



Hartlepool College Of Further Education

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

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

[Achievement and standards](#)

[16-18 year olds](#)

[Adult learners](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

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

[Science and mathematics](#)

[Construction](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Business](#)

[Computing and information technology](#)

[Health and social care](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Foundation](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

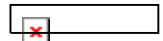
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

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

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

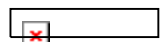
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

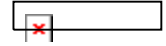


Name of college:	Hartlepool College of Further Education
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Mr A Sutcliffe
Address of college:	Stockton Street Hartlepool TS24 7NT
Telephone number:	01429 295111
Fax number:	01429 292999
Chair of governors:	Councillor Mr Ray Waller
Unique reference number:	130567
Name of reporting inspector:	W P Massam HMI
Date(s) of inspection:	10-14 December 2001

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



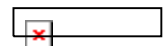
Hartlepool College of Further Education is the major provider of post-16 education and training in the unitary authority of Hartlepool, which has a population of around 90,000. In addition to the College of Further Education, there are a sixth form college and an 11 to 18 Roman Catholic Secondary School in Hartlepool. The college offers courses in all areas of learning, with the exception of land-based industries.

The college recruits primarily from the 11 to 16 schools and from the adult population in the town. In the academic year 1999/2000, the college enrolled 6,321 students, of whom over 58% were aged 19 or over. Over 50% of enrolments were at level 1 and level 2; 54% of students were male and less than 1% of the student population were from minority ethnic groups.

The unemployment rate for Hartlepool is at its lowest for some time, but it is still above the national average. There are pockets of very high unemployment in a number of wards across the town. Male unemployment is 12.2% compared with a national rate of 5.4% (February 2001 figure). In 2000, 81% of statutory school-leavers in Hartlepool progressed into further education (FE) or work-based training. The number of school-leavers progressing into full-time education was 9% below the national figure, but the number progressing into work-based training was 14% above the national figure. A report recently published by the Basic Skills Agency (May 2001) stated that nearly 30% of the 16 to 60 age-group in Hartlepool experienced some difficulty in reading and writing.

The last inspection report, published by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1998, was very positive. Five of the six curriculum areas inspected were good (grade 2) and care was outstanding (grade 1). Two of the cross-college areas were also outstanding (support for students and quality assurance) and three areas were good (general resources, governance and management).

How effective is the college?



This is a very good college which has established excellent links with its local community. Much of the teaching is good. Few lessons are unsatisfactory and the pass rates on most courses are good. Every effort is being made to improve retention rates. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are effective and include several examples of good practice. This college provides an example of good practice in relation to student guidance and support. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. The standards of leadership and management are good. Rigorous quality assurance procedures are in place.

Key strengths

- much good teaching

- good accommodation and resources (including impressive computer facilities)

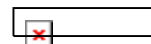
- good pass rates overall
- care for students - including high-quality guidance and support
- very effective leadership and management
- a rigorous quality assurance system
- the college environment.

What should be improved

- staff access to centrally held data
- small class sizes in some areas of learning
- completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- effective dissemination of good practice across the college
- links with those employers engaged in work-based training
- quality of schemes of work in some areas of learning.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

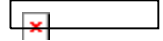


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory. Pass rates fluctuate from year to year. There is much effective teaching, in which good use is made of information technology (IT). Students are given effective individual support. The standard of the classroom and laboratory accommodation is excellent. There is poor attendance at many lessons.
Construction	Good. Pass rates on most courses are high. There is much good teaching. Initial assessment is thorough. Students' progress is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Resources are good. The poor achievement of the framework for modern apprentices, because of the non-attainment of key skills, is a major area of concern.
Engineering	Good. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. Students produce work of a high standard. There is much good teaching. The department is well resourced and managed. Student assessment is well managed. A low proportion of foundation modern apprentices achieved the full framework award.
Business	Good. Pass rates on vocational courses are good, particularly at levels 3 and 4. Retention rates are mixed, but they are around the national average overall. The majority of teaching is good or better. Accommodation is excellent. Teachers know their students well and relationships between students and teachers are friendly and productive.
Computing and information technology	Satisfactory. Pass rates on full-time General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced courses are good, but they are below national averages on the access to higher education (HE) course. Retention rates across most full-time courses are satisfactory. Teaching is good or better in most lessons. Students benefit from an impressive range of up-to-date industrial hardware and software. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Health and social care	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are good. Teaching is very good or better in most lessons. Students are supported effectively by teachers and good use is made of work experience in early years. There are some gaps in the effectiveness of work-based assessment.
Humanities	Good. Retention and pass rates are mixed. Teaching is good and the support for students, whose progress is systematically monitored, is outstanding. Leadership and management are strong. There is a strong commitment throughout the curriculum area to the care and best achievement of the students. Self-assessment and operational planning processes are well established.
Foundation	Good. Discrete basic skills courses and provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well organised and teaching is very good. There are extensive information and communications technology (ICT) facilities which are used innovatively to provide on-

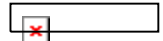
	line basic skills support to students who prefer not to attend college. The range of learning resources and teaching strategies used during basic skills support sessions for full-time students is too narrow.
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How well is the college led and managed?



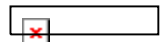
Leadership and management in the college are good. Governors and managers provide a clear sense of direction. There are very effective, integrated self-assessment and strategic-planning processes. Staff benefit from good communications and a consultative management style. Financial management is satisfactory. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous. The academic performance of the college is thoroughly monitored by managers and governors. The college plays a leading role in local strategic partnerships. There is some ineffective co-ordination of courses. The college does not sufficiently monitor equal opportunities.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's provision for educational and social inclusion is good. The college collects data on the ethnic and gender composition of its student body. A significant number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are recruited. The college undertakes a range of franchise provision to reach students in the community. In addition, the college actively promotes its own provision in the community and provides learning facilities in the town centre and other community venues and has been successful in widening participation. It meets the needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities by providing appropriate support. There have been insufficient attempts to broaden provision where recruitment has a strong gender bias. The college does not effectively monitor equal opportunities patterns in recruitment, retention, achievement and progression.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The college provides an example of good practice in relation to student guidance and support. Links with local 11 to 16 schools are good; in some cases they are excellent. Taster courses and the annual summer school allow students, of all ages, to sample the courses on offer in the college. Quality standards for the receipt and tracking of application forms ensure that applications are dealt with objectively and promptly. Induction is effective and enables students to settle into programmes quickly. Individual needs are accurately diagnosed and student progress is monitored carefully through the well-established and effective tutorial system. Well-trained and experienced staff in student services play a key role in providing up-to-date information and support to students through the provision of well-used welfare and counselling services. In addition, student advisers work closely with heads of department and negotiate and provide programmes of work in the taught aspect of the unified tutorial programme.

Students' views of the college



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

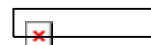
What students like about the college

- friendly, pleasant environment
- good facilities - including library
- approachable, supportive staff
- effective tutorial support
- good teaching
- respectful treatment
- encouragement in lessons
- proximity to town centre.

What they feel could be improved

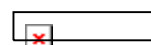
- common room facilities
- facility to borrow more books from the library
- car parking/motor bike storage.

Other information



The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole



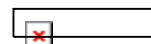
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3)%	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4)%	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7)%
Teaching 16-18	72	25	3
19+ and WBL*	68	25	7
Learning 16-18	71	24	5
19+ and WBL*	72	24	4

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

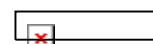


1. In Hartlepool, in 2000, the percentage of students gaining five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades at A* to C was 35.7%, well below the national average of 47%. The average points score for students entered for two or more General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) courses declined by 2% between 1997 and 2000 to 15.3%. The college enrolls a significant proportion of its students from postcode areas with a high level of deprivation. Levels of attainment were good or better in 64% of the lessons observed for students aged 16 to 18. In work-related learning and for adult students, levels of attainment were good or better in 57% of lessons observed. The previous inspection report, published in 1998, highlighted the need for the college to maintain and monitor its strategies for improving retention rates. Strategies have included an improved tutorial framework, progress review, and setting of individual targets for students.

2. The largest number of enrolments are at level 2 for students of all ages. Pass rates are good and consistently above national levels for all students from 1997 to 2000. Pass rates for adult students at level 1 are at national levels. For students aged 16 to 19, they have declined to just below the national average. Retention rates have been stable at around 80% for both age groups and at national levels.

3. At level 3, pass rates for younger students declined sharply in 1999 and 2000 to 68% and 65% respectively, from good pass rates in 1998. Retention rates also declined to below the national level at 72%. Overall pass rates for adult students have fluctuated at this level, but are satisfactory. Retention rates are good.

16-18 year olds

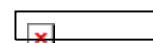


4. Almost 400 students take National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) courses at level 2. Pass rates are consistently good and well above national levels. Pass rates at NVQ level 3, which were well above national levels in 1998 and 1999, have fallen in 2000 to 64%. Retention rates have improved over the last two years, but remained 8% below national levels in 2000. Retention rates on NVQ level 3 courses have improved from low levels and were close to the national level in 2000. On foundation GNVQ or first diploma courses, numbers have increased, with approximately 100 students in the college taking courses at this level in 2000. Pass rates are good. Overall retention rates have improved to at, or near, national levels. In 2001, the GNVQ foundation health and social care retention rate was 81%, with a pass rate of 95%. On the NVQ level 1 in hairdressing course, all students were retained and passed their course.

