Inspection report

Northbrook College Sussex

Dates of inspection: 29 September–8 October 2004

A report from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) under section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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Contents

Section **Page**

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Northbrook College Sussex
Type of college:	General further and higher education
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Unique reference number:	130842
Name of reporting inspector:	Fred Brown
Dates of inspection:	29 September–8 October 2004

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

Northbrook College, Sussex is a large general further education (FE) college located in and around Worthing in West Sussex. College data for 2002/03 show that there were 13,458 FE students, of whom 3,558 were full time and 9,900 were studying part time. In 2002/03, there were 5,402 adult and community learning (ACL) learners. The college offers courses across all 14 areas of learning identified by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There is provision for work-based learning, with approximately 200 learners on programmes. The college offers courses from pre-entry level to degree and post-graduate level. In 2002/03, just fewer than 5% of students were from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 2.7% of the local population. The difference is largely due to the recruitment of international students who come to the college to study English as a foreign language (EFL), FE and higher education (HE) courses. Northbrook College operates on five main campuses, three in Worthing, one at Shoreham Airport and one in Horsham. The college also makes provision in a number of smaller community-based centres, particularly for the ACL provision. The college recruits students from the wider Worthing area, but also attracts significant numbers of students from outside the area, particularly Brighton and Hove.

The main employment sectors in the area are retail, public sector, financial and business services and health services. Unemployment is below that of the rest of Sussex and the South East. Average weekly earnings in and around Worthing are 3.5% below the Sussex average and 9% below the national average. Some 83% of businesses employ fewer than 10 people. There are seven wards in the top 10% most deprived wards in England for education and skills. However, the area has one of the lowest shares of very low literacy and numeracy skills in Sussex. The proportion of people (aged 16 to 59) with no, or low level, qualifications is higher in this area than in the rest of Sussex and the South East. The percentage of Year 11 students gaining five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades A* to C was 49% in 2003 which is below the Sussex average at 55% and national average at 53%. The participation rate of Year 11 leavers in full-time education and job-with-training was 89% in 2002.

The college works closely with partner schools and the West Sussex Learning Partnership to promote the 14 to 16 curriculum and other initiatives aimed at widening participation. Northbrook is committed to the government initiative called 'Action for Business Colleges' designed specifically to enhance employer engagement and workforce development in the area. The college is lead in a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in business, management and finance (interim status) in partnership with City College Brighton and Hove. It is also leading the establishment of an aero and aviation CoVE and is a partner in a full status Hospitality CoVE. Northbrook's mission is 'to develop the capabilities of individuals, employers and other organisations by providing high-quality opportunities for learning, which are relevant to their needs'.

The college has contracted directly with Sussex LSC for the provision of ACL since August 2003. Prior to this, the college's ACL provision was subcontracted by West Sussex Local Education Authority (LEA) adult education service. Under the new arrangements, the Adult

Education Service retains a countywide planning and co-ordination role. ACL is offered at 4 of the college campuses and 39 community venues in Worthing, Shoreham and Southwick. In 2003/04, there were 5,516 ACL learners. Courses are offered predominantly in information and communication technology (ICT); hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; and English, languages and communications. The majority of the programmes are non-accredited. Some 9% of enrolments are on accredited programmes, primarily in visual arts and modern foreign languages. The college manages its ACL provision through the faculty of art and design. In 2003/04, the college employed 160 part-time ACL tutors.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be good in four of the curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in five, with one curriculum area unsatisfactory and work-based learning in construction very weak. Standards of teaching and learning are mainly satisfactory. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- good student support contributing to improved retention rates in 2003/04

- committed, well-qualified and experienced staff

- good development of students' practical and technical skills

- constructive feedback to students helping them improve further

- effective provision for students aged 14 to 16

- strong financial health

- effective external links and partnerships and response to government initiatives

- the good progression opportunities in some curriculum areas

- the flexible learning centres and enhanced information technology (IT) facilities.

What should be improved

- the unsatisfactory teaching and learning in ICT and on level 2 courses

- the pass rates in many areas

- the poor management and performance of learners in work-based learning

- the insufficient use and analysis of management information

- the lack of rigour in the observation of teaching and learning

- the insufficiently critical self-assessment

- the sharing of good practice between curriculum areas and work-based learning

- the inadequate quality assurance arrangements

- the coherence of the strategy for delivering the curriculum across the college.

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
Construction work-based learning	**Very poor.** Retention rates were high on all courses in 2003/04, but the completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Monitoring and recording of learners' progress are inadequate. Not enough use is made of evidence from the workplace and employers are not sufficiently involved in training and reviews. The management of training is poor.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	**Satisfactory.** Provision in work-based learning is **unsatisfactory**. The retention and pass rates on most courses are in line with national averages. Only 25% of teaching and learning is good or better. Physical resources and accommodation at Shoreham are very good. There are effective industrial links and students receive good pastoral support. In work-based learning, there are low levels of framework completion and poor management of the provision.
Business, administration, management and professional	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates are high on personnel, marketing and management programmes, but there are low pass rates on accountancy courses and the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) business course. Retention rates are satisfactory. Much of the teaching and learning is good, but there is insufficient monitoring of the progress made by part-time students.
Information and communications technology	**Unsatisfactory.** Flexible learning provision is **satisfactory**. Pass rates are good on most adult part-time courses at levels 1 and 2, but there are poor retention and pass rates on full-time courses at levels 2 and 3. Flexible learning provision is very good. Overall, there are good resources and students are well supported. Too much of the teaching on full-time programmes is unsatisfactory and ICT programmes are insufficiently co-ordinated.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	**Satisfactory.** Provision in work-based learning is **unsatisfactory**. Pass and retention rates are high on some FE courses and on work-based swimming courses. Pass rates are low on level 1 catering courses and framework achievements by work-based learners are poor. Resources and support for learners on FE courses are good, but assessment practice in work-based learning in sport is unsatisfactory. There is poor management of the work-based learning provision and of the real work environment in hospitality.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates are good on part-time level 3 courses and teaching and learning are good in practical lessons. Support for students is good, but accommodation and facilities are poor and salons do not reflect current industry standards. The range of full-time provision is narrow and management information is not used effectively to inform planning and target setting.
Health, social care and childcare	**Good.** Provision in work-based learning is **satisfactory**. Retention and pass rates on most courses are very high and teaching and learning are very good. There is a focused response to national priorities and meeting skills shortages in care and early years. Course management of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) is good, but the monitoring and review of some other courses is inadequate. Work-based learners develop good occupational skills, but their framework achievements are low.
Visual and performing arts and media	**Good.** Pass rates are high on level 3 visual arts courses, but there are low retention rates in media and music. Practical work is of a high standard, students are well supported and much of the teaching and learning is good. Resources are good in music and performing arts, but accommodation for foundation students at Union Place and for life drawing students is poor. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities, but there is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities.
English, languages and communications	**Good.** Retention rates and most pass rates are good. There is much energetic, stimulating and engaging teaching, and effective use is made of good resources. Initial assessment and on-programme guidance and support are very effective. Numbers on EFL programmes are low and declining and these students have insufficient opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	**Good.** Students achieve good results at the end of their full-time and part-time courses. Strong leadership has a significant impact on quality assurance procedures as well as planning and assessment. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory or better, as are the learning and attainment of students. Students have access to a wide range of supportive activities and resources.
Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	**Satisfactory.** Retention and pass rates are good and students make progress in developing literacy, language and numeracy skills. Much of the teaching is uninspiring and there is an over-reliance on classroom assistants. Assessment is good, students are well supported and the college is pro-active in widening participation. Management is good, although there are some gaps in the planning of learning support.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has retained its strong financial position over a period of growth and change. Retention rates improved in 2003/04 across most curriculum areas. The college has a good community presence and works productively with other local organisations. Governors are beginning to adopt a more systematic approach to monitoring the college's progress. However, quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Policies and procedures are implemented with varying degrees of consistency and success. Although pass rates for 2003/04 have improved in some curriculum areas, there is no clear pattern of improvement in students' achievement across the college. Accurate and reliable management information is more readily available since the last inspection, but it is not used rigorously by managers to analyse trends and to inform planning. Accommodation has improved, but remains unsatisfactory in some areas. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. A number of innovative projects, many of which are operated jointly with external partners, help widen participation by new students. The college is committed to attracting students who do not traditionally participate in FE, although its strategy for achieving this aim is underdeveloped. The college gathers information about the recruitment and performance of different groups of students, but this information is not analysed nor used systematically to plan for improvements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well on the Broadwater campus. Access for people with restricted mobility is good at most venues. Additional learning support for students who may need help in literacy and numeracy is effective and valued by students. The college has a successful programme of vocational provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools. Young people are able to access and succeed on vocational courses as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum. The college has reviewed and updated its policies on race relations and disability discrimination, but these are not monitored effectively. Equality of opportunity is not promoted sufficiently and only a small number of staff have been trained on the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Guidance and support for students are good. Cross college support is satisfactorily managed. Students are well informed about, and make good use of, college support services. Effective pre-course guidance is given to most students to ensure they are on courses appropriate to their needs and abilities. Tutors with good industrial knowledge provide satisfactory careers advice and guidance. Induction is satisfactory for most students, but a few on work-based learning programmes are not well prepared for the NVQ process. Initial assessments of literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory for most students. Other additional learning support needs are effectively identified. Learning support co-ordinators are linked with each curriculum area and extensive use is made of a wide range of specialist tutors. Support is tailored to meet the needs of all individuals. The effectiveness of learning support is evaluated annually. The learning support manager responds well to requests from staff for awareness training, although there is no co-ordinated training plan for this development.

Students receive good pastoral and academic support through effective and well-planned tutorials. Practice in planning tutorials and recording outcomes varies between programme areas. Support in the workplace for some work-based learners is poor. The college has a child protection policy and procedures and has designated a senior member of staff to be responsible for child protection.

Students' views of the college

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

What students like about the college

- helpful, friendly and knowledgeable teachers
- good support for dyslexia and in counselling and welfare facilities
- accessibility of courses and the flexible and open learning facilities
- the workshops and the practical work in lessons
- good handouts in lessons and the small classes offering individual attention
- well-equipped accommodation in visual and performing arts and media
- parking facilities especially for students with disabilities
- the policy of having non-smoking canteens.

What they feel could be improved

- the cost and variety of food in the refectory
- the quality of accommodation for tutorials and some lessons
- the common room space and seating in the refectory
- key skills lessons and some theory lessons
- the setting of deadlines and provision of support to improve and pass examinations on some programmes
- access and signposting at Southwick Community Centre
- car parking facilities at some sites
- the quality of accommodation at the Broadwater site.

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	58	34	8
19+ and WBL*	62	30	8
Learning 16–18	60	32	8
19+ and WBL*	62	29	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.   The college offers courses in all 14 areas of learning as defined by the LSC, although land-based provision is very small. In making judgements about students' achievements, inspectors used data from the individualised learner returns (ILR) to the LSC for the academic years 2001/02, 2002/03 and college data for 2003/04.

16 to 18 year olds

2.   At the time of inspection, there were 1,002 full-time and 115 part-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled at the college on FE courses. In addition, there were 80 learners on work-based learning programmes and 112 students on ACL courses. For the three years ending 2003, retention rates at level 1 were below national averages. They improved at level 2 to above national average, but remained low at level 3. Pass rates were high at level 1, low at level 2 and broadly in line with national averages at level 3. Data for 2003/04 indicate that that retention rates improved at all levels. The data on pass rates, however, are not complete.

Adult learners

3.   During the inspection week, there were 491 full-time and 2,694 part-time adult students enrolled at the college, 3,075 learners on ACL courses and 136 on work-based learning programmes. For the three years ending 2003, retention rates were generally satisfactory. However, there was a decline in 2003 at levels 1 and 3, as well as in short course provision. The decline was particularly marked at level 2 where the retention rate was significantly below the national average. Pass rates at level 2 were also low. At level 3, the

pass rates were satisfactory, while at level 1 they were very high. For 2003/04, retention rates improved, but complete data on pass rates were not available at the time of inspection.

4.   Within curriculum areas, the extent to which students achieve their qualification and/or main learning goal varies. In many curriculum areas, students make good progress and develop appropriate skills for progression to further study or work. Progress is particularly strong for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In visual and performing arts, there is excellent progression from national diploma courses into HE and into relevant employment. However, the completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor in construction, engineering, sport, care and early years.

