



City of Bristol College

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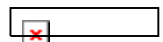
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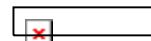
Basic information about the college



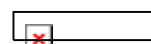
Name of college:	City of Bristol College
Type of college:	Further Education College
Principal:	Brian Styles
Address of college:	City of Bristol College College Green Centre St George's Road Bristol
	BS1 5UA
Telephone number:	0117 904 5000
Fax number:	0117 904 5050
Chair of governors:	Neil Middleton

Unique reference number: 131094
Name of reporting inspector: Michael Davis (ALI)
Date(s) of inspection: 3-7 December 2001

Part A: Summary

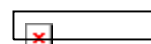


Information about the college



City of Bristol College is a large further education (FE) college. The college has five main sites across Bristol. The College Green campus, the newest of these sites, is situated in the heart of the city. The college will merge with Soundwell College in January 2002. In 2000/01, using college data that have yet to be audited, the number of student enrolments was 33,809, and 14% were full time. Some 86% of the enrolling students were aged 19 or over, and 45% of full-time students were aged 16 to 18. About 17% of students were drawn from minority ethnic backgrounds. Work-related training is provided for 336 students. There are 731 New Deal clients. The college recruits from most maintained secondary schools in the Bristol area. In 2000, 31% of Bristol school-leavers achieved five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A* to C compared with a national average of 49.2%. The unemployment rate in Bristol was 2.4% in September 2001, compared with the national average of 2.9%. In its mission, one of the college's aims is to 'work collaboratively with a range of partners to stimulate and meet the demand for lifelong education and training from the people of Bristol and the surrounding area'.

How effective is the college?



The college is mostly effective. Inspectors judged that teaching and students' achievements were outstanding in one curriculum area, good in eight other areas and satisfactory in the remaining three. The work-based learning provision in construction and hairdressing was satisfactory. None of the college's provision was considered unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- strong strategic leadership
- significant contribution to raising standards of education and training across the city
- outstanding work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and basic skills students

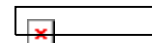
- very effective approach to planning and learning
- outstanding support for learners
- good management of the curriculum
- good teaching
- good pass rates
- highly effective community and industry links
- some very good resources.

What should be improved

- unsuitable accommodation at the Brunel site
- ineffective monitoring of students' records of attendance and punctuality
- underdeveloped monitoring of target setting for students
- unreliable achievement data in a minority of curriculum areas
- inadequate management of work-based 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

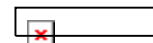


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Good. Most pass rates are good. Most teaching is good and resources are used effectively. A high proportion of students progress to related courses at a higher level. Individual target setting and the development of key skills are weak.
Construction	Good. Most retention and pass rates are good. Teaching and learning are good, as are the materials used. Theory and practical lessons are well integrated. The management of work-based training is unsatisfactory.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Most retention and pass rates are good. Specialist resources are good and used effectively by students. The teaching in theory lessons is often uninspiring and insufficiently motivates and challenges students. Students' reviews are ineffective and measurable targets are not set.
Business	Good. The pass rates are good. Teaching, learning and accommodation are good. There is a wide range of appropriate courses. Specialist learning resources are good. Communications are effective and staff are well supported by managers.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Good. Most retention and pass rates are generally at or above national averages. Teaching is well planned and very effective. The range of courses is comprehensive and provides good routes for progression. The standard of provision on all sites is consistently good.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. The retention and pass rates are in line with the national average. Most teaching is satisfactory. The progress of some students is slow. The standard of practical work in hospitality and catering is good. Support for students is good. Some accommodation and equipment are unsatisfactory.
Hair and beauty therapy	Good. Most pass rates are good. Effective measures have been introduced to improve mostly satisfactory retention rates. Teaching and students' work are good. The working environment on the four sites is good. Course management is effective. Some aspects of work-based training are poorly managed.
Health and social care	Good. Most teaching is good. The retention and pass rates are satisfactory or better and have continued to improve over the two years to 2001. A high number of relevant additional qualifications are available and equal opportunities are promoted strongly. Few teachers give attention to the development of key skills in their

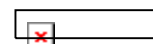
	courses.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Most pass rates and most teaching are good. The standard of students' work is good. Staff work together effectively and share a common vision. Course documentation is outstanding. Student assessment and feedback are good. There are some poor records of attendance and punctuality. Students have inadequate display and storage facilities for their work.
Humanities	Satisfactory. Access courses are very good. Most retention and pass rates are satisfactory, but some General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) and GCSE courses are unsatisfactory. The pass rates for GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) courses are good. Students receive good support from their teachers. Insufficient homework is set. The monitoring of attendance is often ineffective.
English, languages and communications	Good. Good teaching and very effective support for students produce good and sometimes outstanding pass rates in national examinations. Pass rates in English as a foreign language (EFL) fell significantly in 2001. Retention rates are often in line with, or above, national averages. Attendance on some courses is erratic.
Foundation studies	Outstanding. Students' achievement is excellent and enables them to make good progress. The standard of teaching and learning is very good. The provision is flexible and effective. There is excellent collaboration with external partners. Students receive outstanding support which helps them to progress to a broader curriculum.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The principal, senior managers and governors provide strong strategic leadership. They have led the college through a series of mergers, improved the quality of teaching and learning, provided for a wide and diverse range of learners, opened a large new site near the city centre and maintained the financial viability of the college. Retention and pass rates are at, or above, national averages, although there are some poor rates in work-based learning programmes. The curriculum is managed effectively, but overall the management of work-based learning is poor. The management information systems generally provide good financial and student enrolment and tracking data for staff and governors, but some of the data on students' retention and pass rates were inaccurate. Staff appraisal and development are closely linked to fulfilling the aims and objectives of the strategic plan. The number of staff development activities has increased significantly over the three years 1999/2000, and the number of hours of supported training has more than doubled. Throughout the college there is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and to helping all learners to fulfil their potential.

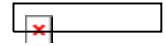
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college successfully promotes social inclusion and equality of opportunity. There is a wide range of courses covering many different levels of study. The college is responsive to local needs. In addition to the main sites, education and training are provided at many other locations across the city. The college has actively sought to recruit a significant number of students from disadvantaged

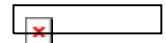
effective. Most stay to complete their courses and are successful. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of a particularly high standard. Many of these students go on to join and prosper on mainstream courses. Staff are friendly and the college community is welcoming. There are good examples of the promotion of equal opportunities and multi-cultural perspectives in the teaching of courses.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Pre-entry guidance and support are good and impartial. All students benefit from effective induction programmes. A good central admissions service deals speedily and efficiently with applications and enrolment. Students are well supported by their tutors, but often attendance is not monitored effectively and absences are not followed up. The monitoring of students' achievement targets is not always effective. The college provides a wide range of specialist support for individuals with particular learning difficulties or physical disabilities. Appropriate careers education and guidance are available through the tutorial programme and advice sessions. Students also have good access to specialist careers advice. The college provides sound welfare services including confidential counselling, and help with childcare, transport and accommodation.

Students' views of the college



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

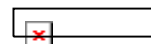
What students like about the college

- friendly and approachable staff
- good mix of students
- good teaching
- good support from tutors
- wide range of courses
- good accommodation at the College Green site.

What they feel could be improved

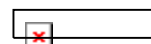
- noise and disruption at the College Green resource centre
- inadequate social areas at College Green and Brunel sites
- poor teaching accommodation at the Brunel site
- inadequate access to computers
- start times of some lessons in the context of transport problems.

Other information

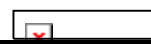


The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



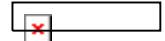
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	70	21	9
19+ and WBL*	75	20	5
Learning 16-18	68	24	8

19+ and WBL	76	20	4
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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

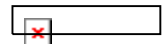
Achievement and standards



1. City of Bristol College offers a wide range of courses that can be studied both part and full time. All 14 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) programme areas are covered. The number of students studying on land-based, customer service and retailing courses is small. The work-based provision is offered primarily in the areas of construction and hairdressing. The inspection covered 12 areas of learning. In 2000/01, the college enrolled 33,809 learners, of whom, 86% were adults. The majority of the 2,012 students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on full-time programmes. Most adult learners attend part time or take short courses. However, a high number, some 2,500 adults, enrolled as full-time students. The courses are offered at a range of college and community venues across the city. Currently, there are 336 modern apprentices, 257 at advanced level and 79 at foundation level.

2. Overall, college achievements are good. All key indicators show that the college is performing at, or above, the FE national averages. There are, however, some variations between curriculum areas. The retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 on foundation and intermediate level courses improved in 2001, and are above the national averages. The retention rate for advanced level courses dropped by 4% in the second year. However, the rate still remains above the national average. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 are at, or above, the national average. The pass rates for foundation and intermediate level courses have fallen slightly, whilst the advanced level pass rates have risen to 7% above averages. The retention rates for adults studying at all levels of provision are satisfactory or better. At intermediate and advanced levels they are above national averages. Pass rates for adults are generally good and above the averages. For adults, the only area with a worsening success rate, between 1999 and 2001, is at foundation level. However, this rate is still at the national average. Short courses have very high retention rates, at 95%, and good pass rates of 91%.

16-18 year olds

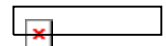


3. In 2000/01, the numbers of students enrolled on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 were similar. Most students studied vocational courses. Full-time students can study for GCE AS/A levels, GCSEs, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) or national diplomas. Some 11% of students study for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Over 50% of enrolments are on additional short and long courses, for example, from computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), key skills, computer servicing, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and first aid. Pass rates on advanced level courses are good. The number of students taking GCE AS/A-level examinations in 2001 has significantly increased. The retention rate, at 79%, is just above the national average. However, the pass rate is significantly higher. Whilst the retention rates on advanced GNVQ courses have declined slightly, pass rates, at 88%, are 14% above the national average. Many of the students aged 16 to 18 who take advanced level qualifications join their courses with low GCSE

analysis indicates that most students who complete their courses achieve above expectations, particularly in GCE A-level business studies and law. The average point score for each student completing GCE AS/A-level courses after two years of study rose from 10 points in 2000 to 13.7 points in 2001. In addition, the number of high grades achieved on GCE A-level courses improved during the same period from 35% to 48%. On national diploma courses in, for example, construction, engineering and media, there was an overall decline in retention rates, but overall pass rates, at 94%, remained high. NVQ level 3 pass rates are good. Students on intermediate courses, for example, GCSE, GNVQ, and first diploma courses, achieved above the national averages. NVQ pass rates are particularly good; 76% of those who start their course achieve their qualification aim. Approximately 350 students are enrolled on foundation GNVQ and NVQ full-time courses. Both sets of courses are successful, achieving, on average, retention and pass rates at least 10% above national averages. Other courses at this level, for example, the 'Towards Independence' course for students with learning difficulties, are mostly successful and provide good starting points for progression to higher levels of study.

4. The achievement of modern apprentices on work-based learning programmes is poor. Over the last three years, the best retention rate for the foundation learners was 43% and, for advanced learners, 39%. However, this profile of results could improve considerably if all learners who are still on the programme complete successfully. Some occupational areas have satisfactory NVQ pass rates. For example, business administration programmes regularly achieve a 50% rate or higher. Retention rates are generally poor. At the time of the inspection, 39% of advanced construction learners who started in 2000/01 had left.

Adult learners



5. In 2000/01, most adults enrolled on level 1 and 2 courses. At foundation level, the overall pass rates are well above the national averages. For example, in NVQ hairdressing and construction, over 80% of learners who started their course were successful. Other level 1 courses have average retention rates at 88% and pass rates at 83%. These rates are significantly above the national averages. At the intermediate level, GCSE pass rates are good. Retention and pass rates for level 2 NVQs in construction, hospitality, accounting, and hairdressing are consistently above 80%. At advanced level, pass rates on GCE A levels, GNVQs, national certificates and diplomas, and NVQs are all above national averages. The 2001 access programme, which has over 300 students, maintained a good pass rate of 93%, but the retention rate was, for the first time, below the national average.

6. The inspection identified some features of students' general skills as they related to the level of study. Most students at all levels gain good IT skills in their programmes of study and use these effectively to further their studies. There is good development of basic skills which helps students to complete their courses. Students with a learning difficulty and/or disability make good progress. In vocational subjects, students' practical skills are effectively developed. Oral presentation skills vary considerably between groups. The general standard of written work is good, but not consistently so across all curriculum areas. Many students aged 16 to 18 start their courses with poor attitudes to study, which affects the standard of their work, particularly in the early stages of a course. As students' confidence grows, the quality of work improves. The general improvements in GCE AS/A-level results are a good example of rising standards. The progress of most adult students is at least satisfactory. The college has made a considerable contribution to raising standards across the city. The standard of students' specialist work is commented on in detail in Part C of this report.

