



# Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

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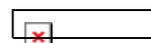
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#### **Basic information about the college**



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Name of college:	Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
Type of college:	Further Education College
Principal:	John Rockett
Address of college:	Eastwood Lane Rotherham  S65 1EG
Telephone number:	01709 362111
Fax number:	01709 373053
Chair of governors:	Joan Brier
Unique reference number:	130527

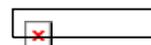
Name of reporting inspector:

Paul Curry HMI

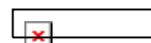
Date(s) of inspection:

26-30 November 2001

## Part A: Summary



### Information about the college



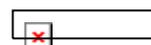
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology is a medium-sized further education (FE) college with approximately 1,700 full-time and 9,000 part-time students and an annual budget of £13.3m. There is one other college, a sixth form college in the town and two other general FE colleges in the outer borough. The college has established a 'central sixth form college' for students aged 16 to 19 specialising in pre-General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), GCSE, General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced levels (GCE AS/A levels), science and sports science programmes. Approximately 75% of enrolments are adults. Most students aged 16 to 18 study full time; slightly more than half of adults study part time. The largest proportion of students aged 16 to 18 study at level 2, whilst the largest proportion of part-time adults study at level 1.

Programmes are provided in 12 of the 14 areas of learning; over 16% of full-time equivalent students are on foundation programmes. The college holds no work-based training contracts directly. The mission states that the college 'exists to serve the educational, cultural, social and economic needs of the local community, and to provide further and higher educational opportunities to a national and international clientele'.

Rotherham has a population of about 250,000 inhabitants, of whom about 2% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The town currently has an unemployment rate of 5% as compared with the regional rate of 3.8% and a national average of 2.9%. In the central area of Rotherham there are eight schools for pupils aged 11 to 16; in the outer area there are also eight schools for pupils aged 11 to 18.

The senior management consists of the principal and directors for finance and corporate services, curriculum, quality and personnel. There are heads of faculty for the curriculum areas of science and mathematics, information technology (IT) and computing, building studies, engineering, business and professional studies, vocational services, caring services and professions, and creative arts.

### How effective is the college?

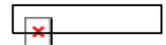


Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be good in five of the curriculum areas and satisfactory in four. Two of the curriculum areas, humanities, and mathematics and science, were judged to be unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

#### Key strengths

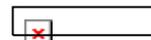
- high levels of retention and achievement for learners at level 1
- good pass rates on vocational courses
- good teaching in business, hospitality, care, hairdressing and visual and performing arts
- social inclusion
- accurate and reliable management information
- improvements to accommodation since the last inspection.

#### **What should be improved?**



- unsatisfactory retention rates at level 2 and above
- pass rates at GCSE and GCE A level
- tutorial system
- financial management and forecasting
- role of governors in decision making and monitoring of the progress of the college.

#### **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
Mathematics and science	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Retention rates on all courses are poor and show little sign of improvement. Pass rates on GCE A-level science courses are unsatisfactory. There are high pass rates on courses for adults. The teaching of adults is good.
Construction	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Many classes are of mixed ability and teaching for these students is good. There are high levels of achievement for entry and level 1 learners. Retention rates at level 2 are low and declining. There is little use of work-based evidence on craft courses. Insufficient attention is paid to health and safety.
Engineering	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates on many programmes. Teaching and assessment are thoroughly planned. Retention rates are low on level 2 programmes and teaching is unsatisfactory in some level 2 lessons. Tutorial support is ineffective.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high on many management and professional programmes. All teaching is satisfactory or better. Support for full-time students is effective. Retention rates are poor on some courses and there is insufficient use of IT in teaching.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are good pass rates on national diploma and GCSE IT qualifications. The teaching of practical work is generally well managed, but, at advanced level, some teaching is unsatisfactory. Key skills are poorly organised and there are insufficient opportunities for students to experience industrial practice.
Hospitality and leisure	<b>Good.</b> On hospitality courses, both pass and retention rates are high. Students display good practical skills and much teaching is good. Classrooms and workshops are well equipped. Links with employers are productive. Retention rates and recruitment for leisure and tourism are unsatisfactory and some learners are making poor progress.
Care	<b>Good.</b> High pass rates have been achieved on level 1 and 2 care and counselling courses. There is much good teaching which links theory to practice. The range of external links enriches the curriculum. Poor retention rates are a feature of many courses and some level 3 learners are working below the expected standard.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates at levels 1 and 2 are good. Provision is flexibly organised to meet a variety of needs. Practical and theoretical teaching is effective. Assessed work is of a high standard. Retention rates are poor in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3. Some of the resources are inadequate; internal verification is insufficiently regular.
Visual and performing arts	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates on full-time courses are good. Practical work in all areas is of a high standard. Teaching directed at individual students is effective and the assessment of students' work is thorough. Pass rates on part-time courses are poor. The accommodation for drama is inadequate.
Humanities	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at GCE A level are poor. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on many courses.

	Learning materials are well designed. Less confident learners are not fully engaged by the teaching. Pass rates on the access and GCSE history courses are good. There is a strong commitment to social inclusion.
Foundation studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Community provision is extensive. There are good levels of retention and progression to higher levels of study within the college. In some lessons the range of teaching methods is narrow and individual learning plans do not have sufficiently specific targets.

### How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has addressed many of the issues identified at the last inspection. Pass rates have improved and are now high, although retention rates have fallen and are now low. A high proportion of the students who enrol at the college achieve the qualification they are seeking. Most curriculum areas are well managed. However, in a few areas, management is unsatisfactory. Senior management has not fully addressed the problem of under-performing curriculum areas. Operational planning and review at faculty and unit level are systematic. There is a thorough system of lesson observation and extensive arrangements to assure quality. The college produces accurate and timely management information for its staff. There are weaknesses in financial management and governance.

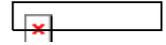
### To what extent is the provision of the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college recruits a high proportion of disadvantaged students. Many courses have been developed in the community to enable participation from under-represented groups. Most students at the central sixth form college have low prior attainment. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. The equal opportunities committee completes an annual self-assessment report and establishes a plan to address weaknesses. Statistics on the recruitment and achievements of under-represented groups are collected and reviewed. In surveys of their views, students report high levels of satisfaction with the way they are treated. Equality of opportunity is a standing item on the agenda of team meetings. Some courses are provided to encourage women to enrol. For example, a course in construction crafts is provided for women and taught by women.