5.   Several students have gained recognition for their achievements. In 2003/04, a student on a certificate in management course was judged to be southern region student of the year. In floristry, college students won the first three places in a regional competition and five adult learners received certificates at a National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) adult learners' awards ceremony. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more detail about students' achievements and standards of work on particular courses.

Quality of education and training

6.   Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 199 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 60% of lessons, satisfactory in 32% and less than satisfactory in 8%. This is about 4% below the national average awarded in general FE colleges, for good or better lessons. The percentage of good or better teaching has decreased considerably since the last inspection in 1999 when 78% of teaching was judged to be good or better. Some 61% of the learning grades are good or better which is about the national average. The general standard of teaching and learning varies considerably between curriculum areas, with the best teaching in business, health and social care, visual and performing arts and English and EFL. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching in ICT. There is very little outstanding teaching. Teaching and learning are better for adult groups than for students aged 16 to 18 in hairdressing and beauty therapy and better for students aged 16 to 18 in hospitality and health and social care. In the other curriculum areas, the standard of teaching was the same for both age groups. There is too much unsatisfactory training in work-based learning. For mainly adult groups, 65% of teaching is good or better, compared with 58% for the students aged 16 to 18.

7.   Students aged 19 and over studying at levels 1 and 2 receive much better teaching than the same age group at level 3. The best teaching and learning is for adult students on level 2 courses where around 75% of teaching is good or better. The percentage of good teaching is much lower and below 60% for students aged 16 to 18 on courses at levels 1 and 2. The teaching in practical lessons and in those lessons that integrate theory and practice is better than for separate theory lessons. There are few discernible differences in the quality of teaching between course qualification aims. There is more good teaching and learning on Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national and NVQ level 1 courses while too much of the teaching on NVQ level 2 and BTEC first programmes is

unsatisfactory. The amount of good teaching by part-time teachers is 6% higher than that by full-time teachers.

8.   The teaching of students aged 14 to 16 is good. Many students are learning and successfully completing programmes. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in health and social care, English and English as a foreign language and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

9.   The best lessons are well planned and structured and include an appropriate mix of teaching and learning methods that keep students absorbed in their tasks. Teachers use an appropriate variety of learning activities that reflect the preferred learning styles of the students. Theory lessons have clear links with practice and students are encouraged to develop further their existing knowledge, or to learn new things. Students are willing learners and participate in group work and discussion. Teachers give clear explanations and make good use of focused questions to stimulate discussion. The intended outcomes of the lessons are made clear to students at the start of lessons. Students are attentive and motivated. Students gain a sense of achievement as their skills improve. Good use is made of information and learning technology (ILT) by teachers in many lessons to stimulate learning, especially in beauty therapy, and literacy and numeracy where some students use computers for independent study. For many students, learning is enhanced by a broad range of trips and visits and opportunities to display their work publicly.

10.   In less effective lessons, the range of teaching and learning techniques is limited. Teachers do not plan sufficiently to take account of the need to provide for students with a wide range of individual abilities. Teaching is insufficiently demanding for some students and there is little use of stimulating materials. Some lesson plans are insufficiently detailed to provide an outline of what will be taught and how. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long, ask too few questions and students lose concentration. The sequence of learning activities sometimes confuses rather than engages the students. In some lessons, many students do not contribute sufficiently to discussion and a few students are dominant in answering questions. Some theory lessons are uninspiring and rely too much on presentations by teachers. Students are not actively engaged in learning. Theory lessons use a limited range of teaching methods and few teachers employ practical demonstrations to illustrate and reinforce theory. Some teachers do not review the work covered in the lessons nor set the scene for next time. In some lessons, the content is poorly co-ordinated, oral instructions and assignment briefs are unclear and students do not know what is expected of them.

11.   The college has five main sites in Worthing and the surrounding areas. Most of the vocational courses are based on these sites at West Durrington, Horsham, Shoreham airport, Broadwater and Union Place. West Durrington campus, the administrative base for FE and HE, is pleasantly set in a 24-acre site to the west of Worthing. Teaching accommodation is generally good on this site. Some 37 centres in the surrounding area are used for a range of ACL programmes and a further 20 venues including local schools are used for FE courses. This range of accessible venues enables part-time students in particular to attend venues that

are convenient for them and this has attracted adult students who may not have otherwise participated. Aeronautical and automotive engineering courses are located in excellent purpose-built accommodation at Shoreham airport. Performing arts facilities are enhanced by a recently refurbished theatre which has industry-standard specialist equipment and a very good range of rehearsal and stagecraft rooms.

12.   The Union Place site, close to the centre of Worthing, is the administrative base for ACL. The site includes a Grade II listed building and an art and design teaching block, but there is poor access for people with mobility difficulties. Teaching accommodation in the Elm Lawn house is drab. Much of the teaching accommodation at the Broadwater site is housed in inferior buildings. The college reviewed its accommodation in March 2004 and at the time of inspection governors were considering disposing of some unsatisfactory accommodation. The utilisation of the college's existing space is low at 32%. Accommodation for hairdressing and beauty therapy, foundation art and design, modern foreign language courses and some lessons for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is of an unsatisfactory standard.

13.   Teachers are well qualified and experienced and 82% hold a recognised teaching qualification. Many have substantial industrial experience and this is used well to enhance their teaching. However, the college does not have a formal policy for updating the industrial experience of staff. New, unqualified teachers are encouraged to gain a recognised teaching qualification. The induction of new staff in ACL is thorough and effective. Learning support assistants and support staff for students with dyslexia are well qualified. Staff development is available to all staff and is designed to address individual and college needs, but take up is variable across the college. A curriculum and staff development committee determines the training programme.

14.   Specialist equipment and resources are generally good. Students in art and design benefit from the use of specialist equipment available for HE courses. Music technology and audio equipment is of a professional standard and students on auto and aeronautical engineering courses at Shoreham airport have access to high-quality specialist engineering resources. There are too few specialist resources for some aspects of the curriculum for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Students on beauty therapy courses do not have access to up-to-date facilities.

15.   Libraries at the college's main campuses are of a good standard. They contain a good range of current books, periodicals and learning resources appropriate to the courses and a smaller selection of general materials. The college has over 43,000 books and 1,845 videos and subscribes to 362 periodicals. The book stock for art and design students at the West Durrington site is extensive and is well supported by reference journals in studios. Libraries are well managed and there is effective monitoring of students' use of the facilities.

16.   The college has invested significantly in improving its ICT since the last inspection and in 2003/04 the college spent over £1 million on IT equipment. A large part of this was used to improve the quality of the flexible learning areas throughout the college. These are well used and located in high-quality accommodation close to the curriculum area they

support. They have a broad range of subject-specific software and many assignments are designed by teachers with this in mind. Students speak highly of the support they receive in the flexible learning areas. An increased number of computers are available in classrooms to support teaching.

17.   All students aged 16 to 18 and adult students complete an initial assessment as part of their introduction to the college. On most courses' taster days, course inductions and outcomes from initial assessment are used to ensure that students are placed on to appropriate courses and their likely support needs are identified. For example, in hospitality, students aged 16 to 18 are only enrolled on to courses after completing taster days and a two-week induction, during which students are assessed. Students and staff then agree the appropriate level of course and support needs.

18.   Assessment is well planned, fair and accurate. Work is thoroughly assessed and marked, and constructive feedback is given. In visual and performing arts, students are encouraged to reflect about their own and others' work within an environment in which the teachers give detailed feedback on draft projects. In care and early years, oral feedback to students on NVQ assessments is followed up almost immediately with written reports. Generally on college courses, useful written comments from teachers help students to improve their work. However, on engineering courses and part-time accountancy courses, insufficient feedback is given on how students can improve their work. Inconsistent use is made of individual learning plans. In English as a foreign language, care, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and beauty therapy, individual learning plans are well used and enable students to review their progress regularly, whilst in ICT and engineering, their use is underdeveloped. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are not well informed about their progress. There are no regular reports to all parents and parents' evenings are not held for all full-time courses.

19.   Verification and moderation practice for college-based provision is effective. In most programmes it is good, whilst in others it is much improved. For example, practices in work-based learning care and early years programmes have improved significantly. All external verifier reports are reviewed centrally each term. Resulting summaries of key issues are highlighted and action points are produced and monitored by college managers. Most teacher-devised assignments are reviewed by peers to ensure that they comply with national standards. In music, assignments are particularly well planned and effective. However, in ICT, not all assignments have clearly identified assessment criteria and students are not able to identify what they need to do to improve. There are very clear assessment schedules on administration, art, hospitality, early years education and English courses. In these areas, careful attention is given to ensure that students' workloads are balanced throughout the year.

20.   The college has recently introduced a pilot computerised learning, tracking and monitoring system, but it is still too early to evaluate its effectiveness. Arrangements for monitoring the progress of work-based students vary considerably between programmes; only in heath and social care are arrangements now better than satisfactory. In construction, there is little assessment in the workplace and the monitoring of students' progress is poor.

Although student reviews are carried out in a timely manner across all work-based learning programmes, they do not always clearly inform students as to what specific improvements are required. Employers are not regularly informed of the progress of their trainees in sports and construction.

21.   There is an appropriate range of courses with clear progression routes to meet the needs of students in most curriculum areas. However, there is no level 1 provision in hairdressing and all students are placed on level 2 courses regardless of ability. There is no level 1 or level 2 provision in art and design owing to an informal arrangement with another college in the area. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have insufficient access to specialist vocational provision other than that located on the Broadwater site. In many curriculum areas, the college provides courses at level 4 and degree courses enabling students to progress within a familiar learning environment. The college works effectively with the validating service of the Open University and has links with the University of Brighton. The college also has productive working arrangements with local special schools, social services and other external agencies which benefit students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The partnership with the LEA is good.

22.   The college responds well to the needs of the community. A number of innovative projects designed to meet the needs of the community and specific groups such as homeless people and learners with mental health problems have been successfully established. The college offers good progression opportunities in literacy and numeracy from entry level to level 2. Links with employers are good and employers of work-based learners in engineering work well with the college and see it as responsive to their needs. The college is involved in an innovative project with the local LSC, the South East Development Agency and local engineering companies to identify skills shortages and to provide appropriate training. Provision of NVQs in care and early years makes a significant contribution to raising the skill levels of the local industry in line with national priorities. NVQ programmes in care and early years are planned to meet the specific needs of employers returning to study. Liaison with employers for work-based learners in construction is poor. Employers are not aware of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework or of the work-based evidence learners must collect.

23.   There are good links with local schools. A successful initiative for pupils aged 14 to 16 to take a vocational course as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum has attracted 80 pupils. Retention and pass rates are high. Staff have been trained specifically to work with this age group and students' behaviour is well managed. This provision enjoys a high status in the college and is seen as a key strategic development. Open events are run for Year 11 pupils enabling them to sample aspects of a vocational curriculum and students find these valuable in helping them to choose a course of study.

24.   The college has an enrichment policy, but this is not implemented consistently by departments. Students in art and design benefit from an extensive range of relevant trips and visits abroad. Business students visit business organisations and visiting speakers from industry are an integral part of their courses. Insufficient enrichment activities are available

in care and ICT. Most curriculum areas provide students with opportunities to gain additional vocational qualifications which enhance their prospects of future employment.

25.   All full-time students have an entitlement to opportunities to improve their key skills of application of number, communications and IT. The college policy on key skills is not applied consistently and its effectiveness is inadequately monitored. The delivery of key skills across the college varies enormously. In some areas, key skills are an integral part of the vocational curriculum, but in others they are taught and assessed separately. Pass rates are low. This is acknowledged as a weakness in the college's self-assessment report.

26.   Students receive good guidance and support. Cross-college support is satisfactorily managed through reporting arrangements to two assistant principals. Informal communication between staff with support roles is good. Specialist student services are centrally located on the main college site. The West Durrington campus has a nursery for the children of students, staff and members of the public. There are no childcare facilities on the Broadwater, Shoreham and Union Place sites. Students are well informed about the support services during induction and these are further publicised in the prospectuses and in the student charter and guide. Students have a good awareness and make effective use of the services on offer. The college provides effective pre-course guidance for full-time and part-time students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Most students feel well prepared for their programmes and are confident that they have chosen courses appropriate for their needs and abilities. Staff visit feeder schools to talk to pupils about what is on offer at the college. Tutors with a good knowledge of industry provide satisfactory careers advice and guidance. There is a small careers library in student services, but there are no careers IT facilities for students at West Durrington. The college has close links with the local Connexions adviser.