Quality of education and training



7. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 331 sessions. Teaching and learning were usually effective and high standards were often reached. The general standard has improved significantly since the last inspection which was undertaken by the Further Education Funding Council. Almost three-quarters of lessons were graded good or better, and 36% of lessons were excellent or very good. Several factors contributed to this good teaching. For example, teachers had a good knowledge of their subject and were very adept at dealing with the wide range of students' abilities. As a result, most students enjoyed their courses and worked productively. In many lessons, teachers used skilful questioning to check that students were learning and to challenge their knowledge and understanding. Teachers often used discussion techniques to improve the effectiveness of lessons. Students' own experiences, for example, of their workplace, were often used to enhance the learning of the whole group. Teachers linked theory to practical work effectively. These links were clearly shown in many schemes of work and lesson plans.

8. The quality of teaching is consistently good across all of the college's many sites, its courses and subjects. The standards of teaching and learning are particularly high in ICT and foundation studies. All the teaching in these areas was at least satisfactory. In foundation studies, 89% of lessons were good or better and 53% were excellent or very good. In ICT, all lessons were good or better and 84% were excellent or very good. All the off-the-job training for modern apprentices was graded as either excellent or very good. In some areas, such as engineering, humanities, hospitality and leisure, care and hairdressing, there was some evidence of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. However, very little of the teaching was judged to be poor and none was judged to be very poor. The majority of unsatisfactory lessons were simply dull and uninspiring, and students were bored and lost interest. In some lessons, students arrived late and the rest of the group's learning was disrupted.

9. Many teachers help students improve their learning skills through sensitive and skilful classroom teaching. Additional support for individual students is provided effectively both by teachers themselves and through a wide range of specialist support services. Around 1,800 students with a range of learning needs that includes weak language and learning skills, hearing and visual impairment, and physical disability, receive this support. The service is well staffed and resourced. Students can benefit from a wide range of resources that include: communication aids such as computers; Braille texts and signing for the deaf; personal support workers for blind, disabled or vulnerable students; and tuition for basic skills. The liaison between support workers and subject teachers is usually effective. For example, prior to a lesson starting, a personal support worker, using a lecturer's notes, gave an introductory briefing to a blind student on an access course. The student was able to participate fully in the subsequent debate. The support worker attends every lesson with the student. An imaginative approach for the provision of on-course support has helped to boost the numbers of learners aged 16 to 18 who receive support. The help given, both during lessons and to students individually, is of a high standard and contributes to students' good progress on many courses. There is sound evidence that on aeronautics courses, for example, additional support has improved pass rates. However, in general, the college does not monitor or evaluate the impact of the support thoroughly. There is no clear evidence that identified learning needs are met in mainstream lessons. Younger students generally find it harder than adults to develop good learning habits, which is reflected in the somewhat lower progress grades awarded to lessons for younger students compared with those for adults.

10. The college has some very good accommodation, particularly on the College Green site which opened in October 2000. To help with the design, the college managers involved architects, students and people with physical disabilities. All sites have been adapted to meet the needs of students with mobility difficulties and access is generally good. Classrooms are pleasant and well furnished. Teachers use good learning and assessment material. In many areas, there is industry standard equipment, for example, in visual and performing arts and in the well-equipped science laboratories. Space is not always put to best use. For example, screens used to achieve smaller work areas in large workshops used up valuable space. In visual and performing arts, there is insufficient space to store or display students' work. The Brunel site has some poor accommodation. This particularly affects students in construction, hospitality, sports and leisure, and hair and beauty. There are drab and poorly-equipped classrooms which are in need of

decorative refurbishment. However, on the same site, the engineering skills development centre is very good. Each site has a resource centre. Students use the centres for working on their assignments and using IT. Some of the resource centres, in particular at College Green, are very busy and noisy, particularly at lunch times. In Brunel, many of the resources are dated. However, the computer workshops are very well resourced, both in terms of equipment and specialist technical support. Most learners have good access to IT, especially on courses in foundation studies, ICT, English and communications, and hair and beauty. Students trying to access the Internet often find it a slow process. In science and mathematics and humanities courses, there is insufficient use of IT in lessons. Students on courses in engineering, foreign languages, foundation and hospitality, and sports and leisure at the Brunel centre have poor access to computers. On courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is insufficient specialist equipment. The language laboratory at Brunel is old fashioned and unreliable. Although there are good teaching resources at the College Green centre, some staff experience difficulties in booking and gaining access to these resources. Some part-time students, in particular women, find that there is insufficient parking at the College Green centre.

11. Staff development is well planned, regular, extensive and linked to the appraisal system. Staff are well qualified, competent and experienced in their subject. Most teachers either hold or are working towards a teaching qualification. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, only a small number of staff are qualified as teachers. Industrial updating is not so well planned, especially in construction and business administration. In some areas, like foundation studies, there is good deployment of additional support staff. However, in other areas, like construction, foreign languages and visual and performing arts, technician support is either insufficient or ineffective.

12. Assessment is fair and rigorous in most curriculum areas. Work is thoroughly assessed and marked, and constructive feedback is given. Most students receive sufficient work to complete outside lessons. However, on humanities courses, students are not set enough homework to enable them to develop their written skills. On courses in hospitality, sport and leisure, assessed work is set too late in the year for students to benefit from it. In some areas, key skills are identified on assignment briefs, but are not being assessed when the work is marked. The progress of most students is well monitored and recorded. For most full-time students, reviews take place every half term. Many part-time students also benefit from regular reviews, although practice is not as consistently good as for full-time students. In work-based training, progress reviews are less well developed, particularly on courses in construction and administration. There is often too long a gap between reviews and, when they do take place, the employer is often not present.

13. The setting and monitoring of appropriately demanding targets for students is underdeveloped in many curriculum areas. A few curriculum areas, such as hair and beauty, foundation and humanities, use targets effectively. On courses in hair and beauty, students negotiate realistic targets with their teachers and progress is monitored against them. In science and mathematics, insufficient use is made of value added data to set individual targets, although the data are available. Targets are not effectively used to motivate students and are rarely shared with them. Parents of younger students are well informed about their progress through parents' evenings and regular reports. A useful booklet has been devised to help parents and carers to understand the assessment process. Some employers, for example in construction, are not well informed about the progress of their employees at the college. The college has a clear and comprehensive assessment and internal verification policy and appropriate supporting procedures. Roles and responsibilities are well understood by staff and students. Most aspects of the internal verification process work well. There is a senior verifier for each faculty. Senior verifiers meet regularly as a group to ensure consistency of practice across faculties and sites. Most feedback from external verifiers is good. All assignment briefs are internally verified against a comprehensive checklist that includes aspects involving equality of opportunity. Work on the development of key skills has generally been introduced effectively throughout the curriculum. However, in science and mathematics and health and social care, there has been weak development and assessment of key skills.

14. The college has an extensive and diverse curriculum that seeks to meet the needs of the people of Bristol. Programmes are carefully designed to seek to ensure that there are very good progression opportunities for full-time and part-time students. In many subjects, the offer ranges from entry level to level 4. The curriculum is well planned and has been carefully developed. At the

main centres, since the implementation of Curriculum 2000, the number of full-time students at the College Green centre has increased dramatically. For example, social science subjects are becoming very popular with vocational students who wish to gain an additional GCE AS qualification. There is good 'Return to Study' and 'Access' provision. However, in some areas, for example leisure, travel and tourism and visual and performing arts, the college does not offer an appropriate level 1 qualification. Intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism students have no opportunity to progress onto a relevant leisure, travel or tourism course at level 3. In engineering, there are poorly-defined progression opportunities between the three faculties offering courses. Whilst most courses offer work experience or simulation activities, for some programmes the planned activities are not sufficient. Most enrichment activities are generally very good.

15. College programmes are socially inclusive. Three of the college's five centres, Hartcliffe, Bedminster and Lawrence Weston, are designated as neighbourhood centres. Their primary purpose is to encourage members of local community and minority groups to get involved with learning. Extensive partnerships operate well, in particular with local companies, training providers and community organisations. Managers from the college regularly take part in local meetings on learning partnerships. Staff from the college work collaboratively with local companies and often run training on their premises. In return, local company employees use the college's courses and resources to update their own skills and qualifications. Most links with support organisations are very effective. The college has been very successful in developing initiatives for community-based learning, for example, the Next Steps project in Easton to encourage Somali refugees in the Easton area of Bristol to join appropriate centres. In another project, the college provides mobile computer terminals that are set up in local amenities which include shopping centres, community centres and libraries. New sites, such as the Greenway Centre, have been developed in conjunction with the Southmead Development Trust. Another good initiative is the Whole Baked Café. The project has persuaded back into learning students from groups under-represented in the college, including those with physical and learning disabilities.

16. The college has developed effective partnerships with a number of schools. Pupils who are excluded from school and are under the age of 16 are encouraged to join the college. The programme extends from half a day a week to full time across a range of college courses. The retention rates for these learners are very good and many progress to become full-time students at the college. As a result of good collaboration with a local secondary school, college and school students are able to take GCE AS subjects not available at their own institutions.

17. Student support is well managed and co-ordinated. There is effective communication between support teams and good teamwork. Senior managers give effective leadership, and their vision is shared and understood by staff. The quality of pre-entry guidance and support is good. A variety of well-designed student guides provide prospective students with appropriate and helpful information. A useful handbook introduces families to key aspects of college life. College staff make regular visits to schools' careers events. School students visit the college for an introduction to college life and to sample vocational work. Students and parents spoke highly of the advice that they received at the college's well-organised open days. Information on the college website is clear and easy to use. All students have access to good information and impartial advice. There is an effective central admissions service, co-ordinated by student services, which deals speedily and efficiently with student enrolment. Students have an opportunity to offer feedback about the service through questionnaires circulated at the start of their course and at the end. However, this information is not systematically collated. The procedures for referring students who need advice about courses, or have welfare or support needs, are effective. There are clear guidelines for faculty staff on how to conduct interviews and complete documentation. For those students who are unsure of their choice, there are suitable arrangements to enable them to make changes of course during the initial weeks of term. Procedures operate successfully to ensure that all full-time students have access to the same quality of induction, regardless of course or centre. The programme includes a range of cross-college events and an introduction to support services. The induction of overseas students is good and includes, appropriately, a guide to the city and to social events to help these students to settle in. Full-time and substantial part-time students take a screening test in literacy and numeracy. Students identified as likely to need help are then invited to attend learning support. However, most part-time students do not take the test and, in a small number of cases where tutors do not refer them to learning support, they do not receive the help they need.

18. Full-time and substantial part-time students are assigned a personal tutor. Many tutors are generous in the time they allocate to help students who are experiencing difficulties. Adult students spoke highly of the personal support which they had received from their tutors. Parents are appreciative of the good contact they have with tutors and the quality of information which they receive. Weekly tutorials for groups of students and individuals provide opportunities for tutors to monitor and assess students' progress and give careers advice and guidance. Most of the tutorials observed were good. However, there were inconsistencies both in the way that attendance was monitored and absence followed up, and in the monitoring of the achievement of targets. Appropriate support and guidance are offered to students on GCE AS courses at the end of their first year of study. Parents and carers are kept informed of the options. Tutors are available at the time the GCE AS results are published and conduct interviews with every potential GCE A-level student. Students' choices are carefully monitored, but not sufficiently accurately recorded.

19. The college provides a good range of welfare services. These include confidential counselling, help with childcare, the purchase of equipment, and help with transport and accommodation problems. Around 100 students benefit from funded childcare placements at one of the colleges' four nurseries or in privately arranged placements. The number of students applying to the college's 'Learner Support Fund' is high and growing, and has led to some delay in distributing funds in 2001. This funding has enabled a significant number of students to overcome difficulties in attending college. An appropriate range of careers education and guidance is offered through tutorial programmes and advice sessions. Students also have access to specialist careers advice through advisers within the partnerships. A personal adviser from the Connexions service is based at the College Green centre. Each of the college's resource centres includes a good range of up-to-date careers resources. Many faculties also organise programmes of visiting speakers to give advice on specific career routes. Some adult students are dissatisfied with the range of provision for careers and educational guidance. Although adult students can use the college's good computer software on career choices, they have to visit the local Connexions service for careers guidance interviews. Students are generally well supported when making applications to higher education (HE) institutions. Parents and students are invited to an open evening for HE. Most tutors give good advice on which course to choose and how to write a personal statement. Last year, 72% of students who applied for a place in HE were successful. Most one-year access students gain places at the university of their choice.