5. GNVQ intermediate pass rates have been good over the past three years, the retention rate is on or close to national levels. The majority of students taking Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses are aged 16 to 18. Retention rates on level 3 were poor in 2000, at 52%. Out of 82 students who started courses, only 38 students successfully achieved their qualifications.

6. There were notable achievements in English language in 2001, the proportion gaining A* to C was 76%, significantly above the national average. The proportion gaining A* to C in mathematics, was low at 31% in 2000 and poor in 2001. Pass rates at GCE Advanced level (A level) have been above national levels from 1998 to 2000. In 2000, overall pass rates were 10% above the national level at 83%. The percentage of students achieving high grades (A to C) has improved steadily to 43% in 2001. The pass rate for GCE AS in 2000/01, with 209 entries, is 83%, close to the awarding body average for England. The proportion of students achieving high grades (A to C), is 46%. Of particular note, for subjects with above 20 subject entries, pass rates for A to C and A to E grades are in English literature, at 84% and 100% respectively, and in psychology. Pass rates are good in English language, theatre studies, and history. Detailed value added data are used to monitor and challenge students and point to positive achievements by students whose GCSE scores were low. However, in a number of GCE AS subjects, pass rates are below the awarding body average.

Adult learners



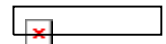
7. Small numbers of students follow courses at level 1 NVQ. Over 300 adult students followed NVQ level 2 courses in 2000. Pass rates are very good between 1998 to 2000, and consistently in the top 10% of colleges' performance nationally. The retention rate was below national levels in 1998 and 1999, improving in 2000 to just above national levels. On level 3 NVQ courses, there are

significantly above national levels in 1998 and 1999, in the top 10% of colleges nationally, with a fall in 2000 to 12% above the national level.

8. Approximately 50 students take GCE A levels each year, mainly in the social sciences. Pass rates were just below the national average from 1998 to 2000 at around 50%, with an improvement in 2001. Retention rates are low and are around 15% below the national levels over the last three years.

9. Pass rates for GCSE in English have improved significantly and are well above the national average between 1998 and 2000. In GCSE English language in 2000, there were approximately 20 students. The proportion of students receiving high grades in 1998/99 and 1999/2000 was well above the national average of about 65%, at 79% and 86% respectively. Approximately 30 adult students have taken GCSE mathematics over the last two years. The proportion of students achieving high grades at A* to C in mathematics in 2000, increased to 69%, above the national average of 51%, but declined to 44% in 2001.

Quality of education and training



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded in 131 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 71% of these, satisfactory in 24% and less than satisfactory in 5%. The overall quality of teaching was very good, with over 60% of teaching good or better in each of the areas of learning. The best teaching was in health and care and on foundation programmes. In humanities, 20% of the teaching was excellent. Students studying on entry level and on level 1 programmes received better teaching than those on level 2 and level 3 programmes.

11. Where lessons were good or better, teachers engaged and sustained the interests of students by lively and clear exposition, regular questioning to check on students' understanding and by the effective and selective use of handouts and support materials. In a lively and successful business studies lesson, involving a mixed group of Year 1 and Year 2 AVCE students, there was a detailed scheme of work with excellent support materials taken from a local company. The teaching was differentiated to take account of the two year groups. Equal opportunity issues were raised and discussed. Summary techniques were used to good effect. All students made progress in a supportive, encouraging learning environment. Similarly, in an on-line basic skills session involving a tutor and three students, clear sequential guidance was given that enabled the students to make progress and develop their writing skills. The students were set challenging, achievable targets for the session. The teacher displayed good listening skills, empathy, patience and encouragement. A feature common in all areas of learning was the excellent staff student relationships in the classroom. The teachers were keen for the students to achieve.

12. In the small number of lessons judged to be unsatisfactory or poor, teachers used a limited range of methods and there was little to excite or motivate the students. In some cases, the teachers failed to check whether all students understood the topic under review. Poor lesson plans were a feature in a small number of cases. For example, one plan, designed to cover a three-hour session, was summarised in a total of seven words. One lesson was interrupted and delayed when a mobile phone conversation was allowed to disrupt proceedings.

13. There is a considerable variation in the quality and success of the teaching of key skills. In ICT, the development of key skills is satisfactory for most students, even though there are some missed opportunities to develop communications key skills particularly at level 3. In humanities, all full-time students pursue individual key skills programmes. In construction, poor achievement of key skills is the predominate reason for the generally very poor achievement of the framework for work-based learners. Similarly, in engineering both retention and pass rates for foundation modern apprentices are low. No learner completed the full foundation framework which includes key skills achievement.

14. Most of the teachers are well qualified for the work they do and many are able to demonstrate a good knowledge of their subjects. The large majority of the 120 full-time teachers, and 60% of the part-time teachers have teaching qualifications. There is adequate technician support. Staff development opportunities are good and are centrally co-ordinated. Current priorities for training relate to ICT, teaching qualifications and curriculum updating. Basic skills teaching is integrated within teaching across the college, but many tutors are not adequately trained or do not have specialist qualifications in this important area of work.

15. The college is located on a single campus in the centre of Hartlepool and offers an attractive and welcoming teaching environment. College computer facilities have been enhanced to a very high standard and the infrastructure upgraded to support major ICT developments. Teaching accommodation is of a high standard. Considerable refurbishment and continual improvement to facilities have been completed since the last inspection.

16. The value and use of technology in teaching and learning are effectively promoted through Internet access in classrooms, the use of data projectors and visual aids. There is good student access to up-to-date computers located near curriculum areas and in the learning centre. Workshops are clean, safe and well equipped with specialist materials and equipment. The majority of classrooms, workshops and science laboratories are well equipped, and appropriately furnished. In a few lessons, classrooms were too small for the number of students and this hindered teaching strategies. Teaching rooms and corridors have relevant curriculum materials on display. Specialist rooms and allocated classrooms are grouped together to give a strong identity.

17. Realistic work environments in the college are very good in some areas. Facilities have been extended and upgraded in response to the requirements of students and industry, for example, in the development of new technology in engineering. Hairdressing and beauty therapy salons are well equipped and provide students with good experience of working with customers. Hospitality and catering students run a bistro which is open to the public.

18. The learning centre is well managed and open until late each evening. Resources are centrally catalogued and easily accessible. A good range of resources is available. Ample computer resources are available on a drop-in basis. The college intranet has useful links to course information, tutors, and key skills assignments and links to Internet sites for employment and universities. On-line learning materials are available to students outside the college.

19. A large, quiet study area is well used. A separate area has been created through which adults can access basic skills training.

20. The college is clean and well maintained. The reception area has been improved since the last inspection. Information about the location of college facilities and personnel is provided on a large interactive board in the reception area. A newly established and popular health information suite is located close to the main entrance and is open on a daily basis to provide a service to the local community and college students. Students with restricted mobility are able to access most rooms in the college. Social areas are limited but well used. The refectory is popular.

21. The procedures followed by the college, in the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress, are effective and include several examples of good practice. Forms of assessment are in most cases appropriate for the courses being followed. Students in most areas of learning are given an assessment timetable at the beginning of their course of study to give them the opportunity to organise their time effectively when completing tasks. Assessment is carried out on a regular basis and work is returned to students promptly within an agreed time scale. Criteria for assessment are shared with students. As a result, students are able to monitor their progress on a regular basis.

22. Initial assessment is undertaken with all full-time students aged 16 to 18, all work-based students and day-release students. However, the resulting scores are not always fed back to students and the assessment is not always undertaken with part-time students or all students aged 19 and over. Poor performance is identified and actions to improve performance are agreed and further monitored. Value added information, comparing previous attainment with current progress, is

also used effectively in the process of review to monitor progress and to establish targets for future improvements.

23. The majority of college staff who undertakes vocational assessment holds appropriate assessor/internal verifier awards. Some work-based supervisors, however, do not hold these awards and this reduces the opportunities for assessments in the workplace. In plumbing and other areas of construction, most employers are unaware of learners' progress and workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in monitoring progress and learning.

24. Assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow regulatory body requirements. The process of internal verification for vocational qualifications is rigorous. All assignment briefs in vocational areas are internally verified before they are issued to students to ensure that they are fair and are measuring what they are intended to measure. External verifier's reports support the rigour of the process and their comments are closely monitored and followed up by managers and curriculum teams. In areas of learning where assessment is conducted internally, procedures are laid down for formally convened examination boards to follow.

25. These procedures are strictly adhered to resulting in well-moderated and reliable assessment decisions. The results of assessment are also used to inform developments in programmes, for example, in business and management, finance units are allocated extra teaching time because of previous assessment results.

26. The college provides a broad range of courses which meet the needs of most young people and adults. Arrangements to ensure that students select the right course are good. Courses are provided in all areas of learning except land-based provision. Students may choose from courses at all levels from pre-foundation up to HE and study through a suitable range of modes of attendance. Recruitment has increased steadily in recent years. There are some gaps in the provision and in some areas recruitment is low. For example, the range of provision in science is narrow and no level 1 courses are provided in mathematics.