27.   A satisfactory induction provides most students with a sound basis on which to start their college programmes. Induction is unsatisfactory for some work-based learners and there are few checks on learners' understanding of the NVQ process. Most students have their literacy and numeracy needs assessed using the key skills builder programme, but this has not yet been extended to all students. Other learning support needs are identified during enrolment and students may also request support. Individual student needs are often identified by tutors during the learning programme. Enrolment procedures and supporting documentation for full-time and part-time courses have been standardised. Students are encouraged to use additional support services. Support arrangements are set up within the first few weeks of their courses. Learning support co-ordinators are attached to each programme area and this ensures that links to the learning support available are effective. Learning support is used extensively throughout the college. Support for students is highly valued, flexibly provided and tailored to meet individual needs. Specialists in dyslexia, visual and hearing impairment, autism and mental health provide good support to many students. The effectiveness of learning support is evaluated annually and reported to the equal opportunities committee. Course reviews include an evaluation of the different types of learning support taken up within programme areas. However, the management information from these evaluations is insufficiently used to plan further developments in the service. Staff requests for awareness training are welcomed and recent training in dyslexia and

disability awareness has been offered. However, there is no co-ordinated training plan to develop staff awareness of learning support issues.

28.   Tutorials provide good pastoral and academic support for most students. The use of formal guidelines ensures that full-time and most part-time students receive a minimum tutorial entitlement, but practice varies across the college. There is no cross-college timetable for group tutorials. Most individual tutorials are well planned and set clear action points for students, but there is variable quality in the records kept by programme areas to record tutorial outcomes. Tutors conduct individual tutorials sensitively, taking account of individual needs and equality of opportunity. Good tutorials encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Some tutorials are held in inappropriate accommodation which is noisy or lacks privacy. For example, a tutorial in hospitality and catering was held in a kitchen with noisy and distracting equipment nearby. Support for work-based learners in engineering and in care and early years is satisfactory, but some learners on construction programmes receive poor support in the workplace.

29.   Students' attendance is carefully monitored through a recently introduced electronic register system. Divisional deans receive weekly reports and there are procedures in place to follow-up concerns about the attendance of individual students. Monthly attendance reports are analysed to determine trends, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of the new system on retention rates. During the week of inspection, average attendance was 87%.

30.   The college has a child protection policy and procedures and the vice-principal is responsible for child protection. The governors have very recently been updated on child protection matters. All staff who work in a supervisory or individual capacity with children undergo checks by the criminal records bureau. Most staff are not yet aware of the new policy and procedures.

Leadership and management

31.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection in 1999, many cross-college weaknesses have been addressed successfully. Newly developed management information systems are beginning to provide staff with relevant data and timely reports. Compliance issues relating to governance have been resolved. The college has increased student enrolments steadily year on year and has attracted students from a wider age range and from more varied backgrounds. Accommodation has gradually improved, but remains unsatisfactory in several areas.

32.   A strategy to improve retention and pass rates is beginning to have an impact. For the three years up to 2003, there have been significant pockets of low retention and pass rates across different curriculum areas. The main strand of the strategy centres on the role of programme managers. These managers have recently had their teaching loads reduced significantly to allow them more time for course management. Other actions taken by senior managers include changes to staffing and courses and a re-organisation of the quality assurance team. Retention rates improved across all levels in 2003/04. Data on pass rates

were not complete at the time of inspection. While there is evidence of pass rates improving within some curriculum areas, there is no clear picture of improvement across the college.

33.   The principal has demonstrated sound leadership over many years, successfully steering the college through periods of change and growth, while maintaining a clear focus on financial stability. Turnover has increased over the last three years and the college has remained financially strong, retaining its category A status. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

34.   Governors, working with the principal, set an overall direction for the college. They bring specialist expertise to sub-committees and work in a supportive manner with senior college managers. Their awareness of the strengths of the college and the areas for improvement is variable. The recently appointed chair of governors is enthusiastic about the work of the college and its future role within the community and is promoting the need for tighter performance indicators and targets against which governors can measure progress more systematically in the future. At present, key strategic objectives are not written in a way that makes them easily measurable. Governors have become more focused on students' achievements, but they have paid insufficient attention to weaknesses in work-based learning provision. Procedures to measure the governors' own performance are underdeveloped.

35.   Quality assurance is unsatisfactory for FE provision and work-based learning. The implementation of procedures is inconsistent. A framework is in place, supported by a wide range of policies and documentation. Self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous. The quality of course review and evaluation is variable, ranging from very good to weak. Although management information is available to teachers and managers, it is not used systematically to analyse areas of strengths and weaknesses or to inform planning. In some curriculum areas, managers rely on their own information, rather than use the centrally held data.

36.   The system of internal lesson observations is supportive and many staff value the feedback provided. However, as the college recognises, the grades given are too high. Performance management systems are in place and most staff have been appraised. The outcomes from observations and appraisals are not analysed or acted upon in sufficient depth to drive forward improvements in teaching and learning.

37.   The quality of curriculum and course management varies from good in some curriculum areas to unsatisfactory in others. The management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Much of the well-managed FE provision benefits from enthusiastic and proactive managers. There are aspects of unsatisfactory management in several curriculum areas. These include poor understanding and use of target setting and management information, as well as weak self-assessment and a lack of clear direction.

38.   Comprehensive policies are in place to comply with most aspects of equal opportunities legislation. However, there has been too little monitoring of the effectiveness of these policies. The college has recently produced an appropriate action plan on equality and diversity improvement measures. Data are collected on staff and students in relation to

gender, age, race and disability, but are not used in a systematic way to improve performance. The college has extensive provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA) action plan is reviewed regularly. Access to the majority of venues for people with restricted mobility is good. A college-wide training event on the Disability Discrimination Act was helpful for staff, but only a few people have had training on the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities, as identified in the college's self-assessment.

39.   There is a strong commitment by governors and senior managers to staff training and continuing professional development. Staff value opportunities to attend courses and conferences or undertake part-time study. Governors, too, have attended training sessions. However, there is too little evaluation of development activities and their impact on improving practice and raising achievement.

40.   Internal communications are generally good. Staff are well informed through team meetings, informal discussions, and electronic communications. They consider managers to be accessible and supportive. Programme managers value the opportunity to meet regularly with the principal.

41.   Links with employers, local schools, HE institutions and community organisations are good. The college works effectively with schools on a range of initiatives for young people aged 14 to 16. The college has a strong community presence and in the last year it has increased its network of community contacts and partnerships. Several innovative projects have been successful in involving learners who had not previously participated in any formal learning.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Construction work-based learning

Overall provision in this area is **very poor (grade 5)**

Strengths

- high retention rates in 2003/04.

Weaknesses

- poor completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks

- insufficient range of work-based evidence in portfolios

- inadequate monitoring and recording of learners' progress

- poor management of training.

Scope of provision

42.   The college holds work-based learning contracts for students on brickwork, carpentry and joinery, plumbing and electrical installation programmes. At the time of the inspection, 18 students were on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes in electrical installation and 33 students were on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes. Of these 33 students, 17 were on carpentry and joinery programmes, 7 on brickwork and the remaining 9 on plumbing programmes. Plumbing students attend a sub-contractor college to complete their off-the-job training whilst all other students attend Northbrook College for their off-the-job training. All work-based learners attend college on a part-time day-release basis and are employed by local companies for the remainder of the working week. Reviews of students' progress are conducted by a monitoring officer both in college and in the workplace. The FE construction provision was not included as part of this inspection.

Achievement and standards

43.   Retention rates on all courses in 2003/04 are high and have improved significantly. Of the 24 students who started programmes in 2003/04, 22 students are still in learning and 1 has achieved a qualification.

44.   Completion rates of modern apprenticeship frameworks are low. To date, only 6 students have completed full frameworks from a possible 75. Additionally, at the time of the inspection, only 15 students of the 75 that could have been expected to achieve, had achieved the NVQ qualification, and only 6 had achieved the key skills qualification.

45.   The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Students can build walls that are level, gauge and plumb. They can explain the purpose of a damp-proof course and why wall ties are used. A carpentry and joinery student was observed in a joinery workshop fabricating the components of a complex staircase. An electrical student was observed competently wiring power sockets and he was able to confidently explain the installation and testing procedures.

46.   Students' portfolios are underdeveloped. They lack an appropriately diverse range of work-based evidence. For example, portfolios contain very few photographs or other supporting work-related evidence. There is insufficient feedback from assessors in portfolios. Feedback does not give advice or guidance to students about how to improve or make progress. There is an over-reliance on students writing about what tasks they have completed and how these tasks were carried out. The exception to this is in electrical installation where work evidence log books do contain photographic and other work-related evidence, and log books are issued at an appropriate time.

Quality of education and training

47.   The standard of practical skill development is satisfactory. Employers and work-based supervisors give students the opportunity to complete a wide range of practical work that enables students to gain valuable experience. Teaching is unsatisfactory in underpinning knowledge and key skills lessons. These lessons are not well planned and schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed nor do they contain appropriate cross references to qualification standards. The lessons are often dull and uninspiring. Key skills are not well promoted or understood by staff.

48.   Resources for teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Workshop accommodation is adequate and there is a satisfactory range of tools, materials and equipment. At times, there is a shortage of classrooms for theory teaching.

49.   The requirements of work evidence recording packs are not well explained to students and they have not been issued soon enough to allow students to start collecting essential evidence. Visits by assessors to the workplace are not planned in advance and little effective assessment planning has been completed except in electrical installation.

50.   There is inadequate monitoring and recording of students' progress. Progress and tracking records are very poor and do not track all aspects of the framework. Tracking systems that are used vary in their format from section to section and many records are incomplete or not routinely updated. The work-based learning section uses different tracking and monitoring systems from those used by assessors. Information held on students' progress and achievements differs between the two systems. For example, the work-based learning section staff monitor students' achievements at performance criteria level whilst assessors track students' achievements at a unit level.

51.   Individual learning plans are underdeveloped and do not set meaningful or useful targets or milestones to help and support students to achieve. Students do not value the plans.

Reviews conducted by work-based learning monitoring officers do not set targets for students to achieve and employers and assessors are insufficiently involved in the review process.

52.   Students who have been identified as requiring support receive it and five learners attend additional support sessions. Students' language, literacy and numeracy skills are adequate and appropriate for the level of course they are on.

Leadership and management

53.   The management of training is poor. There is little effective communication between work-based learning and the construction department. Despite significant difficulties in work-based learning for some time no detailed strategic plan exists to improve this area. There is insufficient co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. Employers are insufficiently involved in training. Employers and work-based supervisors are not fully aware of the content of students' qualifications. In particular, they are not aware of what work-based evidence must be collected or what students complete during their off-the-job training.

54.   Quality assurance systems are incomplete and checks to monitor the quality of provision do not take place regularly. There is little standardisation of systems and procedures. Sub-contracted provision in plumbing is poorly managed and no quality monitoring of the sub-contractor has taken place.

55.   The quality of key skills and tracking of students' progress have been recognised as significant problems for some time, but improvement measures have been slow in being implemented. Self-assessment is not robust. The appointment of two managers in construction and work-based learning has resulted in some actions, but it is too early for these measures to have had any significant impact on students and too early to measure their success.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing

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

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

Strengths

- very good physical resources at the Shoreham centre

- good support for engineering students.

Weaknesses

- very poor framework achievements in work-based learning

- insufficiently stimulating teaching

- poor management of work-based learning

- weak self-assessment.

Scope of provision

56.   Engineering offers a wide range of courses and modes of attendance including motor vehicle, mechanical engineering, aeronautical engineering, and electronics. Currently, there are 473 students undertaking engineering programmes, of whom 276 are aged 16 to 18 and 197 are aged 19 or over. Some 15 of the total number of students are female. Qualifications range from foundation level to level 4. There is a full cost provision for overseas students studying BTEC national diploma aeronautical. The college offers engineering taster courses to pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools. The main work-based learning provision is in automotive engineering. Currently, there are 14 apprentices on vehicle body and paint operations programmes and 34 on vehicle maintenance and repair programmes.

Achievement and standards

57.   Retention and pass rates show signs of improvement in 2003/04 except on the national diploma in engineering, where the retention rate is only 46%. Pass rates at level 1 on the City and Guilds motor vehicle repair and service course have been consistently high since 2002 and are over 30% above the national average. There are some good and improving retention rates on NVQ level 2 courses. Retention and pass rates have improved in 2003/04 on the aircraft engineering licence course, but pass rates remain low. Attendance in lessons observed is good, at 93%.