Leadership and management



20. Leadership and management are good. Governors, the principal and senior managers have provided strong strategic leadership, as noted in the self-assessment. They have led the college through a series of mergers, developed a wide range of courses from entry level to HE, opened a new site near the city centre and maintained the financial viability of the college. For the three years to 2001, the retention and pass rates at all levels and for all age groups have been above, or close to, the median compared to other FE colleges of the same type. They have shown a trend of increasing improvement over a longer period.

21. The college is a large and diverse institution to manage. It has grown considerably since its creation as a result of the merger of Brunel College of Arts and Technology and South Bristol College in 1996. A further merger is planned for January 2002. Mergers have been managed carefully to ensure stability and to support learners in different parts of the city. Strategic priorities have been identified, for example, the assurance and improvement of quality and the recruitment of students from groups not traditionally involved in FE. The priorities are expressed in an annual operating plan. The operating plan is suitably detailed, but lacks sufficient numerical targets to help monitor its implementation. Targets have been set on a college-wide basis to help maintain and improve students' achievements. The focus has been on improving pass rates and monitoring stable retention rates.

22. The curriculum is managed effectively through a faculty structure as noted in the self-assessment. Some faculties are large, the equivalent of small colleges in terms of staff and student numbers, and have budgets of more than £1 million. Some faculties extend across sites. Faculties have a large amount of autonomy. Structures within each faculty have evolved to meet their curriculum needs and the learning needs of students. A clear planning cycle links the curriculum to financial budgets, targets and the annual operating plan. Senior managers closely monitor the implementation of the plans.

23. Work-based learning is managed through a separate unit. Overall, the management of work-based learning is poor. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment. The monitoring of health and safety is conducted by appropriately qualified training co-ordinators. Service-level agreements between the training unit and other college units are not monitored effectively; there is little monitoring of learners' progress, pass or retention rates. The number of learners achieving their modern apprenticeship is low. The quality assurance of work-based learning is incorporated in the college system. There are no references to pass or retention rate data in the self-assessment and the evaluation focuses too heavily on the college-based training.

24. Communications are effective within the college. Staff understand their roles and what is required of them. As the institution has grown, good use has been made of e-mail to communicate within faculties and across the various centres. All faculties have regular meetings. Information is disseminated throughout the college and points of view, from curriculum teams for example, are forwarded to senior managers. A newsletter is distributed electronically, and policies and other college documents are also available to staff in an electronic format. Staff feel that the principal and senior managers work in an open style and are approachable. Communications between the college and some providers of work-based training are poor. Many training providers do not understand the requirements for training. There is little exchange of information on the training of individual trainees between the college and individual providers.

25. The management information systems generally provide good financial and student enrolment and tracking data for staff and governors. The systems are well established. Most staff make good use of them, especially staff working across sites who find them particularly effective for tracking information on students. Data are checked three times every year to seek to ensure reliability. However, some data on students' achievement are still inaccurate. The self-assessment and reports to the corporation correctly identified this weakness. The college is working on ways to reduce the problem.

26. All staff understand the clear quality assurance procedures. Comprehensive common documentation is used. Individual course self-assessment reports are aggregated into faculty self-assessment reports. Teaching observations are used to evaluate the quality of teaching on a faculty-wide basis. The faculty self-assessments only identify strengths and weaknesses for four out of seven of the key questions in the common inspection framework. Some self-assessment reports are appropriately detailed and critically evaluate the provision. Some reports lack evaluative comment. Some course teams do not make good use of targets to improve the quality of their provision. Good practice is not always shared by teachers, especially when they are working in more than one centre. Plans that result from self-assessment activities contain suitable actions to be undertaken and a target date for their completion. However, there are often no specific targets against which to measure if intended results have been achieved. Franchise partners produce their self-assessment report to the same format as college courses. External inspectors undertake an independent review of the college's provision on a tri-annual basis.

27. Appraisal is undertaken annually with all staff. Development needs identified during the process are met. They relate closely to the college strategic plan and the development of the curriculum. The number of development activities has increased markedly over the three years to 2001, and the number of hours of supported training has more than doubled. Priority areas have been identified. They include: equal opportunities; management training; NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4; cross-college curriculum areas of work such as key skills and accredited teacher training; and areas of work specific to faculties. In a few cases, the appraisal process has not been used effectively to improve teaching skills. An employee lifelong learning scheme allows staff to follow a college course of their choice.

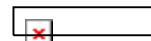
28. The corporation has effectively supported significant strategic change. It has steered through a major accommodation strategy, a rapid growth in student numbers and several mergers. The corporation has established a curriculum and quality assurance committee which meets four times a year. The committee has an appropriate membership of governors and senior college staff. It receives suitably detailed reports on student retention and pass rates, and has considered other academic matters, such as internal inspection reports. The committee has endorsed a number of actions to improve students' performances including the appointment of a student adviser to improve the retention and pass rates of Black and Asian students. The board has closely reviewed its own performance. Governors identified the need to improve their knowledge of the college's customers and a working group has been established to support this aspect of their work.

29. As noted in the self-assessment, throughout the college there is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and to maximising the achievement of all learners. A wide range of students benefit from support. The college has taken part in a number of initiatives, such as the 'Passport to Learning', which targeted a wide range of potential students from groups such as the unemployed, travellers, rough sleepers and those with mental health problems. The learning services team includes staff working on learning support and on a number of other support areas, for example, language and disability support, basic skills and ESOL. Staff are deployed in all centres and help a wide range of students. The college also supports students from partners who provide courses for minority groups in the local communities.

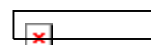
30. Equal opportunities reports on both students and staff have been presented to governors on the curriculum and quality assurance committee. The report on students commented on some of the activities organised by the college to promote an understanding of equality of opportunity. It analysed the achievement of students against their ethnic origin, age range and gender. It identified a series of actions to be taken to improve retention and pass rates amongst students from minority ethnic groups, and included the need to improve language support. The comprehensive staff report included detailed monitoring data on staff appointments. The academic board, which reviews curriculum equality issues, has established an equalities task group. It has organised various events such as a 'barriers to learning workshop' at The Lawrence Weston centre, and a cross-college conference in the summer of 2001, which had a focus on 'equalising opportunities for all'.

31. The complaints policy is clear and comprehensive. The policy document does not include the date on which it was published nor does it contain a date for review. It is available both as a single document and as part of a small booklet that lists all policies relevant to the curriculum. The student handbook contains practical proposals on what to do if problems arise. The complaints policy states that reports, including recommendations for action, are to be considered by senior managers twice a year. However, this commitment has not been met. In 2000/01, a report was presented to the academic board analysing the types of complaint received over a three-year period. Senior managers had dealt with approximately 25% of the complaints.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- much good achievement
- good range of provision at intermediate and advanced levels
- effective management
- good resources.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of target setting and monitoring
- inadequate development of key skills.

Scope of provision

32. There is a good range of science and mathematics courses at intermediate and advanced levels. There were 333 students aged 16 to 18 and 197 adults enrolled on these courses at the time of the inspection. The science offer includes GCSE, GCE AS and A-level courses in chemistry, physics and biology. Environmental science is also available at the higher level. A general vocational alternative to GCE AS/A-level science is offered as a single award Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE). Adult students can enrol on an access course in science and engineering as a progression route to HE. In response to the demands of local industry, other courses offered include animal care and science and a NVQ qualification for school laboratory technicians. Mathematics can be studied at entry level through to accredited courses at GCSE and at GCE AS/A level. Students study GCSE mathematics through a variety of modes of attendance. Students on any access programme must take a level 2 mathematics option as a compulsory part of their course.

Achievement and standards

33. Most students studying on GCE A-level biology, physics and mathematics courses are successful. A large number gain high grades. Pass rates in mathematics and biology are good, but chemistry results have declined over the three years from 1999. In 2001, only 58% of students who completed their chemistry course were successful. The number of students taking the physics examination in 2001 was small, but all passed and gained high grades. Until September 2001, the number of students taking GCE A-level chemistry and physics was in decline. However, due to the introduction of the new GCE AS courses and the opening of the College Green site, numbers have

risen sharply. Retention rates on GCSE science courses are now at the national average. Pass rates are at, or above, the national average. Physics and biology have particularly high pass rates. The number of students studying GCSE mathematics is declining. An increasing number of students are choosing to study the application of number course instead. The access to HE course in science is very successful. Most students progress to a degree course in, for example, health-related or computer disciplines. Mathematical skills developed on access and GCSE courses enable many students to progress onto higher-level courses within the college or into HE. Students' attendance is good.

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	*	308	242
		% retention	*	68	86
		% pass rate	*	41	49
GCSE human biology	2	No. of starts	34	43	29
		% retention	74	58	93
		% pass rate	71	52	75
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	46	49	29
		% retention	76	82	77
		% pass rate	88	77	58
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	67	62	43
		% retention	78	77	64
		% pass rate	71	90	84
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	43	52	50
		% retention	72	63	74
		% pass rate	75	81	89
Access to science	3	No. of starts	17	24	30
		% retention	65	78	87
		% pass rate	55	100	95

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

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

34. Teaching is good. Some 59% of lessons were judged to be good or better and none were unsatisfactory. In the more effective lessons, there were good examples of students working in groups, using computers and taking care with their written work. Teachers give clear explanations. They regularly check that students are understanding the work by asking skilful questions, running quizzes and giving short tests. Most students are enthusiastic about their studies and produce a good standard of work. In one lesson, a group of AVCE students effectively developed the use of number, communication and reasoning skills. The planning exercise, based on the needs of a local town centre, was realistic and well designed. In a biology lesson, students researched a variety of disorders and prepared suitably detailed handouts. Students' presentations were good. Students were able to answer detailed and testing questions. In another example of good practice, students in a GCE AS biology lesson organised their own practical work on osmosis. The teacher provided a

clear explanation at the start of the lesson and a science technician provided help when required. The use of computers in lessons is inadequate. However, in some physics, statistics and biology lessons, appropriate software is used effectively to improve students' understanding. Video recordings are used effectively in biology and environmental science. In some lessons, there is too much emphasis on the teacher talking and too few appropriate activities for students.

35. All courses have schemes of work. Effective schemes include, for example, cross-referencing for key skills, the establishment of assignment schedules and well prepared, thorough introductions to certain topics. However, no common layout is required and the standard of the schemes is not consistently high. Homework is set regularly and marked carefully. Corrections are made on the students' work and often the written feedback shows students how they can improve. Teachers keep accurate records of student performance and use them as the basis for progress reviews. At the start of their GCE AS programme, students aged 16 to 18 are given target grades based on their GCSE achievements. However, the use of other targets to measure progress and set future goals is underdeveloped.

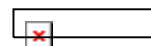
36. There are good links with the community. For example, one group of students worked with a local primary school to help the pupils improve their number skills. Some students take part in local and national competitions. Students who need additional learning support receive it by attending a homework club or a special class, usually outside lesson times. Revision conferences take place in the college each year at which external examiners give advice to students and staff. Students use the library and computer facilities effectively outside lessons. All students have access to the Internet. Full-time GCE AS students have personal e-mail facilities. Teachers are well qualified and most have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. Most teachers undertake regular professional development. Technical support is adequate. Assistant lecturers help in practical sessions.

37. Full-time students studying on GCE A-level and vocational programmes, attend key skills lessons in preparation for external tests. The internal verification process works well. All science assignments are internally moderated. As part of the process, opportunities for identifying key skills are reviewed. However, students make slow progress in developing their key skills portfolios. The support and encouragement some teachers give to students in their area of work are poor. Many students are reluctant to spend time developing their key skills as they believe them to be of little relevance to their present or future needs.

Leadership and management

38. The management of the provision and internal communications are both good. Teachers are given sufficient time to meet, plan their courses and review students' progress. Meetings are mainly used to discuss curriculum issues and to share good practice. Courses are reviewed annually. The process is effective, resulting in clear action plans to improve courses. The views of students are taken into account before changes are made. There are no common procedures for setting targets for students. Each teacher pursues a different approach. Some students lack motivation and are unclear about their short and medium-term goals.

Construction



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on NVQ programmes

- good teaching
- good integration of theory and practical lessons
- outstanding learning materials
- good learning support for students.

Weaknesses

- inadequate reporting of students' progress to employers
- insufficient technical support
- inadequate management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

39. The faculty of construction offers a wide range of courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, including craft and technician programmes and modern apprenticeships. Specialist provision includes plastering and furniture manufacture. The faculty has a partnership arrangement with Bristol City Council which has helped 150 qualified construction workers into the industry since 1999. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,110 construction students, including 265 full-time and 750 part-time students and 95 advanced modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

40. The retention rates on NVQ programmes have remained above national averages since 1999. The pass rates on NVQ level 1 and 2 courses improved in 1999/2000 and are well above national averages. The college's data for GNVQ and national certificate programmes are unreliable. However, locally held data indicate that pass rates on most of these courses are good.