27. The college has been energetic in meeting many of the demands of Curriculum 2000. New GCE AS and AVCE qualifications have been developed, and students can study for the three key skills alongside their other work. Full-time students are provided with good opportunities to take additional qualifications, and partake in residential and other broadening experiences. Arrangements to enable students to mix academic and vocational subjects are currently underdeveloped. The college plans to adopt a college-wide timetable to facilitate this from September 2002.

28. There is substantial provision to meet the needs of employers. The Hartlepool business development centre supports local industry with a variety of courses in, for example, computing and management. The college is a major provider of modern apprenticeship training and is also responsible for the college-based element of the apprenticeship programmes of other training providers. To meet the needs of companies that are having difficulties in recruiting or updating their staff, the college has developed the facility for individuals to improve their basic skills on their company's premises by e-learning. A significant amount of funding is franchised, for example, to the local authority to offer training in health and care, and to local community groups. There is a significant amount of New Deal provision.

29. Staff are engaged in partnership work with a wide variety of organisations. It is a major partner, for example, at a regional level in the Tees Valley strategic partnership, at a local level in partnerships such as the local economical forum and the enterprise agency board and at the curriculum level with industry lead bodies, training providers and community groups. The college has established and maintains strong and effective links with local universities.

30. The college provides an example of good practice in relation to student guidance and support. Teachers, student services, careers staff and the college counsellor work well together under the effective leadership of the head of corporate services, to ensure that students are well supported and receive good quality impartial guidance.

31. Links between the college and 11 to 16 schools in Hartlepool are good. Key Stage 4 students in local schools are provided with detailed and up-to-date information explaining the full range of courses and programmes of study offered by the college. This information is provided through a series of talks, videos and presentations by student services staff and, on request, through individual interviews. The college organises a popular summer school which enables prospective students to sample possible subjects or course options. A number of local 11 to 16 schools, including Manor Technology College, have established very strong links with the college which resulted in Key Stage 4 students having access to and making excellent use of college facilities, particularly in relation to specialist measures and staff expertise. The provision is helping to extend the curriculum offered in local 11 to 16 schools and is an important feature in helping to improve student attainment at Key Stage 4. The 'routeway' programme is specially designed to meet the needs of pupils who do not attend school. GNVQ courses are provided for school pupils who attend the college for a few sessions each week. College teachers provide some teaching in schools and some school staff teach at the college. Some students from the local college of art and design take GCSE subjects at the college, negotiated and planned on an individual basis.

32. Links between the college, the local sixth form college and the 11 to 18 Roman Catholic secondary school in the town are generally poor and limited to attendance at meetings and having joint publicity and awareness raising events. There are no significant curriculum links.

33. College publicity material is attractive, well designed and presented in a number of different ways. A brochure for full-time courses, a part-time prospectus produced in a newspaper format and a series of leaflets outline the requirements and explain the content of specific courses. There is, however, a lack of suitable publicity material for those who experience difficulty in reading and insufficient information about the provision and support available for those students with childcare needs.

34. Quality standards relating to the receipt and processing of applications ensure that applications are dealt with promptly and impartially. Student advisers in student services play an important role in screening and tracking applications and in advising those students who, in the first instance, have applied for an inappropriate course. Induction is effective and enables learners to settle in to their programmes quickly. Students have a good understanding of course requirements and of their rights and responsibilities as learners. Induction is carried out throughout the year for full-time and work-based learners. The induction process, particularly for full-time students, is flexible and encourages students to sample other programmes or to transfer to more suitable courses particularly in the initial stages of their studies.

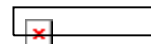
35. Learning support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effectively organised and co-ordinated. The service is well known to staff and students are made aware of the provision at pre-enrolment and during the induction process. Current provision includes interpreters for students with hearing difficulties, individual support for students with special medical conditions and technical support for students with individual needs. For some part-time students and those aged 19 and over, screening for individual learning needs is not always carried out on an individual basis and the identification of any needs is mainly dependent on the vigilance of individual tutors.

36. College procedures for the monitoring of students' attendance, poor punctuality and unsatisfactory performance are highly effective and have resulted in an average attendance rate of over 80% for the college as a whole. Non-attendance and poor punctuality are monitored in each session. Reports of non-attendance are acted upon quickly through contact with the student, parents or employer. Unexplained periods of absence or regular patterns of absence are dealt with through the process of review in the unified tutorial system or through the process of academic action planning, during which students are carefully, regularly and closely monitored. Attendance and punctuality for the 400 students in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance are closely monitored.

37. Student services provides a comprehensive range of services including welfare advice, counselling and careers information. Student advisers based in the student services are well qualified and work closely with heads of departments by negotiating and providing programmes of work in the taught aspect of the unified tutorial programme. Course tutors, vocational staff and

student advisers work closely to ensure that full-time students are provided with up-to-date information on careers and possible progression routes. Students value the support and information given by student advisers when completing and submitting university forms.

Leadership and management



38. The overall standard of management in the college is high. Governors and managers have set a clear direction for the work of the college. The college has addressed most of the weaknesses identified in the report published by inspectors of the FEFC in 1998. Provision is good in the majority of the curriculum areas inspected. Pass rates are good on many courses and for the college as a whole. Retention rates are satisfactory for provision for students aged 19 and over, but are slightly below national averages for students aged 16 to 18. The overall quality of teaching, learning and attainment is good. Quality assurance arrangements are rigorous and lead to improvements. There are very effective processes for self-assessment and strategic planning. The college actively leads a number of local partnerships. Data held centrally on students' performance are reliable. The co-ordination of some courses is ineffective and equal opportunities are insufficiently monitored.

39. Since the last inspection the college has implemented a number of improvements. It has extended its range of community provision. The college management structure has been revised and managers have been supported to undertake professional management training. The management information system has been further developed and managers have been provided with on-line access to information on students' enrolment, attendance and performance. Data is used to help monitor performance and to set performance against targets. Attendance registers are electronically read on a daily basis and data on students' attendance is readily available to staff.

40. Rigorous and comprehensive quality assurance systems and procedures have resulted in improvements in performance in the college. The college's self-assessment committee meets regularly to review quality assurance procedures and to ensure that these procedures are being implemented fully across the college. It is chaired by the quality assurance manager and reports to the academic consultative committee which is chaired by the principal. The self-assessment committee conducts regular audits of the application of these systems and procedures and the level of compliance is high. All courses undertake an annual review and evaluation in which they consider performance against targets and against national averages for retention and pass rates and a number of other quality indicators. The views of students and other stakeholders are considered. Realistic targets for retention and pass rates are set by course teams. A comprehensive programme of lesson observations is conducted annually. These observations are graded and conducted by trained observers. Reports from these observations are used to inform the college's overall self-assessment report and also to identify staff training needs. The lesson observation programme is rigorous and a sample of observations is carried out by the vice principal to ensure consistency of grading. The programme has assisted in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

41. Annual self-assessment is well established in the college. The self-assessment report clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses and provides supporting evidence. Actions to address weaknesses are carried forward into departmental operating statements which contain detailed action plans with specific responsibilities and time-scales identified. The self-assessment report contains a detailed analysis of teaching and learning and the findings of lesson observations. Strengths and weaknesses identified in the report are evaluative and mostly constitute robust judgements. A self-assessment of management is not reported upon or graded in the self-assessment report. Most of the grades in the self-assessment report are an accurate reflection of the quality of provision. Senior managers, together with some staff and some governors, attend an annual strategic planning conference to consider issues arising from the quality assurance processes; to review achievement of objectives set out in the strategic plan; and to agree new strategic objectives. The strategic plan for 2001 to 2004 identifies a number of broad aims that are supported by a series of objectives and an action plan. Departmental operating statements identify

specific objectives and measurable targets to support the strategic plan. The college takes a leading role in a number of local partnerships to further its strategic role in the community.

42. Challenging targets are set for a range of key performance indicators, including recruitment, retention and pass rates. These are set by course and by department. A rigorous system for monitoring performance against strategic objectives and targets is carried out by the principal and vice principal on a six-monthly basis. A range of performance indicators and an analysis of performance against targets are considered and actions are taken to address issues identified. A well-established system of staff appraisal covers all full-time and part-time staff and includes those involved in the college's franchise work. Staff are appraised annually by their line manager. Their work is reviewed under this process and staff development needs are identified. The college provides good support for staff through its staff development programme. Staff appraisal is effective in improving performance and the quality of provision.

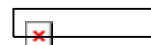
43. Most courses are well managed. Course teams meet regularly to review their courses. They monitor retention and pass rates and judge performance against national averages. Staff are clear about lines of responsibility and definition of roles. Overall, the management structure is effective. Co-ordination between teachers is good in most areas of the college and many teachers share learning resources, but it is not effective in a small number of areas. For example, there is no co-ordination of teachers on basic skills courses and there is little exchange of resources between these teachers. Curriculum management in science is weak and as a result problems of some poor performance have not been addressed. In some cases, departmental boundaries have restricted students' access to a broader range of courses. Communications with staff are good and there is a consultative management style. Termly staff meetings with the principal and vice principal and regular departmental and course team meetings ensure that staff are fully involved in and informed about developments in the college. Staff are fully consulted about the strategic plan and self-assessment. Weekly college management team meetings comprise the principal, vice principal and assistant principals. A wide range of committees in the college address specific issues, for example internal validation and ICT policy.