58.   Framework achievements are very low in work-based learning. Of the 15 learners who started in 2000/01, only 5 (33%) have achieved the full framework. Of the 17 learners who started in 2001/02, only 2 (12%) have achieved the full framework and 2 are still in

learning. Of the 129 learners who started in 2002/03, 50% are still in learning and none has achieved the framework. Pass rates on the NVQ and for key skills are similarly very low.

59.   Students develop a satisfactory range of practical and technical skills that enable them to complete tasks efficiently. The better examples of students' work are seen in the practical lessons. Some students struggle to grasp theory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, technology and manufacturing, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 3980-01 repair and service/prog award in automative service	1	No. of starts	55	49	49
		% retention	67	65	76
		% pass rate	35	97	97
NVQ aircraft engine maintenance	2	No. of starts	34	31	31
		% retention	97	90	90
		% pass rate	82	79	86
NVQ performing engineering operations (2 year)	2	No. of starts	*	17	29
		% retention	*	65	76
		% pass rate	*	73	64
National diploma engineering	3	No. of starts	72	49	26
		% retention	83	76	46
		% pass rate	83	73	82
Aircraft engineering licence (3 year)	3	No. of starts	50	27	20
		% retention	8	30	60
		% pass rate	75	25	50

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

60.   There is not enough good teaching. This is below the national profile of teaching grades for engineering. The better teaching is in practical lessons where teachers provide effective individual support. For example, in one aeronautical engineering lesson, students, who were in the workshop for the first time, were set a task which required them to prepare aluminium repair panels marking out and using a compressed air driven drill/hammer to place the rivets. This was the first time they had used this type of equipment and the entire group were keen to produce high-quality work. A competitive spirit emerged and students worked hard to produce the best example while the teacher circulated the room and often intervened to support students. By the end of the lesson, students had gained a good understanding of the tools and processes and had developed good practical skills as well as building up a good team spirit.

61.   Teachers in theory lessons use only a limited range of teaching and learning methods. Few teachers use practical demonstrations to illustrate theory and to make it easier for students to understand. Teachers often fail to check or consolidate what has been learned at the end of a lesson. Lesson plans and schemes of work are poor, consisting in most cases of little more than lists of topics. There is no reference to learning objectives, nor to ways of providing for the different needs of individual learners. There is no emphasis on basic or key skills.

62.   There is a successful project for pupils aged 14 to 16. In one lesson, students responded well to the checks on learning by the teacher. All showed a good understanding of the principles of 'brakes' and clearly enjoyed the lesson.

63.   The Shoreham site has very good accommodation. The college has a number of aircraft on the site and students gain competence in aircraft maintenance. This is unusual for an FE college. Local employers have a high regard for the automotive practical training facilities, which are of a good industrial standard. Theory teaching rooms in the new centre are light, airy, well furnished and equipped with appropriate teaching aids, but without any displays of technical data these rooms lack a clear vocational emphasis. At the Broadwater site, the accommodation is adequate, although the mechanical workshop is very cramped with too many machines.

64.   Teachers have good industrial experience, a particularly important requirement on the aerospace engineering courses. Difficulties in providing cover for absent staff and in recruiting new staff adversely affect students' learning. A number of lessons had to be cancelled in the week of inspection, as no cover was available.

65.   Students' progress is well monitored in practical lessons. Tracking of progress on assignments and practical tasks is good. However, insufficient attention is given to correcting grammar or spelling errors in students' work. In the progress reviews in work-based learning, good support and advice were given regarding valid evidence collection, work difficulties and progress on the programme. Some targets set for the completion of

work were not sufficiently demanding. In a workplace assessment a learner carrying out a major service on a car displayed a good level of knowledge of modern vehicles and their servicing and repair, when answering questions from the assessor.

66.   Northbrook is one of the few colleges to deliver the aircraft maintenance 'licence' programme attracting students from across Britain and from other countries. The college has good and productive links with employers. This is evident in the good collaborative working towards achieving CoVE status as the lead provider in a regional proposal for aerospace and aviation in partnership with other providers. In addition, the college is working in a consortium with the South East Development Agency and the local LSC to identify training needs in engineering companies. As a preferred training provider for local automotive employers, the college has attracted a local chain of garages whose managers have decided to place their entire apprentice training with the college.

67.   The tutorial support for students is good, both through the pastoral system and with the support of subject teachers. Second-year students commented favourably on the introduction of a full-time tutor. Effective additional learning support is provided through the onsite learner support co-ordinator. Students' additional learning needs are identified on entry to the college and in most cases support is now in place. Tutorials for full-time students and reviews in work-based learning are carried out at frequent intervals.

Leadership and management

68.   Leadership and management of college courses are satisfactory. Resources are well used and deployed. A new programme management structure is working well. However, development plans from the programme area reviews do not identify strategies to improve retention and pass rates or to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is little promotion of equal opportunities in the classroom or in the teaching materials being used.

69.   For work-based learning leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is poor recording of progress and no apparent analysis of achievement, either by start cohorts or expected completion dates. Insufficient attention has been paid to the development of measures to improve framework achievements. New management arrangements for work-based learning have not been in place for long enough to have an impact on learners' success and the quality of training.

Business, administration, management and professional

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on personnel, supervisory management and marketing courses

- good teaching and learning

- good range of part-time business courses with progression opportunities.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on accountancy courses and on the AVCE business course

- insufficient target setting and review of progress for part-time students.

Scope of provision

70.   The college provides a wide range of courses. Full-time, part-time and short courses are available in administration, law, marketing, management, personnel and accountancy. The college has recently been awarded funding to develop a CoVE in business. Examples of the courses offered are budgeting for small business, new directors' responsibilities and marketing communications. Bespoke courses are also provided for employers. Online distance learning courses are available free to businesses to help employees develop job-related skills and knowledge. A number of courses have been designed for women returning to study and young people wanting to work part-time whilst gaining qualifications.

71.   Specialist part-time courses include the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) courses at levels 2, 3 and 4, and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) courses. Other professional courses that also lead to institute status are offered in personnel practice, marketing and management. At the time of the inspection, there were 54 full-time and 554 part-time students. Of the full-time students, 36 were aged 16 to 18. Two students were on an apprenticeship programme in accountancy.

Achievement and standards

72.   Pass rates on personnel, supervisory management and marketing courses are high. On personnel and supervisory management courses they have been significantly above the national averages for the past three years. However, pass rates on NVQ accountancy courses at levels 2, 3 and 4 are low. Following a succession of very low pass rates on the AVCE in business, the course has been withdrawn and students have transferred to a national certificate course in business. The CoVE is making good progress towards meeting its targets.

73.   The standard of students' work is good and written work in students' portfolios is of an appropriate standard. In one lesson, for example, students worked successfully in groups

on an advertising project and produced a comprehensive analysis of the strategies marketing companies use to advertise products. Presentations to each other were of a high standard. Students progress well on their course and develop personal and social skills through a range of enrichment activities, including visits to courts of law, outward bound centres and large employers. Students are motivated and work productively in lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, administration, management and professional, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ accounting foundation	2	No. of starts	35	39	48
		% retention	86	69	79
		% pass rate	57	4	42
NVQ accounting intermediate	3	No. of starts	56	44	29
		% retention	82	84	97
		% pass rate	43	41	39
Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX)	3	No. of starts	7	15	13
		% retention	86	93	77
		% pass rate	100	64	69
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	36	28	17
		% retention	92	96	94
		% pass rate	97	93	100
ACCA	4	No. of starts	13	23	12
		% retention	85	91	58
		% pass rate	73	71	43
Advanced certificate in marketing	4	No. of starts	12	16	11
		% retention	92	81	82
		% pass rate	64	31	81

Quality of education and training

74.   Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of methods effectively to stimulate learning. Teachers use humour to good effect and encourage discussion. In one lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully managed a lively debate on various aspects of divorce law. Teachers use personal experience and examples appropriate to the learners' experience to reinforce learning. In one lesson, students enjoyed discussing the marketing strategies relating to food and drink products they were familiar with. In a few lessons, the teacher talks too much or does not provide a sufficient range of activities to stimulate students' interest.

75.   Resources are satisfactory. Staff are motivated, with a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of their specialisms. Students have good access to ICT facilities and use an appropriate variety of learning resources available in all classrooms.

76.   Tutorial support for full-time students is generally good. Students value the support and guidance they receive. Tutorials are used to monitor progress on full-time courses and set targets for students. However, the majority of part-time students on law, accountancy, management and marketing courses do not benefit from target setting through regular reviews of their progress. Learning plans are completed with all full-time students, but this is not the case for part-time students on NVQ accountancy courses. Although some workshops are used by tutors to check progress, not enough feedback is given and students are not always clear about their own progress.

77.   Pre-course guidance for students is satisfactory. Students are interviewed and full-time students complete an initial assessment in numeracy and literacy. The results of these assessments are used to inform individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

78.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. The majority of programmes are well managed and staff meet on a regular basis to discuss programme requirements and improvements. Course leaders have recognised the need to take actions to improve pass rates on accountancy courses. Self-assessment has led to the identification of weaknesses and many of these are being addressed.

Information and communications technology

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

Contributory grade for flexible learning provision is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most part-time adult courses at levels 1 and 2

- good support for students

- very good flexible learning provision

- good learning resources.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on full-time courses at levels 2 and 3

- much unsatisfactory teaching on full-time programmes

- poor co-ordination of ICT programmes.

Scope of provision

79.   The college provides ICT courses at five sites. Management responsibility for the provision is divided between two programme areas. There are 277 students in the computing and ICT department made up of 75 full-time and 202 part-time students. Full-time students are undertaking first diploma, national certificate and national diploma courses. There are 126 students undertaking distance learning accredited programmes at levels 1 to 3 and 45 part-time students are on taught courses, including an introductory computer literacy course, application workshops, hardware, networking, programming and web-design courses.

80.   An additional 528 students attend 5 flexible learning centres. These include 245 students on courses leading to an examination-based qualification in ICT, 15 on taster programmes and 17 in groups and workshops. There are 251 students on ICT learndirect courses. The college contracts with learndirect Sussex to deliver courses. Three learning centres offer learndirect provision. Over 70% of students take ICT user courses, but skills for life courses have been increasing. Online testing has been available since the summer of 2004.

Achievement and standards

81.   Pass rates are high on most part-time courses at levels 1 and 2 for adults. Retention rates on part-time courses are satisfactory. The retention rate was poor for an examination-based qualification in ICT in 2002/03, but in 2003/04 88% of students were retained. So far,

57% of these students have achieved the qualification. ICT students on learndirect courses progress to further courses. The overall retention rate for learndirect programmes is satisfactory, at 77%, with 60% successfully completing courses.

82.   Retention and pass rates are low on courses at levels 2 and 3 for full-time students. For example, on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate course, pass rates have been below 35% for three years and only improved to 41% on the first diploma course, introduced in 2003/04. Pass and retention rates have been consistently below the national averages on AVCE courses for the past four years. On the national diploma course, which started in 2003, 88% of students progressed to the second year. There are satisfactory retention rates, but declining pass rates on the BTEC national certificate programme for adults. Retention rates for distance learning courses have been poor. Some 57% withdrew from level 1, 39% from level 2 and 60% from level 3 courses. A newly designed level 3 course has resulted in improved retention rates and 80% of students are currently retained. The distance learning courses started in May 2004 and there have been 18 achievements up to the date of the inspection.

