-level mathematics. There is a good range of taster programmes for year 10 and 11 pupils. Curriculum areas maintain appropriate links with employers through tutor contacts, but there are insufficient arrangements to gather and analyse employers' views. There is no employer advisory group. Community needs are identified very effectively through formal and informal links with community organisations.

21. Support for students is good. Student services are in a prominent, accessible position in front of the college. Students have access to a wide range of advice services including information on careers, finance, counselling, welfare and transport. Students receive good, objective pre-entry advice and guidance. Staff work proactively with feeder schools to promote the support services that are available and to identify the support needs of any potential students in order to ease their transition into college life. All students starting in September are given a welcome talk by the principal and helped to settle into their chosen courses quickly. Students' views are collected through student surveys and any issues or complaints are responded to swiftly. For example, the induction programme has been revised to include more interactive activities in response to students' feedback. The student handbook has also been redesigned to help students address previous concerns regarding time management. The handbook is well used by many students. Support for students is particularly effective in psychology, ICT and humanities.

22. The college has made a number of changes recently to improve support services, but it is too early to assess their full impact. Learning support has been relocated close to other support services and now has a higher profile. Many students have gained confidence in requesting study support for

themselves. Learning support is given by a well-qualified team and is available in-class or through discreet sessions. The percentage of students achieving their target grade is higher amongst those receiving additional support than it is for other students in the college. The impact of additional support on students' retention and pass rates at course level is not measured. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

23. A central tutorial programme has been developed to meet the differing needs of students aged 16 to 18. Each student has a personal tutor who utilises and adapts a selection of structured materials that have been developed to support tutorial delivery. Many students value the academic and pastoral support provided by their tutors out of timetabled lessons. Not all tutorial sessions, however, are engaging the students. A significant minority of tutorials, particularly those involving general studies, are not effective. Attendance at tutorials is low for students studying two year advanced level programmes. Support for adult students is highly effective. A personal tutor has been appointed to provide flexible pastoral and academic support for adult students studying both in the daytime or in the evening. This support includes providing initial assessments, individual progress reviews and careers advice.

Leadership and management
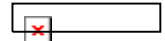
24. Leadership and management are good. Pass rates are generally high and have improved over the last three years, but retention rates remain around national averages. A significant majority of students are on advanced level programmes and value added analysis shows that these students are achieving significantly higher grades than expected on the basis of their previous qualifications. The overall quality of teaching and learning is slightly below the average for sixth form colleges. Too much teaching is uninspiring and lacks challenge. The college has a clear strategy to deliver students' entitlement of key skills in communication, number and information technology (IT). Achievement of the full qualification for all three main key skills is now above the national average and challenging targets have been set for further improvement. Attendance at lessons observed by inspectors was good. Progression to HE is good and improving, with over 93% of applicants being successful in 2004, compared with 78% four years ago.

25. The college serves its community well. It has a clear and effective strategy to increase and widen participation by school leavers from a local community that is characterised by high deprivation indices and educational underachievement. There has been significant growth in full-time student numbers in recent years, mainly from socially and educationally deprived areas. This growth is planned to continue through a major expansion of vocational courses. The college strategy is strongly endorsed by local schools and other partners, who regard the college as very responsive. A range of partnerships is effectively supporting widening participation, often through successful bids for project funding. Employer engagement, however, is underdeveloped.

26. Governance is good. Governors are representative of the college's community and have a good range of relevant experience. They are involved appropriately in determining the character, mission and strategy of the college. For example, they were actively involved in the decision to replace the GCSE re-sit programme with a range of vocational courses at the same level. An annual strategy review, involving governors and managers, together with reports and briefings at meetings, ensure governors are well informed for their supervisory role. Governors ask challenging questions informed by good financial and quality performance data. At a recent meeting of the standards committee, governors questioned appropriately the reliability of over-grading internal teaching observations. There are sound systems for maintaining an effective framework of governance in which the governors justifiably have confidence. The board is focused appropriately on students' performance, aided by a reconstituted governor standards committee, which receives good management information for its monitoring role. Governors have yet to focus sufficiently on key skills performance by full-time students aged 16 to 18, however, and the role of wider key skills.

27. The college has a strong commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity to prepare its students for a diverse society. Substantial staff training has taken place on these issues over the last three years, but there is insufficient focus on diversity and equality issues in some curriculum areas. The widening of participation is encouraged by the curriculum strategy to increase the proportion of students on vocational programmes and those from backgrounds with low educational achievement; the student population is therefore becoming more diverse. The college regularly analyses students' performance by gender, but does not collate or analyse data on students' achievement by ethnicity or disability. Targets for increasing participation by specific groups are not set. There is coverage in tutorials of a range of issues to increase awareness and positive attitudes towards diversity. The college has responded appropriately to obligations under legislation on race relations, special educational needs and disability. A comprehensive disability access audit has reinforced the strategy for improving physical access. Two major access improvement projects are nearing completion.

28. Staff development policy and practice are good and appropriately link training and development to the strategic aims of the college. Both academic and support staff have good opportunities for professional development. Staff value the regular college staff development days and the joint events with local colleges as effective ways of continuing their own professional development and progressing the quality improvement agenda. There is a failure to share good practice within and between some curriculum areas. The staff appraisal scheme has been effectively replaced with a performance management system. The targets and actions agreed through this process have led to significant improvements on individual courses.