44. The college is active in raising awareness of equal opportunities issues. There is an equal opportunities policy which is regularly reviewed and an equal opportunities committee which is chaired by a senior manager. It is attended by representatives from each department together with the equal opportunities co-ordinator. There is no student representation on this committee. The committee, with strong support from senior management, has focused its work on removing barriers to learning for current and potential students. In addition to improving physical access to the college, a number of initiatives have been adopted in order to enable the community to access college provision. For example, the development of on-line learning and provision of IT facilities in the town centre have attracted students to learning who did not wish to attend the college. Marketing material is reviewed to ensure that equal opportunities are carefully represented. Staff training is provided on equal opportunities issues and developments, including the effects of new legislation. A committee is in the process of undertaking a detailed self-assessment of equal opportunities across the college. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities. For example, the college does not monitor students' retention and pass rates by gender, age, disability and ethnicity at course and college level.

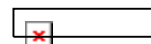
45. Governors and managers set a clear direction for the work of the college. The mission of the college is regularly reviewed. Governors are actively involved in determining the strategic plan and they receive regular reports on progress against strategic objectives. There is regular, thorough monitoring of the college's academic performance by managers and governors. Governors ensure that sufficient action takes place to address any concerns raised through this monitoring. The framework within which governors operate for governance is satisfactory. They monitor the college's financial performance closely.

46. Curriculum area managers are allocated budgets for materials and small equipment needs based on student numbers. Expenditure is closely monitored by the finance director. Financial management is satisfactory. Overall retention rates are satisfactory for students aged 19 and over, but are slightly below those for similar colleges for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates are good on many courses. In the curriculum areas, the majority of the provision is good.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- enthusiastic and effective teaching
- very high standard of classroom and laboratory accommodation
- good use of IT to support teaching and learning
- effective individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- low recruitment on GCE A-level science courses
- poor retention rates on some courses
- low pass rates on GCE AS science courses
- poor attendance at many lessons.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry, human biology, physics, environmental science and mathematics. GCSE programmes are offered in mathematics and science. Some students following the access to HE programme undertake science and mathematics modules. A significant amount of mathematics teaching is provided for students following vocational courses throughout the college. There is no level 1 provision and no vocational science courses are offered.

Achievement and standards

48. The number of students recruited onto GCE AS and A-level courses has been low for several years. For the last three years, GCE AS and A-level physics and chemistry classes have each had six students or fewer. There is poor attendance on some courses, particularly those for adults. The average attendance in all classes was 73%, but only 63% for the adult classes. Student retention rates for the GCE A-level courses in biology and mathematics were below the national average in 2000/01. The retention rate for the two GCSE courses improved in 2000/01 to around the national average.

49. Pass rates on the GCE A-level courses have fluctuated over the last three years. In mathematics and human biology, they were above the national average in 2001. Pass rates in GCSE science have been near or above the national average in the last three years. The pass rates on the GCSE mathematics course fell to below the national average in 2001. Pass rates on the new GCE AS science programmes are generally poor. For example, the pass rate for GCE AS chemistry in 2001 was only 14%. Many GCE A-level students have not achieved their target grades and the proportion of students achieving high-grade passes is below the national average.

50. The quality of students' work is generally good, particularly assignment and project work. There are many examples of students making good use of IT resources. Science students carry out practical work competently and there is a strong emphasis on working safely.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	121	121	119
		% retention	75	70	75
		% pass rate	38	43	35
GCSE sciences	2	No. of starts	38	42	25
		% retention	66	60	71
		% pass rate	48	44	41
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	**	12	12
		% retention	**	86	55
		% pass rate	**	83	60
GCE A-level human biology	3	No. of starts	15	12	7*
		% retention	57	50	85*
		% pass rate	50	75	67*
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	7	10	11
		% retention	86	90	64
		% pass rate	100	63	89

* *unreliable data*

** *course did not run*

Quality of education and training

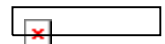
51. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Some 65% of lessons were or better. Most lessons are well structured and taught at an appropriate pace. Good reinforcement of learning takes place. The small numbers of students in science classes allows teachers to give students plenty of individual attention, particularly in practical sessions. There are good examples of science teachers taking effective account of students' learning difficulties. For example, a student with a hearing impairment was able to participate fully in a human biology lesson through the provision of a signer. In many science lessons, IT is used effectively as a learning aid. For example, in one physics lesson, students used the Internet to track a space station. In some science lessons, however, teachers did not ensure that students' notes were of a sufficiently good quality; the teacher did not provide handouts and the quality of students' notes was poor.

52. In mathematics, the teaching is generally good, but learning methods are not sufficiently varied. Effective use is made of good, purpose-designed learning materials. The best lessons are designed to encourage students' interest, participation and learning. In some lessons, there is insufficient checking of learning. Students are generally well motivated, work productively and make effective contributions to lessons. Additional mathematics tuition is available for students who need it.

Leadership and management

53. Science and mathematics provision is based in the sixth form and teacher education department which co-ordinates all the college's GCE A-level and GCSE provision. There is a section leader for mathematics and the staff team meets every two weeks. One successful marketing initiative taken by this team was to plan an annual mathematics challenge in which seven local schools compete against each other. The science course team consists of a small number of subject specialists, none of whom has management responsibility for the science provision. The small group sizes in science results in the inefficient use of resources. Although regular meetings are held of the science team, there is insufficient strategic direction to address the issues of low recruitment or the narrow range of provision. Courses are reviewed annually and staff appreciate the importance of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Action plans that intended to address falling student retention and pass rates have not yet been effective.

Construction



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

Contributory for work-based learning **satisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on most qualifications
- good teaching
- good quality resources

- productive links with employers
- thorough initial assessment
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on level 3 courses
- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in apprenticeships.

Scope of provision

54. The college offers construction programmes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. At the time of inspection, there were 430 learners on construction programmes undertaking courses in a range of subjects including brickwork, wood occupations, painting and decorating, plumbing, gas installation and electrical installation. Around a quarter of learners are undertaking a work-based training programme. Of the college-based students, 43% are between the ages of 16 and 18 and 57% are aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

55. Students' achievements in NVQs in construction craft at level 2 are above the national average. There are also high pass rates on the electrical testing and gas safety courses. Pass rates on NVQ level 3 programmes are below the national average. Last year there were no passes on the national certificate in building services engineering. Pass rates on the City and Guilds 2360 electrical installation qualification were low in 2000/01, at 22%, against a national average of 61%. The college identified this poor performance in its self-assessment report. Most students on this course joined late at the request of their employer and did not have sufficient time to complete all the necessary work.

56. Pass rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks are low, particularly the foundation modern apprenticeship programme. Almost half the apprentices who started the programme in 1999/2000 have left early without completing the framework. Only 17% of these apprentices have successfully completed the targets on the training plan. Of those who joined the modern apprenticeship programme in 2000/01, 28% have left early without achieving the framework. In many instances, apprentices complete their intended NVQ, but fail to complete the key skills units. The college recognises this and has put in place better arrangements for instruction in key skills for the current

apprentices.

57. Attainment of standards by students in lessons was often good. They produce good quality practical work particularly in the craft areas. Students on the construction technician programmes produce good quality course work and assignments.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 16 th edition wiring regulations	entry	No. of starts	46	66	43
		% retention	93	95	98
		% pass rate	63	48	92
Site supervision certificate	entry	No. of starts	12	43	15
		% retention	92	100	93
		% pass rate	80	62	93
Construction craft NVQs	2	No. of starts	88	124	76
		% retention	80*	62	70
		% pass rate	82	72	77
Other short electrical courses	2	No. of starts	49	36	52
		% retention	92	100	98*
		% pass rate	71	47	70
City and Guilds 2630 electrical installation	2	No. of starts	39	52	20
		% retention	97	94	80
		% pass rate	86	62	22
GNVQ precursors	3	No. of starts	29	42	12
		% retention	72	57	67
		% pass rate	85	73*	0***
Construction craft NVQs	3	No. of starts	44	63	54
		% retention	89	89	96
		% pass rate	77	36	66
Short gas safety course	3	No. of starts	**	36	110
		% retention	**	100	100
		% pass rate	**	47	85

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* unreliable data

** course did not run

*** no achievements registered for 2001

Quality of education and training

58. There is much good teaching: 62% of lessons were good or better. Students are enthusiastic about their work both in theory and workshop sessions. Students appreciate being treated with respect and have a good rapport with staff. Staff pay great attention to improving students' levels of confidence through the use of regular constructive feedback and encouragement. Lessons are

highly participative and staff have developed innovative projects to stimulate and interest students. One such project has been designed for modern apprentices in joinery who are working towards an NVQ at level 2. Weekly visits are made to a site where houses are being built. Apprentices follow the progress of experienced joiners on the site and have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in a real work environment under close supervision.

59. Classrooms and workshops are clean, safe and well equipped. IT facilities are well used as a learning aid. The good range of computer facilities is valued by students. Students attend the IT suite regularly as part of their work on key skills. Full-time students spend some of their class time in the IT suite under the supervision of staff from the construction section.

60. Initial assessment is thorough. Many students attend taster sessions during the summer to sample courses on offer. This helps them to select the most appropriate course. All applicants are interviewed twice and undertake an initial assessment of their basic skills to determine any additional support needs. Where appropriate, students attend additional basic skills classes. Alternatively, students may benefit from one-to-one support. Students' progress is thoroughly and formally reviewed three times a year. Copies of the review records are sent to parents and, where appropriate, employers. Feedback from students obtained through reviews is used as part of the course review and evaluation system.