83.   Many beginners quickly master practical skills. A student aged 75 produced Christmas cards and was able to e-mail her family and friends after following an examination-based qualification in ICT course. Students on A+ courses gain valuable skills which enable them to repair hardware faults at work and at home. Students on a basic computer literacy course develop proficiency in word processing, spreadsheets, databases and graphics. Many students speak of increased confidence and improved career prospects as a result of their new ICT skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Short courses 3 guided learning hours	entry	No. of starts	1,137	688	379
		% retention	96	100	85
		% pass rate	100	100	96
Internally certified other	1	No. of starts	*	471	304
		% retention	*	82	92
		% pass rate	*	92	93

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) - short	1	No. of starts	589	189	75
		% retention	82	88	88
		% pass rate	87	65	58
European computer driving licence (ECDL) - short	2	No. of starts	502	133	56
		% retention	64	12	88
		% pass rate	94	100	57
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	29	16	*
		% retention	72	44	*
		% pass rate	33	0	*
GNVQ advanced / AVCE double award	3	No. of starts	35	31	19
		% retention	63	42	58
		% pass rate	64	69	73
National certificate for ICT practitioners 1 year (19+)	3	No. of starts	26	35	14
		% retention	69	63	64
		% pass rate	28	55	44

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

84.   Some teaching is satisfactory or better, but there is too much unsatisfactory teaching. In the weaker lessons, planning is poor, teachers talk for too long and there is insufficient checking of students' learning. Some students are not sufficiently stimulated and challenged by the work set and become bored by teachers' lecturing. Lessons in which content is poorly co-ordinated and links between the different topics are not explicit fail to engage students' attention. On one occasion, students did not grasp the main points of the lesson. Some oral instructions and some assignments are unclear. Inadequate attention is given to safe working practices. For example, not all teachers remind students about the need for good posture

when using computers. Most students have poorly developed keyboarding skills and teachers pay little attention to helping them to improve their keyboarding techniques.

85.   The better lessons have a satisfactory balance of theory and practice. They are appropriately structured and confidently managed. Some lessons are good. Students apply themselves fully and learn from the practical exercises set, such as how to control text formatting in webpage design. Good use is made of the data projector to demonstrate software functions and students' prior knowledge is well used. Students are given tasks which become increasingly more difficult, for example, in creating web pages. In the better lessons, students increase their confidence and improve their career prospects.

86.   Students in flexible learning centres receive a high level of support from their tutors. They are able to produce good computerised display presentations and gain confidence in using e-mail and word processing software. They work at a time and pace to suit their needs. One student has successfully completed six of the seven modules of an examination-based qualification in ICT over a period of three years.

87.   There is an extensive range of good ICT resources at the flexible learning centres. Students from all areas of the college have the opportunity to receive support for their learning using ICT in the flexible learning centres. The flexible learning centres can be used in the evenings, at the weekends and during holidays. Assembly workshops have recently been established to provide students with practical experience of building, dismantling and servicing computers. Leased hardware and software are replaced on a three-yearly cycle. Hardware is of a high specification with flat screens, speedy processing and very good connectivity. Data projectors in ICT rooms are mostly well used. Adaptive technology, such as tracker balls, large keyboards and screen magnification, is provided for students with specific needs. Students value the Northbrook online intranet, the college's own virtual learning environment, as a resource for assignments, information and course materials.

88.   Some assignments provide clear guidance for students, but others do not. There is no policy for the prompt return of marked work. Some assignments, submitted in July 2004, had not been returned to students at the time of the inspection. Some marked assignments contain no clear assessment decision indicating whether a student has passed or failed. There is inadequate written feedback to students, including information on how to improve their work. On the first and national courses, there is good tracking of units achieved. Internal verification satisfactorily ratifies assessment decisions, but makes no comments on the quality of feedback to students. The progress of students on the examination-based course in ICT is monitored regularly. Learndirect students have progress checks every four weeks and tracking sheets are completed during each visit to the centre. The progress of distance learning students is regularly monitored by their online tutors.

89.   The curriculum for part-time students enrolling on beginners' courses is confusing. Courses are offered through ACL, flexible learning, learndirect, and distance learning. Three different managers share the responsibility for students enrolling on to these courses. In response to declining recruitment on part-time courses, satellite centres have ceased to operate this year and three distance learning courses have been introduced. There is no level

1 programme offer for full-time students. There have been recent changes in level 2 and level 3 full-time programmes from GNVQ and AVCE to BTEC first and national diplomas to try to improve the low retention and pass rates. Progression routes for full-time students from the level 2 course to the first degree course in ICT are good. However, no clear pathways exist for transferring between the different strands of ICT provision.

90.   Support for students is good. Students' additional needs are identified very early, sometimes before enrolment. Appropriate in-class or out-of-class help is provided. Personal and learning mentors work with students to help them overcome their difficulties. Good use is made of specialist agencies for additional support. Good partnerships with parents have helped improve performance by some students. There is initial assessment for full-time, learndirect and distance students and a skills' check is offered to learndirect students. Individual learning plans are well used with students on the examination-based ICT programme and with learndirect students. However, insufficient information is recorded on the individual learning plans of full-time students and target setting is weak. Three students, whose first language is not English, were unable to get sufficient help to enable them to interpret online and written materials.

Leadership and management

91.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Flexible learning centres and learndirect provision are satisfactorily managed. Students are well supported and their progress is effectively tracked. There are good informal communications between full- and part-time staff and many opportunities for staff to meet. Tutors effectively use the intranet to communicate with their students and each other. However, there is insufficient communication between staff working in the two programme areas. There is a good staff development programme which includes training in managing difficult students, and training on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). New distance learning tutors are well supported.

92.   Grades awarded by the college for observed teaching and learning sessions are too generous. Management information reports are inconsistent with course team data. The self-assessment report for full-time programmes is insufficiently evaluative. There are no references to retention and pass rates, teaching and learning or the management of the programme. The report for flexible learning accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses, including poor links with course teams.

93.   Students have only a basic understanding of equality of opportunity. Most students do not know whether the college has an equal opportunities policy, or are vague about its contents.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel

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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on swimming and level 2 catering courses

- high retention rates on most catering courses

- good teaching and learning on swimming courses

- good resources in hospitality, travel and tourism

- good support for learners in hospitality, travel and tourism.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on level 1 catering courses

- poor completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks in sport

- poor assessment practices in work-based learning in sport

- weak management of work-based learning in sport

- inadequate management of the real working environment in the restaurant.

Scope of provision

94.   The college offers a range of hospitality courses at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 and single and double AVCE awards. There is also a course for cake decoration and courses at levels 1 to 3 for pastry cooks and patissiers. There are 113 students on hospitality courses of whom 43 are full-time students and 70 are part-time students. There are 18 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools attending the college. A double AVCE award is offered in travel and tourism with 30 students, all female, aged 16 to 18. Most students are taking additional awards in both areas.

95.   Foundation modern apprenticeships are offered in sport and recreation with specialist routes in swimming and exercise and fitness. Since January 2004, this programme has been subcontracted to a local provider of swimming qualifications who uses a specialist training organisation for the delivery of the exercise and fitness award. There are 40 foundation modern apprentices of whom 14 are female and 26 are male.

Achievement and standards

96.   There are high pass rates on swimming courses, with all students passing at level 1 and 73% at level 2. Of the small number of students doing additional units at level 2, over 90% have been successful and a few have also progressed to level 3. Many students gaining these qualifications are given further responsibilities and promotion at work.

97.   Retention rates are high on most catering courses, particularly on NVQ level 2 in food preparation and cookery which has a relatively high number of students. The retention rate is 100% for the level 2 certificate for pastry cooks and patissiers, although numbers are low. Retention rates are also high on the NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking course, but pass rates on NVQ level 1 catering courses are declining. On both NVQ level 1 courses, pass rates fell below the national averages in 2004, although all students on level 1 courses achieved some units. Pass rates are high on level 2 catering courses and have been above the national average for the NVQ in food preparation and cookery for three years. Pass rates for the level 2 certificate for pastry cooks and patissiers have been above national averages for the two years the course has been offered. Retention rates have improved on the AVCE in travel and tourism, but pass rates have fallen to just below the national average.

98.   In work-based learning, completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Over the past three years, only 4 students out of 136 have completed their full modern apprenticeship. Over the same period, only 5% of work-based learners completed a key skills qualification.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ food preparation and cookery	1	No. of starts	32	26	34
		% retention	81	88	100
		% pass rate	100	91	68
NVQ food and drink service	1	No. of starts	24	19	25
		% retention	79	89	100
		% pass rate	100	100	72
NVQ food preparation and cookery	2	No. of starts	23	17	25
		% retention	78	100	100
		% pass rate	89	88	96

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AVCE (double award) travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	28	25	26
		% retention	46	52	73
		% pass rate	77	92	79

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

Quality of education and training

99.   Teaching and learning are good in swimming for work-based learners in sport. Lessons are well structured and provide opportunities for learners to develop their knowledge and skills appropriate to the level of the course. Well-qualified and experienced tutors create a relaxed, focused learning environment which benefits students preparing for their job as swimming instructors. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in hospitality, and travel and tourism. The better lessons are well planned, a variety of teaching methods are used, learning materials are good and there is clear evidence of new skills and knowledge being developed. In hospitality, some lessons have low numbers and in others students are taught in groups with others of different ages and at different levels of study. Where this is well managed, students benefit from the challenge of working in mixed groups. In some lessons, students' previous experience is not always acknowledged. The pupils aged 14 to 16 attending the college benefit from working in an adult environment and learn appropriate new skills.

100.   Resources are good in hospitality, and travel and tourism. Staff are well qualified and have recent industrial experience. Facilities for ICT are mostly good and easily accessible by students. In hospitality, there is a well-maintained realistic working environment including a restaurant, kitchen, bar and coffee shop. Resources in work-based learning are satisfactory, meeting industry standards and course requirements.

101.   Assessment practice is poor in work-based learning in sport. For students following the swimming route, NVQs are introduced very late into the foundation modern apprenticeship programme. Assessment of the NVQ does not take place until the level 2 swimming award has been completed. Opportunities are not taken to complete health and safety units and key skills earlier to speed up the rate of progress. Many work-based learners are unaware of the requirements of NVQs and do not understand their structure or the assessment process. Exercise and fitness work-based learners' portfolios do not meet assessment requirements as evidence is not authenticated or validated. There is an over-reliance on case-study evidence and too little evidence of naturally occurring activities within the workplace. Assessors do not visit learners regularly in the workplace. Too many assessments are undertaken through simulation.

102.   In hospitality, and travel and tourism, assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment is effectively used to assess students' additional learning needs for literacy and numeracy.

Adequate support is provided by tutors or through the student support unit within the college. In hospitality, assessment is appropriately timed to take place when students have developed their skills and are ready to be assessed. In travel and tourism, students complete assignments which are appropriately marked and graded with detailed written feedback. Internal verification is planned and meets awarding body requirements. Actions identified in external verifier reports are fully implemented.

103.   The range of programmes meets the needs of students enabling them to progress, gain employment and promotion. Programmes meet local business needs and many local employers contact the college when recruiting staff. Additional courses are available to all full-time students. Work is currently undertaken within the CoVE to increase employer involvement and improve opportunities to widen and increase participation. Students aged 14 to 16 benefit from a two-year NVQ level 1 in food preparation and cooking programme. One student from this group has enrolled full time to a course in the college.

104.   Support for students in hospitality and travel and tourism is good. Initial guidance and regular group and individual tutorials are effective. Students have been well supported on a range of personal and learning issues and this has helped them to complete their qualifications. Students are well informed about the financial support available and make good use of the funds provided. In work-based learning, support is satisfactory. A college monitoring officer carries out student progress reviews every 12 weeks, but there is insufficient involvement of the employer and inadequate links to assessment.

Leadership and management

105.   Management of the real working environment in the restaurant is inadequate. There is a limited range of customers and students do not have sufficient opportunity to practice a variety of skills in the restaurant. The current customer base of largely retired people does not reflect fully the local community. Some students are not sufficiently challenged by this experience or adequately prepared for the world of work.

106.   Work-based learning is poorly managed. There is inadequate monitoring of the quality of provision. Staff have been slow to take action to improve retention rates and completion rates of modern apprenticeship frameworks which have been low for a number of years. Course reviews are not thorough. Monitoring of sub-contracted provision is inadequate. The college does not routinely receive copies of the centre approval documents or external verifier reports for the company who provide the assessment service in exercise and fitness. In hospitality, and travel and tourism, management is satisfactory. There are regular staff meetings and both formal and informal communications between managers and staff.

107.   Equality of opportunity is not openly promoted, although there is an ethos of care and respect for the students. In work-based learning, the agreement between the college and the sub-contractor does not cover equality of opportunity. The self-assessment report recognises some of the weaknesses identified by the inspectors. However, additional

weaknesses were identified by inspectors and lower grades awarded than those in the self-assessment report.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on part-time level 3 programmes

- good teaching in practical lessons

- well-qualified and experienced teachers

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor accommodation and facilities

- insufficient assessment on NVQ hairdressing level 2 programmes

- narrow range of full-time provision

- inadequate use of management information to inform planning and target setting.