### How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

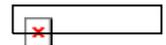
Students joining the college receive good initial support and guidance. Surveys of students' views indicate a high level of satisfaction with their induction programme. A system of student mentors and senior personal tutors has been introduced to improve pastoral and tutorial support for all full-time students. It is not yet working effectively. There are only informal tutorial arrangements for part-time students.

## Students' views of the college



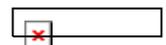
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

## What students like about the college



- friendly and supportive teaching staff who treat students with respect
- good access to learning resources and other specialist services
- wide range of course provision and progression opportunities
- good opportunities to develop practical skills
- constructive feedback from teaching staff following assessment
- town centre location and easy access to the campus.

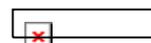
## What they feel could be improved



- individual academic and vocational tutorial support
- more appropriate and up-to-date library books
- more quiet areas for independent study

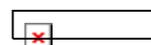
- more flexible timetabling for single parents and mature students
- better smoke free common room and refectory areas
- more modern practical learning resources.

### 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

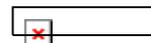


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	57	36	7
19+ and WBL*	63	28	9
Learning 16-18	54	37	9
19+ and WBL	58	34	8

*Key: Inspectors grade three aspects of lessons: teaching, learning and attainment. The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).*

\* work-based learning

## Achievement and standards



1. The college recruits a high number of students from disadvantaged areas. Its performance is therefore compared with colleges of a similar type. The data on students' achievements for the years 1998 to 2000 show that pass rates have improved for most qualifications at the different levels to a point where they are now good. The exceptions are in GCSE and GCE A-level subjects where, overall, pass rates are below national averages. Retention rates are acknowledged by the college to be unsatisfactory. On level 2 courses for adult learners they are poor, though they are much better for all learners at level 1. Figures for 2001 suggest that retention rates for adults at level 2 are improving, although they have significantly worsened at this level for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates in 2001 largely reflect the good performance in 2000. All faculties celebrate students' achievements at annual awards ceremonies, attended by parents, students and local employers.

2. Attendance in the lessons observed during the inspection was 76% overall. It was good in engineering and foundation programmes but poor in humanities. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about achievements and standards for particular courses.

### **16-18 year olds**

3. The college has been successful in raising levels of retention and achievement for level 1 learners to a point where they are now significantly above national averages. The pass rate, for example, has risen from 44% in 1998 to 84% in 2000. Provisional figures for 2001 suggest the maintenance of good standards. On National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1 programmes, for example, the pass rate is close to 100% although compared with the previous year, retention rates have declined. Similarly, at level 2, pass rates have improved considerably over the period 1998 to 2000 but retention rates fell below the national average in 2000. For example, the NVQ pass rate in 2000 was 80% but the retention rate fell from over 70% in 1999 to 67% in 2000. On General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes, both retention and pass rates have been above the national average. However, in GCSE, retention rates have been below 60% during the last two years, and the A\*-C pass rate fell from 56% in 2000 to 35% in 2001. This compares with the figure for Rotherham as a whole of 41%. Only a relatively small number of students study GCE AS/A-level subjects. Most have low levels of prior attainment. However, even when comparing actual pass rates with those predicted by students' GCSE results, achievements are below the levels expected, though there was some exception to this in GCE AS-level sociology and English literature in 2001.

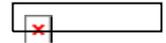
4. Students on vocational programmes at level 3 perform much better. Results are particularly good on national diploma and certificate courses where overall pass rates exceeded 90% in 2000.

### **Adult learners**

5. Adults perform well at level 1. Pass rates in 2000 place the college in the top quartile of general FE colleges. The indications are of further improvement in 2001. On courses, of over 24 weeks for example, of the 1,657 adults completing in 2000, 77% were successful. The improvement in pass rates is, however, not matched by retention rates which have fallen steadily over the last three years. At level 2, the poor retention rate of 62% in 2000 shows signs of improvement in 2001, although it is still well below the national average. Pass rates at this level, for those who complete their courses, have increased significantly over the last four years and now average over 80%. On NVQ programmes, students perform particularly well. For example, of the 455 students who completed their level 2 studies in 2000, 93% were successful. At level 3, retention rates have worsened by over 10 percentage points during the last three years and are now below national averages. For example, on NVQ programmes, retention is now below 60%. Pass rates, however, have risen from 51% in 1998 to 76% in 2000 and there are indications of further improvements in 2001. On courses of over 24 weeks for example, 78% of the 369 students who completed were successful. The number of adult learners enrolling on higher education (HE) programmes is

declining and actually halved between 1998 and 2000. Retention and pass rates on these courses in 2000 were good at over 80%.

## Quality of education and training



6. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 222 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 59% of these, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 8%. These overall figures mask some unsatisfactory teaching across different areas of learning. In one area of learning, 18% of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The standard of teaching and attainment was better on programmes for adult students than on those for students aged 16 to 18. On many courses, however, there was a mixture of these two groups of students. The best teaching profiles occurred in business, hospitality, care, hairdressing and visual and performing arts.

7. Nearly all teachers demonstrated appropriate technical or vocational competence and a good knowledge of their subject or vocational area. However, many teachers had no recent industrial updating. There were some good classroom and workshop lessons which were carefully planned based on appropriate schemes of work. In these lessons, teachers gave clear instructions to students explaining the aims and objectives of what was to follow. Teachers encouraged learning by using a range of appropriate teaching methods, learning materials and equipment, including computer software, specialised machinery and well-written course information. They also undertook regular reviews of students' work and enabled learners to make good progress by setting clear targets for improvements. In some very effective lessons, teachers ensured that students of different abilities in the class were able to progress, learn and attain at an appropriate level.

8. Teaching at level 1 was particularly effective on NVQ, GNVQ foundation and basic skills programmes. Teachers at this level were sensitive to the learning needs of individuals. Lessons were lively and interesting and teachers focused on enabling students to achieve examination success, complete an individual learning plan or meet the appropriate awarding body competence requirements. Group work was well managed. Students were encouraged to plan project work thoroughly and to prepare different types of portfolio evidence for assessment purposes. Attendance, retention and pass rates are mostly good on these programmes. In a few lessons, teachers failed to give sufficient attention to students with low GCSE grades and made little use of IT to enhance teaching and learning. These lessons were uninspiring and badly organised with teachers spending too much time talking.