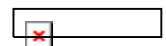
61. The department has close links with local employers. These links are used effectively to ensure that the college is aware of job vacancies and placement or training opportunities. Work placements are of a high standard. Employers and workplace supervisors support apprentices well. However, insufficient assessment is carried out in the workplace. Apprentices' assessment portfolios contain little work-based evidence, despite the fact that opportunities to gather such evidence are plentiful. Some learners are not aware of the progress they are making towards their learning plan. Workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in the learning programme. Many are unaware of the requirements of the NVQ and for key skills. Workplace supervisors do not have sight of the termly progress reports and are unaware of the progress their apprentices have made.

Leadership and management

62. Construction programmes are managed within the department for engineering, construction and design. Each craft area is effectively led by a manager with vocational expertise. The department is directed on a cross-departmental basis by directors of studies and supported by senior specialists who concentrate on managing quality assurance. Senior staff meetings concentrate on relevant issues such as quality, appraisal and key skills to enhance the learners' experience. In recognition of the poor achievement of modern apprentices, there has recently been a strong focus on improving the teaching of key skills.

63. Staff development has been strongly focused towards improving the teaching of basic skills and guidance and support to learners. Lesson observations are well established in the department as part of its drive for continuous improvement. Departmental targets, including those at course-team level, are set and monitored. Much work has gone into ensuring that all students are treated with dignity and this attitude is reflected in the views of learners interviewed. However, the college fails to monitor equality of opportunity for modern apprentices in the workplace. The self-assessment report for construction was accurate and realistic.

Engineering



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**
Contributory for work-based learning **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses
- high pass rates on most craft courses
- high standards of students' work
- much good teaching
- well-resourced department
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on part-time technician courses
- low retention and pass rates on foundation modern apprenticeships.

Scope of provision

64. There is a wide range of full-time and part-time provision in engineering. Courses are available in mechanical and electrical/electronic engineering, fabrication and welding, motor vehicle servicing and body work, at levels 1 to 4. There are also 250 modern apprentices studying at both foundation and advanced level. The department also makes provision for a large number of apprentices from other training providers. In addition to following courses leading to their main qualification, full-time students undertake additional qualifications such as NVQs and key skills and may benefit from enrichment activities such as residential courses.

Achievement and standards

65. Student retention rates on most courses were above the national averages in 2000/01. Retention rates on NVQ level 1 programmes in motor vehicle studies and NVQ level 2 in engineering have been consistently high in recent years. However, retention rates on some courses such as the national certificate in engineering, have remained consistently low. Pass rates in the last two years have been high on most courses. Exceptions are the City and Guilds craft courses at level 3, where pass rates have been below the national average for the last two years. On first

certificate courses, pass rates have fluctuated; they were high in 2000 and low in 2001.

66. Retention rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme are improving. For example, 49 out of the 56 apprentices who started training in 2000/01 are still in training. The rate at which the current advanced apprentices are progressing through the NVQ qualifications is slow. Both retention and pass rates for foundation modern apprentices are low. In 2000/01, 50% of the apprentices left the programme early and only 38% completed the NVQ level 2. No apprentice has yet completed the full foundation modern apprenticeship framework which includes achievement of key skills.

67. Students' written assignment work is presented to a consistently high standard and shows appropriate levels of attainment. Much of the work is word processed. Practical work is also of a high standard. Students are generally enthusiastic and well motivated and work hard in practical lessons. Advanced modern apprentices' log books and portfolios of work are well organised and clearly presented.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ 1 motor vehicle	1	No. of starts	83	54	**
		% retention	78	85	**
		% pass rate	80	93	**
First certificate engineering	2	No. of starts	**	43	18
		% retention	**	95	78
		% pass rate	**	78	38
City and Guilds engineering	2	No. of starts	153	138	*
		% retention	67	59	*
		% pass rate	63	72	96
NVQ engineering	2	No. of starts	165	129	75
		% retention	74	73	79
		% pass rate	78	90	88
National certificate in engineering (2 year)	3	No. of starts	36	43	*
		% retention	32	38	*
		% pass rate	90	33	60
National diploma engineering	3	No. of starts	26	25	*
		% retention	63	71	*
		% pass rate	67	88	100
NVQ motor vehicle, mechanical, production and maintenance	3	No. of starts	57	51	44
		% retention	30	37	95
		% pass rate	38	83	79
City and Guilds 3 engineering	3	No. of starts	20	36	20
		% retention	90	92	95
		% pass rate	0	24	0

* *data unreliable*

** *course did not run*

Quality of education and training

68. A high proportion of the teaching observed by inspectors was good. The teaching in 70% of lessons was good or better. Little teaching was less than satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers engaged and sustained the interest of students by lively and clear exposition, regular questioning to check on students' understanding, reference to industrial practice and the use of demonstrations to illustrate key points. For example, in a lesson on different types of welding rod, questioning was given extra relevance by linking the questions to the students' work-place experience and their interests and was further increased by passing round different weld rods and examples of welding work. In the better lessons, the need for students to make detailed notes was reduced by the issuing of well-designed handouts and workbooks. Students' learning was reinforced by the use of short written assignments that helped them summarise the key features of the topic. Practical work is generally well organised. Students are clear about what is required of them and work at a good rate, with the teachers helping where appropriate. In a few lessons, teaching was adversely affected by restricted access to equipment and work being set at too low a level.

69. The department is well resourced. It has a wide range of equipment, most of which is of good quality. Recent investment has enhanced resources, including those for fabrication and welding. Accommodation is mostly well furnished. Classrooms provide a pleasant learning environment and are well equipped with teaching aids. The excellent motor vehicle centre provides first class facilities, equipment and accommodation. It has a good range of vehicles, appropriate sheet metal tooling for body work, spacious workshops and an IT centre. The library is satisfactorily stocked with books, is well equipped with computers and contains a good range of videos.

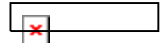
70. Student assessment is well managed. Assignments are carefully scheduled through the year to provide an even workload for students. They contain an appropriate mix of practical and written work. Assessment briefs are generally clear and of an appropriate standard. Feedback to students is often clear and helpful. Internal verification is effective in ensuring that standards are maintained and that marking is consistent and fair. Students' progress is monitored rigorously and regularly. Subject teachers report on each student's progress. Course tutors review the report and compare the student's progress with predictions of performance based on their incoming GCSE grades. Reports on progress and attendance are sent to parents or employers as appropriate. Progress in practical work is displayed on wall charts, which motivates students. Until this year, the department has not been effective in assessing evidence of competence that apprentices have generated in the workplace. This is now being done and apprentices are progressing more quickly.

71. Students are carefully guided onto the most appropriate course. Many students attend taster sessions, which the college provides in the summer, prior to enrolment. These provide valuable information about the range of courses available and help students to make the most appropriate choice. Students' basic skills are assessed at the beginning of the course to identify any additional support needs. Advice on careers and progression opportunities is provided during group tutorials.

Leadership and management

72. The department is well managed. Teams meet regularly and their meetings are guided by appropriate agendas. The progress of students is a regular agenda item and is carefully considered. Operational planning takes into account college priorities and is informed by school and course concerns. The implementation of development plans is carefully monitored. There are rigorous procedures to assure the quality of the provision. Targets for retention and pass rates are set at course and department levels and performance is compared with the targets. Self-assessment takes into account the views of students, the quality of teaching and students' achievements. Contacts between teachers and employers are frequent, but are not recorded.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- excellent accommodation and specialist resources
- well-planned courses and lessons
- good use of work experience and employer links
- imaginative project and assignment work on AVCE and public services courses
- high level of individual support
- close monitoring of attendance
- thorough course review and evaluation.

Weaknesses

- gaps in provision at foundation and intermediate levels
- few opportunities for the development of problem-solving skills for administration students
- many small class sizes.

Scope of provision

73. Business and public services provision for around 100 full-time students includes GCE AS and A-level in business studies, AVCE business, first and national diplomas in public services and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in administration. Most students are aged 16 to 18. A narrow range of part-time business courses in accounts, administration and business technology is provided at the college's main site. The college also has franchise agreements with several organisations to deliver business technology and management courses in other venues, including community centres. In 2001, student numbers on full-time public services courses rose significantly and the college continues to offer a strong portfolio of supervisory and management courses for employed students. Business and administration enrolments have declined since the last inspection and there are gaps in provision. GNVQ intermediate business failed to recruit in 2001, and there are small group sizes on most full-time courses. At the time of the inspection, no level 1 provision was available in business administration for full-time students.

Achievement and standards

74. Pass rates on vocational courses are good, particularly at levels 3 and 4. In 2001, all completing students on NVQ level 3 administration, national diploma in public services and AVCE business programmes were successful. For successful level 3 students, their grades were often higher than would typically be expected based on their GCSE grades on entry. Retention rates are mixed: overall they are around the national average. Most administration students completing their courses progress to employment. Increasingly, business and public services students choose to progress to HE.