Scope of provision

108.   The college offers courses leading to NVQs in hairdressing at level 2 and beauty therapy at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are also specialist short courses in beauty therapy. There are opportunities for students to increase their qualifications by attending additional classes in subjects including Indian head massage, barbering and nail technology. There are currently 200 full-time and 150 part-time students on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Most students are aged 19 or over. The college also provides an apprenticeship scheme in hairdressing.

Achievement and standards

109.   Pass rates for students on part-time level 3 programmes are above the national averages and have remained consistently high over the past three years. The pass rate on the body massage certificate was 97% in 2001/02 and 100% in 2002/03 and 2003/04. Retention rates on many significant programmes are in line with or slightly above national averages. The NVQ level 2 full-time, two-year hairdressing programme had a retention rate of 50% in 2003/04 against a national average of 43%. Pass rates on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses are variable. In NVQ level 2 beauty therapy, pass rates were 92% in 2001/02, rising to 100% in 2002/03, but declining to 88% in 2003/04. Pass rates have improved over a three-year period on the diploma in holistic therapies level 3 course from 88% in 2002/03 to 96% in 2003/04.

110.   Standards of practical and portfolio work are satisfactory. Students produce photographic evidence to support their assessments in hairdressing. Some 25 students are taking key skills qualifications alongside their main programme. Pass rates in key skills qualifications are satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ beauty therapy (2 year)	2	No. of starts	17	17	15
		% retention	76	65	60
		% pass rate	92	100	88
NVQ hairdressing (2 year)	2	No. of starts	43	36	30
		% retention	60	50	50
		% pass rate	65	61	73
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	25	19	17
		% retention	92	95	88
		% pass rate	96	94	73
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	25	18	20
		% retention	72	89	85
		% pass rate	100	100	94
Body massage certificate	3	No. of starts	39	44	32
		% retention	97	84	87
		% pass rate	97	100	100
Diploma in holistic therapies	3	No. of starts	27	26	28
		% retention	96	96	82
		% pass rate	88	88	96

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

Quality of education and training

111.   Most practical teaching is of a good standard. In one lesson, the teacher demonstrated beauty skills to students in a structured, well-paced manner. Instructions were given clearly and examples of choosing eyelash colour choice were taken from the teacher's own work experience to enhance students' learning. Students then completed a treatment confidently and to a professional level. In a hairdressing lesson, the teacher paired students together well so as to enable inexperienced students to learn from those with more experience. Some theory teaching is dull and uninspiring and students fail to learn effectively. Different abilities amongst the students are not always recognised and planned for. No attention is paid to essential skills. One level 1 lesson was pitched higher than the course requirements.

112.   Tutors use ILT well in lessons. In science, effective use was made of interactive presentations to highlight the circulatory system. Students used computers to research from the Internet and found detailed information relating to forms of depilation. Schemes of work are comprehensive. In the best lessons, teachers consider students' different needs and abilities. Students are late to some lessons and are not always challenged by teachers.

113.   Teachers are well qualified and use their expertise effectively. For example, one teacher related information from Chinese medicine to the zones of the body within reflexology to make it easier for students to understand. All staff continue to work in industry and technicians supporting the salons are well qualified in hairdressing and beauty, or holistic therapies.

114.   Accommodation is poor. The salons do not reflect current industry standards and the two hairdressing and three beauty and holistic salons are out of date. One reception area services all salons. A computerised appointment and record system is used. There is no door in the doorway separating the two hairdressing salons. The noise from practical classes is intrusive for students taking theory in the neighbouring salon. All equipment, products and retail ranges are satisfactory. Theory rooms are dull and uninspiring. No visual stimulation is used on the walls to enthuse or motivate students and students' work is not displayed.

115.   Students who have been on the NVQ hairdressing level 2 programme for over a year have not completed foundation units in shampooing and health and safety. Little practical assessment took place in the first year. Considerable pressure is placed on students in their second year. Additional assessment opportunities arranged in the summer have not improved unit accreditation. Written papers attempted in February 2004 had not been resubmitted at the time of inspection. Grammar and spelling are not corrected on students' written work. There is evidence of ongoing assessment in the beauty therapy level 2 programme, but there is poor accreditation of some students' work. Some students need very little additional evidence in order to gain full unit accreditation. In beauty and holistic therapies, there is insufficient written feedback to students.

116.   There is no full-time level 1 or level 3 provision in hairdressing. The student surveys and interviews indicate a need for a level 3 programme. Full-time students in beauty therapy have no opportunity to gain a more academic qualification at level 3. There is limited reporting of students' performance to interested parties.

117.   Student support is well planned with individual and group tutorials available frequently. Tutorials address both pastoral and course issues. Students are appropriately guided or referred to the college's support unit when necessary. Additional learning support needs are identified at the beginning of the programme and the follow-up support is quickly arranged.

Leadership and management

118.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course team meetings are held frequently and are well documented. Staff appraisal is thorough and effective. The department holds its own data on student performance and staff are aware of students' progress. The targets for the recruitment of full-time students are unchallenging and actual recruitment bears little resemblance to these targets. This makes course planning and staffing difficult. There are no targets to recruit students from under-represented groups or to encourage students from minority ethnic groups into suitable programmes. The grades from internal teaching observations are higher than those awarded by inspectors. Management of departmental timetables is poor. The self-assessment report does not focus sufficiently on teaching and learning and students' achievements and several of the strengths identified are expected normal practice.

Health, social care and childcare

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

Contributory grade in work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- very high retention and pass rates on most courses

- good development of occupational skills in work-based learning

- very good teaching and learning

- focused response to national priorities in care and early years

- good course management of FE based NVQ in care and early years.

Weaknesses

- low completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks

- insufficient monitoring and review of some courses.

Scope of provision

119.   There are 92 full-time and 405 part-time students enrolled on courses in care and early years. The full-time students are predominantly aged 16 to 18 and the part-time students mostly aged over 19. Currently, some 20 people aged 14 to 16 are following a foundation programme in caring for children. The full-time courses are offered in early years from levels 1 to 3. The part-time programmes are NVQ awards in early years care and education, care and care management. There are levels 2 and 3 in early years and levels 1 to 4 in care and the level 4 care managers award. An NVQ level 3 course in oral health was introduced late in 2003. Other part-time courses include the certificate in counselling skills and a range of courses in childminding practice. There are 26 early years modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

120.   Students' achievements are very good on most programmes. There are very high retention and pass rates on all early years' FE courses. Pass rates are very high on the level 2 certificate in childcare and education and the level 3 diploma in childcare and education. Pass rates on the NVQ level 3 early years have been consistently above the national average for the past three years, although the pass rate declined significantly in 2003. The four students on NVQ early years level 2 in 2003 all achieved their qualification. The 10 students on the foundation course in caring for children, introduced in 2003, all completed the programme and achieved their qualification. Retention and pass rates are high on the NVQ

programmes in care with excellent results on the NVQ level 3 in care over the past three years. The access programme has consistently high pass rates.

121.   The work-based learning programme in early years care and education has a history of low achievements. However, current learners are making good progress towards the full modern apprenticeship. Students on programme for 15 months have completed all or nearly all NVQ units and communication key skills. Attendance at off-the-job training is satisfactory. Portfolios are well presented. There is good development of occupational skills. Learners working with children are able to manage children's behaviour very well. They have good understanding of and are able to apply their knowledge of health and safety. Their understanding of child development provides a sound basis for developing skills in the workplace. Two learners were observed to be particularly skilled in creating a peaceful learning environment for children.

122.   Attendance and punctuality of FE students are good. Many students make interesting and relevant contributions in lessons. They stay focused and make good progress. Most students are able to link theoretical learning with vocational practice. Students on the certificate in childcare and education course grasp concepts quickly and work quickly. Their written work in lessons is of a good standard and well organised. Students use word processing for most of their assignments.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	10	24	13
		% retention	80	88	85
		% pass rate	100	95	100
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	19	15	18
		% retention	53	87	100
		% pass rate	100	85	89
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	106	195	141
		% retention	73	66	82
		% pass rate	99	98	84

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ care (1 year)	3	No. of starts	2	21	17
		% retention	100	95	100
		% pass rate	100	95	100
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	21	20	16
		% retention	57	75	81
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Access certificate in HE	3	No. of starts	14	18	16
		% retention	79	67	63
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

123.   Teaching and learning are good across all courses. The needs of individual students are met. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and meet the qualification requirements. The specific learning needs and the preferred learning styles of full-time and part-time students are identified clearly. These are incorporated into some lesson plans, but not all. In the best lessons, planning to meet individual needs directly informs the teaching and learning activities. For example, in a foundation early years lesson, the teacher took account of a wide range of preferred learning styles and incorporated all of these different styles in the activities she planned. The students worked productively in pairs preparing leaflets for nursery workers on the physical care of children using written materials and relevant images, ICT resources and previous learning to support their work. Students worked at their own pace and all made good progress in this lesson. The leaflets were accurate, informative and attractive. In another lesson, the teacher arranged specific writing support for a student with identified literacy needs, enabling the student to complete the same task as other students. Teaching methods are well chosen to give students the best opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes. Good use is made of ICT and in a level 3 early years lesson students prepared a powerpoint presentation on how religious beliefs affect childcare practice. Teachers are increasingly using Northbrook On-Line to provide direct support for teaching and for swift communication with their students.

124.   There are good links between theory and vocational practice. The level 4 care managers make direct links between the lesson on the storage and use of confidential client

information and their professional practice. Students are able to describe how they have improved their care practice as a direct result of the course. Key skills are well integrated into the teaching of full-time courses. Application of number is assessed through an assignment requiring students to design, furnish and equip a nursery. Communication is assessed through students designing leaflets, writing Curriculum Vitaes and formal letters to nursery children's parents. Achievement of key skills on all early years' courses is good. There has been little sharing of this good practice with the work-based learning team.

125.   Resources within care and early years are satisfactory. Classrooms are adequate for the curriculum delivery. There are computers in some classrooms. Students have good access to a well-equipped flexible learning area. There is a wide range of appropriate work placements for the development of vocational skills.

126.   The assessment of students' work is good. NVQ portfolios are well ordered and rigorously assessed and verified. Students have a very good understanding of their qualification and quickly use a wide range of appropriate evidence to support achievement. Students' progress is recorded clearly. Full-time students' work is carefully marked and there is clear guidance for improvement. There is good formative assessment.

127.   There is a focused response to national priorities and local employment needs in care and early years. The requirements of the Care Standards Act and the Child Care Strategy are directly addressed through a large and effectively planned NVQ programme. The innovative school-link provision clearly addresses the national agenda for the 14 to 19 phase of secondary education. School pupils are invited to a six-week summer programme to assess their suitability and motivation for early years study. Applicants are then selected for entry to a two-year, part-time foundation course in caring for children. There is little short course provision for adults or vocationally related additional courses for full-time students.

128.   Support for students is satisfactory. Initial assessment is carried out quickly and course tutors informed of specific students' needs. Additional learning support is provided promptly. Staff know their students well and provide appropriate personal and academic support. All full-time and most part-time students have regular tutorials. There is no agreed tutorial programme. Individual learning plans are not securely in place for all students. Clear academic and personal targets are not set for all students.

Leadership and management

129.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good course management of FE NVQ provision. Programmes are structured clearly and organised and understood by all stakeholders. Team meetings are regular, records are clear and actions agreed and monitored. The sub-contracted provision for modern apprentices is well managed by the Centre for Early Years Training. However, the college's involvement in the monitoring of this provision is very recent. On the full-time FE courses, staff teams are well defined and team work is good. Monitoring and review of some courses are inadequate. Course reviews lack detail. Curriculum planning is effective, but there is little use of the management information systems to inform this process. Judgements on students' achievements in the self-assessment

report are not supported by available statistical evidence. Target numbers for student recruitment are not used to ensure appropriate group sizes.

Visual and performing arts and media

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

Strengths

- high pass rates in level 3 visual arts courses

- good standard of practical work

- much good teaching and learning

- very good resources in music and performing arts

- wide range of enrichment opportunities

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in media and music level 3 courses

- poor accommodation for foundation studies and life drawing

- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities.

Scope of provision

130.   The college offers a broad range of full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 and adults. National diplomas are offered in a wide range of disciplines from fine art and fashion technology to music practice. There are diplomas in foundation studies in art and design and media arts, a national certificate in fine art and a certificate in art, design and creative studies. There is a part-time diploma in foundation studies, City and Guilds jewellery, interior design and decorative. There are currently 479 students aged 16 to 18 and 314 adult full-time students and 78 students aged 16 to 18 and 658 adult part-time students. There are many more part-time courses and students in the adult and community provision. Most courses are held at the main campus at West Durrington and at two other centres in Horsham and in Worthing town centre.