9. Overall, the practical teaching on level 2 and level 3 courses was judged to be slightly better than the classroom teaching. This is in contrast with the examples of unsatisfactory workshop teaching cited in the college's learning observation report. Workshop teaching is nearly always well organised and assessments are well planned and thorough. Teachers carefully monitor students' progress on projects and assignments and the good teacher and student relationships that exist help to promote students' motivation and interest. However, on some courses, teachers have failed to develop appropriate teaching methods to meet the needs of mixed-ability classes. Insufficient attention is given to health and safety in construction workshops and few arrangements have been made on some full-time courses for students to experience industrial practice or work experience.

10. Nearly all full-time teachers are appropriately qualified in their subject or vocational specialism. Over 90% have a recognised teaching qualification. Extensive use is made of part-time agency staff; 48% of teachers are in this category, but, of these, only 68% have a recognised teaching qualification.

11. The college is located in three large easily accessible buildings in the centre of Rotherham. Since the last inspection a major investment programme has improved the accommodation and teaching and learning resources. Most areas of the college have been refurbished, including improved lighting and new floor coverings. Classrooms are well equipped and many have

interactive whiteboards. High-speed Internet links are available throughout the college and in the main community centres. Catering students have been particularly active in using the technology and resources to improve their communication and IT key skills. There are insufficient computers available for students to use on a drop-in basis. Nearly all of the college's accommodation is accessible to students with restricted mobility. The learning resource centre is well laid out and organised. The centre has a quiet study area and rooms for staff to use for group work or individual tutorials. Some student social areas are poor. In one of the main buildings, the refectory area requires refurbishment. Smoking areas are permitted in the refectory and the air quality is poor. In hairdressing and beauty therapy and performing arts there is insufficient space for practical activities.

12. There are clear policies and procedures relating to the assessment and monitoring of students' progress. These procedures are scrutinised three times a year through the college's curriculum validation system to ensure that they meet awarding body requirements. In vocational programmes there are arrangements to share assessment practice and set standards. Assessment methods are appropriate to students' needs and level of study and are mostly well planned and administered. Assignment briefs provide students with helpful guidance on assessment. Students' work is marked and verified promptly. Students are fully aware of the assessment appeals procedure.

13. The college has detailed internal verification arrangements. In most curriculum areas these arrangements work well. Internal verifiers check assessment plans in each curriculum area in advance of their implementation. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, there is insufficient sampling by verifiers and weak assessment record keeping by tutors. In some curriculum areas, students' progress reports clearly detail the progress made, but in others the reports are too brief and uninformative.

14. The college provides an extensive range of learning programmes from entry to HE levels. The vocational curriculum covers most areas of learning. GCSE and GCE A-level courses are offered in 28 subjects. Enrolments for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) have increased since the last inspection from 300 to nearly 600 students. Over the last three years the college has extended its range of courses at pre-entry and foundation level in all areas of the curriculum. Enrolments at level 3 and 4 have declined over the last three years. The college provides learners with a range of flexible attendance arrangements and community programmes that promote widening participation. An increasing number of learners progress from level 1 to level 2 courses.

15. There are some shortcomings in provision. For example, there are no courses at entry level or level 1 in care and childcare. In hospitality and hairdressing and beauty therapy there is little level 3 provision. In science and humanities, GCE A-level courses are inappropriate for some students. Enrichment opportunities are well established within many courses. The cross-college programme is centrally co-ordinated, with Wednesday afternoons reserved for activities. A local sports complex provides students with access to football, basketball, swimming and aerobics. The college is committed to widening participation. The provision in community education is good. External funding and collaboration with voluntary organisations have helped to provide around 50 local education and training centres in the Rotherham area. The college has strong and effective links with local schools. An open day and evening events are held four times each year. The college is an associate college of Sheffield Hallam University. Links with employers are good in some areas, for example, hospitality and care, but less well developed in others, for example IT.

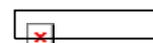
16. The college provides a central student advisory service for enquiries and applications. Students joining the college receive a good level of initial support and guidance. A college devised initial assessment on basic literacy and numeracy is used to establish students' entry level and additional support requirements. Surveys of students' views indicate a high level of satisfaction with the student induction programme. The student advisory service works closely with tutors when a student is recognised as requiring support from a specialist agency.

17. Senior personal tutors have been introduced to provide a structured programme of weekly group tutorials for full-time students. However, because the vocational background of some senior personal tutors does not match the students' course of study, they are not always able to give appropriate support. The system is working well in business, but is less effective elsewhere, for

example, in engineering and visual and performing arts. Insufficient staff and time are allocated for individual tutorials. Where these did take place, there was often a lack of confidentiality and individual tutorials were held in the presence of the whole tutorial group. The action plans and records resulting from individual tutorials do not always set clear targets or record accurately students' progress. A mentoring system has been set up to provide pastoral help to students and to deal with cases of absence or poor attendance. There are only informal tutorial arrangements for part-time students.

18. All learning and key skills support is provided by classroom or workshop-based support tutors. In addition, there is a 'drop-in' learning support facility. These arrangements have been successful in raising key skills achievements across the different curriculum areas. Specialist advisers provide students with timely advice and guidance on careers and progression to HE. The student advisory service provides students with access to employment opportunities with local employers.

## Leadership and management



19. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the college has improved several areas of provision including its college information system, quality assurance procedures, and accommodation and equipment. It has recovered successfully from the financial problems it was encountering at that time. Students' pass rates have improved and are now high on most courses. Retention rates, however, have fallen and are now low. Nevertheless, a high proportion of the students who enrol at the college achieve the qualification they are seeking. There are inadequacies in the arrangements to support students. There are weaknesses in governance. The college's finances have deteriorated recently to a point where there is an accumulated deficit on the income and expenditure account of over £800,000.

20. The college's mission, values and strategic objectives are reviewed annually. Few of the annually set corporate operational objectives include targets which can be easily measured. For example, many of them include the general ambition to 'continue to develop' provision. Faculty and unit development plans, however, contain objectives which are more specific. These plans are based on a careful consideration of existing provision, and a review of the extent to which previously set objectives have been achieved. They are detailed and contribute systematically to the achievement of corporate objectives. The college's quality management group periodically assesses the degree to which these plans have been implemented. Targets for retention and pass rates are set at course and college levels, and for funding units at faculty and college levels. Progress towards them is monitored periodically. Pass rate targets have been met in recent years, but not retention targets.

21. Arrangements to assure the quality of provision are extensive. Course teams meet regularly and consider issues systematically. Their annual reports contribute to faculty self-assessment. The analysis of the outcomes from the college teaching observation scheme is detailed and thorough and the grade profile is similar to that awarded by inspectors. The views of students and other customers are systematically collected, considered and acted upon. All faculties and cross-college units complete detailed self-assessment reports. The implementation of plans to improve the provision is reviewed regularly. Quality assurance arrangements have not, however, been successful in raising achievements at GCE A level in two curriculum areas graded unsatisfactory by inspectors.

22. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. The equal opportunities committee completes an annual self-assessment report and establishes a plan to address weaknesses. Statistics on the recruitment, and achievements of under-represented groups are collected and reviewed. In surveys of their views, students report high levels of satisfaction with the way they are treated. Equality of opportunity is a standing item on the agenda of team meetings. Some courses are provided to try to encourage women to enrol. For example, a course in construction crafts is provided for women and

taught by women. Many courses have been developed in the community to widen participation from under-represented groups.

23. During 2000/01, the corporation has been distracted by extended and unprofitable discussion about the way the college is managed. Governors' decisions concerning some key aspects of college performance, for example the college's financial position, have been weak. Governors considered the college's mission and key strategic objectives carefully at a weekend conference. They also considered a wide range of other academic matters, including retention and achievement data. However, the outcomes of discussions are not minuted. The minutes of corporation meetings during the year do not give a clear view of the extent of the discussions about issues of concern. For example, at the meeting where retention and achievement targets were reported, no discussion about the low retention rates is recorded. The corporation has not received reports on the implementation of some key policies, such as health and safety, during the last 12 months. Governors have committed themselves to establishing links with a large number of college groups, including all the faculties and the quality-monitoring group. During the last year only a few governors have met these commitments adequately. Some of the events to address governors' development needs have been poorly attended.

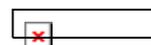
24. The college's information system provides accurate and timely management information reports on a range of matters, including students' attendance, retention, funding unit achievement, and staffing information. Inspectors were able to place a high degree of reliability on the accuracy of centrally-produced students' achievement data. There are well-developed mechanisms to promote good communications in the college. College newsletters are regularly produced and include a wide range of useful information. Whole staff meetings are held termly. Teams at all management levels in the college meet regularly and to a schedule which facilitates the dissemination of information.

25. The college has been unable to determine accurately its financial out-turn for the year 2000/01. A recent benchmarking exercise has identified several areas where the college is operating inefficiently in comparison with other colleges. These include higher than average staffing costs and lower than average class sizes. The low retention rates exacerbate these inefficiencies. The college planned for the receipt of significant European funds. When these were not forthcoming it elected not to make efficiency savings immediately, deciding instead to preserve as much of its provision as it could. The current financial deficit and the non-arrival of European money are posing a threat to the viability of some provision.

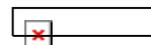
26. Curriculum management is well developed in a number of learning areas. Good features include a rigorous validation process for new courses, and course files which include important information relating to teaching, such as schemes of work and verifiers' reports. There are policies on the number of hours of teaching which can be undertaken each week and the time allowed for other activity. However, there are some operational weaknesses. For example, there are some poor safety practices in construction. In another area, students' individual learning plans lack measurable targets. Senior management has not fully addressed some under-performing areas of provision, such as the central sixth form college.

27. Arrangements to induct and develop staff are good. New staff are allocated a mentor during their first year. New teachers are observed teaching and regular training and development reviews are undertaken during this first year. All staff have an annual training and development interview. The college's staff development plan is based on staff needs which have been identified, for example, from training and development interviews, from lesson observation and self-assessment, and from operational development needs. Staff development events cover a wide variety of appropriate activities. The implementation of the staff development plan is reviewed annually.

## **Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas**



## Mathematics and science

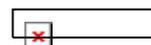


Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### **Strengths**

- good pass rates in health science, science access, animal nursing and vocational courses
- much good teaching for adults
- well-structured practical sessions
- extensive support for adults.

### **Weaknesses**



- poor retention rates across all courses
- poor pass rates on GCE A-level science courses
- some teaching not well matched to student abilities
- ineffective assessment procedures on GCSE and GCE A-level courses.

### **Scope of provision**

28. A wide range of courses is offered in science and mathematics, from foundation to level 3. Full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 which operate within the central sixth form college provide a variety of GCSE and GCE A-level subjects, including mathematics, biology, chemistry and

physics. Access to HE courses for mature students are offered in health science and science. Adults can also study GCSE mathematics, human physiology and health and GCE AS-level biology part time. Vocational programmes are offered in animal nursing and for science technicians working within companies or schools. The largest numbers of students study GCSE mathematics; currently nearly 300 are on roll. Vocational programmes currently cater for approximately 40 students.

### ***Achievements and standards***

29. Pass rates on full-time courses for adults and on vocational courses are good. For example, the pass rate on the animal nursing course has been 100% for the past two years. The pass rate on the GCSE mathematics course for both adults and students aged 16 to 18 has been above the national average for the past three years. There has been also been a considerable improvement in the A\*-C pass rate for GCSE science which reached 47% in 2001 and is now in line with the national average. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are poor. Only 47% of full-time students achieved a pass in GCE A-level science or mathematics in 2001. When comparing these results with students' previous GCSE grades, outcomes are still poor. Retention rates are low across all courses and, in the worst cases, fall below 50%. Retention rates for all GCSE and GCE A-level courses have been consistently well below national averages.

30. Attendance at most lessons was satisfactory but in some of the lessons, it fell to 60%. In most of the classes observed, students were working at the expected level; standards were generally higher for adults than students aged 16 to 18. In the best lessons, students demonstrated high levels of analytical and thinking skills and coped well with the tasks set by teachers.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Veterinary nursing certificate	2	No. of starts	19	30	26
		% retention	63	53	81
		% pass rate	25	100	100
Other vocational courses	2	No. of starts	29	33	31
		% retention	69	73	74
		% pass rate	62	64	82
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	230	322	313
		% retention	60	58	54
		% pass rate	45	45	47
GCSE sciences	2	No. of starts	97	80	32
		% retention	49	50	53
		% pass rate	21	15	47
GCE A-level sciences	3	No. of starts	50	34	54
		% retention	75	37	64
		% pass rate	46	27	37
Access to health science and science	3	No. of starts	32	40	34
		% retention	91	62	68
		% pass rate	90	88	91

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

### **Quality of education and training**

31. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The best lessons were in adult classes. They were well structured and teachers used an appropriate range of activities, materials and equipment to enable students of all abilities to learn. Detailed lesson plans are based on well-structured schemes of work. There were examples of productive question and answer sessions which promoted discussion and students' conceptual development, as well as providing opportunities for teachers to check students' understanding. For example, students in an access mathematics class were confident in using symbolic formulae and enthusiastically tackled problem solving exercises.