29. The college's management information system provides accurate and reliable information. Returns to the college's main funding body are timely and accurate. Staff use data well to inform corporate and curriculum decision-making. Staff have excellent access to computers and can access freely management information system data, a student tracking system and the recently installed managed learning environment. There is a high degree of ownership and use of data by curriculum leaders to inform quality issues. Budget holders are well provided with data to support sound financial monitoring.

30. Quality assurance arrangements have been effective in raising overall pass rates, but retention rates have fallen in some areas of the curriculum. Procedures and processes are comprehensive within a well-documented annual cycle. Curriculum performance review meetings result in action plans for improvement. The self-assessment report lacks rigour in identifying weaknesses in several areas, particularly in failing to recognise uninspiring teaching. Two curriculum area self-assessment grades are higher than those awarded by inspectors; the quality of the teaching is a key contributor to this variance.

31. The management of the curriculum is good in some areas and satisfactory overall. There are examples of very strong leadership at course level, but the application of best practice and standards is inconsistent. The college has a well-established management structure and clear lines of accountability. Performance against targets is monitored closely through a detailed, comprehensive and rigorous review process. Communication throughout the college is good. The principal is accessible and there are regular meetings and newsletters. Staff feel that managers are open and responsive.

32. Financial management is very effective. Managers and governors monitor the college's financial position closely. The college regularly achieves budget surpluses, which are used to support curriculum initiatives, new building projects, and equipment investments. Risk management systems are good. On the basis of students' pass rates, the range of provision for the local community, progression to HE, efficient use of staff resources and accommodation, and class sizes, the college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas
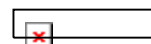
Science and mathematics

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

Contributory grade for mathematics is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Contributory grade for science is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o high retention rates on most courses

- o high pass rates on GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics courses

- o much outstanding teaching in mathematics

- o good learning resources

- o strong leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- o low pass rates on most AS-level science courses

- o insufficient challenge in science teaching.

Scope of provision

33. Science and mathematics courses are offered from foundation level to level 3. Around 270 students are studying AS-level and GCE A2 science subjects, and there are 15 students on the new Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate in forensic science. At level 2, there are GCSE and BTEC first diploma courses and, at foundation level, the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA exam board (OCR) certificate in science is available. Around 210 students are studying on AS-level and GCE A2 mathematics courses including 17 students on the further mathematics course. There are 334 students enrolled on GCSE mathematics courses, 40 of whom are studying at foundation level. GCSE biology and mathematics are offered in the evening.

Achievement and standards

34. Retention rates are around, or above, national averages on almost all courses and both attendance and punctuality are good. Pass rates in science are satisfactory. On GCE A2 science courses, most pass rates are high and improving. Students generally achieve GCE A-level grades in line with those predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications. Most AS-level science pass rates are unsatisfactory, however, with many at least 10% below national averages. GCSE science pass rates are low. Pass rates on most mathematics courses are high. Pass rates are around, or above, national averages on all courses except AS level. Students do better than predicted by their entry qualifications on both AS-level and GCE A2 courses. In 2004, all students on the GCE A-level further mathematics course passed and 86% obtained high grades. On the GCSE mathematics course, 68% of students obtained a pass at grades A* to C. This is 26% above the national average and represents an improvement of 22% from 2003. Progression from AS level to GCE A2 is good with 67% of the students starting an AS-level course in 2003 progressing to GCE A2 in 2004.

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	146	169	279
		% retention	84	84	83
		% pass rate	41	46	68
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	59	43	43
		% retention	88	91	88
		% pass rate	54	62	71
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	110	102	112
		% retention	79	80	94
		% pass rate	93	74	63
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	29	32	27
		% retention	76	97	96
		% pass rate	45	74	73
GCE A2 biology	3	No. of starts	16	23	20
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	69	77	95
GCE A2 mathematics	3	No. of starts	43	51	54
		% retention	91	96	98
		% pass rate	92	88	98

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

Quality of education and training

35. There is much good teaching, particularly in mathematics where innovative approaches encourage participation and increase motivation and understanding. In almost all lessons, a wide range of carefully planned activities enthuse the students and encourages them to share ideas. Students' contributions are valued and a problem solving approach is used with an emphasis on developing confidence and mathematical skills. Students work together collaboratively and are reaching high standards. In a very effective GCSE mathematics lesson, a practical activity was used that involved matching formulae to written descriptions. The students said that the activity-based approach helped to make them retain their learning and their levels of participation and enjoyment were very high. In AS-level and GCE A2 lessons, students enjoy using individual whiteboards for their rough calculations and for offering solutions to questions posed by the teacher. In one

outstanding lesson, the whiteboards were used to support an effective question and answer session that was very skilfully managed by the teacher and moved at a lively pace. The students were relaxed and confident as they discussed their solutions and explained concepts to each other; they then worked very productively in small groups producing posters that explained the concepts and included annotated worked examples. The interactive whiteboard was used very effectively by the teacher to recall earlier solutions and develop ideas.