Achievement and standards

131.   Pass rates on the City and Guilds interior design and the national diploma in fine art are high, with improved pass rates on the national diploma in music technology. Pass rates on the national diploma in technical theatre were above the national average in the year 2002/03. However, there has been a steep decline in pass rates on the diploma in photography/media arts, from 88% in 2003, to 62% in 2004. Retention rates on the national

diploma in performing arts have improved and are now above national averages. Retention rates on level 3 courses in music and media are below the national averages.

132.   Students gain confidence individually and working within groups. Many students progress to HE and a significant number of students on music courses gain related employment. There is a good standard of practical work in visual arts, in drawing, textiles, interior design and performance. Students' work is of a high professional standard. On the City and Guilds interior design course, students designed a teenage recreation room for the local hospital which was accepted and installed, and received a very positive response from the young users.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 7819 introduction to interior design	1	No. of starts	22	13	12
		% retention	41	85	75
		% pass rate	100	91	89
Desktop publishing skills	2	No. of starts	31	49	28
		% retention	87	88	100
		% pass rate	56	79	71
National diploma in fine art (2 year)	3	No. of starts	50	41	22
		% retention	60	73	77
		% pass rate	93	93	94
Natinal diploma in graphic design (2 year)	3	No. of starts	38	35	30
		% retention	50	74	57
		% pass rate	74	85	94
National diploma in music technology	3	No. of starts	129	144	111
		% retention	55	50	51
		% pass rate	61	68	75

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Diploma in foundation studies art and design (1 year)	3	No. of starts	123	97	122
		% retention	92	82	95
		% pass rate	97	98	97
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	29	15	21
		% retention	24	74	76
		% pass rate	86	80	81

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

Quality of education and training

133.   Much of the teaching is good and students are motivated and often challenged by projects and exercises. For example, students on the national certificate of foundation studies use well-developed drawing skills as a basis for the production of an architectural three-dimensional sculpture. The project was inspired by a famous contemporary artist, introduced in contextual studies, and providing a good link between theory and practice. Music technology national diploma students compose original music using Cubase composition programme and have good instrumental skills. Performing arts technical students carve striking, life-sized puppet heads for use in future productions. Lessons are generally planned carefully to accommodate the needs of a range of students. In the less satisfactory lessons, teachers do not provide opportunities for questions and answers or on some occasions use too much questioning. In some teaching, there is not enough consideration given to creating opportunities for group work and there are insufficient checks on students' learning.

134.   Accommodation for performing arts is good. The recently refurbished theatre is equipped to a very high standard. This facility is shared by students on the theatre foundation degree and higher national diploma (HND) courses, and gives national diploma technical students the chance to design and manage live productions. There are professional quality audio facilities, computers and studios for music students, and many good-sized, well-equipped studios and workshops throughout the faculty. There is a shortage of rooms for tutorials. Accommodation at Union Place and Broadwater is inappropriate. Teaching mobile units are cold and dilapidated. One drawing studio is too small for the purpose and theatre changing rooms are shabby. Many staff have higher degrees and industrial experience, but only 27% have completed teaching qualifications. The college supports staff in updating their IT skills. There is good technical support in most areas. Technicians maintain accommodation and equipment effectively as well as acting as teacher/demonstrators on some courses.

135.   Assessment and monitoring are generally good. Media and visual work is thoroughly marked. Internal verification is effective. In music, students receive two detailed sets of comments on their final assessed piece. Internal verification paperwork shows evidence of detailed and rigorous moderation discussions and meetings, leading to improvements in the design of assignments. Very good feedback on draft work for the final major project is leading to improvements in the quality of finished work. There is good oral feedback to students during the majority of lessons. Students' work is continuously assessed, through tutorials and end of unit assignments, and in performing arts live productions. A wide and appropriate range of assessment tasks is used. Some theatre assignments lack detail and cut off dates. Teachers' comments on students' work are encouraging and supportive, but fail to define guidelines for improvement.

136.   There are few level 1 courses to attract unqualified students. Some level 3 courses are attracting students aged 19 and over with few qualifications. For example, one mature student, with no formal qualifications, joined the access to HE in media course, graduating in 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in film/media and society. There is excellent progression from national diploma courses to HE, and into employment in the visual and performing arts industry, though there is little work experience for students while at college.

137.   There are good enrichment opportunities with trips to Europe and America, gigs at local and national venues and visiting professionals to work with the students. Music and drama students collaborate well on assessed plays and shows annually, graphic design students create posters for music gigs, and photography students support the work of fashion, clothing and textiles.

138.   Students at Northbrook are well supported both academically and pastorally. A thorough initial interview ensures that students are placed on an appropriate course on joining college. Learning support needs are identified from school reports, volunteered information, tutorials and teaching. During induction, students are screened for learning support needs. There is a well-planned, regular programme of one-to-one tutorials supporting the presentation of work and academic targets. The working relationship between tutors and students is very good. Counsellors work actively with teachers to support students with emotional and learning needs. Course information leaflets and the prospectus are clearly written and accessible. Good careers advice is available from the student centre as well as from course and personal tutors.

Leadership and management

139.   Leadership and management of the area are good. For example, there is a clear policy on accommodation which seeks to balance the need for course development against the available space. Good relationships exist between managers and staff. Staff are encouraged to attend courses and new teachers are well supported by mentors. Regular, minuted, team meetings, with action plans, are attended by many part-time staff. Communication in the area is good and staff are involved in the organisation's quality assurance arrangements. There is much sharing of good practice within sites, but this does not extend to between sites. Retention rates at level 3 are improving as a result of strategies

put in place including the introduction of fast track diplomas and a later start for morning lessons. Students are unaware of any specific initiatives to promote equal opportunities and there is limited promotion through the curriculum. There is some carelessness in record keeping and personal tutorial files are not always fully completed. Target setting for students, based on prior experience and qualifications has yet to be developed.

English, languages and communications

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

Strengths

- high and improving retention rates

- much very good teaching

- good resources

- effective initial assessment.

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities for enrichment activities for English as a foreign language students

- low and declining recruitment for English as a foreign language.

Scope of provision

140.   The college offers full-time and part-time English as a foreign language programmes leading to Cambridge examinations at levels 1 to 5. GCSE English and advanced subsidiary-level (AS) English language and literature are offered on a part-time basis. In addition, there is an English literature unit offered as an option on the access to HE in humanities and arts. At the time of the inspection, there were 54 students on English as a foreign language courses of whom 9 come from outside the European Union. There were 38 students on GCSE English courses and 13 on AS-level English language and literature. The English literature unit within the access to HE programme had not yet started. Apart from a small number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 studying GCSE English in addition to their main college programme, all the students are aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

141.   Retention rates on all courses are high apart from in AS-level English language and literature where they are consistently below the national averages. Pass rates in the Cambridge English as a foreign language qualifications for 2004 are high and nearly all are above national averages. The pass rate for GCSE English has been improving and in 2004 was well above the national average.

142.   Students at all levels of the English as a foreign language programmes and on the AS-level and GCSE English programmes demonstrate a good standard of written and spoken language appropriate to the stage of the programme they have reached. Students work hard in their lessons and complete set tasks with enthusiasm. They work effectively in pairs and

small groups and show respect for each other. Attendance is satisfactory and students come to lessons on time.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communications, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	34	45	29
		% retention	65	73	83
		% pass rate	59	52	71
Cambridge first certificate in English	2	No. of starts	36	9	13
		% retention	75	78	100
		% pass rate	*	*	69
Cambridge certificate in advanced English	3	No. of starts	16	7	10
		% retention	94	86	90
		% pass rate	*	*	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

143.   Much of the teaching is good or very good and none is unsatisfactory. Teachers know their students well, are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and manage activities in lessons effectively using individual, pair and group work to good effect. For example, in one lesson, mature GCSE English students were asked to use a visual image of a reflected human head as a catalyst to discuss in pairs the topic of verbal imagery and to produce an agreed synopsis for a written narrative outlining possible plots and the typical features for a chosen genre. This proved to be a stimulating activity with students producing a wide range of ideas that were fed back to the rest of the class. Students found this exercise both challenging and motivating. It also provided a context that enabled them to comment on and explore each other's views with confidence. They went on to produce drafts written in the lesson that demonstrated their understanding and ability to use imagery in their writing.

144.   Lessons are effective in giving students time to think, practice and apply their understanding. For example, in an English as a foreign language lesson looking at idioms, students were asked to describe their personal responses to contemporary works of art. The

task was suitably demanding, but highly motivating to students who were able to demonstrate their understanding of these phrases in the context of some sophisticated and detailed opinions expressed in the target language. Homework is set regularly, marked and returned promptly. Comments on written work are constructive and clear.

145.   Teachers hold appropriate qualifications. They reflect on the success of lessons recording the effectiveness of strategies designed to meet the needs of individual students, resources and activities to inform future teaching and learning practice. There are good published and college-generated resources. Students have good access to IT facilities in learning resource centres. There is a web-based GCSE English resource that includes stimulating learning materials, access to other websites and a discussion forum. The libraries have a well-kept stock of periodicals, video and audiotapes for English as a foreign language and AS-level English language and literature. There is a limited amount of contemporary fiction to encourage wider reading. Classroom accommodation for English as a foreign language is very good with stimulating displays and good audio-visual resources. For GCSE English and AS-level English, accommodation is adequate in terms of size and suitable furniture.

146.   Initial and diagnostic assessment are good. All students applying to study GCSE English and English as a foreign language programmes receive initial assessments. These result in good placement and appropriate grouping of students. Students' current level of language skills are assessed and recorded and students are involved in setting their personal targets and goals. There is good tutorial support and students put a high value on the personal support they receive from their personal tutors and teachers. Tutorials help students in planning their learning and working towards fulfilling their progression aspirations.

147.   The range of provision in English as a foreign language is satisfactory, but student numbers are low and declining. There is no college strategy to address this decline. English as a foreign language students do not have opportunities for trips and visits as part of the enrichment programme or enough opportunities to integrate with the wider student population.

Leadership and management

148.   Day-to-day management of English as a foreign language and English is generally good. Teachers are well supported by their curriculum managers and teaching teams have regular formal meetings. Staff are appraised by their line manager on an annual basis and training needs are identified. Support for staff development by attendance at in-house or external courses is very good, but there is little formal opportunity for the sharing of good practice. Annual course reviews feed into the annual self-assessment reports, which are generally accurate. However, centrally produced data on student achievement in English as a foreign language courses are unreliable and are not used in the course reviews. Teachers take little notice of the targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates which are set for each course by their managers. The college has produced a plan to develop its English as a foreign language provision, but few of the action points have yet been implemented. There is a

strong commitment to equal opportunities in EFL and English, and the cultural diversity of the EFL students is highly valued and used positively in teaching and learning.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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

Strengths

- good teaching focused on individual needs

- high pass rates

- well-managed provision

- effective use of individual learning plans

- very good ICT resources.

Weaknesses

- limited access to specialist vocational resources

- some poor accommodation.

Scope of provision

149.   The college makes provision for 284 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on one main college site and two adult training centres in the Worthing area. The college provides a range of full-time and part-time courses for school leavers and adults within the pre-entry and entry level framework. Part-time courses cater for adults, some of whom have profound, multiple and complex learning disabilities. Students work towards a college certificate that has literacy and numeracy embedded in a range of pre-vocational and life skills programmes. Full-time provision offers students the opportunity to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications as well as Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) accreditation in vocational skills. The vocational programme is supported by a range of work experience placements.

150.   Link programmes are offered to local special schools and there are well-established partnership arrangements with schools, social services, the health service, adult training centres and local care homes.

Achievement and standards

151.   The achievement of adult students on the part-time ASDAN towards independence course is very good with all of the students who remain on the course completing it successfully. Students aged 16 to 18 also achieve at a very high level on their vocationally orientated vocational access and basic work preparation courses. Other students working at pre-entry level are successful in achieving their milestones and college-based certification in

the core curriculum. Students at all levels are successful in meeting their short-term goals as expressed in their individual learning plans.

152.   Retention rates on all courses are satisfactory and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Good levels of punctuality and attendance have had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Strategies aimed at improving retention rates have been effective. These include team building activities at the start of courses, residential events and targeted in-course support.