75. Students produce a high standard of work for formal assessments. There is a strong emphasis on examinations and assessments in lessons and students are clear about the standards of work expected and the deadlines for the submission of work. They are skilled in using a range of IT software to ensure that projects and assignments are well presented. AVCE business and public services assignments are imaginatively designed to encourage individual students to develop their ideas in topical contexts. By contrast, administration students do not critically evaluate the information given by teachers and there are limited opportunities in lessons to develop their problem-solving skills through group work and research.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	103	76	35
		% retention	72	80	80
		% pass rate	66	69	78
NVQ administration	3	No. of starts	33	28	23
		% retention	91	89	91
		% pass rate	87	84	100
GNVQ advanced/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	16	25	12
		% retention	88	68	75
		% pass rate	100	94	100
Text and word processing	3	No. of starts	70	51	60
		% retention	94	96	87
		% pass rate	56	86	76

National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	6	14	13
		% retention	83	62	69
		% pass rate	80	100	100
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	18	5	19
		% retention	78	80	68
		% pass rate	62	75	69
Certificate in management studies	4	No. of starts	28	53	38
		% retention	91	97	97
		% pass rate	86	92	89

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

76. The majority of teaching is good or better. The teaching in 60% of lessons was good or better. Courses and lessons are well planned and effectively managed. Assessment schedules are generally carefully linked with succinct schemes of work and most lessons are clearly thought through. There is a good working atmosphere in lessons and many teachers are adept at building links with previous lessons and other activities to reinforce learning. The most successful lessons include well-judged inputs from the teacher, penetrating questions, meaningful discussions and useful practical activities. An imaginative lesson required students to vote on an emotive topical issue before the teacher presented factual information and a short video. Students in the class responded enthusiastically in discussions and the teacher further developed both their vocabulary and their understanding before requesting a further vote to find out if they had modified or changed their views. A minority of teachers failed to engage the more reluctant students and they did not check their understanding of complex issues. Some teachers are too ready to explain concepts to students instead of encouraging them to think for themselves. NVQ students, for example, spend excessive amounts of lesson time sorting and cross-referencing documents for portfolios at the expense of developing their understanding of effective business performance.

77. Full-time students have good opportunities to enhance their theoretical studies. For example, public services students take part in residential team-building activities and have visiting speakers from the sector. There are well-developed links with local employers for management, business and administration courses. Work experience offered on one day each week is an integral part of administration courses and this is supplemented by periods in the training office for students to practise their skills. The office is well organised and provides an administrative support service for both staff and students. NVQ level 3 students take the role of office supervisor for NVQ level 2 students. The standard of work produced is effectively monitored and assessed each day.

78. Teachers know their students well and relationships between teachers and students are friendly and productive. There are regular timetabled opportunities for students to meet individually with their teachers to review progress. Unauthorised student absences are quickly followed up by telephone and there is a positive culture of support for students.

79. Most teachers mark work constructively and give prompt feedback, though in GCE AS/A level there is insufficient work set and marked. Internal verification is thorough and systematic. Around half of the lessons had fewer than 10 students, even though some courses had already been combined. In several sessions, small classes restricted methods of working and reduced the possibilities for learning through interaction with others.

80. Accommodation is excellent; classrooms are spacious, well furnished and reflect a modern business environment. Management students stated that the high standard of facilities and the expertise and support from teachers were key factors in choosing to study at the college. IT facilities in classrooms are of a good industrial standard, though occasionally insufficient computers are

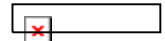
available to meet students' private study needs in the learning resource centres.

Leadership and management

81. Curriculum managers in the vocational business department have a commitment to build on what has already been achieved and further enrich and reshape the curriculum. They have a good understanding of course performance and ensure that teachers regularly review and evaluate how students are performing in order to raise standards. Targets are set for both retention and pass rates. The decline in enrolment on business and administration courses is recognised, though no enrolment targets are set at course level.

82. GCE AS and A-level provision is separately managed in the sixth form centre. Franchised provision in business is also separately managed and quality assurance arrangements for these external organisations are well developed. Opportunities for staff to share resources and good practice for the benefit of students across the three business areas are not well developed.

Computing and information technology



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

Strengths

- much good teaching in vocational lessons
- effective internal verification for most courses
- innovative on-line and software resources to support learning and assessment
- good pass rates for GNVQ intermediate and advanced students.

Weaknesses

- few links with ICT industry
- insufficient exchange of good practice
- some inadequate accommodation and equipment.

Scope of provision

83. The college offers full-time computing and IT courses, which meet the needs of most students and offer good progression opportunities, particularly for students aged 16 to 18. The delivery of vocational, academic and some part-time entry and level 1 courses are divided between different departments of the college. The provision includes an IT certificate at level 1, GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in ICT. For adult students, access to HE courses offer direct access to two local universities as part of a college-wide passport system. Part-time courses include computing for beginners, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and Integrated Business Technology stage 2 (IBT 2). The sixth form centre within the college offers GCE AS and A levels in ICT as well as CLAIT, IBT 2 and key skills in IT. Departments across the college also provide CLAIT and key skills in IT. CLAIT is also provided by a franchisee in the local community.

Achievement and standards

84. There are good pass rates on the full-time GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses. Retention rates across most full-time courses are satisfactory. For students aged 16 to 18 on level 1, GNVQ intermediate and AVCE courses, attendance is closely monitored. Staff make daily telephone calls to the students' homes during absence. Attendance and retention rates on these courses have increased in the last year. For full-time adult students on the access to HE course, pass rates are below national averages, although retention rates show signs of improvement during 2000/01. Some students on the one-year CLAIT course achieve good pass rates, but accurate pass rate data is not available for CLAIT students who are taught in other departments or in the community.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and information technology, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	544	388	84
		% retention	80	82	77
		% pass rate	51	59	82
City and Guilds 7261 IT	1	No. of starts	**	22	17
		% retention	**	82	65
		% pass rate	**	100	91
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	**	**	40
		% retention	**	**	78
		% pass rate	**	**	77
Access to computing and IT	3	No. of starts	36	31	16
		% retention	50	55	81
		% pass rate	89	71	69
GNVQ ICT advanced	3	No. of starts	14	17	10
		% retention	71	65	*
		% pass rate	80	91	90

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* unreliable data

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

85. Most teaching is good in vocational lessons. The teaching in 73% of lessons was good or better. The teachers are well qualified and experienced. In vocational lessons, they make effective use of information and learning technologies to carry out on-line learning and assessment. Teacher presentation packs are available on the college network to ensure that students have full sets of good learning materials. Teachers also use the college network to give out assignments and feedback from assessment. The planning of teaching is mostly adequate, although lesson plans and schemes of work lack detail or reference to key skills. In some lesson plans, insufficient attention is paid to the evaluation of learning materials or teaching methods. In several instances, teaching methods did not always meet the needs of students and, on occasions, teachers failed to provide challenging work for the more able students.

86. Most students are skilled in operating a variety of computer software and in using the college intranet. Most are confident in working independently and use the Internet, technical user manuals and textbooks to support their learning. Students demonstrate clear knowledge when responding to teacher questions about the use of IT in organisations, the handling and presenting of information, data protection and computer misuse.

87. The development of key skills is satisfactory for most students. Key skills are taught separately to ICT lessons. When teaching theoretical concepts of spreadsheets, databases or graphics, few teachers refer to the development of application of number key skills. There are missed opportunities to develop communications key skills from the range of written projects such as 'user manuals' required for the level 3 students.

88. Teachers mark work regularly and give feedback. The detail of the feedback given to students varies and sometimes, it is too brief to help the student develop higher standards of work. Internal verification practices are sound for vocational courses with a clear set of policies and procedures in place. There are regular assessor meetings for those teaching on the CLAIT courses across college to evaluate assessment practice. For key skills in IT, internal verification practices are consistent with those of other departments, but this sharing of good practice does not cover all delivery of key skills in IT. Internal verifiers are supported in their roles by management who allocate appropriate time for them to carry out their duties.

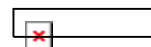
89. Students benefit from a range of up-to-date industrial hardware and software. There is a computer resource room, which is available to students for independent study, although with growing numbers on ICT courses, this resource is often over-subscribed. ICT students are allowed the same amount of memory space on the college intranet system as any other student. In some cases, students wish to store work such as graphics, which overloads the system and results in lost coursework. The layout of some rooms prevents teachers from arranging effective group work activities when explaining theoretical concepts. One classroom was too small for the number of students.

90. There are insufficient links with the ICT industry to develop staff knowledge and student awareness of current practice. Full-time students do not undertake relevant work experience to support their career aspirations. External verifier reports have indicated the need for staff to maintain their technical expertise and this has also been raised during programme review. Remedial action is still awaited.

Leadership and management

91. There have been many changes to the management of ICT during recent years. This has led to gaps in provision for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults. Since July 2000, several initiatives have been introduced to develop the range and quality of vocational courses. The profile of teaching grades has improved on these courses. The delivery of vocational, academic and some part-time entry and level 1 courses are divided between different departments of the college. There is insufficient sharing of good teaching practice, knowledge and expertise between the departments to improve the quality of learning for students.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- good retention rates
- high pass rates
- well-written lesson plans
- much very good teaching
- good tutorial support
- close links created between theory and practical work.

Weaknesses

- small group sizes on new adult courses inhibit learning
- some gaps in the effectiveness of work-based assessment.