36. In science, activities are planned well to engage and maintain students' involvement, but teachers tend to be over-directive thus limiting students' learning. A wide range of activities is used to maintain students' interest, whatever their preferred learning style, and good use is made of technology. In an effective lesson on cell fractionation, an electronic whiteboard was used to review learning by annotating electron micrographs. Laptops were used for an ordering exercise which engaged students' interest and led to good understanding. In too many lessons, however, the teacher tends to dominate and there is insufficient interaction and collaboration between students. Opportunities to involve students are missed and questioning techniques are poor.

37. In both science and mathematics, teachers are well qualified and they actively develop their skills. There is a strong commitment to professional development and staff attend many external events. Extensive internal staff development has taken place in mathematics to share good practice and to develop teaching and learning. Technical staff are well qualified and provide good support. The science team have effective processes in place for risk assessment and for ensuring student health and safety. In one science lesson, procedures were not followed, which put students' safety at risk. Both science and mathematics are well resourced and have impressive ICT facilities, but the wireless laptops that are used in science are slow to log on to the network and to open applications. Effective, accessible and attractive learning materials are provided for students. An AS-level physics teaching pack introducing electricity was well received by students who said that it encouraged them to work harder outside lessons.

38. Assessment practice in mathematics is outstanding, but there is some unsatisfactory practice in science. In both science and mathematics, work is set regularly, marked carefully and returned rapidly. In mathematics, the assessment strategy includes provision for extension work using thinking and extension questions as well as extra practice for weaker students. A common assessment system is used to show development and security of understanding. Feedback is of a high quality and is valued by students; it is personalised and identifies achievements as well as areas to work on. There is some unsatisfactory marking in science using ticks only. External moderators' reports highlight a lack of annotation, a poor choice of activity and assessment criteria not being applied correctly.

39. The area is responsive to the needs of students. In mathematics, there is an excellent range of provision that enables progression from entry level to advanced level. Around 70 pupils from partner schools are also studying AS-level mathematics at the college. In response to the needs of potential students, the curriculum in science has been enhanced by introducing vocational courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Science students benefit from a range of trips, visits and visiting speakers. For example, an industrial visit for GCE A-level physics students to see the production of rockets provided inspiration for coursework projects that received particularly high marks and praise from the moderator.

40. Effective support is provided for students. In mathematics, there is a weekly `maths clinic', and a `problem solving workshop' plus good access to staff for help and support. In science, effective strategies are in place to assess any initial science support needs and to provide individual support. Extra revision workshops are held for all subjects both in term time and in student vacations.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are good with a clear commitment to quality improvement. Self-assessment is rigorous and involves the whole team. Relevant data are analysed carefully and action plans for improvement are developed. The result has been clear improvements in teaching and learning, student resources and improved pass rates on many courses. Quality improvements in science have been limited by lesson observation feedback that failed to recognise weaknesses in

teaching. Commitment to educational inclusion is strong and students are accepted with low entry qualifications and given targeted support. For example, students with single subject science GCSE are accepted on to GCE A-level science courses.

Computing and information and communications technology
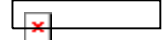
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o effective development of students' practical skills

- o rigorous monitoring of students' progress

- o good support for students.

Weaknesses

- o very low pass rates on AS-level ICT courses

- o too much uninspiring teaching on advanced level courses.

Scope of provision

42. There are full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced level. At advanced level, students have a choice of AS-level and GCE A-level courses in computing and ICT plus either the single or double award advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE). The college has introduced the BTEC first diploma for IT practitioners which has replaced the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate ICT course. The European computer driving license (ECDL), computers for beginners, and a range of OCR new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and CLAIT plus programmes are also offered. Currently, 292 students are enrolled on computing and ICT courses, 228 are studying full time and 64 part time. In addition to these, 140 students from other areas of the college study CLAIT as part of their key skills programme.

Achievement and standards

43. Retention rates and pass rates are satisfactory overall, but there is wide variation between courses. The retention rate on the AS-level computing course is very high. It improved from the national average to 100% in 2003/04. Retention rates on the ECDL course have been above the

national average for the last three years. Retention rates on GCE A-level computing are low and have been below the national average for the last two years. Pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate in ICT course were high in 2003/04, exceeding the national average by 15%. Pass rates on key skills IT level 2 are satisfactory and, although they are declining, they have been above the national average for the last four years. Pass rates on AS-level ICT are very low. They have been below the national average for the past four years and decreased significantly in 2003/04 to 37% below the national average. Pass rates on the AS-level ICT, the single award AVCE in ICT and GCE A-level computing courses are around national averages. Students on AS-level ICT and computing courses achieve lower grades than predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications.