41. Most students' work is of a high standard. Most projects and portfolios are word processed and contain good industry standard drawings and accurate calculations. For example, in a structural mechanics lesson, students produced accurate calculations for sheer force and bending moments for a variety of beams under different loading conditions. Craft students also acquire good practical skills. For example, on an intermediate construction award in brickwork, students produced to specifications half brick walling with return corners, stopped ends and junctions. Students' practical

work was clean, accurate and to industrial standards.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Foundation vocational (crafts)	1	No. of starts	117	199	228
		% retention	73	85	85
		% pass rate	74	73	88
Intermediate vocational (crafts)	2	No. of starts	466	334	361
		% retention	83	81	84
		% pass rate	68	84	86
Advanced vocational (crafts)	3	No. of starts	86	151	137
		% retention	88	92	93
		% pass rate	61	86	72
Advanced vocational technician	3	No. of starts	134	88	101
		% retention	*	*	*
		% pass rate	*	*	*

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

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

42. The quality of teaching is good. In 66% of lessons observed, teaching was good or better. Work programmes are well planned and lessons are carefully structured to support learning. Lessons are taught in an industrial context and effective use is made of students' industrial experience to illustrate key points and promote discussion. Learning materials developed and used by teachers are outstanding. For example, plumbing students are given a series of well-written booklets, including a series of assessed exercises. Each exercise includes relevant theory and practical work for completion. Practical assessments are arranged when the theory work has been assessed and recorded. Lessons are improved by the use of visual aids that include relevant industrial equipment. In lessons, teachers hold their students' interest and attention. For example, in one lesson, the environmental aspects of fossil fuels were discussed in relation to central heating boiler efficiency. Students work effectively in groups. For example, in a lesson on design procedures, students worked in pairs to design the floor of a bungalow. They produced good schemes and made oral presentations to explain the concept of space diagrams. The theoretical and practical elements of courses are well planned and integrated. In most lessons, teachers check learners' understanding by careful questioning. Students' progress is closely monitored and recorded. Appropriately detailed records are maintained in students' workbooks and in the teachers' course files. Students are aware how far they have progressed at any time and can readily identify what they need to do to improve their work. In some workshops, there is insufficient technical support which leads to some students spending too much time clearing up or dismantling their practice pieces. These additional tasks slow down their learning. Students have a high regard for the support that they receive from teachers. They are guided well in their assignment and practical tasks. Assignments are vocationally relevant and appropriately demanding. Marking is thorough and constructive, and helps students to improve their performance. Students are placed on courses appropriate to their ability and needs.

43. Some aspects of work-based learning are poorly managed. Evidence generated in the workplace is not sufficiently integrated into NVQ assessments. Off-the-job training is of a high standard and trainees receive good support from college staff. Most students' portfolios are well

constructed and contain a good range of evidence. The reporting of students' progress to employers is sometimes poor. Employers have expressed concern at the lack of regular feedback. Not all employers understand the requirements of the NVQ. For example, some are unaware that assessment can take place at work. Progress reviews for work-based learners often lack rigour. Records of meetings are thorough, but learners and employers do not always receive copies. There is little employer input into action plans. Reviews by training services staff do not cover NVQ requirements.

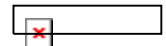
44. A construction crafts programme for Year 10 school pupils, who have been excluded from formal secondary education, has been running for several years. These pupils are integrated into the mainstream construction courses. Most produce work of a very high standard. Their attendance record is very good. A number of these pupils progress into FE and particularly onto construction courses.

45. Teachers have relevant vocational and assessor qualifications. Construction workshops are adequately resourced to meet the requirements of the programmes on offer. For example, the new plastering workshop contains spacious work areas, which provide a realistic working environment.

Leadership and management

46. Curriculum management for most courses is good. Programme reviews and evaluations are thorough, but retention and pass rate statistics are inadequately evaluated. Data for retention and pass rates on GNVQ and national certificates are unreliable and do not contribute to management decisions. The monitoring and co-ordination of work-based learning are inadequate. There is little co-ordination between on-the-job and off-the-job training.

Engineering



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

Strengths

- extensive range of courses
- good pass rates on many engineering and aircraft maintenance courses
- good retention rates
- effective teaching in many practical lessons
- good standard of practical work from motor vehicle students

- good specialist resources in workshops
- effective links with employers and other external organisations.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on motor vehicle courses
- unsatisfactory teaching of engineering theory
- insufficient attention by teachers to the wide ability range of students
- lack of measurable targets for students
- slow progress of many aircraft maintenance students during work placement
- inadequate monitoring and review of under-performing courses
- unclear progression routes.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time engineering courses. Courses are offered at three college sites and include: the aircraft maintenance engineers licence; mechanical, electrical, electronic, and telecommunications engineering; and motor vehicle servicing and repair.

48. During the inspection, a total of 1,341 students were enrolled on engineering courses. Of these, 850 were aged 19 or over. Some 68% of students attend part-time courses. Some students are modern apprentices attending courses to gain theoretical knowledge and additional vocational qualifications. Courses for school-leavers include the newly developed level 1 NVQ, GNVQ intermediate and advanced-level engineering courses.

Achievement and standards

49. The pass rates on many engineering courses are good. On aircraft maintenance courses, the pass rates in 2000 and 2001 were outstanding. The pass rates for the mathematics modules, integral to aircraft maintenance courses, have almost doubled in one year. Over the three years to 2001, most of the students who enrolled on the level 1 basic engineering course gained the qualification. In 2000/01, pass rates improved on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses. However, pass rates on motor vehicle engineering courses are unsatisfactory. Retention rates are good on most courses.

50. Many students, including part-time adult students, progress from level 2 to level 3 courses. Of those students completing the GNVQ advanced course in 2001, 50% entered university, and the remainder gained employment. In motor vehicle engineering, students attain a high level of practical skills. Students on the national certificate course in telecommunications were able to demonstrate good analytical skills, and effectively applied these to solving networking problems. In electrical engineering, the standard of practical work produced by craft students is good. Recently, three modern apprentices studying at the college have gained awards in a regional competition organised by the Engineering Employers Federation.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds basic engineering competencies	1	No. of starts	54	44	29
		% retention	94	98	93
		% pass rate	90	98	96
City and Guilds motor vehicle repair and servicing	1	No. of starts	39	56	30
		% retention	100	84	87
		% pass rate	68	50	47
GNVQ intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	15	30	23
		% retention	80	87	83
		% pass rate	33	27	63
GNVQ advanced engineering	3	No. of starts	24	19	21
		% retention	58	84	62
		% pass rate	80	58	100
National certificates in engineering	3	No. of starts	99	98	93
		% retention	88	97	81
		% pass rate	79	67	96
Aircraft maintenance engineering licence	3	No. of starts	93	140	182
		% retention	63	63	79
		% pass rate	59	99	100

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

Quality of education and training

51. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. In the effective lessons, teachers challenge and inspire their students. Most students respond enthusiastically and make good progress. For example, in an engineering drawing lesson, the teacher skilfully structured the lesson to enable students to make

models from their drawings of cylinder sections. Students were able to assess the accuracy of their drawings when constructing the models. In motor vehicle engineering, teaching in practical lessons is good. During an aircraft engineering maintenance lesson, the tutor effectively used a globe and spinning wheel to demonstrate an aircraft's movement around the world. This approach led to a productive discussion among students on how the direction of flight is achieved. However, the teaching of engineering theory is too often boring, and students lose motivation and become inattentive. Some teachers did not effectively address all the students' needs during lessons. In many lessons, mainly attended by adults, insufficient demands were made on the more able students. Conversely, in other lessons, weaker students were poorly supported and made insufficient progress. In a few lessons, teachers spoke for too long, and rarely checked students' understanding of the topic being addressed. Teaching styles were not always appropriate and discussions did not always involve all students. Teachers made little use of available aids to enliven their teaching.

52. Additional learning support is effectively provided during lessons for some students. Others receive additional help by attending sessions in the learning support centres. Engineering tutors receive regular reports on the attendance and progress of students receiving additional learning support, but do not discuss these reports during the termly student progress reviews. Targets for improvement are not set during individual progress reviews.

53. The arrangements for assessment on motor vehicle engineering courses are good. However, the recording of students' progress and achievements on mechanical and electrical engineering courses is inadequate. The monitoring of aircraft maintenance students whilst on work-placements is poor. Teaching staff do not routinely liaise with employers to guide the training in the work place. There is no review of work undertaken during the work placement until students return to college. Students who have not completed a sufficient range of activities often have to return to the work placement for extended training.

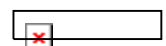
54. There is a good range of modern specialist equipment for motor vehicle, aircraft maintenance and engineering courses, but some equipment used in electronics engineering is dated. There are insufficient computers for teachers and students. Many classrooms used by engineering students at the Brunel site are in a poor decorative condition. Few of the rooms possess screens for overhead projectors which restricts the teaching styles available to teachers.

55. Teachers are well qualified and have suitable industrial experience. Some teachers have attended 'good practice' seminars supported by the Standards Fund. Aircraft engineering teachers regularly receive technical update training and attend industrial liaison visits to aircraft engineering organisations.

Leadership and management

56. Managers' roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood in each of the faculties that offer engineering courses, but there is little overall co-ordination of engineering provision. Students are not provided with clear information on how they may progress to courses offered in other faculties. Self-assessment reports are thorough, but are insufficiently rigorous in assessing the quality of teaching and learning. The setting of realistic and demanding targets to improve retention and pass rates is underdeveloped and is hindered by the poor quality of data provided by the college's student management information system. Faculty managers and staff have good links with a range of external organisations and employers. Managers review the range of courses thoroughly to ensure that they meet the needs of the local community.

Business



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- good retention rates
- good pass rates
- very good resources at College Green
- relevant and appropriate range of courses
- well-managed curriculum areas.

Weaknesses

- poor record for student attendance and punctuality on some programmes
- inappropriate use of specialist accommodation.

Scope of provision

57. The college provides courses in business management, secretarial, accounting, administration, legal executive and management. Specialist part-time courses include marketing, teacher training and personnel practice. The offer ranges from foundation-level courses to higher-level programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were 581 full-time and 1,995 part-time students. Of the full-time learners, 380 are aged 16 to 18. They are studying on GCE AS/A-level and AVCE courses in business studies and accounts, intermediate GNVQ courses in business and NVQs in business administration. Of the 201 adults studying on full-time courses, 48 are taking a Higher National Diploma (HND) qualification. Courses are organised to meet the needs of students with different modes of attendance or study, for example, day release, part-time day and evening, and distance learning. Other courses introduced after 2000, include call handling and customer service. Students can enrol on several part-time courses throughout the year. Many courses lead to professional qualifications or NVQs. Work-based programmes in administration and management are offered at levels 2, 3 and higher. Most students on these programmes are employed locally. Some 30 learners are business administration modern apprentices. The college's business, management and administration provision is based in three different faculties. The college of business and faculty of administration and business technology are both at the College Green centre. The corporate

training faculty is at Brunel.

Achievement and standards

58. Retention and pass rates for most courses are at, or above, national averages. In some cases, they are significantly higher. For example, the one-year NVQ accounts course has averaged a 96% retention rate since 1999 and compares favourably with a national average of 91%. The pass rate, at 68%, is more than twice the national average. In 2001, the diploma in management studies course had a retention rate of 94% and a pass rate of 100%, both well above national averages. NVQ business administration courses have very high retention and pass rates. For example, in 2000/01, over 90 % of students who started level 2 and 3 courses achieved the qualification.

59. The range of programmes is comprehensive and is responsive to local requirements. College faculties have strong links with local business communities. Learners receive a good preparation for employment opportunities. The standard of most learners' work is good. Students are assessed effectively prior to starting their programme of study. Learners who require support for literacy and numeracy, receive it. Students' attendance and punctuality at some lessons are poor. The attendance rate for the lessons observed was 67%, which is below the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Financial planning (short)	3	No. of starts	91	89	38
		% retention	95	83	80
		% pass rate	66	100	100
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	60	58	54
		% retention	83	78	76
		% pass rate	76	97	78
GCE A-level business studies (one year)	3	No. of starts	66	35	53
		% retention	94	94	79
		% pass rate	66	62	73
ILEX Part 1 (one year)	3	No. of starts	58	92	89
		% retention	91	91	77
		% pass rate	72	67	69
NVQ accounts (one year)	4	No. of starts	27	58	55
		% retention	96	93	100
		% pass rate	77	57	71
Certificate in management	4	No. of starts	48	25	19
		% retention	88	96	89
		% pass rate	97	100	84

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

Quality of education and training

60. The standard of teaching is good. Teachers use an extensive and effective range of methods to help students to learn. They adapt their approach to meet the needs of different student groups.