153.   The college is successful in preparing entry-level students to progress to work experience placements and for some to open employment. The college is effective in finding work experience placements for all those on vocationally orientated courses. In the last year, several students have been able to progress to BTEC courses in IT and business. One student was so successful on his extended education course that he has been employed as a part-time support assistant on the towards independence programme.

154.   Students are able to listen to directions, follow simple instructions, support each other when appropriate and describe the activities they have undertaken. In assessment and review sessions, they are able to reflect on how they are progressing on their course and make judgements about their own performance.

A sample of retention and pass rates in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Towards independence	pre-entry	No. of starts	137	142	*
		% retention	99	89	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
Basic work preparation	entry	No. of starts	21	16	*
		% retention	76	81	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
Vocational access	entry	No. of starts	38	27	*
		% retention	71	81	*
		% pass rate	96	100	*

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

*data unavailable

Quality of education and training

155.   Teaching is consistently satisfactory or better. Schemes of work are detailed and planning for lessons and activities is good. Strategies to meet individual needs include providing modified or extended activities, directing support from an assistant or introducing additional resources. In most lessons, teachers include time for review and reflection which is also used to check what students have learned. In some lessons, students are able to comment appropriately on their own performance and that of others in the group.

156.   Where activities are challenging and well-presented, students respond with enthusiasm. In one lesson for adults, a poem was successfully used as the basis for a future dance and drama presentation. Students are enthusiastic about their learning and are able to remain focused on challenging tasks for 20 to 30 minutes. When a student finds it difficult to remain on task activities are skilfully modified or changed and support is sensitively directed to keep the student on track.

157.   Teachers are well qualified as well as being skilled and experienced at working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning support assistants play a significant role in supporting teaching and learning. For those groups where the level of disability is acute, staff from the student's home provide valuable assistance in looking after the physical care needs of the student as well as supporting the student during the lesson.

158.   Almost all of the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities takes place on the Broadwater campus in the mobile unit accommodation, much of which has poorly controlled ventilation and poor acoustics. There are insufficient social areas so that students are restricted in their ability to interact with students on other programmes. Courses match the vocational provision located on the Broadwater site and there is insufficient access to specialist vocational resources on other sites to fully deliver the vocational access and basic work preparation programmes.

159.   ICT facilities are very good in many of the rooms used regularly by the students, including the Northbrook online curriculum resources to support their learning. There are insufficient specialist resources to fully deliver one of the programmes for students with multiple and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The sensory programme has insufficient equipment to provide the range of experiences and teaching methods required to ensure the programme is fully effective.

160.   The college maintains good partnership working with local special and secondary schools as well as with social services. The college buys in the services of a speech therapist who provides good specialist guidance to staff. A community nurse is also employed by the college to support students both at college and in the home. This support has been successful in maintaining a number of students with emotional, personal and social problems and who may otherwise have not completed their course.

161.   The individual learning plans are used effectively to set, monitor and review short term and medium-term learning goals. In a cookery lesson, students were able to make

perceptive and accurate comments on the extent to which they had met the targets set with them at the beginning of the session. Initial assessment is good. Where possible, assessments are undertaken before students join a college course.

Leadership and management

162.   At a day-to-day level, leadership and management are good. The curriculum is organised and managed effectively and enables students consistently to achieve at a high level. Strategies to improve retention rates have proved increasingly successful since the last inspection. Quality assurance systems, including self-assessment, are thorough and effective. There are good systems for listening to, and acting on, the views of students. In a recent student survey, some students expressed concern over their general safety in the refectory and suggested security cameras be installed. The college management responded positively to this request and cameras have now been installed.

Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates in national qualifications in literacy and numeracy

- good use of ICT in learning

- very effective use of partnerships to engage hard to reach students

- good support for students

- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- slow progression from English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses

- teaching is uninspiring

- over-reliance on classroom assistants

- poor planning for the development of underpinning literacy/numeracy skills in learning support.

Scope of provision

163.   The college provides a range of literacy, numeracy, ESOL and computer literacy courses, during the day and in the evening, from entry level to level 2. Lessons are provided at four of the five college sites, in the community and in the workplace. Currently, there are 83 students on numeracy courses, 237 on literacy courses and 118 on ESOL courses. Students can take open college network (OCN) or City and Guilds national qualifications and tests on these courses. There were no students in the community or the workplace at the time of inspection. Literacy, numeracy and language support is offered to all students on vocational and academic courses. Support is provided in class, one to one and in small groups. At the time of the inspection, there were 184 students receiving support, 84 for literacy, 35 for numeracy and 21 for language support. There are also 44 students receiving dyslexia support. In 2003/04, a total of 967 students received literacy, language and numeracy support and 200 received dyslexia support.

Achievement and standards

164.   There are high retention and pass rates in national qualifications in literacy and numeracy. On some courses, retention rates are 100%. In 2003/04, the pass rate was 81% in numeracy and 84% in literacy. However, the pass rate in ESOL was 53%, and below the national average. Progression from community courses to college courses is good. For example, 58% students from the single regeneration budget (SRB) ESOL project progressed to college courses. However, progression from ESOL courses is slow. The prior qualifications of students from other countries are not recognised sufficiently so that they can progress more quickly to more advanced provision to realise their full potential. All students develop language skills and gain in confidence. The college celebrates students' achievements. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. In literacy lessons, students at entry level are able to write letters and short messages. In numeracy, students can do mathematical calculations with confidence. However, students are not always set demanding targets and prior attainment and qualifications are not always taken into account.

Quality of education and training

165.   Most teaching is satisfactory. Students make progress in developing language, literacy and numeracy skills. They make good use of ICT to develop literacy and computer skills in a variety of contexts. For example, in one lesson, a student used IT software to highlight words within words to practise spelling strategies. In another lesson, students doing a project on Shoreham Airport used the Internet to get information and then extracted relevant details for topics they had selected to write about. In better lessons, teachers use various methods and resources to develop concepts and skills. For example, a student was able to understand how to round figures in tens and hundreds through the use of playing cards. In another lesson, students used plastic letters to build up and break up spellings for learning. In better ESOL lessons, students use real life tasks to practise language skills. In one lesson, entry-level students practised leaving a message on the answer phone, spelling out their names and giving reasons for not being able to come to college.

166.   However, most teaching is not sufficiently demanding and does not take into account the needs of individual students. In the weaker lessons, activities are not effectively planned for students at different levels. Teachers spend too much time on whole class teaching. More advanced students do not get opportunities to extend their skills. Tasks and resources do not stretch or stimulate students. In a story writing task, simplistic picture cards were used as a stimulus. The writing produced by students lacked interesting content or vocabulary. Students spend too long on simple activities or completing worksheets unrelated to meaningful writing tasks. Teachers make little use of adult reading materials such as books and magazines to stimulate students to extend their reading and writing skills. There is some unsatisfactory teaching and learning in ESOL.

167.   There is an over-reliance on classroom assistants. In many lessons, classroom assistants re-teach the topic in small groups and control communication between students. Students do not develop independent learning skills. Learning is not planned to encourage students to learn from and with each other.

168.   In learning support, students make good progress in achieving their primary learning goal. However, teachers do not sufficiently plan for the long-term development of underpinning literacy and numeracy skills. They do not routinely encourage students to develop independent learning strategies. They do not give students tasks which enable them to practise and reinforce their learning.

169.   Students have good access to computers in students, in the learning centres and in the community. For example, laptops are used in a local mosque to teach computer literacy skills. Staff make good use of 'blackboard', the intranet area for literacy, language and numeracy resources, for group teaching and individual tasks. For example, in one ESOL lesson, students used a thesaurus to replace certain words in a letter on the computer screen with more interesting words they had found in the thesaurus. This helped them to practise both their language and computer literacy skills. There are adequate numbers of dictionaries and thesauruses at different levels. Handouts are clearly written and well presented. In an ICT literacy lesson, students used well-produced vocabulary booklets to record meanings of computer related terms. The good selection of reading books displayed in dedicated classrooms is not widely used. Accommodation is generally satisfactory except for inadequate soundproofing in some designated learning support rooms. Most staff are appropriately qualified. Others are studying for literacy, numeracy or ESOL specialist qualifications. In some curriculum areas, learning support staff have specialist knowledge in the areas of learning they support. This helps them to put literacy and numeracy skills into a vocational or academic context more effectively. Many teachers have specialist dyslexia qualifications.

170.   Assessment is robust and thorough. All students receive initial and diagnostic assessment to identify their literacy, numeracy and language levels. Online diagnostic assessment is used to identify areas of weakness in literacy and numeracy. Results are used by the tutor to develop individual learning plans. However, targets set are not always challenging. Students receiving literacy, language or numeracy support are aware of the particular areas they have to develop with their support tutors. There are regular reviews of students' learning and progress. Students evaluate each session. Students referred for specialist assessments for dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties are given an in-depth diagnostic assessment with detailed recommendations for teaching and learning. Students receive good feedback on their progress. Assignments are marked thoroughly with encouraging comments as well as areas for further practice to improve future pieces of work.

171.   The college makes effective use of partnerships to reach students who do not traditionally take part in learning such as people with mental health problems, homeless people and new arrivals. Community programmes are carefully planned to meet individual and group interests and goals. For example, a scheme of work for a group of men in catering occupations from the local mosque was designed around relevant language and topics. The college offers a range of programmes with opportunities to progress from entry to level 2. Language, literacy and numeracy support is available to all students across the college on all sites. Links with vocational areas are underdeveloped and students' progression into vocational areas is inhibited. There is little development of vocational link courses.

172.   Support for students is good. Students receive good initial advice and guidance and good personal support. Learning support is available to all students who need it across the college. Students needing support are identified through initial assessment and support is put into place quickly. There is very good support for dyslexic students. Students not making progress on literacy/numeracy courses are referred for specialist assessment and support.

Leadership and management

173.   The area is well managed. The Skills for Life profile is high within the college. There is a well-thought-out development plan and good strategic and operational planning between the discrete literacy, numeracy and language and support provision. There are effective partnerships and projects to widen participation. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Course reviews are thorough and involve all staff and students. Students' comments are used to bring about improvements. For example, evening literacy lessons were set up as a result of student feedback. Verification processes are robust. There is effective sharing of good practice through course team meetings. Newly qualified tutors are well supported. Regular teaching observations in literacy, language and numeracy and in learning support take place, but these have failed to identify teaching and learning weaknesses. Classroom assistants are not deployed efficiently. In some literacy, numeracy and ESOL lessons, the ratio of students to classroom assistants is 2:1, whereas vocational areas have insufficient classroom support. There is an inclusive culture throughout the college. Staff members who think they are dyslexic have access to specialist assessment and support.

Part D: College data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	32	47
2	42	20
3	24	18
4/5	0	3
Other	2	12
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	490	436	5
Land-based provision	4	63	0
Construction	77	163	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	221	346	3
Business administration, management and professional	48	1,215	8
Information and communication technology	484	1,701	13
Retailing, customer service and transportation	19	152	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	457	1,549	12
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	66	238	2
Health, social care and public services	226	3,752	24
Visual and performing arts and media	850	652	9
Humanities	20	454	3
English, languages and communication	525	244	5

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Foundation programmes	406	1,277	10
Other	73	645	4
Total	**3,966**	**12,887**	**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+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
1	Starters excluding transfers	464	382	447	875	1,410	1,513
	Retention rate %	66	72	77	73	63	78
	National average %	76	76	76	71	71	71
	Pass rate %	79	80	76	75	103	63
	National average %	69	73	70	70	77	70
2	Starters excluding transfers	541	576	507	1,699	1,314	939
	Retention rate %	71	76	81	62	50	66
	National average %	71	71	73	68	67	69
	Pass rate %	65	68	58	62	63	65
	National average %	70	73	73	71	73	71
3	Starters excluding transfers	705	712	648	1,570	1,508	1,316
	Retention rate %	66	67	73	74	73	74
	National average %	77	77	82	70	69	70
	Pass rate %	81	75	73	81	80	64
	National average %	77	80	83	71	74	71
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	154	179	185
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	79	75	81
	National average %	71	74	73	68	69	68
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	56	58	61
	National average %	57	68	54	54	58	54

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).
Sources of information:
1.   National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.
2.   College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR
*fewer than 15 students enrolled.

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)	63	31	6	90
Level 2 (intermediate)	56	29	15	48
Level 1 (foundation)	62	29	9	21
Other sessions	50	42	8	26
Totals	**60**	**32**	**8**	**199**

Notes