44. Full-time students' practical work is good and demonstrates effective competence in the use of ICT applications. For instance, the students in a BTEC first diploma lesson on system specification were totally involved in researching the most appropriate components and used powerpoint and spreadsheets to produce accurate estimates of costs. AVCE students effectively used scanning equipment which they were unfamiliar with then successfully combined text and graphics. The quality of the oral and written work of full-time students is satisfactory. Part-time adult students are well motivated and they are developing satisfactory skills, but some do not feel confident when using them.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	35	35	25
		% retention	83	74	80
		% pass rate	0	54	90
ECDL 1 year	2	No. of starts	44	47	24
		% retention	91	83	83
		% pass rate	0	69	80
Key skills IT 1 year	2	No. of starts	388	346	119
		% retention	86	84	86
		% pass rate	53	41	31
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	49	30	20
		% retention	88	77	100
		% pass rate	74	78	80
AS-level IT	3	No. of starts	119	73	63
		% retention	85	74	90
		% pass rate	53	59	40
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	25	33	28
		% retention	88	97	93
		% pass rate	77	94	92
AVCE ICT (single award)	3	No. of starts	36	36	47
		% retention	78	83	74
		% pass rate	11	77	77

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

Quality of education and training

45. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory or better in most lessons. Lessons are well planned and detailed schemes of work are shared amongst members of the course teams, giving consistency across different lessons. In the best lessons, teachers show very good, up-to-date subject knowledge and use this to give interesting examples and engage the interest of the students. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to maintain effective learning and carefully check students' understanding. High quality, college produced learning material is used and much material is made available online for use both in the lesson and from home.

46. Too much of the teaching on advanced level courses fails to encourage students to think for themselves. In the weaker lessons, teaching is often uninspiring, and fails to engage students. Teachers talk for too long and their instructions are confusing. The teachers also fail to check students' understanding.

47. Resources are satisfactory. Classrooms are well equipped with sufficient, good specification computers and a number of wireless laptops can be booked for use in standard classrooms. Three of the IT rooms are equipped with data projectors and interactive whiteboards, and a number of portable data projectors are available for use. Projection screens in some rooms are too small. The college intranet is used extensively in lessons and students are adept at accessing it. Use of the online ICT materials is increasing, particularly on the BTEC first diploma course. The furniture in the IT rooms is unsuitable and none have adjustable chairs.

48. Monitoring of students' progress is good. During lessons, students note down the objectives of the lesson and, at the end of the lesson, they comment on the extent to which they have understood the items. These sheets are monitored carefully by the teacher and remedial action is taken as required. Tracking and monitoring of students' progress against individual targets are good and students are encouraged to improve their time management through the use of a student work planner. Coursework and assignments are well designed and meet awarding body standards. Students' work is well marked and is returned promptly. Comments sometimes lack sufficient, detailed and constructive advice to help students improve their work.

49. The area makes changes to its portfolio of courses in order to meet the changing needs of its students, however, the range of enrichment opportunities for computing and ICT students is too narrow.

50. Support and guidance for students are good. They receive high levels of subject support in lessons and teaching staff provide extra help for students who need it. Teaching staff also provide students with good informal help with personal and social problems. Students' skills in literacy, numeracy, and IT are checked effectively and a large proportion of the ICT students who have been identified as needing support are receiving it. Liaison between teachers and support assistants is good. Regular individual tutorials providing pastoral support are valued by the students.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Over the last year, the manager has improved communications within the team. Staff meet on a regular basis and work collaboratively to produce detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Course team members have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and they are set targets. At twice-yearly performance reviews progress against these targets is monitored. The self-assessment report identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses of the area, but does not address the weaknesses adequately. The internal lesson observation process overestimated the quality of teaching and learning, and weaknesses in teaching have not been addressed adequately.

Visual and performing arts and media

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

Strengths

- o high pass rates on GCE A-level media studies and film studies courses

- o high standard of students' work in textiles, graphics and media

- o good specialist resources in visual and performing arts

- o good enrichment opportunities.

Weaknesses

- o low and declining retention rates on AS-level performance studies and GCSE photography courses

- o too much unsatisfactory teaching

- o lack of rigour in self-assessment.

Scope of provision

52. The college provides a range of courses from foundation to advanced level in art and design, performing arts, and media. The majority of students are studying on AS-level and GCE A2 courses in a range of subjects including film studies, media, communication, performance studies, graphics, photography, music and art. A BTEC first diploma in art and design was introduced in September 2004. In addition, courses for adults at foundation and intermediate levels are available in the evening including guitar playing, photography, woodcarving, and painting and drawing. Adult students also access daytime provision. Currently, there are 655 students enrolled on courses in this area. The majority of enrolments are within media and visual art subjects, with approximately 20% of students enrolled on courses in performing arts.

Achievement and standards

53. Retention and pass rates are generally satisfactory. Retention rates on AS-level performance studies and GCSE photography courses are unsatisfactory, however, and have declined over the last three years to below national averages. The GCSE photography course has not been offered in

2004/05. Pass rates on GCE A2 media studies are consistently high with pass rates of 100% for the last 3 years. In 2004, the pass rate on GCE A2 film studies was also 100%. Students on AS-level communications studies, GCE A-level expressive arts and AS-level and GCE A-level textiles courses consistently achieve significantly higher grades than their performance at GCSE would suggest.