Many adult learners praise the way teachers support them and approve of the variety of study options. A small purpose-built business centre provides an effective learning environment for fast track administration students. Teaching is well planned. The most effective lessons are stimulating and resources are well used. Schemes of work and lesson plans are good. Most are comprehensive and standardised for all courses. Most lessons have clear aims that are fully explained to students at the start of each lesson. The learning that takes place is reviewed at the end of the lesson. Handouts are informative and appeal to most students. Teachers draw on personal experiences to illuminate key points. Examples are relevant and memorable to the students. Educational visits are highly valued by students and are skilfully used by the teachers to reflect industry practice and standards.

61. Most students on advanced-level courses have developed good research and evaluation skills. Students are enthusiastic about their studies and work well, both as individuals, and as part of a group. Students usually assess group-work activities. Teachers manage the process very effectively. In most lessons, students are interested in the work and concentrate on the set tasks. They write well and maintain their files to a very high standard. Their work is accurately marked and grammar and spelling are corrected. Assignments reflect industry standards and are set at appropriate and challenging levels. Teachers have high expectations of their students.

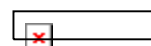
62. Courses are effectively designed to meet the needs of different employment markets. The number of students enrolling onto business courses has grown steadily since 1999. Some centres open seven days a week. There is an extensive range of accountancy courses. Courses are offered as fast-track, one-year, two-year or as short programmes. Students without the appropriate entry-level qualifications are encouraged to pursue other options until they meet the requirements. Higher-level management courses are greatly valued by local organisations. The business teams work in partnerships with many local employers. At the time of the inspection there were 300 adult students studying administration at level 3 in the workplace.

63. There is a good supply of computers for students to use. However, some specialist rooms equipped with computers are also used as standard classrooms. This arrangement often led to ineffective teaching, due to limited space available for students to work. In one faculty, teachers do not have adequate space for preparation and some lessons are overcrowded due to the size of the rooms. Most classrooms are very well equipped. Many have liquid crystal display (LCD) projectors and students with impaired hearing can use hearing loops. Students with a physical disability can reach most facilities and classrooms. Prompt action is taken if a student is identified as in need of additional support.

Leadership and management

64. Learning programmes are well managed. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities. Managers and programme leaders are enthusiastic and work closely with teaching staff. Internal communications are good. Meetings are held regularly. Key meetings focus on target setting and measures that will lead to improvement. Minutes specify action to be taken and are widely distributed. There is effective control over the deployment of resources. Budgets are devolved to programme teams. A good team spirit exists amongst the large team of part-time and full-time staff. Staff development opportunities are good and training is mostly linked to improving teaching and learning. Quality assurance arrangements including internal verification are good.

Information and communication technology (ICT)



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

Strengths

- comprehensive range of well-managed courses with good progression routes
- well-planned and effective teaching
- good support for students
- good retention and pass rates for the majority of courses
- good monitoring of students' progress
- outstanding learning materials.

Weaknesses

- late arrival and poor motivation of some students
- inadequate development of independent learning skills
- insufficient use of communication technologies for course management.

Scope of provision

65. The college offers a comprehensive range of courses ranging from basic computer literacy, GNVQ at levels 1 and 2, AVCE and programmes to HND. In addition to the extensive range of 14 full-time courses, there is a wide choice of general and specialist short courses in areas such as Integrated Business Technology (IBT), computer servicing, networking, computer-aided design and software installation. Flexible programmes of study provide training and re-training that lead to recognised qualifications at several levels. Courses are offered at seven centres across the city and are very popular, recruiting some 7,000 students each year. Routes for progression are good. Around a third of students enrolling on computer courses each year have already successfully completed a course at the college.

Achievement and standards

66. The retention rate for all full-time courses is at, or above, national averages. It has been well

above average for the GNVQ advanced IT course until 2001, when both retention and pass rates declined to the average. Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate and foundation IT courses were well above average in 2001. The one-year courses and the short courses for City and Guilds, and for CLAIT attract large numbers of students. Both the retention and pass rates for these courses have been consistently good since 1999. The specialist short courses have also achieved above national averages. The NVQ in installing IT products has achieved a 100% retention rate since 1999. The pass rate reached 100% in 2001.

67. In most classes, students show a good understanding of basic concepts and can use the college computer system with confidence. Standards are at least satisfactory for all students and good or better for many. Students progress well, gaining knowledge and demonstrating competence in advance of their examinations. Many follow the guidance of their teachers and show good skills in solving problems. Many students were so confident about software or hardware processes that they were ahead of the teaching plan. These students then shared their knowledge with others. This sharing was especially noticeable in the personal computer servicing lessons. Here, groups of students co-operated to solve obscure fault problems including, for example, making complex changes to the computer registry. In all lessons, this good co-operation among students helped the tutors to advance the knowledge of the whole group at a rate above normal expectations.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT short	1	No. of starts	500	432	507
		% retention	96	82	87
		% pass rate	63	72	69
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	491	412	398
		% retention	81	71	80
		% pass rate	79	75	74
City and Guilds 7261 (one year)	1	No. of starts	256	183	182
		% retention	87	85	79
		% pass rate	79	81	85
GNVQ foundation IT (one year)	1	No. of starts	11	25	34
		% retention	100	68	88
		% pass rate	88	82	79
GNVQ intermediate IT (one year)	2	No. of starts	27	30	41
		% retention	52	87	83
		% pass rate	50	85	73
GNVQ advanced IT (two years)	3	No. of starts	51	63	45
		% retention	84	92	71
		% pass rate	82	61	72

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

Quality of education and training

68. Teaching and learning were consistently good or better in all lessons observed. Lessons are well planned and prepared. The plans are well structured and include the timing for various activities

and the refreshment breaks for students. The sequence of each session is logical, leading step by step to an increased knowledge and awareness of processes. For example, in a software-programming lesson on data loops, the key terminology was built up step by step. In a key skills lesson, the lesson plan was in two parts. For a short time there was some very good teaching, and for a longer period, students were encouraged to practice new skills using graphics on a computer. The quick move from words to actions suited the students very well and they completed their tasks with enjoyment and increasing skill. Students receive verbal and written feedback on their performance. Tutorials are thorough and focus on any need a student may have for additional support. Tutors know their students well. Most students and tutors form good working relationships. A small number of students had behaviour problems, and others were either late into lessons, or failed to attend. Of those who did attend, a small number had a negative attitude, which could impede the flow of the lesson. Teachers coped with these interruptions very well.

69. Teachers have an excellent understanding of their subject. They can answer simple or complex questions which arise in the course of teaching without reference to printed materials. Answers are quick, relevant and very often inspirational. The good working relationship between staff and students is reflected in the use of humour during many lessons. Many students receive good one-to-one support in lessons which helps them understand new or difficult concepts. Tutors show a high level of awareness when allocating their time in the classroom. Students with disabilities or additional learning needs are very well supported both personally and also technically through the provision of specialist equipment. In the case of students with visual impairment, both equipment and in-class support are exemplary.

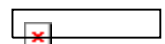
70. In specialist courses, resources, such as notes and handouts are always of a good standard, but some are outstanding, for example in computer-aided design. Considerable care has been taken in designing, writing and producing training materials. Many students rely on their notes to remind them of what to do if they are absent for a number of lessons. For example, they may need to remember complex software symbols for computer-aided design. In general IT courses, students do not take such good notes and tend to be over-reliant on tutor support in the practical rooms.

71. ICT resources have not always kept pace with the needs of tutors or the requirements of the courses offered. Although the college recognises and is working to resolve the problem, some tutors find the slow access to the Internet adversely affects teaching in, for example, website design classes. There is insufficient use of communication technology in the management of courses or in communication with students. Some classes lack computer-linked projectors which, in some cases, limits the teaching of information relating to the operation of computer programmes on-screen. Some classes do not have access to digital cameras, colour printers or scanners. In some lessons, there were insufficient computers to cope with demand.

Leadership and management

72. Course provision is shared between the two faculties of administration and business technology, and computing and digital communication. The excellent working relationships and co-operation between the heads of faculty and their staff have led to a well-integrated and coherent provision. The uniformly high quality of access to learning for students at all sites across the city is a good example of the effective leadership in this subject area. Tutors' course files show good planning of courses on a day-to-day basis and good strategic planning for course development. The files also show a high commitment to quality assurance. Course review and evaluation is appropriately detailed and thorough. Tutors' work is evaluated on a regular basis and good written and verbal feedback is given. Staff development in this rapidly evolving curriculum area is linked to an effective appraisal system. Both full-time and part-time staff are encouraged to develop occupational and personal aspirations through the gaining of further qualifications.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning at advanced level
- high standard of practical work and food production in hospitality
- good retention and pass rates on NVQ level 2 courses
- good individual support for students.

Weaknesses

- slow progress of students at foundation and advanced levels
- inadequate assessment practices at levels 1 and 2
- some poor accommodation and equipment
- narrow range of programmes for leisure students.

Scope of provision

73. The college offers NVQ courses in food preparation and cooking at levels 1, 2 and 3 and the AVCE in hospitality and catering. A number of part-time certificate programmes of the Hotel and Catering International Management Association as well as food hygiene, wine and spirit, and cake decoration courses are also available. In sport and leisure, provision includes the progression award at levels 1 and 2, NVQ level 2 sport and recreation, GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, national diploma in sports science (sports studies), and GCE AS physical education and sport. The college also offers an outdoor pursuits instructors' award. Most part-time students take courses in hospitality and catering.

Achievement and standards

74. The retention and pass rates vary across the area. On NVQs at level 2 in food preparation and

cooking and in sport and recreation, retention and pass rates are good. The pass rates on GNVQ advanced catering and hospitality are also good. Students' pass rates on the national diploma in science (sports studies) improved in 2000/01, but remains below the national average. On the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism programme, retention and pass rates are similar to the national average. However, only 43% of those who started the course in 2000/01 achieved a qualification. The pass rate on NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking is poor, although retention is good. The low numbers and poor pass rate on NVQ level 1 in sport and recreation prompted the college to withdraw the programme. The newly introduced progression award shows improved achievement. In 2000/01, achievements on GCE AS PE and sport improved. Most part-time courses have good retention and pass rates, for example, the community sports leader award and the basic food hygiene certificate. Over 2,000 students took the latter course in 2000/01.

75. The standard of students' work in lessons is good on level 3 courses. However, in over one third of lessons, mainly at levels 1 and 2, students were not reaching satisfactory standards. For example, GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism students could not complete simple assignment tasks without considerable help. The submission date for their first assignment falls too late in the college year. This timing prevents teachers providing feedback that would enable students to improve before the end of the course. On GNVQ leisure and tourism and NVQ level 2 sport and recreation courses, the assessment of key skills is slow. Little other assessment has taken place on the NVQ level 2. In NVQ level 1 hospitality and catering, portfolios lack sufficient evidence. Teachers do not gather sufficient evidence of the good practical skills of their students and assessment deadlines come too late in the course.

76. The standard of practical work throughout hospitality and catering is good. Students have good practical skills and produce food to a high standard. Using fresh ingredients, food produced has flavour, texture and aroma. Students understand why the appearance of the food is important to the customer. Students demonstrate a high standard of technical skills in the kitchens and restaurants. They work well together in teams and display good social skills when dealing with customers. All hospitality students achieve a basic food hygiene certificate, and can choose from a range of other short courses. The range is limited in sport and leisure to first aid, and sports leader awards. There are no additional qualifications in travel and tourism for GNVQ intermediate students. Most students go on to gain relevant employment in industry or progress to higher-level courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Food preparation and cooking (one year)	1	No. of starts	8	14	13
		% retention	88	71	92
		% pass rate	100	100	50
Serving food and drink restaurant (2 year)	2	No. of starts	10	8	10
		% retention	100	100	90
		% pass rate	100	88	89
NVQ sport and recreation	2	No. of starts	9	16	10
		% retention	78	81	100
		% pass rate	67	73	80
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	21	19	14
		% retention	67	68	79
		% pass rate	57	62	67
National diploma sports science	3	No. of starts	29	15	9
		% retention	64	73	78

		% pass rate	79	60	75
GNVQ advanced Catering and hospitality (two years)	3	No. of starts	14	10	13
		% retention	92	90	69
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

77. Most teaching was good or better, but some of the lessons observed were graded satisfactory. The most effective teaching was observed on level 3 courses. Teaching in hospitality and catering was more effective than teaching in sport and leisure. The better lessons were well planned and clearly linked theory to practical activities. They were well directed and managed by the teacher and offered good individual support to students. In the less effective lessons, the teacher spent too much time with individuals at the expense of the rest of the group, who tended to drift off the topic they were working on. In some of the smaller classes, it was difficult to organise practical sport activities. Students did not make effective contributions to discussions.