32. Practical lessons are well structured and appropriate attention is given to health and safety procedures. In the best lessons, teachers effectively developed students' experimental skills and their understanding of theory. In a pre-GCSE lesson, the effective use of class discussion, the showing of a relevant video clip and a short practical session ensured that students whose behaviour is sometimes poor were actively participating in the work and learning key scientific concepts. In some weaker lessons, for students aged 16 to 18, the teacher talked too much and failed to question students sufficiently to check students' understanding. Not enough use is made of computers in teaching and there are no computers in the science laboratories.

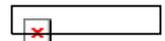
33. The accommodation for science and mathematics is fit for purpose. There is adequate practical apparatus, but insufficient specialist equipment for use on vocational programmes. Technician support is satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified with relevant degrees and teaching qualifications. Nearly all those staff teaching on NVQ programmes possess relevant assessor awards. There has been no recent updating of industrial experience.

34. Detailed assignment briefs with structured marking schemes have been produced for access courses. There is less effective assessment of GCE A-level students. Although GCE A-level marking is linked to examination grades, teachers do not provide students with sufficient advice on how they might improve their performance. Support arrangements for access students are good; extra sessions are provided after subject lessons for those students who require additional help. For students aged 16 to 18, progress reviews are satisfactory and help students to understand their level of achievement. However, they are rarely used to plan specific targets in subjects for students not achieving their expected grade, or to push students to achieve above their minimum expected grade.

### **Leadership and management**

35. Course teams meet regularly to discuss quality assurance developments and the progress of individual students. They contribute to the production of faculty plans and the self-assessment report. Inspectors largely agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that insufficient weighting had been given to the poor retention rates. They did not agree that assessment on GCE A-level courses was a strength.

### **Construction**



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

#### **Strengths**

- good teaching in mixed-ability groups

- high achievement on entry and level 1 programmes
- effective teaching of key skills
- learning programmes matched to employer and community needs.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low and declining level 2 retention rates
- some inappropriate timetabling of workshop activities
- too much reliance on simulated work experience
- insufficient attention to health and safety issues.

### ***Scope of provision***

36. The college provides a broad range of construction programmes covering brickwork, wood occupations, painting and decorating, plumbing, plastering and technician courses. Craft courses range from entry to NVQ level 3. Technician courses include a national diploma and bridging programme to HE. The courses offered provide progression opportunities for craft learners from entry level to HE. The college responds to the needs of employers by providing bespoke courses which include gas safety and multi-skilling for the local authority's modern apprenticeship scheme. Two years ago, the college introduced women-only courses at entry level. This provision has expanded to include level 1 and 2 courses.

37. Recent community projects include craft learners from various disciplines contributing to the construction of flats for the local authority and the construction of a Bailey bridge. The Construction Industry Training Board curriculum centre is located at the college. This is used to promote the industry to school pupils and currently over 150 are engaged in a range of construction activities at the college. The Bailey bridge has been exhibited at the millennium dome and is used extensively in school projects to enrich the curriculum.

### ***Achievement and standards***

38. Good retention and pass rates exist on entry and level 1 courses with 100% pass rates in 2001, well above the national average. At level 2, retention rates on NVQ craft courses have declined over the last three years from 71% to 49% and are now well below the national average. The pass rates

achieved by students who complete the course are well above the national average. Retention rates on NVQ level 3 craft courses over the last three years have fluctuated, but overall are close to the national average and pass rates are above the national average. Retention rates on the GNVQ advanced programme in construction and the built environment have been well below the national average. The college has responded by replacing this provision with a national diploma in building studies. Early indications demonstrate improved retention rates. The bridging programme to HE was successful in enabling most students to progress to HE in 2001. Most learners were working to the standard required for the qualification they were seeking, but over 15% of them were working below the required level.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Open College Network (OCN)	E	No. of starts	*	12	12
		% retention	*	75	92
		% pass rate	*	100	100
NVQ construction craft	1	No. of starts	24	51	60
		% retention	58	80	70
		% pass rate	29	95	100
NVQ construction craft	2	No. of starts	94	164	129
		% retention	71	59	49
		% pass rate	81	86	96
NVQ construction craft	3	No. of starts	44	29	39
		% retention	82	100	77
		% pass rate	67	89	78

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

\* course not running

***Quality of education and training***

39. Teachers provide effective tuition, guidance and support in practical craft and technician studies lessons, establishing good working relationships with learners. Full-time and part-time learners are effectively taught together in many lessons. In the best practical lesson, teachers matched tasks appropriately to the different levels of students' ability. Workbooks are used to give learners job-related knowledge. Some learners lack the required levels of maturity to learn effectively through this medium without a high level of individual support from the tutor and this is not always available when it is required. The timetabling of several courses at the same time in workshops which were not large enough for the combined class sizes made it difficult for teachers and had an adverse effect on learners' progress.

40. Key skills lessons are good. They are taught by enthusiastic vocational tutors with effective support from college key skills specialists. The IT sessions are of a particularly high standard. Project work and assignments are carefully designed to integrate with work in the occupational area to enable students to use evidence both for key skills and for their primary qualification. This motivates learners and helps them to appreciate the relevance of key skills.

41. Teachers possess appropriate vocational experience and qualifications. Some have recent industrial experience developed through contact with local employers. Craft workshops and classrooms have adequate resources for the courses being taught. The computing resources are of

a particularly high standard and current industrial standard software is used.

42. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory and there is an effective internal verification system. Portfolios are of a satisfactory standard and contain good written feedback from teachers to learners. The use of work-based evidence is not well established. Plumbing portfolios, by contrast, are of a high standard and include a good range of work-based evidence. Most practical craft assessment is by simulation in the college workshops and there is no assessment of competence carried out in the workplace. As a result, some learners have to repeat for assessment activities which form part of their normal work. This slows the progress of the learner towards achieving their qualification and leads to frustration. Plumbing portfolios are of a high standard and include a good range of work-based evidence, such as witness testimonies, site diaries and photographic evidence.

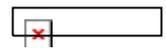
43. The new college-wide tutorial system has only just commenced in construction and the arrangements are not yet satisfactory. For example, because individual tutorials are carried out with the rest of the group present, there is no confidentiality for the individual student. Not all learners receive a comprehensive induction programme. Additional support requirements are identified during initial assessment and an appropriate programme of support is designed. However, few learners receive the full level of support they need.