54. The standard of students' work is good, particularly in textiles, graphics and media. In textiles, students use a wide range of materials and techniques to develop their own designs. Computer-generated images are used to create effective designs for print. Students on the graphics and product design course have produced some ambitious maquettes which have been developed into full-size products. In media, students use digital cameras and video editing equipment to produce high-quality video productions. In film studies, one student had shot and edited an advert which showed both sophistication and good manipulation of the technology. The work of adult students is generally good. In a woodcarving lesson, students effectively used self-generated images to create designs which they carved with sensitivity and skill.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE photography	2	No. of starts	18	30	28
		% retention	83	73	64
		% pass rate	80	91	83
AS-level art studies (fine art)	3	No. of starts	105	125	53
		% retention	80	80	85
		% pass rate	85	87	84
AS-level communication studies	3	No. of starts	29	42	43
		% retention	90	81	91
		% pass rate	96	91	97
AS-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	33	37	20
		% retention	88	78	60
		% pass rate	97	97	100
GCE A2 media studies	3	No. of starts	31	36	38
		% retention	94	89	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A2 film studies	3	No. of starts	21	34	46
		% retention	95	88	93
		% pass rate	100	90	100
GCE A2 art and design	3	No. of starts	39	27	32
		% retention	92	96	81
		% pass rate	97	96	96

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

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers structure the learning well, using a variety of activities to involve students and develop thinking skills.

In one media lesson on genre, the teacher effectively used targeted questioning to involve the whole group in a lively discussion and successfully encouraged the more reluctant students to join in. The session had pace and the teacher used humour very effectively to help students to remember important points about analysing media language.

56. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching that impedes learning across visual and performing arts and media. Students are not challenged sufficiently and many lessons lack focus and pace. In too many lessons, teachers use a very narrow range of learning strategies. For example, in one lesson, the teacher read from notes for over 30 minutes. Ineffective questioning techniques are often used which result in the same students answering all the questions. Some teachers lose control of the direction that the lesson is taking, time is wasted and little productive learning takes place.

57. There are good specialist resources in both visual and performing arts. Improvements have been made to resources and accommodation across the arts curriculum. A new spacious performance studio has been built for dance and drama with a sprung dance floor, mirrors and seating. There is a large, well-equipped video-editing suite with specialist editing software, but the smaller editing suites are in need of refurbishment. There is an open-access computer suite located within the art and design area which students value. Music rooms are located conveniently and the area has two practice rooms, but they are not adequately soundproofed, resulting in invasive noise. This area is also ventilated poorly. Students' artwork is displayed attractively around the college. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Staff development is good for both full-time and part-time staff, who are encouraged to update their skills and qualifications. In art and design, staff training days focus on the sharing of craft skills rather than teaching skills.

58. Student assessment is satisfactory. The assessment of students' work is fair, accurate and is carried out regularly on most courses. Students are given detailed written feedback on their work with action points for improvement. Not all students are aware of the criteria requirements to get high grades. Students do not have individual learning plans to help them set or monitor specific targets for improvement. Internal verification is satisfactory, but feedback given to assessors sometimes lacks rigour.

59. Opportunities for enrichment are good and include opportunities to work with the artist in residence at the local art gallery, textile workshops at a local university, and dance workshops at the Pineapple Studio, and there are many theatre visits. Key skills are offered to all students, however, the integration of key skills is not effective and opportunities for portfolio building are often lost.

60. Support for students is good. Adult students value the support and pre-entry guidance they receive. Students are supported well by their tutors. Access for students with restricted mobility is good in visual arts and media.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are three curriculum managers involved in the management of the area and they each work to a different senior manager. Planning and development of the curriculum is fragmented and opportunities to share good practice are missed. Resources are managed effectively. Communication is good within curriculum teams, who meet regularly. The area's self-assessment report lacks sufficient rigour. Course reviews are not linked to self-assessment and the internal lesson observation grades are too generous. The promotion of equality and diversity within lessons and tutorials is adequate.

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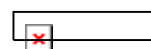
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates

- much effective teaching

- good support for students

- effective strategies for improving performance.

Weaknesses

- limited range of learning activities in a minority of lessons

- insufficient availability of ICT restricts some learning.

Scope of provision

62. All the provision in this area is at advanced level and includes AS-level courses in archaeology, geography, history and law, and GCE A levels in geography, history and law. Law attracts the largest number of students with nearly 200 students enrolling annually.

Achievement and standards

63. Retention rates have improved in recent years and are now satisfactory. Students achieve well in humanities subjects and pass rates are above national averages on many courses. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses improved in 2004 and reached 100% in GCE A-level history and geography. Students achieve the grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Low numbers of students achieve the highest grades, but many more than would be expected from their entry qualifications. Progression rates from AS level to GCE A level are satisfactory. High numbers of students progress to university: nearly 100 in 2004. Students are strongly encouraged by teachers to progress to FE or HE; nearly 40% of the students who completed their course in 2004 went on to read humanities subjects, mainly those related to history or law. Many students go on to study at local universities, and several more widely: small numbers gain university places at Oxford or Cambridge.