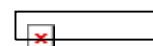
78. Students value the support they receive from their tutors, both in tutorials and outside the classroom. Good support and guidance is offered to students with specific learning difficulties. Students' basic skill levels are assessed during the induction process and learning assistants provide good support in class at level 1. Students undertake a variety of visits to local hotels and visitor attractions, and in hospitality they have a trip abroad. GNVQ leisure and tourism students do not undertake any work experience.

79. Lessons at the College Green centre are held in modern classrooms. There is a good range of specialist resources, including fitness testing tools and biology laboratories for sports students. Although a well-equipped sports facility close to the college is used, there are no gym facilities or sports hall. The restaurants and kitchens at most of the college sites are modern and in good condition. The kitchens have modern industrial standard equipment. Some teaching rooms and catering equipment at the Brunel site are in need of refurbishment. At the Brunel centre, teachers and learners have insufficient access to computers. Students on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and AVCE hospitality courses had not commenced work on their IT key skills at the time of the inspection. Teaching staff in both curriculum areas are well qualified.

Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Decisions were made to withdraw courses which had low numbers of students and poor performance. However, this sudden move was not part of a planned strategy for curriculum development. The course offer is still not appropriate and does not have sufficient range. The GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism course, withdrawn due to low numbers and poor achievement, was not replaced. Students who start the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course have no progression route into a similar level 3 programme or into any travel and tourism programmes. Staff meetings are held regularly and appropriate action is taken to remedy issues that are raised. Course reviews are effective and contribute to the self-assessment report. Lesson observations take place regularly and commentary is added to each teachers appraisal record.

Hair and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- good standard of students' work
- wide range of courses
- good learning environment
- good course management.

Weaknesses

- some poor retention and pass rates
- insufficient work experience for full-time students
- lack of monitoring of equal opportunities in work-based salon placements
- poor communication between the college and work-based employers.

Scope of provision

81. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy on four sites. Courses range from level 1 to level 3. There is an extensive range of holistic therapy programmes including crystal therapy, baby massage and stress management. Taster courses are offered to give prospective students an insight into their chosen course or career. The college has developed a pre-16 schools programme for school pupils who are excluded or about to be excluded from school. These pupils speak positively about their experiences at college. Foundation and advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in

hairdressing and the appropriate key skill qualifications. The programme portfolio for each of the four college sites is carefully planned to attract and reflect the needs of the local community. For example, the college offers a 'fresh start' course aimed at women who wish to return to education. These programmes have been very successful in recruiting adult students who wish to study hairdressing on a part-time basis.

Achievement and standards

82. The standard of students' practical work in hairdressing and holistic therapy courses is very good. Young people on the full-time hairdressing NVQ level 2 course and foundation modern apprentices course produce a high level of work in practical lessons. For example, after watching a practical demonstration on foil highlight application, foundation modern apprentices were able to perform the task with considerable expertise. The teacher had not anticipated that the learners would be able to demonstrate such a high level of skill and speed. Additional materials were rapidly provided so that the treatment could be completed. Students drew on their experiences in the workplace and confidently shared knowledge on different commercial techniques with the group. They demonstrated a good knowledge of the commercial products available for this treatment. Students on beauty therapy courses did not always demonstrate the same degree of competence. Some did not perform treatments to the expected level. On NVQ programmes, most written work and assignments are good. On holistic therapy courses, students' work is often of a higher standard than is required by the awarding body.

83. The pass rates in 2001 on NVQ levels 1 and 3 in hairdressing were above national averages. The pass rates on part-time body massage and Indian head massage courses have been at, or above, the averages since 1999. The retention rates for full-time NVQ level 2 in hairdressing and the Indian head massage course are below national averages. Retention rates on the modern apprenticeship are unsatisfactory. In the three years since 1999, the best retention rate achieved by a group of foundation modern apprentices, was 46%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hair and beauty therapy, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	1	No. of starts	55	52	74
		% retention	82	81	84
		% pass rate	87	79	92
NVQ hairdressing (two years)	2	No. of starts	*	*	164
		% retention	*	*	87
		% pass rate	*	*	71
NVQ beauty therapy (two year)	2	No. of starts	23	40	*
		% retention	81	82	*
		% pass rate	83	97	*
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	17	17
		% retention	*	94	82
		% pass rate	*	79	85
Body massage certificate (one year)	3	No. of starts	48	36	30
		% retention	85	67	83
		% pass rate	100	96	100
Indian head massage short	3	No. of starts	79	65	96
		% retention	80	78	85

		% pass rate	100	89	100
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Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

84. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their programmes thoroughly and provide students with a suitable induction for all topics. Schemes of work are shared with the students. On work-based training, schemes of work are shared with employers. Good practice is shared across the four college sites. All teachers follow a similar format when designing schemes of work and lesson plans. Learning resources and good practice are shared effectively between teachers. In the most effective lessons, the student experience is very positive. Teachers use an appropriate variety of activities to motivate students. The teaching of theory is satisfactory, although sometimes narrow in approach. For example, in one lesson, the teacher read from a computer-generated presentation, and failed to illustrate with lively examples or to involve students in discussions. In another class, students spent too much time copying down notes.

85. Students' progress is monitored closely. Students are encouraged to set their own targets, and action plans are discussed and agreed with their teacher. Students are clear about their course requirements, their achievements to date and the targets to be achieved. Teachers mark work accurately and provide helpful comments on how the students can improve. In work-based learning, clear targets are set during off-the-job training at college. However, these targets are not used as a basis for the 12-weekly review that takes place in the workplace. The staff who conduct these reviews do not adequately liaise with the teachers who co-ordinate the off-the-job training. The college has placed great emphasis on improving retention rates. Attendance is reviewed regularly and poor attendance or persistent lateness leads to a disciplinary meeting with the head of faculty. Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend these meetings. The attendance rate shows signs of significant improvement. During inspection week, the average attendance for all classes observed was 84%. A learning support teacher supports the vocational specialist to provide for those who need help. Additional one-to-one support is also provided for some students.

86. There is a wide range of enrichment activities for students that enhances their studies. Students are encouraged to enter external competitions. The college holds an annual hair and makeup competition. Students compete for an inter-centre cup of excellence and individual student of excellence awards. In 2000, a foundation modern apprentice received the cup for student of excellence. Students are encouraged to fundraise for local and national charities. However, the work-experience programme for full-time students is inadequate. Students are only required to go into the workplace for experience in the second year of their programme and just for a limited period of 19 hours. They lack experience of the hustle and bustle and commercial pressure of a busy salon. Some full-time students have an unrealistic view of the industry they are training for.

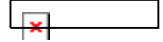
87. Resources to support learning are good. There is sufficient modern equipment in the salons which is updated as necessary. Accommodation on three of the four sites is good. Salons are modern and provide a good learning environment. On one site, the accommodation, whilst being fit for purpose, is old and in need of refurbishment. Resources in the learning resource centres are good, but at the Brunel site, textbooks need updating and renewing.

Leadership and management

88. There is strong leadership and programmes are well managed. Teachers have developed schemes of work that are shared across all sites ensuring consistently effective approaches to teaching and learning. Staff development opportunities are good. Teachers meet regularly and record their decisions clearly. However, reports on action taken are not monitored at subsequent meetings. All staff are involved in self-assessment and given their own individual action plans to improve their performance. The centrally-held college data on hairdressing and beauty therapy NVQ level 2 courses are unreliable. Many students are listed as continuing after the end date of their

programme. Some aspects of the management of work-based training are poor.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- wide range of provision
- effective strategies for improving retention rates for full-time students
- high pass rates in health and social care
- strong and effective partnerships with external agencies and employers
- very effective support for students on personal issues
- strong and successful promotion of equal opportunities.

Weaknesses

- lack of effective learning support
- missed opportunities for developing key skills.

Scope of provision

89. There is a good range and breadth of health and care courses. Students are well informed on possible routes for progression. Courses are offered at foundation, intermediate and HND levels. There is also an access course for adults. A foundation GNVQ course provides a good basis for further study in the area of childcare and health and social care. A wide variety of short courses, including first aid, are available to meet employer needs. At the time of the inspection, there were

337 full-time and 618 adult part-time students studying health and social care courses. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. There are a number of good collaborative partnerships with external agencies. A range of new courses has been developed to widen participation and encourage adults back into learning. In particular, the health and care team is working to increase the numbers of Black people being trained and employed in the care sector. Most courses are taught at the College Green site, but a few are at other sites or community venues.

Achievement and standards

90. Strategies for improving full-time students' retention rates are effective. For example, the pattern of attendance for level 2 and 3 childcare students has been changed. They now attend college or their work placement on alternate weeks. The impact has been significant and retention rates have improved. Retention rates on the certificate course rose from 61% in 2000 to 73% in 2001, and the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma rose from 82% in 2000 to 87% in 2001. In health and social care, teachers now offer pre-enrolment sessions for potential NVQ course students. The tutors meet with the applicants and their employers to ensure that they are well informed on the range of choice. Retention rates have improved on most health and social care courses over the three years to 2001. GNVQ intermediate retention rates have increased steadily from 30% in 1999 to 89% in 2001, well above the national average of 76%.

91. Most pass rates on health and social care courses are good and are improving. Many pass rates are well above national averages. The pass rates on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses have remained well above national averages for the last two years. The access to health studies course achieved a 100% pass rate for 2000 and 2001. The access to social work also achieved 100% in 2000 and 92% in 2001. Pass rates on the childcare courses are more varied. Level 2 courses have consistently remained below the national average. At level 3, the pass rate on the course for the CACHE diploma was 100% in 2001, but the pass rate for the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma was 50%, well below the national average. Large numbers of students study short courses in first aid, and health and safety courses. The pass rates have remained consistently high. Most full-time students achieve relevant additional qualifications. These include: introductory counselling skills; paediatric first aid; health and safety; and food hygiene. Students are enthusiastic about these opportunities.

92. The standard of students' work is good. NVQ students' portfolios contain comprehensive evidence that meets the requirements of the framework. Students on the certificate course in childcare and education regularly use a variety of information communication technologies to identify, for example, childcare support issues in the Bristol area. Foundation students show a well-developed understanding of aspects of their course. Course work is often well presented by students using IT skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	35	33	38
		% retention	94	85	100
		% pass rate	61	82	81
Therapy counselling skills	2	No. of starts	15	25	37
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	100	92	100
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	54	41	51
		% retention	74	61	73
		% pass rate	50	60	67

GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	23	15	19
		% retention	30	53	89
		% pass rate	57	86	100
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	39	51	26
		% retention	82	82	87
		% pass rate	100	76	100
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	56	21	85
		% retention	95	81	89
		% pass rate	77	93	50

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

Quality of education and training

93. Most teaching is good or better. In the more effective lessons, teachers plan and initiate a range of challenging learning activities. Most teachers are well qualified and have a sound vocational knowledge. Teachers encourage learners to consider the links between theory and practice. In one lesson, students presented their ideas for developing a creative learning pack to help sick children afraid of entering hospital. An external adviser, from the local hospital assessed their presentations. In another lesson, a teacher introduced NVQ standards by comparing them to a family tree. A quiz to assess the group's understanding ended the lesson. Students spoke enthusiastically about how much they had learned in a short time. Equal opportunities issues are threaded throughout the curriculum. For example, in an AVCE lesson, the teacher dealt particularly well with a complex set of equal opportunities problems and this enabled students to understand clearly what the issues and associated dilemmas were. Students were encouraged to express their views and opinions. One teacher's sensitive integration of a visually impaired student with learning difficulties into a class inspired a positive reaction from other students. However, some teaching is poor. In one class, the lesson was poorly planned and students became bored and inattentive. In another lesson, the teacher's initial presentation was disjointed and some students found it difficult to follow.

94. The learning environment is good. Classrooms are generally well resourced and have a good range of specialist equipment. However, one lesson was impaired by the use of a poor quality tape recording. The IT resource centre is well equipped and regularly used by students. However, it is not an appropriate base for the teaching of IT key skills. The layout inhibits effective communication between students and teachers. Assessment practice is good. Feedback to students on assessed work is clear and supportive. In some cases, marked work does not explain to students how they can improve. Some teachers do not correct spelling and grammatical errors. Not all part-time students are initially assessed. In some cases, this hinders progress. There are good internal verification systems. For example, the NVQ assessment centre has thorough processes in place and an effective recording system.