### ***Leadership and management***

44. Targets for recruitment are set at course level by the programme team during the annual review process, and these are a basis for the self-assessment report. There is good monitoring of individual learners' attendance. There are comprehensive management information data available although they are not always effectively used at programme and course level.

45. There is insufficient emphasis on good health and safety practice in the workshops. Learners displayed poor manual handling techniques in plumbing and plastering workshops. This had to be brought to the attention of the tutors. On several separate occasions, learners failed to use appropriate eye protection whilst cutting bricks. The college policy relating to the wearing of protective footwear and overalls is not implemented.

## **Engineering**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on many programmes
- thoroughly-planned teaching and assessment
- good physical resources.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates particularly on level 2 programmes
- ineffective tutorial support
- unsatisfactory teaching in some level 2 sessions.

### **Scope of provision**

46. Engineering provision covers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses, including mechanical and electrical engineering, from level 1 through to Higher National Certificate (HNC) and diploma programmes. The majority of learners attend part time either on day release supported by an employer, or on short courses for personal interest and development. The teaching divisions have good working relationships with local and national companies providing off-the-job training for groups of apprentices as well as professional development for qualified engineers. There are also links with several local schools and external agencies, especially in mechanical engineering, where groups of learners excluded from normal compulsory education attend practical workshop activities.

### **Achievement and standards**

47. Retention rates on most full-time engineering programmes are poor. For example, on the GNVQ intermediate course, the retention rate was less than half the national average in 2001. In response to low retention rates at level 3, practical elements of the performing engineering operations qualification have been introduced for advanced learners. This has assisted in motivation and allows learners to develop practical skills to complement their academic qualification.

48. The standard of learners' work is good in practical sessions and satisfactory in theory-based sessions. Some learners take additional GCSE qualifications to increase HE entrance and employment prospects. Pass rates in some areas are above the national average for engineering. For example, in computer-aided engineering programmes, all of the learners who completed the course in 2001 achieved the qualification. The national certificate in engineering demonstrates pass rates of 90%, well above the national average. Unemployed learners have special, short, full-time courses designed to accelerate their achievement of a qualification. Success rates on these programmes are high and most learners find employment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 2240	1	No. of starts	10	11	9
		% retention	70	73	67
		% pass rate	43	62	67
Welding and fabrication practices	1	No. of starts	*	20	10
		% retention	*	75	100
		% pass rate	*	67	30
GNVQ intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	22	15	13
		% retention	59	73	38

		% pass rate	54	73	40
NVQ manufacturing	2	No. of starts	54	52	30
		% retention	72	37	47
		% pass rate	72	87	100
GNVQ advanced engineering	3	No. of starts	15	8	20
		% retention	87	38	55
		% pass rate	69	33	91
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	65	64	29
		% retention	86	77	79
		% pass rate	91	92	90
City and Guilds 2301-07 computer-aided engineering	3	No. of starts	16	18	11
		% retention	100	83	100
		% pass rate	81	100	100

*\* course not running*

### **Quality of education and training**

49. The planning of lessons using detailed schemes of work is thorough. There were some good theory and practical lessons where teachers successfully involved all the learners, taking into account the full range of their abilities and arranging for learners to work at their own pace. In these lessons, teachers provided an appropriate range of activities which motivated all the learners and extended their abilities to the utmost. Learners developed good practical skills. For example, in a lesson on pattern development, following lucid demonstrations of different pattern designs by the teacher, the standard of work produced by students was high. In some lessons, however, particularly at level 2, the teaching was poor and overlong exposition resulted in insufficient engagement of the students and little learning taking place.

50. Key skills teaching and achievement has improved over the past year. Occupationally specific material has been developed which integrates key skills into the main study programme. This maintains learners' interest and helps to increase their motivation and achievement.

51. Resources are generally good. The computer numerical control centre is well equipped and contains up-to-date industrial standard equipment and software. The facility, however, is underused throughout the day and tends to be more heavily timetabled in the evening.

52. Feedback on learners' work is generally prompt. The outcomes of assessment are accurately recorded with monitoring documentation in place. In some cases, the marking of assignments is not thorough enough and internal verification is insufficiently frequent. The new tutorial system is not effective in engineering. Most full-time students have not received progress reviews so far this academic year; many had not received the necessary documentation in order to prepare for reviews. Tutorial periods have only recently been introduced. Learners with identified additional needs in communications and numeracy benefit from support from additional staff.

### **Leadership and management**

53. The faculty of engineering is generally well managed. Its activities are monitored by the college quality assurance team. The self-assessment report failed to identify some of the weaknesses identified during the inspection. For example, although only one member of staff had undertaken industrial updating during the last academic year, the industrial updating of teachers was not identified as an area of concern in the self-assessment report. The promotion of equal opportunities by the college has assisted in raising the number of women learners in engineering to over 40, now

representing nearly 5% of learners.

## **Business**



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

### ***Strengths***

- flexible provision to meet a wide range of needs
- high pass rates, particularly on adult professional courses
- good standards of teaching and learning
- effective support for full-time students
- close links with the wider business community.

### ***Weaknesses***

- declining enrolments across many courses
- weak retention rates on some courses
- poor use of ICT in teaching.

### ***Scope of provision***

54. There is a wide range of provision for full-time and part-time students operating both during the day and in the evening. Most courses, for example the NVQ accounting programme which runs at foundation, intermediate and technician levels, are offered at several different levels. Management programmes also offer progression from introductory supervisory to more advanced certificate and diploma levels. The modular nature of many programmes allows students to start their studies at

different times of the year. Full-time students can study general business studies courses such as the British Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma or specialise in accounting, administration or secretarial programmes. Part-time provision is also offered in these and other specialist areas.

### ***Achievement and standards***

55. Achievements are good, particularly on courses for adult part-time students. Examples of recent results which are significantly above national averages include National Examination Board Supervisory Management (NEBSM), NVQ level 2 programmes in administration and accounting. Students' achievements are also reflected in the high quality of portfolio and other work produced on many courses, a standard confirmed by the comments of visiting external examiners and verifiers. There has been a pattern of declining enrolment and very poor retention in the GNVQ advanced/Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) programme, but this has been addressed positively and there has been an increase in enrolments to 17 students this year. Retention rates are good. Many, including the NEBSM course with a completion rate of over 90%, are above the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Word processing	1	No. of starts	116	89	51
		% retention	81	79	76
		% pass rate	83	84	90
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	68	46	43
		% retention	85	78	72
		% pass rate	36	75	86
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	27	27	26
		% retention	89	85	85
		% pass rate	33	100	100
GNVQ advanced	3	No. of starts	25	27	6
		% retention	67	37	50
		% pass rate	50	90	83
GCE A/AS-level business studies (part-time)	3	No. of starts	26	26	11
		% retention	62	71	64
		% pass rate	50	45	86
NEBSM certificate	3	No. of starts	34	25	17
		% retention	85	91	94
		% pass rate	97	89	100

### ***Quality of education and training***

56. All teaching is satisfactory or better and some is outstanding. Teachers know their subjects well and organise work competently with detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. They use a variety of different learning activities, appropriate to the particular stage of students' individual development. This practice is supported by the department's widespread and effective use and monitoring of individual student action plans. An important feature is the enthusiasm which many teachers display about their subject and work. Students respond with interest, attention and a

committed approach to their studies. Dull and tedious teaching with over long exposition is a feature in only a small minority of lessons.