64. Students become more articulate through their humanities work, and learn to express ideas better, especially in oral work across all the humanities subjects.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004

AS-level history	3	No. of starts	67	58	70
		% retention	87	91	87
		% pass rate	86	91	89
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	99	91	132
		% retention	91	78	83
		% pass rate	60	82	88
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	47	30	29
		% retention	91	83	93
		% pass rate	70	80	89
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	15	36	31
		% retention	100	100	97
		% pass rate	93	94	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	40	43	50
		% retention	90	95	94
		% pass rate	83	78	94
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	16	19	17
		% retention	94	95	94
		% pass rate	100	94	100

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

Quality of education and training

65. Teaching is good or better in most lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and demonstrate good specialist knowledge. They are very interested in their subjects and are committed to their students. The students enjoy engaging with human issues and teachers capture their interest by using well-chosen geographical, historical, or legal examples. In a history lesson in which the students were analysing Henry VIII's power struggles, the teacher used Meaux Abbey, which was very close to the college, as a striking example that clearly impressed and captivated the students. The use of technical vocabulary is encouraged across all four subjects and students become increasingly confident in expressing their own responses. In one archaeology lesson, students were invited to show how different building features are revealed by high-quality digital aerial photographs projected on to a screen from a computer. Students zoomed in on different parts of the photographs illustrating graphically the technical terms they were articulating. Students in another successful lesson were asked to make up their own laws and identify all the required legal processes involved. The students worked with enthusiasm and argued confidently for public bills covering a range of topics. In the best lessons, teachers are able to utilise fully the teaching resources available. For example, in a geography lesson on Sahel wind movements across central Africa, the low-pressure curve and trade winds, which the teacher had marked on to a digital map of Africa, were moved by finger up and down the whiteboard. In the weaker lessons, activities are unimaginative and involve too much note taking and copying from the board. Learning is too passive in such lessons.

66. Accommodation is of a high standard. Interactive whiteboards and other teaching resources are used well in lessons where these are made available. Student workbooks compiled in all subjects, and other kinds of student-focused text resources collected by teachers, are varied and well planned; they are also appreciated by students as aids to organisation and learning. However, independent learning resources and computers are not available to all teachers or lessons. This is restricting the learning experience of the students affected.

67. Assessment of students' work is good overall; record keeping is thorough, with teachers making

concise, relevant and generally encouraging comments in their marking. They use forms devised for specific subjects to give clear guidance. Spelling mistakes and other technical errors are not effectively identified and corrected by teachers. There are consistently good systems for monitoring progress using a workbook that incorporates the students' self-assessment of their understanding and development alongside regular monitoring by tutors.

68. A very good enrichment programme is organised by teachers in all four subject areas, and most students benefit from many trips and visits that are available. These are incorporated into schemes of work, and issues revealed by such trips are referred to in lessons. There are limited links with outside organisations, schools, colleges and businesses.

69. Students are well supported and guided in the humanities area. Guidance is consistently good; few students drop out from courses, or between AS level and GCE A level. Subject support for students is very effective, and many students speak highly of the academic and personal support teachers offer them. Students' specialist needs are well catered for. For example, dyslexic students are given a modified copy of the lesson workbook, and special terminology sheets.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good. Course management is effective which leads to well-organised learning experiences for many students. The supportive ethos of the humanities area ensures equality of learning opportunity. Workbooks have been incorporated into the planning of teaching in all subjects, and enable students of all abilities to improve their organisation of notes. College strategies to review and improve retention rates and teaching have been implemented fully and these have improved quality and students' performance.

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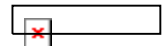
Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- o   very good achievement

- o   much outstanding teaching in psychology

- o   excellent learning materials

- o   strong subject enrichment in vocational programmes

- o   excellent academic support.

Weaknesses

- o   ineffective teaching in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

71. Social care courses are offered from foundation to advanced level, and AS-level and GCE A-level courses are available in psychology and sociology. There are currently almost 700 enrolments in the area; the majority are by students aged 16 to 18. There are around 240 students studying AS-level psychology and 140 studying GCE A level. Over 90 students are studying AS-level sociology and nearly 50 are studying GCE A level. GCSE psychology and sociology are not available this year as they have been replaced by the vocational alternatives of BTEC first diplomas in caring and early years.

Achievement and standards

72. Retention rates are around, or above, national averages. Very high pass rates have been achieved by students who enter the college with relatively low entry qualifications. In 2004, for example, the pass rate on the GCE A-level psychology course was 99% and the number of high grade passes on the AVCE in health and social care, the BTEC first diploma and GCE A-level sociology courses exceeded the national average. Some 75% of BTEC first diploma students achieved high grades, which is 60% above the national average. National value added systems show that GCE A-level psychology students have achieved significantly higher grades than expected given their entry qualifications. Attendance and punctuality are good.

73. The standard of students' work is very good. Students are confident in analysing information and answering questions using appropriate arguments. In one AS-level psychology lesson, students were able to debate complex, competing theories on perception.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
BTEC first diploma in early years	2	No. of starts	15	16	*
		% retention	87	81	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	210	210	209
		% retention	88	80	87
		% pass rate	77	89	87
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	81	73	79
		% retention	90	86	95
		% pass rate	89	87	84
AVCE in health and social care	3	No. of starts	20	35	30
		% retention	85	83	93
		% pass rate	82	90	86
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	96	93	109
		% retention	97	95	93

		% pass rate	95	97	99
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	20	46	36
		% retention	95	96	94
		% pass rate	95	98	94

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

74. The majority of teaching is good or better and in psychology much of the teaching is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers move briskly from one topic to another carefully checking students' understanding, and using well prepared handouts and research packs to develop understanding and research skills. Students also work at their own individual pace using ICT learning packages. In an outstanding GNVQ foundation health and social care lesson, students made good use of information and learning technology (ILT) to create imaginative magazine pages examining teenage problems. GCE A-level psychology students made effective use of an online personality test to establish their own personality types, followed by a productive discussion of relevant theories. In a health and social care lesson, a food tasting exercise reflecting cultural diversity was followed by good research on the Internet using laptops with radio connectivity. A small minority of lessons are overly directed by the teacher allowing a small number of students to remain passive. In these lessons, teaching does not meet the learning needs of all students.