95. The college has developed strong and effective partnerships with, for example, the Employment and Social Services, a health care trust and a wide range of voluntary and private organisations at local, regional and national level. Some of these contacts have led to innovative developments, for example, training for support staff working with drug users. Changes are being made to improve the flexibility of the provision. In childcare, one course has been modified so that adult returners can attend college or their work placements at convenient times during the day. However, the access course does not have an evening option. Full-time students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. These include 'story sacks', creative activities, training in citizenship and training in the issues facing hearing impaired people.

96. The support that students receive on personal issues is very effective. Students highly value the help they receive. A well-developed tutorial framework aids students' learning. Tutorials are carried out sensitively. Students' progress is regularly reviewed and action plans are negotiated. To

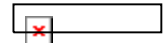
improve performance, clear targets are set. There has been insufficient analysis of the skills students need to be successful. This shortcoming reduces the effectiveness of the learning support team when providing feedback on students' progress. Tutors are often unclear about the links between learning support and the requirements of the course. Opportunities are missed to develop key skills. Most assignments identify opportunities for key skill development, but few teachers plan, develop or effectively assess key skills.

Leadership and management

97. The management of the provision is effective. There is good teamwork, effective communication and sound course organisation. Students' views are regularly sought and used when improvements are being made. For example, assignments have been re-scheduled to meet students' concerns over workloads. Course files are well organised and informative. Course monitoring and reviews are effectively carried out.

98. The use of data for course planning has been inadequate. Teachers are well supported by managers. Lesson observations are regularly carried out, but failed to identify some unsatisfactory teaching. Curriculum managers recognise that the counselling course offer is confusing and needs to be reviewed. Managers have successfully developed approaches which embrace the core values of equal opportunities and directly impact on students' learning experience and their work in the care sector.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- good course management
- good standard of practical work
- outstanding course documentation
- effective processes for students' assessment and feedback
- good IT resources
- well-integrated work on key skills

- mostly good pass rates.

Weaknesses

- poor record of students' attendance and punctuality
- some inappropriate teaching space
- inadequate display and storage facilities
- ineffective technician support
- poor retention rates on the national diploma in design.

Scope of provision

99. The college offers a good range of provision at levels 2, 3 and 4, for both full-time and part-time students. Courses take place at a variety of centres, during the day and evenings, but most courses are based at College Green. Full-time courses include art GNVQs at intermediate and advanced levels, and a range of national diplomas which include, design, media, music technology and performing arts. Students taking a GCE AS/A-level programme can study art, media, film, dance and photography. Part-time courses include media technology in television, journalism and vocational photography. For adult students wishing to progress to HE, there is the access to art and design course. There are currently 483 full-time students and 631 part-time students on courses within the faculty. Students on GCE AS/A-level courses are based in another faculty.

Achievement and standards

100. Many pass rates are at, or better than, the national averages. However, retention and pass rates are uneven across the provision. GCE A-level art has achieved good retention and pass rates for the three years from 1999. The pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate is now well above the national average, but the retention rate has declined. Students on national diploma courses in design and music technology continue to be high achievers. However, the course on media technology in television at level 3 has had poor retention rates, although the pass rates are satisfactory. On the journalism course at the same level, retention rates have stayed consistently high, but the pass rate in 2001, at 35%, was very poor. The retention and pass rates on the vocational photography course have remained consistently above national averages.

101. Students produce a good standard of work. The technical skills displayed by most students are of a high standard. Many of the lessons observed were assessment activities. Students are confident when making presentations and they respond well to helpful criticisms by other members

of the group. The standard of work produced by adult students on the access programme is particularly good quality. The attendance at a few lessons was poor and students arriving late disrupted some lessons. Many students who complete their courses successfully progress to relevant higher levels of study.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, and media, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate art	2	No. of starts	27	22	23
		% retention	81	86	74
		% pass rate	68	53	94
Media technology journalism	2	No. of starts	37	34	25
		% retention	62	88	76
		% pass rate	78	87	35
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	19	27	25
		% retention	89	65	80
		% pass rate	67	81	80
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	85	85	41
		% retention	67	72	56
		% pass rate	97	81	100
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	13	7	18
		% retention	77	71	78
		% pass rate	100	100	86
National diploma music technology	3	No. of starts	19	36	25
		% retention	79	69	76
		% pass rate	100	91	88

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

Quality of education and training

102. Most teaching is good or better. In a music technology lesson, the teacher gave a clear and concise explanation of the assessment process. The task set for students, was to present a three to five minute piece of music which each had composed. Other students in the group then acted as the assessors. The musical pieces were quite different in character and reflected the students' musical ability or technical skill. The standard of composition and sound was impressive. The group and the teacher made perceptive and helpful comments. On fashion and clothing courses, the garment designs are of a very high standard. Many ideas are imaginative and students draw from their own cultural background. Where teaching is less successful, student project activities are not stimulating and lesson plans are not clear. Teachers are technically very competent when using up-to-date and industry standard IT equipment which is reflected in the effectiveness of their teaching. They use an appropriate variety of methods to maintain students' interest. Students are often inspired by their teachers and find the work challenging. The working relationship between staff and students is very good. Teachers who have training and development needs are well supported.

103. Technician support is sometimes ineffective. Students find some technician staff difficult to approach and unhelpful. The induction process is mostly satisfactory. However, it is rather short and some students are not included. When students have started on their courses, they undergo an

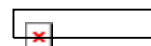
initial assessment and receive good tutorial support. Student reviews are good and effectively used to document and monitor progress. Some students find the flexibility of some learning programmes, where there is no defined group to belong too, unsettling.

104. Most of the provision is located in new purpose-built accommodation at College Green. The space allocated and the standard of equipment are good. For example, the digital studio is a large area resourced with high specification computers, scanners and printers. The 86 workstations are available 6 days a week. Some of the computers are used for timetabled sessions and others for drop-in purposes. However, some studios such as music technology and three-dimensional, are too small for their purpose. Although the design studio is large, when three different groups are using it, the screening does not prevent noise interruptions. Some rooms can be stuffy. Doors are often held open to improve ventilation. Some display and storage facilities are inadequate. The opportunities for students to exhibit their work are inadequate.

Leadership and management

105. The department is well led and managed. Teachers share the same vision and understand their role in meeting the demands of the work. The team keeps accurate and well-organised records covering all aspects of their work, including, for example, changes to the management of the curriculum and minutes of the regular meetings. Team members are fully involved in the self-assessment process. The report is thorough, honest and mostly accurate. The system for tracking student absences and punctuality is not effective. Students are represented on course committees. However, they feel that their ability to influence course improvements is not significant.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- good access and return to study courses
- effective support for students
- good GCE AS pass rates.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GCE A-level courses
- insufficient homework for advanced-level courses

- ineffective monitoring of students' progress and attendance on advanced-level courses
- inadequate course planning in GCE and GCSE subjects.

Scope of provision

106. There is a good range of humanities courses. The provision attracts both adults and students aged 16 to 18. A wide range of humanities subjects is offered at GCE A level. The provision for full-time students aged 16 to 18 has grown significantly since the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and the relocation of courses to College Green. Students from a nearby secondary school attend the college to take additional GCE AS subjects. For the same reason, a small number of the college's students travel to the school. The arrangement works well. There is a satisfactory range of GCSE courses, but few are offered in the evening. The access and return to study courses are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of adult learners. The courses are structured to enable students to join and leave the programme at times that best suit them. The return to study course develops the skills students need for further study or employment. The access provision provides an effective route to HE. Access courses are offered on four of the college sites.

Achievement and standards

107. The general standard of students' work, and their achievements, is uneven. Some pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been unsatisfactory. The retention rate on GCE A-level courses is lower than national averages. The pass rates for these courses have been low, but in 2001, rose to around the national average. In GCE A-level law, a small group of full-time students has consistently achieved very good results. In most subjects, the percentage of students achieving high grades is low. The pass rates on the new GCE AS courses are very good, achieved at a time when enrolments have significantly increased. The pass rates on GCSE courses are uneven. Many students fail to achieve their target grade. Centrally-held information on students' retention and pass rates in humanities is not reliable. The achievements of adult returners are good. Most adults are retained on their course and nearly all completing students progress to FE or HE.

108. The work produced by adult students is mostly of a high standard, particularly on the access course. Students successfully develop the study skills they need for progression. The standard of students' work on GCE and GCSE courses is below the level of what is expected. Most students are developing the skill levels required to meet external examination requirements. However, the written work required of students is insufficient. Many students do not receive enough homework and undertake little studying outside lessons. Most assessment is by short tests. Students' ability to analyse and evaluate course materials is often superficial and underdeveloped. By contrast, in many lessons, students demonstrate good critical skills and make effective oral contributions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE psychology (one year)	2	No. of starts	19	40	26
		% retention	89	63	62
		% pass rate	18	48	50
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	30	22	7

(two years)		% retention	40	64	43
		% pass rate	42	86	100
GCE A-level psychology (two years)	3	No. of starts	31	19	18
		% retention	39	89	50
		% pass rate	100	76	78
GCE A-level law (two years)	3	No. of starts	11	23	14
		% retention	90	43	71
		% pass rate	91	100	100
GCE A-level psychology (one year)	3	No. of starts	32	42	20
		% retention	59	88	55
		% pass rate	63	41	91
Access to HE (one and two years)	3	No. of starts	73	156	99
		% retention	81	71	71
		% pass rate	95	92	99

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

Quality of education and training

109. Most of the lessons observed were good or better; a few were unsatisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of imaginative approaches that maintain students' attention and involve the whole class. For example, in psychology, practical experiments help students to both understand research techniques and to develop analytical skills. In one lesson, students carried out a range of interesting exercises to illustrate the concept of context-dependent memory. In another sociology lesson, an extract from the biography of Malcolm X was successfully used to introduce the concept of labelling. During a class discussion, students effectively developed an understanding of the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers on the access and return to study courses are skilled at developing students' understanding of a wide range of concepts. Lessons are well planned. Students' own experiences and knowledge are effectively used. Students receive constructive and relevant feedback on their assignments. The process helps them to improve. In the less effective lessons, not all students get involved in the learning or show interest. For example, in some lessons, students copied notes from the board for long periods. There were no checks on learning and minimal student involvement. In most subjects, students display real enthusiasm, but in some dull lessons, opportunities to develop students' critical skills are often missed. GCE A-level courses are not well planned. Schemes of work are insufficiently detailed. The topics for the year are simply a list, rather than identifying expected learning outcomes and approaches to teaching. Insufficient thought is given to students' individual needs or strategies for improving the effectiveness of teaching. New and inexperienced teachers have little written information to guide them.

110. Humanities teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. Most handouts are good. There is an adequate supply of appropriate textbooks in the library. Classrooms at the Brunel site are poorly decorated. The availability of audio-visual equipment and computers in classrooms is inadequate. Students make insufficient use of IT in their learning. Teachers recognised this weakness and assignment briefs highlight where appropriate IT resources are located. A teacher in sociology has created an excellent website with a wealth of materials for students.

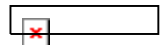
111. The monitoring of students' progress and attendance on GCE A-level courses is ineffective. The team has developed clear systems aimed at improving both achievement and attendance. For example, at the start of each course, based on previous results, each student is given a target minimum grade. However, progress against these targets is not effectively evaluated or used to raise students' achievement. The working relationship between staff and students is very good and

this is reflected in the purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. Staff are approachable and give freely of their time to help students outside lessons. Students' progress on the access and return to study courses is closely monitored. The tutorial system is very effective.

Leadership and management

112. Provision in humanities is well managed. The access and return to study courses are effectively co-ordinated across four sites. Managers have developed a clear strategy for improving standards for full-time GCE A-level courses. However, the systems for monitoring its effective implementation are underdeveloped. The doubling of the number of students studying on GCE A-level courses over the last two years to 2001 has been successfully managed.

English, languages and communications



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- good pass rates in GCSE modern languages, and GCE AS/A-level English language and English literature
- good retention rates on EFL and GCSE modern language courses
- constructive marking of students' work
- good support for students
- effective use of teaching and learning materials.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in EFL examinations in 2001

- poor attendance on some courses
- outdated and unreliable language laboratory.