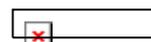
57. Teachers are required to work periodically in local business as part of their own professional development and business updating. In most lessons, theory is linked with business practice and the liveliest lessons often take place when discussions surround topical and current business issues. Students visit local companies, retail parks, public sector, voluntary and other organisations to add a realistic dimension to their studies. There is provision for full-time students, including those taking accounting courses, to undertake work experience. There is insufficient use of ICT in some of the curriculum planning and teaching. In many lessons there was no use of, or reference to, the use of ICT. Some students comment on the difficulties of gaining access to ICT facilities. The faculty has recognised this and, in particular, that insufficient use of the intranet is taking place in learning.

58. Student questionnaires show a high level of satisfaction with induction arrangements. This process is supplemented with diagnostic screening which identifies individual needs and provides for any specialist support. There is an effective tutorial system in place for full-time students. However, some evening class students comment that their courses do not have options for individual tutorial arrangements. An employer mentoring scheme is available for part-time students on professional courses.

### **Leadership and management**

59. Leadership of the business faculty is good. Managers have put effective structures and procedures into place during the last few years. Teachers are given a clear direction and they are helped to achieve agreed targets through professional development. Team meetings take place regularly at different levels. Action points are agreed and their achievement reviewed as a basis for future planning. Morale is good and there is a clear sense of staff working together to ensure that continuous improvements and progress are made. The faculty encourages links with the wider business community in several ways. There is an established employer board which meets throughout the year to advise on curriculum matters in a local employment context.

### **Information and communication technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on national diploma and GCSE IT courses
- significant community-based IT provision
- well-managed teaching through relevant practical activities
- good aspects of curriculum management.

### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory teaching at advanced level
- poor quality of some assignment briefs
- poor arrangements and co-ordination of key skills provision
- insufficient opportunities for students to experience industrial practice.

### **Scope of provision**

60. The college offers a good range of programmes in ICT. Full-time courses for over 150 students range from foundation GNVQ IT through the national diploma in computer studies to higher qualifications. There are part-time courses for around 1,000 students at three levels in local community centres, helping to widen participation. Courses include OCN introduction, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and integrated business technology level 2 (IBT2). Programming and other courses, including flexible study, are also available in the college. There are good opportunities for progression for all students entering lower-level programmes and for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3.

### **Achievement and standards**

61. Many pass rates are above the national average. Pass rates for the national diploma in computer studies and GCSE IT are good and well above national averages. There has been a significant decline in the GNVQ IT pass rate at intermediate level this year although it is still close to the national average. Enrolments of students aged 16 to 18 are growing, especially at level 3. There are clear progression routes for this age group into HE. Achievements on community IT courses are good. About a third of students progress to higher-level courses. Learners' skills and confidence have improved. There are examples of learners progressing from entry-level courses to level 4 study over a period of years. Retention rates have improved over recent years and are now close to the national average for most courses. Attendance in the lessons observed was 75%; most students arrive punctually.

62. Through well-planned practical lessons involving a progression in activities, many learners are gaining appropriate practical skills. For example, projects for second-year national diploma students involved them in developing their individual skills in web authoring and in database manipulation. Practical skills are applied to commercial contexts. For example, students were investigating retailers' websites and their approaches to customer service. In some lessons, teachers failed to test and consolidate students' learning through the use of a whole class discussion towards the end of the lesson. Practical learning was generally well managed in community centres. Teachers helped learners to work at their own pace through materials which took into account their different abilities.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	1,255	1,314	1,021
		% retention	78	78	86
		% pass rate	41	71	*
Word processing	1,2,3	No. of starts	202	196	171
		% retention	95	87	91
		% pass rate	80	78	86
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	16	18	33
		% retention	69	67	76
		% pass rate	73	83	64
GCSE IT grades A*-C	2	No. of starts	16	15	15
		% retention	25	53	60
		% pass rate	75	62	67
IBT 2	2	No. of starts	163	305	328
		% retention	84	81	84
		% pass rate	34	70	*
BTEC national diploma in computer studies	3	No. of starts	17	13	25
		% retention	88	46	68
		% pass rate	100	100	*

\* incomplete data

### **Quality of education and training**

63. Teaching and learning is mostly satisfactory and sometimes good for both students aged 16 to 18 and adult learners. In the best lessons, teachers conducted the lesson at a good pace and effectively enabled learners to work at a variety of different levels. For example, in a word processing lesson, the teacher successfully managed a variety of tasks at different skill levels for learners with a range of abilities, promoting high levels of concentration and commitment. Some lessons are not sufficiently well planned to enable learners to make good progress. For example, one programming practical lesson involved students laboriously keying in statements to build a software program. The exercise was not productive in developing the application of knowledge or understanding. Some advanced-level teaching was unsatisfactory because the content of the lesson was not sufficiently varied to meet the needs of the full range of students' abilities. In one theory lesson, learners were expected to follow the reading of a handout on programming errors rather than discover error classifications through practical examples.

64. Teachers are appropriately qualified technically for the levels of students they teach. Most are teacher trained or are currently studying to qualify. Accommodation and ICT resources are sufficient to support the ICT programmes offered. Technical support is available when needed. In the different learning centres resources related to ICT students are adequate.

65. Assessment practice and moderation activities are planned and meet external requirements. The quality of teacher feedback to students varies considerably from a minimal approach to being exemplary. Some teachers give good feedback to students, with encouraging comments and comprehensive guidance on improving work. Other teachers provide only minimal feedback. Assignment briefs are not always adequate. Some poor briefs provide inadequate guidance to help students to understand the performance level required when submitting work. Students aged 16 to

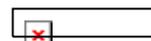
18 have not received an assignment schedule this year to help them plan their work in advance.