Scope of provision

92. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in early years and a more limited range in health and care. Courses are available at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. The college also offers HE courses. Provision in college and in the community for adults to study part time is limited. Apart from first aid, there are few courses available for adults or employees in the public or private sector to study at the college. The GNVQ foundation course in health and social care and the first award in care are used as stepping-stones by students to advanced diplomas. Diploma courses in early years and health studies are well established and attract good

numbers of students aged 16 to 18. NVQs in early years are available on a full-time basis to students aged 16 and through part-time attendance for adults. NVQs in care are offered as a franchise with social services through the business development unit. Full-time access and pre-access to health courses are offered to adult students who attend on two days a week.

Achievement and standards

93. Retention and pass rates for all full-time courses are good and above the national average. GNVQ foundation students achieve well; with a 100% pass rate in 2000, and 95% in 2001. Many of these students progress to level 2 courses in care and early years, but many of those who are capable of doing so do not take additional qualifications. In 2001, retention and pass rates on the first award in care were good with a 100% pass rate, and a retention rate at 88%. The health studies diploma recruits well and has good retention and pass rates. For 2001, the retention rate is satisfactory at 94%, with a 100% pass rate. Many of these students go on to FE at the end of the course. There is satisfactory progression to HE and professional training for all students who achieve national diplomas with merits and distinctions. Attendance and punctuality are generally satisfactory across all courses.

94. NVQs in care and early years recruit very low numbers of adults and the retention rate is slightly below national averages. For most candidates the qualification is achieved within the recommended time of one or two years. The NVQ provision offered through the college business unit in care is franchised to the social services training department and has good retention and pass rates.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	16	14	26
		% retention	80	86	81
		% pass rate	83	100	95
BTEC first diploma in care	2	No. of starts	14	**	16
		% retention	79	**	88
		% pass rate	100	**	100
NVQ early years	2	No. of starts	21	22	27
		% retention	52	90	81
		% pass rate	100	80	95
NCFE classroom assistant	2	No. of starts	13	23	27
		% retention	100	91	89
		% pass rate	100	83	100
BTEC national diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	31	41	15
		% retention	93	87	93
		% pass rate	100	82	100
NVQ early years	3	No. of starts	**	11	27
		% retention	**	80	81
		% pass rate	**	100	95

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

** course did not run

95. Students' written work on the national diploma in early years is good and generally above awarding body requirements. Health studies students have a good understanding of health related issues. They work well together and demonstrate strong vocational commitment. However, they do not have opportunities to follow complementary academic qualifications, use science laboratories regularly and benefit from other college programme areas. They have very limited opportunities for work place experience. Students on level 1 and level 2 courses in care are supported effectively in their learning. They learn about co-operation and recommended working practice and make some relevant links to the care sector. However, some of them do not extend their knowledge and understanding as well as they could.

Quality of education and training

96. Some 88% of the lessons were good or better. Most teachers prepare an appropriate range of activities and provide students with good individual support. In less effective lessons, students spend too much time on tasks that are not sufficiently challenging. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well written. They all follow an agreed format and identify how basic skills will be included in the lesson. In early years, all the lessons were good. Teachers make effective use of work-related activities and link theory to practice. Terminology likely to be used in the industry is explained clearly to students and reference to spelling and punctuation feature strongly in all lessons. Teachers attempt to integrate basic education and support student learning in communication, literacy, IT and numeracy.

97. Assignments are written well by staff to cover course requirements. Most students' portfolio work is at an appropriate level. Teachers mark students' work within the set time limits and provide appropriate written feedback on how to improve further.

98. Full-time students on GNVQs in early years are provided with good support from college tutors, but there are too few supervisors in the workplace who are qualified to assess direct observations. Work-based experience for these students is varied and provides appropriate opportunities to relate theory to practice. The opportunities for work experience in health and care are limited. Health studies students spend much of their time in college because of insufficient appropriate work placements. Visits to laboratories in hospitals and visiting speakers do not compensate sufficiently well for relevant work placements. Work experience for early years diploma students provides good opportunities for them to use their theoretical knowledge in realistic work settings. Staff monitor these students in the work place carefully and make appropriate judgements about their progress.

99. Pre-course information is good. Students recognise the value of visiting college and taking part in a summer school before deciding upon which vocational course to follow. The induction period provides good information to students about their studies. The tutorial system is very effective. Teachers are skilled at identifying students who need additional basic skills support.

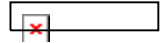
100. Teachers are well qualified and have relevant occupational experience. They have good opportunities to keep up to date. Even though teachers plan lessons carefully to include basic skills, not all of them have sufficient experience or qualifications to provide students with effective support. Much of the accommodation is good. Some classrooms are cramped resulting in disruption to teaching when students are asked to take part in group work. Students have many opportunities to use computers in their learning. When making presentations, some students are able to use PowerPoint. The library has a wide range of appropriate resources and students use it well. Examples of student work are displayed in classrooms and corridors.

Leadership and management

101. Promotion of leadership is encouraged at every level. Staff work well together. There is effective communication through regular staff meetings. Course review and evaluation ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is given regular attention. The manager sets targets for senior staff that are linked to the strategic plan. Meetings are held to discuss progress towards targets. Staff appraisal is particularly effective at identifying professional development needs. At course level, staff communicate well with each other and demonstrate commitment to providing good

education and training. The self-assessment report covers many of the strengths and weaknesses, but some shortcomings were not included, such as, gaps in the effectiveness of workplace assessment and small group sizes on new adult courses.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- much good teaching
- good GCE A-level and access results
- very good support for students
- effective management of self-assessment and action planning
- very good monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- low recruitment to part-time courses
- poor GCSE results in 2001
- some poor schemes of work.

Scope of provision

102. The provision covers GCE AS and A-level courses in geography, history, law, psychology, sociology and general studies. Currently 158 students follow these courses. There are 35 students working towards GCSEs and a further 30 students are working towards the access certificate in

humanities.

103. The wide range of courses caters for students of all abilities. Courses are well advertised. However, recruitment to part-time GCE A-level and GCSE courses is low. In addition, many full-time courses have low numbers. The college manages to retain this provision by assigning students from other groups into classes and by reducing the number of taught hours for GCE AS and A-level courses. All full-time students undertake key skills units in addition to their main courses of study.

Achievement and standards

104. GCE A-level results in 2000 for all subjects and age-groups were extremely good. Pass rates well exceeded national averages for similar colleges and in most subjects surpassed the national averages for high grades. In all six subjects, positive value added scores were recorded. These achievements were also a significant improvement on 1999 results.

105. In 2001, aggregated attainments for all six subjects dropped by 7%, but were still slightly above national averages. The percentage of high grades rose to 42%. The results in individual subjects were variable. On the two-year GCE A-level courses, pass rates were 100% in history and psychology, but only 43% in law. Access results have been consistently very good. Results in the first year of GCE AS courses were encouraging, with the pass rate for all subjects averaging 82%, 48% of which were at grades A to C. Pass rates at GCSE level were poor, with only 6 of the 31 candidates gaining A* to C grades.

106. Overall student retention rates on GCE A-level courses improved in 2001, to 75%, but the retention rate of adult students was markedly weaker than for students aged 16 to 18. The retention rate on GCE AS courses is good, at 89%.

107. Much of the written work observed by inspectors was of an appropriate standard and related closely to the criteria specified by the examination boards. Project assignments in history and psychology are especially good. Classroom discussions, particularly on first-year courses, revealed the poor oral language skills of many students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE psychology, law, sociology and history	2	No. of starts	39	30	31
		% retention	67	63	61
		% pass rate	42	58	31
GCE A-level history, geography, law, psychology, sociology, general studies, access 16 to 18	3	No. of starts	59	50	57
		% retention	80	68	89
		% pass rate	64	82	80
GCE A-level, history, geography, law, psychology, sociology, general studies, access 19+	3	No. of starts	64	55	48
		% retention	59	62	67
		% pass rate	34	74	72
Access certificate in humanities	3	No. of starts	12	55	32
		% retention	0	76	72
		% pass rate	8	100	96

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

108. There is much good teaching: 64% of lessons were good or better. Lessons are generally well prepared and use a good variety of suitable teaching methods and materials. Most handouts are carefully compiled by teachers rather than simply copied from other sources.

109. Teachers are knowledgeable and have a caring concern for their students. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Teachers know their students well and provide plenty of individual support with basic language skills, as well as through their subject. Teachers are encouraging and supportive, yet maintain discipline well. Lessons are purposeful, with clear objectives and little time is wasted.

110. In all classes, the required standards of the subject were attained. All students working towards level 3 qualifications were being taught how to make and present informed critical judgements based on detailed analysis of evidence. In psychology, some simple experiments on memory were conducted which enabled the teacher both to point up certain features, recall and to advance the students' understanding of objective methodology. In a GCE AS geography class on segregation and decline in urban populations, effective use was made of a local population survey recently completed by the students. In a GCE A-level history class, fine discriminations were achieved in a debate on whether the 1906 to 1914 Liberal social reforms represented a radical attitude to poverty presaging the welfare state.

111. In most classes, students participate fully enabling teachers to assess their understanding regularly. Students take their studies seriously and are attentive and willing to learn. Few lessons failed to keep the attention of each student. Group work tasks were designed to address different abilities. Independent learning is encouraged through use of directed private study. Students obtain course textbooks from the library for use at home.