Scope of provision

113. At the time of the inspection there were 1,530 students enrolled on a range of full-time and part-time English, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and modern foreign language courses. Of these, about 25% are aged 16 to 18, and the rest are adults. A total of 410 students are following English courses. English language and English literature are offered at GCSE and GCE AS/A level. The full-time access to HE programme includes options in English language and English literature. There are 120 students enrolled on EFL programmes. EFL students can take a range of certificated qualifications from basic to the proficiency level. There are some 1,000 students enrolled on modern foreign language courses. Most are studying on part-time Open College Network courses offered in nine different languages. Approximately 140 students, mostly full-time, are enrolled on GCE AS/A-level and GCSE language courses. The number of students enrolling onto GCE AS language courses is increasing. However, the number of students who progress to GCE A-level language courses after completing their GCE AS language course is low.

Achievement and standards

114. Most pass rates have improved over the three years to 2001. The results in GCSE Spanish, Italian and French, and in GCE A-level English language and English literature are now good. The pass rates for the first GCE AS English language and English literature groups were high at 93% and 97% respectively. Most part-time provision for adults is good. The modern foreign language section recently won a Beacon Award for the excellence of its modern language courses. Most retention rates are at, or above, national averages except for GCE A-level English language, which has stayed around 60%. In EFL, retention rates have been showing improvement, but pass rates fell in 2001.

115. In most lessons, students work well on their own, in pairs or in small groups. In English, students often make perceptive and thoughtful contributions to class discussion. However, many of the students aged 16 to 18 cannot adequately express themselves when speaking. Standards of written work are mostly good. Students' files are full of work that demonstrates good progress. Written work is well presented and is often word processed. Students on EFL courses are making good progress with their language skills. Students at the elementary level are able to ask and respond to questions in the classroom. The level of written work appropriately matches the standard of the students' spoken English. Many of the students aged 16 to 18, who start a modern language course, have poor oral skills and significant problems with basic English grammar. These students find it difficult to grasp the structure of a foreign language and often do not participate in oral work. Adult students who attend modern language lessons in the evening soon develop good listening and comprehension skills. However, later in the course, some students encounter problems with their written work which are often overcome by effective individual support by the teacher.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communications, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	149	135	142
		% retention	73	75	70

		% pass rate	54	44	47
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	27	17	19
		% retention	78	76	79
		% pass rate	95	91	87
GCSE Italian	2	No. of starts	13	*	19
		% retention	77	*	95
		% pass rate	80	*	94
GCE A-level English language (one year)	3	No. of starts	27	18	23
		% retention	63	67	61
		% pass rate	76	83	100
GCE A-level English literature (one year)	3	No. of starts	30	19	18
		% retention	87	89	94
		% pass rate	85	82	94
ESOL examinations (full-time courses)	E/1/2/3	No. of starts	147	163	219
		% retention	73	85	97
		% pass rate	54	86	64

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

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

116. Most teaching is well planned and interesting. Tasks and activities make sufficient demands upon students and meet their needs. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. They make effective use of well-chosen handouts and other materials that aid teaching and learning. Students learn and practise language skills in a supportive atmosphere. In a lively EFL lesson, the teacher used a series of timed tasks to encourage students to use spoken English in several different contexts. The teacher was aware of the needs of individual students and used frequent short exercises to correct pronunciation. Students successfully used newly-learned words in correct ways. However, the best practice in lessons is not always shared between staff. A few EFL lessons are dull and uninspiring, and focus mainly on examination requirements. Written work is marked thoroughly. Comments are encouraging and constructive and help students to improve. Internal moderation arrangements are thorough and effective, and meet the requirements of the awarding bodies.

117. Teachers monitor students' progress effectively. Care is taken to ensure that the differing needs of individuals are met. Teachers plan teaching activities effectively so that one task builds on the previous one to consolidate learning. During an outstanding evening language class, highly relevant learning was skilfully combined with a short celebration of Christmas in the Swedish style. Students enjoyed their learning and were enthused by the candles, videos, illustrative pictures and, in particular, the authentic Christmas fare. Sometimes new vocabulary introduced during modern foreign language lessons is not clearly placed in context. Students have difficulties when they are later required to use the words. The use of IT to stimulate interest in a foreign language and the countries where it is spoken is inadequate.

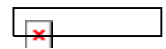
118. Students receive very good support from their teachers. Full-time students have a personal tutor. The tutoring system works well. The progress of full-time students is closely monitored and regularly reviewed. Students in need of additional support for a learning disability or basic skills needs, receive appropriate help. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. The library

book stock for English is adequate at College Green, but poor at the Brunel site. Some English materials have been placed on the college's IT network, but their range and usefulness is inadequate. English and EFL students make good use of the Brunel site's resource centre. However, although the college is highly valued, the opening hours are insufficient to meet the students' needs. The language laboratory is old and the equipment is unreliable. Classroom accommodation is adequate or better on all sites. The newly opened College Green site is very attractive and students enjoy its facilities.

Leadership and management

119. The provision is effectively managed. All teachers, whether new, established or part time, feel valued and supported. Classroom observations of teaching regularly take place. The outcomes play a significant role in staff appraisal. College policies and procedures are effectively implemented. Course teams meet regularly. All English and modern foreign language courses are reviewed annually, and action plans are produced. The reviews form the basis of the annual self-assessment. The EFL team's action plan is inadequate. Students' achievements and qualification level on entry are not sufficiently taken into account.

Foundation studies



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

Strengths

- outstanding teaching and learning
- high levels of achievement and progression
- excellent development of social and life skills
- effective collaborative working with partners across the city
- extensive and flexible provision
- excellent support for students
- effective target setting.

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of student data.

Scope of provision

120. The college provides a wide range of responsive and flexible provision, both full-time and part-time, at pre-entry, entry level and level 1. It collaborates effectively with a large number of partners in the community and across the city, for example, minority ethnic and mental health groups. The foundation programmes are socially and educationally inclusive. They are designed to meet the individual needs of students, both at college sites and at many community venues. Around 4,200 students were enrolled in 2001 on basic skills, ESOL and programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Approximately 1,400 are on basic skills courses, 134 studying on return to work options and 100 studying on foundation key skills programmes. Some 1,500 students studying on full-time or part-time courses in the college receive additional support to help them improve their literacy or numeracy skills. These students may receive help in their lessons or have individual support outside lessons. About 640 students, who do not have English as their first language, are studying to improve their English language skills. Programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities recruit 450 full-time or part-time students. There are 270 students on pre-entry courses, 60 on entry programmes and 120 on community programmes.

Achievement and standards

121. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exceptionally well motivated. They are enthusiastic about their work which is often of a very high standard. Their work is clearly and soundly based on effective initial assessments of their capabilities. In nearly all the lessons observed, students were engrossed in their work and concentrated well. They made good progress during lessons and often demonstrated skills that were at the limits of their potential. One group was rehearsing for a forthcoming performance. The development of their skills as members of a team was very rapid. They made appropriate responses to the music and contributed well to the overall performance. They were proud of their achievements during this lesson. Another group was involved in planning a buffet. They were fully engaged in tasks such as writing invitations and designing table layouts. These students asked probing questions, clearly demonstrating their developing ability to reason and think independently. Their problem-solving skills are well developed.

122. Additional support is highly effective. Students on basic skills courses and those who receive additional support for literacy, numeracy or dyslexia perform well. Many students said that they valued the support highly and felt that they would not successfully complete their course without such extra help. Adults on basic skills courses were mostly confident in how to use their new skills. They were well motivated and asked questions which were fluent and relevant. Some adult students took great pride in being able to help their children with their homework. Students who had received additional support displayed their new skills in a wide range of vocational lessons. Hairdressing students dealt proficiently with client bills. Care students wrote effectively about bereavements. Students of bricklaying could calculate and deal with quantities more effectively. The support is based on a sound initial analysis of what help students need.

123. Most students learning ESOL make good progress. They are keen to learn and they work hard to improve their language skills. Almost all succeed and some make excellent progress. A student receiving individual support to gain entry to an access course used a good range of vocabulary during a lesson. Other students who were completing CVs were very confident in their use of language. They expressed their views clearly and could offer reasoned justifications for them.

124. There is an appropriate range of courses that leads to qualifications. The student data held

centrally often vary from data held locally by course teams. The data in the achievement table are accurate. Retention and pass rates for courses in basic skills and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very good. For ESOL programmes, retention and pass rates vary from satisfactory to very good. However, in this area of work, interpreting data is not always helpful. Students' progress was accurately recorded, often in great and convincing detail, by tutors and teachers. These records show that students make good progress onto further courses of study.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Workright award (long course)	entry	No. of starts	31	59	29
		% retention	90	95	93
		% pass rate	21	42	100
Independent living skills (long course)	entry	No. of starts	*	185	85
		% retention	*	91	95
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Improve your English	entry	No. of starts	63	74	171
		% retention	94	94	77
		% pass rate	100	100	81
Improve your maths	entry	No. of starts	37	61	122
		% retention	89	97	73
		% pass rate	86	100	91
Independent living certificate	entry	No. of starts	*	189	86
		% retention	*	91	95
		% pass rate	*	100	100
ESOL	1	No. of starts	51	89	161
		% retention	76	95	99
		% pass rate	41	66	61

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

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

125. There is outstanding teaching and learning within foundation studies programmes. Classroom practice is firmly based on meeting the needs of individual students. Groups are often composed of students with a wide range of abilities. Teachers are skilled at ensuring that each student works hard and effectively in lessons. As a result, students are highly motivated and work consistently and productively. In lessons, they take part in a variety of tasks and learn very well. They are clearly proud of their work, and are enthusiastic about the progress they make.

126. Teachers are skilled at supporting their students. They help them to recognise the real progress they are making as a result of their own efforts. Working relationships between teachers and their students were consistently good, often outstanding. Support workers were effectively used in many lessons. They worked well with the teacher, understood the aims of the lesson and knew their students' capabilities well.

127. Students are given realistic yet challenging personal and learning targets. Their progress towards meeting these targets is monitored closely. In addition to suitably detailed individual learning plans, students also have plans that describe the additional help they need to achieve their goals. In general, teachers on mainstream courses and additional support tutors work very closely together. However, there are a few isolated cases where this co-operation does not take place.

128. Across the provision, teaching and learning resources are good. Classrooms are inviting and well furnished. Where possible, full use is made of information and learning technology, but in some areas there are insufficient computers. Teaching staff are well qualified and receive effective and relevant staff development.

Leadership and management

129. Overall management of the provision is excellent. Although the foundation programme comes under two faculty managers, there is ongoing collaboration to ensure that good practice is shared. The team works closely with a number of European counterparts, to develop effective strategies. There are effective departmental and site meetings that are used to pass information to staff in the faculties and to maintain good liaison. Senior managers are active in the pursuit of improvement. Although the teams collect a significant amount of data, there is no consistent attempt to use the data to identify overall trends and to monitor student achievements.

Part D: College data

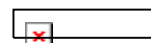
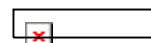


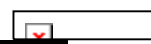
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	30	33
2	34	30
3	27	20
4/5	0	2
Other	9	15
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2001

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %

Science	1,672	4,454	18.5
Agriculture	22	143	0.5
Construction	620	1,047	5.0
Engineering	519	1,608	6.4
Business	412	3,148	10.8
Hotel and catering	436	2,804	9.8
Health and community care	810	4,508	16.1
Art and design	364	1,002	4.1
Humanities	1,863	4,990	20.7
Basic education	259	2,429	8.1
Total	6,977	26,133	100.0

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2001

Table 3:

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1998/ 99	1999/ 00	2000/ 01	1998/ 99	1999/ 00	2000/ 01
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,141	1,517	2,184	2,424	3,131	3,417
	Retention rate (%)	86	81	86	86	81	79
	National average (%)	80	80	*	78	79	*
	Pass rate (%)	63	84	67	64	76	72
	National average (%)	62	66	*	63	69	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,544	1,719	2,463	2,359	2,559	2,466
	Retention rate (%)	81	78	83	82	83	85
	National average (%)	76	77	*	78	78	*
	Pass rate (%)	67	80	70	71	69	76
	National average (%)	67	68	*	65	68	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,442	1,524	2,303	2,895	3,908	3,321
	Retention rate (%)	84	85	81	87	79	83
	National average (%)	77	77	*	79	79	*
	Pass rate (%)	74	79	80	75	77	77
	National average (%)	72	73	*	65	69	*

4/5	Starters excluding transfers	9	14	1	440	543	478
	Retention rate (%)	89	93	100	94	91	93
	National average (%)	84	80	*	84	81	*
	Pass rate (%)	67	100	100	68	74	77
	National average (%)	64	65	*	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).

* data unavailable

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 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	74	20	6	149
Level 2 (intermediate)	68	22	0	95
Level 1 (foundation)	61	32	7	41
Other sessions	87	11	2	46
Totals	73	21	6	331

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