75. Teaching accommodation is good. Teaching rooms are spacious, well furnished, and have a personal computer, digital projector and an electronic whiteboard. There is an ICT room especially designated for sociology and psychology students which is well used during lessons and as a drop in facility. However, the room has an insufficient number of personal computers for a large teaching group. The department has prepared excellent ICT learning resources that students are able to access electronically from home. The library is well stocked and students can access sets of up-to-date textbooks. Appropriate displays of learning materials and posters, produced by students, create stimulating classroom displays and celebrate student achievement. Staff are qualified appropriately and take full advantage of internal and external staff development.

76. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are excellent. Students' work is marked thoroughly and students are provided with clear assessment criteria and assignment schedules. Feedback on written work is thorough, with guidance on how to improve performance. Spelling and punctuation are appropriately corrected. Students are set demanding targets, based on entry grades, at the start of their programmes. Performance against targets is monitored centrally twice a year and subject tutors continuously review students' performance throughout the year. There are appropriate quality assurance procedures in place, at curriculum area level, to monitor assessment. Teachers attend awarding body standardisation meetings to ensure that their teaching meets the requirements of specifications and to standardise marking.

77. Curriculum provision meets the needs of students very effectively. Programmes have been replaced, at level 2, by BTEC first diplomas in caring and early years. Students are able to progress to the appropriate level 3 programme. There is an excellent programme of enrichment activities in health and social care vocational programmes which is designed to extend and broaden students' experience. Speakers from universities, voluntary organisations and social care agencies visit the college. Some opportunities to develop key skills are missed.

78. Students receive excellent guidance and support. Teachers give students a high level of informal support outside the classroom. In psychology and sociology, additional subject workshops are timetabled in January to enhance the attainment of students who have to re-sit their examinations. Full-time students have an initial assessment of learning needs at enrolment to identify appropriate levels of additional learning support. In a health and social care lesson, a support worker was

present as a note taker for a student who had a hearing impairment. In psychology, students can take an online assessment to check learning once they have completed each of the 20 core studies. The assessment is self-marking and provides information for teachers to monitor performance. Psychology teachers use an electronic mark book to track students' progress. Subject lecturers provide students with e-mail addresses so that they can be contacted online at the college.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are outstanding. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurately assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the area. There is a strong team ethos of continuous improvement with regular formal and informal meetings between staff to effect quality improvement. Communications within the curriculum area and with external partners in health and social care are excellent. Curriculum teams share good practice effectively. However, insufficient attention has been paid to identifying uninspiring teaching in the significant, but small, minority of lessons. Teaching teams have good administrative support enabling them to focus their concentration on the quality of teaching and learning. Diversity issues are addressed effectively in lessons and materials are free from stereotyping.

English and modern foreign languages
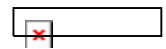
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   good teaching in modern foreign languages

- o   good use of learning resources in modern foreign languages

- o   good range of courses

- o   good curriculum enrichment.

Weaknesses

- o   low pass rates on some courses

- o   insufficient challenge for more able students in English

o   lack of rigour in self-assessment.

Scope of provision

80. The college offers a wide variety of courses in English, from entry level through to advanced level. Currently, there are around 630 enrolments in this area. Over one third of enrolments are on to GCSE English courses. At AS level, there is a wide range of courses including English language, English literature and English language and literature combined. There is a wide range of modern foreign languages courses in the community. The range includes Dutch, Japanese, Italian, German conversation and Spanish, usually at beginners' level, and the majority of the enrolments are by part-time students. The number of full-time enrolments in modern foreign languages is low. There are around 50 enrolments in total on to AS-level and GCE A-level language courses.

Achievement and standards

81. Retention rates on English courses are generally close to national averages. Retention rates on modern foreign languages courses have improved, especially on AS-level courses. Pass rates in English at advanced level are generally high, although pass rates in AS-level English literature are low and declining. Pass rates on both GCE A-level English literature and English language courses are high. The percentage of passes at grades A* to C on the GCSE English course is low. Achievement by students in AS-level English literature and GCE A-level English language is significantly lower than expected when compared to their results at GCSE. In modern foreign languages, achievements at advanced level are improving, but are low. Students still do not achieve as highly as would be expected when compared to their results at GCSE, but there has been an improvement in most subjects.