112. Two lessons were poorly planned. The quality of schemes of work varies and many are not sufficiently detailed. In some subjects, teachers use a common format incorporating lesson content, homework, directed time activities and record of completed work. In other subjects, schemes of work are limited to lists of topics or are simply copies of the course syllabus.

113. Written work is generally marked promptly and constructive feedback is given to students. Three members of staff are public examiners. Access course and GCE A-level history scripts are marked and students are given detailed written feedback that includes an evaluation of their performance against a skills profile. The comments of external verifiers are highly complimentary. All scripts are marked to a percentage grade, thus facilitating the assessment of students' progress across all subjects. However, the quality of marking varies, the poorest is cursory.

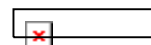
114. Resources are good. Rooms are bright, clean, well furnished and well equipped for teaching. Subject displays are generally relevant and attractive. The sixth form centre resources room is equipped with 24 computers and is constantly in use. The quantity and range of up-to-date books and journals available for each subject in the central learning support centre are extensive. The centralisation of the ordering, issuing and return of textbooks saves much teacher time.

Leadership and management

115. Leadership and management are strong. There is good communication and teamwork among staff. In addition to regular meetings, a fortnightly newsletter informs staff. The process of self-assessment is well established. Within the team some areas of work, such as schemes of work and marking, would benefit from the sharing of good practice. Lesson observations are conducted annually for all staff. The college produces a detailed annual report including examples of good and poor practice. However, observations are not carried out by teachers from the same subject area, and the opportunity to learn from each other is not fully exploited.

116. Management in this area of learning is good. The assistant principal and the director of sixth form centre direct the implementation of quality assurance procedures. The annual self-review involves all staff and directly informs the operational plan. Both are rigorous and critically well focused. There are developed databases to aid analysis and value added data is held on every student since 1994. Three value added systems (Greenhead, The Audit Commission, and Hartlepool College's own system) are used to inform evaluation of each course and to set targets for students. Many GCE AS and A-level students have low GCSE points scores (32 to 36 points), and, according to the Audit Commissions recommendations, are 'at risk' candidates. Despite this, many of these students achieve well academically.

Foundation



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

Strengths

- excellent use of ICT to aid learning
- effective curriculum planning and recording
- much very good teaching
- good students' progress.

Weaknesses

- narrow range of learning resources used for basic skills support
- lack of specialist basic skills teaching.

Scope of provision

117. Foundation programmes include provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and provision for students who want to improve their basic skills. There are currently 16 full-time students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, divided into two groups. They are working towards a pre-vocational qualification at entry level. Seventy students are undertaking part-time basic skills programmes. Some of these students attend college for two or four hours each week. The college has developed basic skills on-line learning facilities to reach students who prefer

to learn in the community. Links have been established with four external venues. Some of these students are working towards City and Guilds wordpower and numberpower awards. In addition, basic skills support is provided within each department for those students who need it. Each department has a learning support co-ordinator who attends monthly meetings.

Achievement and standards

118. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and are successful in achieving their goals. The curriculum is effective in developing students' personal skills and independence. The proportion of students who progress onto mainstream college courses, 70% in 2001, is high. Many of these students undertake GNVQ programmes in either health and social care or IT. Work placements are used to provide valuable experience and enable students to make informed choices about their future. Some work placements are with local employers and others are within the college. The development of students' personal and social skills is good. Students' portfolios are well organised and contain a good range of individualised work.

119. Students attending part-time basic skills lessons are also progressing well. The work in their portfolios shows clear skill development and their improved levels of confidence are evident. Students are developing oral communication skills and the ability to learn independently. Assessment tasks set by teachers are highly relevant and make good use of a wide range of activities including photographic evidence, witness testimonies and observation.

120. Retention and pass rates are at, or above, national averages. One exception is the achievement test in numeracy where both retention and pass rates were below national averages in 2000. Pass rates are not available for 2001, but the retention rate is poor at 50%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in foundation, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 393 wordpower	entry	No. of starts	28	**	11
		% retention	82	**	91
		% pass rate	74	**	100
Achievement tests - literacy	entry	No. of starts	17	12	**
		% retention	94	92	**
		% pass rate	44	82	**
Achievements tests - numeracy	entry	No. of starts	**	10	10
		% retention	**	90	50
		% pass rate	**	56	*
FE award	entry	No. of starts	88	170	39
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	88	15	37
ONC 2 (j) 1 year	entry	No. of starts	30	13	57
		% retention	93	100	88
		% pass rate	32	92	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* data not available

** course did not run.

Quality of education and training

121. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and part-time basic skills courses are managed within the health and care department. Teaching on these courses is very good. The teaching in over 90% of lessons was good or better. Staff are experienced and hold specialist teaching qualifications. There is also one member of staff who is qualified to carry out diagnostic tests for dyslexia.

122. Lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are lively, stimulating and purposeful. One lesson, on first aid, was particularly effective, involving students in role-play and teamwork. Students thoroughly enjoyed the session and learned some valuable first aid skills. In another session, the task set for students was too challenging. The level of vocabulary used on a handout was too high.

123. Teaching sessions for basic skills include effective use of a variety of learning strategies including cloze procedure, use of key words and social sight vocabulary. Learners are helped to develop their spelling skills through a range of methods including use of homophones, suffixes and prefixes, phonic approaches and word families. Most sessions involve learners carrying out individual work and staff monitor the progress of students closely.

124. The college's innovative basic skills on-line project is working well. There is a dedicated room within the college containing eight computers. There are currently links with four locations including a school, a care home and a centre run by the probation service. Teaching and learning are carried out through video conferencing, e-mail, file transfer and whiteboarding. Each student has intensive one-to-one support for up to an hour each week. Students are provided with study tasks which they have to complete independently after a computer link up. The college has developed a series of six basic skills learning packages, each based upon a vocational area. These are well presented, user-friendly and clearly illustrated. In addition to the basic skills on-line project, ICT is effectively used throughout the curriculum as a learning aid.

125. In September 2001, the college adopted a new approach to basic skills support. The new policy is to integrate basic skills development into mainstream lessons. In some areas, such as the health and care department, the integrated approach is working well. Basic skills objectives are included in lesson plans. In other areas of the college, the new approach is less well established. In these instances, basic skills objectives are included in the lesson plan, but no related teaching takes place. In addition to integrated basic skills support, extra help is provided within each department. In the care department, separate study skills lessons are offered on certain topics, such as punctuation and spelling. These lessons are well attended and valued by students. In other departments, individual and small-group basic skills sessions are provided.

126. Teachers have not yet undertaken staff development to enable them to integrate basic skills effectively. The college recognises this development need and has plans to provide appropriate staff training. Similarly, some staff who are providing individual or small-group basic skills support within the departments do not hold basic skills teaching qualifications, nor have they undertaken appropriate training. Some basic skills support lessons rely too heavily on the use of handouts and worksheets. Basic skills support staff do not use a central resource base, but rely instead on resources readily available in the department. In most instances, these do not include specialist material for basic skills learning. The range of resources used is too narrow.

Leadership and management

127. Leadership and management of the part-time basic skills provision and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or difficulties are good. A small team of full-time staff delivers these courses, providing continuity and stability. Staff meetings are held regularly and there is continuing informal communication. The management style is open, consultative and supportive. Responsibility for basic skills learning support lies with each of the departmental heads. This work is managed less well. A college basic skills policy is in operation and each department has its own procedures and arrangements for implementing the policy. Basic skills learning support is insufficiently monitored,

with few teacher observations in some departments. Good practice is not shared among basic skills learning support staff.

Part D: College data

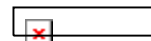
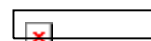


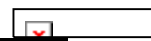
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	20.58	16.71
2	45.44	22.58
3	28.83	17.22
4/5	0.28	5.45
Other	4.87	38.04
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	1,460	1,630	21.84
Agriculture	1	9	0.07
Construction	338	346	4.83
Engineering	639	1,484	15.01
Business	309	1,358	11.78
Hotel and catering	160	55	1.52
Health and community care	805	1,945	19.44
Art and design	70	38	0.76
Humanities	2,272	973	22.94
Basic education	26	230	1.81
Total	6,080	8,068	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000
		1	Starters excluding transfers	636	713	693	642
	Retention rate (%)	79	81	83	77	78	83
	National average (%)	81	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	75	60	62	74	64	69
	National average (%)	59	62	66	62	63	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,378	1,441	1,552	786	813	1,041
	Retention rate (%)	74	77	79	78	82	80
	National average (%)	76	76	77	79	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	61	72	74	77	74	76
	National average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
3	Starters excluding transfers	895	803	831	669	881	905
	Retention rate (%)	77	74	72	75	79	82
	National average (%)	77	77	77	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	83	68	65	91	58	71
	National average (%)	71	72	73	64	65	69
H	Starters excluding transfers	11	8	2	96	88	86
	Retention rate (%)	91	100	*	86	78	84
	National average (%)	83	84	80	84	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	75	67	*	88	94	70
	National average (%)	64	65	70	58	61	60

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 (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

2. College rates for 1997/8 - 1998/9: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

3. College rates for (199/00): provided by the college in spring 2001.

* too few starts to provide a valid rate

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)	69	25	6	65
Level 2 (intermediate)	67	31	2	42
Level 1 (foundation)	80	13	7	15
Other sessions	78	22	0	9
Totals	70	25	5	131

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