82. The standard of students' work in lessons is satisfactory or better. In AS-level and GCE A-level English language, students are encouraged to use linguistic terminology, and do so with increasing confidence. When insecure, they have glossaries to complete to help their learning. GCE A-level English literature students have not developed their independent critical writing skills sufficiently. In modern foreign languages, at advanced level, students are encouraged to develop their grammar skills in the first year of their course, but students find it difficult to respond to questions in the target language.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 3470 Spanish	1	No. of starts	46	39	36
		% retention	65	72	47
		% pass rate	73	64	94
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	165	184	195
		% retention	75	86	79
		% pass rate	39*	53*	40*
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	116	128	147
		% retention	91	86	90
		% pass rate	92	84	95
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	91	88	69
		% retention	88	89	96

		% pass rate	91	86	77
AS-level modern foreign languages	3	No. of starts	50	29	19
		% retention	68	93	95
		% pass rate	62	78	77
GCE A2 English language	3	No. of starts	48	60	55
		% retention	92	95	95
		% pass rate	95	96	96
GCE A2 English literature	3	No. of starts	41	49	35
		% retention	98	98	91
		% pass rate	95	100	94

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

Quality of education and training

83. Teaching is satisfactory or better; it is good in modern foreign languages. English lessons are planned with imaginative and interesting tasks, but these do not always challenge the most able students. In one session on children's acquisition of language, students were asked to consider how they had learned to read. Most recalled that it was easy. The activity, which was to read a piece of text written backwards and from right to left and bottom to top, was fun, engaged their interest and changed their understanding of the difficulties involved. Opportunities were lost, however, to link the learning that had taken place to relevant theories and to refer students to further research. In modern foreign language lessons, there is some effective teaching using realia. In one AS-level Spanish lesson, an extract from a Spanish magazine on David Beckham at Real Madrid supported the teaching of interrogatives. The students were actively engaged in a variety of tasks and work.

84. Some English teaching is overly directive and students do not engage with the task, or are slow to take part. Learning is best when teachers use group work to allow students to share and test ideas, and there are clear benefits for students' enjoyment, confidence and articulacy. In a foundation lesson, students worked in pairs on the play, *An Inspector Calls*, one student read out his work for the others and there was a spontaneous round of applause, which increased that student's self-esteem and enjoyment of the work he had been doing.

85. Written work is marked accurately in accordance with examination board criteria. Students have copies of these returned with their assignments and the relevant assessment objectives marked. The assessment of learning within lessons is more variable. Staff respond intuitively to their perceptions of the needs of individuals and classes, but there is insufficient documenting of how learning needs will be met. Most lesson plans lack sufficient detail, including clear objectives, which can lead to students being unclear about what is expected of them.

86. The imaginative displays in the English accommodation are stimulating. There are terminology quizzes which have Velcro fasteners allowing students to move words to definitions. Magnetic boards in the corridor allow students to construct poems before lessons begin. Quotations from the texts studied hang from the ceilings. Modern foreign languages have a state-of-the-art language laboratory and a teaching room adjacent to it. Heating and ventilation are inadequate in the language laboratory, however, and the blinds are inadequate to keep out the sun when the board is being used.

87. The teams have some good links with the local schools and this year the English department is sharing a trip to the First World War battle sites with a local school. The staff organise an excellent range of enrichment activities. Examples include `master classes' on particular themes, foreign exchanges, visits abroad to support literature study, theatre trips, study days and extra revision sessions.

88. Students appreciate the support they receive outside the classroom from staff at breaks, lunchtimes and after college. Students particularly value help they get with their coursework, and appreciate the reviews which they complete in their handbooks.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers are deployed effectively; they work together as teams and enjoy the open and consultative style of management. Course management is good, but the formalising of records requires development in both areas. There is much informal communication about students, but formal communications are underdeveloped. The self-assessment report in modern foreign languages is rigorous: English is less so. The self-assessment report in English does not highlight one major weakness: the low achievement in English GCSE, a course which accounts for over one third of the enrolments. Other issues which were identified in last year's action plan have not been addressed. Equal opportunities are addressed satisfactorily by staff.
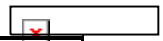
Part D: College data
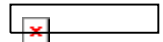
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age
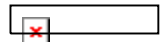
Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	12	56
2	25	38
3	63	6
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,085	74	13
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	70	6	1

Business administration, management and professional	817	245	12
Information and communications technology	403	218	7
Retailing, customer service and transportation	1	21	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	281	559	9
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3	96	1
Health, social care and public services	145	289	5
Visual and performing arts and media	768	214	11
Humanities	1,810	90	21
English, languages and communication	1,360	202	18
Foundation programmes	58	59	1
Total	**6,801**	**2,073**	**100**

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	236	116	155	281	264	244
	Retention rate %	80	83	81	80	81	84
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	52	46	52	64	71	35
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	730	822	821	233	223	215
	Retention rate %	79	78	82	73	86	78
	National average %	80	81	81	70	71	69
	Pass rate %	83	83	88	63	50	59
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,899	3,160	3,408	127	131	154
	Retention rate %	79	89	87	57	79	75

	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	78	77	85	75	70	78
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

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

Sources of information:

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

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

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)	72	25	3	65
Level 2 (intermediate)	59	23	18	17
Level 1 (foundation)	89	11	0	9
Other sessions	0	0	0	0
Totals	**71**	**23**	**6**	**91**

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