66. Teachers help students well in most lessons. Part-time students considered that their learning experiences and the support they had received were good. Full-time students are not receiving enough work-related experience, either directly through placements or through visiting practitioners or off-site visits. Full time students' basic skills are tested at initial interview. Key skill levels are tested at induction. Arrangements to develop students' key skills are ineffective and are not well received by students. There are plans to improve this from 2002 by integrating key skills with the core programme and avoiding the current duplication of assessment.

### ***Leadership and management***

67. Course management records are thorough and include minutes of meetings and development planning. Management information is well used to assist with target setting, self-assessment judgements and future planning. Some good practice is shared. Self-assessment is not sufficiently specific in identifying strategies and targets to improve teaching and learning. The management of key skills for many ICT students is not satisfactory. Action has been taken to improve attendance and retention through the creation of new senior tutor posts.

### **Hospitality and leisure**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates for many courses
- good retention rates for hospitality and catering courses
- good practical skills of hospitality and catering students
- much good teaching in hospitality and catering
- well-equipped classrooms and workshops
- good links with employers.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- unsatisfactory students' progress in leisure and tourism
- lack of provision at level 3.

### **Scope of provision**

68. Provision in hotel and catering includes NVQ level 1 and 2 programmes in food preparation and cooking, together with food and drink service. A foundation course in catering skills is provided for school leavers who require support in basic skills. Intermediate GNVQ and AVCE are offered in hospitality and catering. Recruitment for an intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism has fluctuated since 1999. The AVCE in travel and tourism has not recruited sufficient students and is unavailable for 2001. There is relatively low recruitment for NVQ level 3 programmes in catering and hospitality. There are few opportunities to study at this level, particularly on a part-time basis. Short courses are offered in food hygiene and the national licensees certificate.

### **Achievement and standards**

69. Retention rates of students on NVQ and GNVQ courses at level 2 all meet or exceed national averages. The retention rate for NVQ level 1 in food preparation has fallen from 79% in 2000 to 63% in 2001. There has been a decline in enrolments on the NVQ level 3 in hospitality and catering from 25 in 1998 to 13 in 2000. However, retention rates for this course have increased steadily from 40% in 1999 to 69% in 2001. Retention rates for the GNVQ advanced in hospitality and catering have fallen since 2000 from 91% to 71%, but still match the national average. The retention rate for the GNVQ in leisure and tourism has been unsatisfactory at 60% in 2001.

70. Pass rates for those students who complete their courses are good. In 2001, on the NVQ level 1, the GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in hospitality and catering, all students passed. In the GNVQ intermediate, 78% of students achieved high grades. In food preparation, pass rates have fallen from 75% in 2000 to 68% in 2001. Of the 13 students who started NVQ level 3 in catering and hospitality, only 2 were successful in 2001.

71. Many students demonstrate good skills in completing assignments. ICT is widely used for researching and presenting projects. Proper attention is given to spelling, grammar and the presentation of work. In the hospitality realistic work environments, students undertake practical work competently and professionally. There is appropriate awareness of health, safety and hygiene. Second-year students on the AVCE in travel and tourism have not sufficiently developed skills in evaluating and analysing. They have made poor progress in some of the units they are studying. Attendance and achievement in key skills is also poor in this area.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and leisure, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	32	32	19
		% retention	72	79	63
		% pass rate	52	89	92
GNVQ intermediate hospitality and catering	2	No. of starts	10	10	9
		% retention	100	90	100
		% pass rate	100	56	89

GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	5	10	8
		% retention	20	50	75
		% pass rate	0	100	83
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	37	31	35
		% retention	50	86	80
		% pass rate	94	75	68
NVQ serving food and drink	2	No. of starts	6	36	20
		% retention	67	64	85
		% pass rate	50	100	100
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	No. of starts	13	12	21
		% retention	75	91	71
		% pass rate	78	60	100

### ***Quality of education and training***

72. In hospitality and catering teaching, theory and practice are successfully linked in a way that stimulates students. In realistic work environments, students at different levels work as an efficient team; more experienced students supervise first-year students and have developed responsibility for what they are doing. Students on the AVCE programme are highly motivated by the theme dinners they are required to plan and manage. Teaching in leisure and tourism is competent. However, insufficient use is made of visits, study tours and tourist destinations in the area. Teaching and learning in key skills is ineffective. Many students perceive key skills as dull and not relevant. They are seldom given an emphasis in vocational schemes of work.

73. Assignments and course materials contain up-to-date information, are clearly reproduced and conform to a standard format. There are extensive enrichment activities in hospitality and catering. They include well-planned work experience which takes account of the aspirations of individual students. This has led to placements in highly acclaimed restaurants. Staff maintain good links with employers and the collaboration creates mutual benefits. For example, leading chefs work with students on special dinners. Local and national companies make career presentations to the students.

74. Well-equipped facilities contribute to the quality of teaching and learning. Base rooms provide specialist resources. The foundation catering room contains extensive displays of students' work. Computers are available in base and resource rooms in addition to the learning centre. Sets of course textbooks are available for leisure and tourism students. Realistic work environments are modern and up to date. Equipment is of a good industrial standard and includes specialist items such as combined microwave and convection ovens.

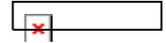
75. A new tutorial system has recently been introduced. In hospitality, leisure and tourism this has resulted in some groups being combined into groups in excess of 20. This has restricted the time available for individual reviews. In one session, personal tutorials were conducted in front of the whole group.

### ***Leadership and management***

76. There is strong leadership in hospitality and catering that fosters effective teamwork. A strong emphasis is put on the quality of teaching and learning. Good communication is evident throughout hospitality, leisure and tourism. For example, the procedure for monitoring students' absences works well. There is good planning of teaching and learning. However, schemes of work sometimes contain insufficient detail and do not provide an adequate overview of what will be taught and how. Course review and evaluation is thorough and there is clear evidence of action points being

addressed. However, some staff are unclear about retention and pass rate targets.

## Care



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

### **Strengths**

- good pass rates at levels 1 and 2
- much good teaching
- good external links
- good range of courses and student progression
- integrated teaching of key skills.

### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory retention rates on a number of courses
- poor attendance on some courses
- some low attainment on level 3 courses.

### **Scope of provision**

77. A good range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care, childcare, guidance, playwork and counselling is offered at different levels from entry to HE. The college has introduced a number of part-time courses, including NVQ levels 2 and 3 in care, early years care and education, playwork and guidance. Many of the adults on these programmes have progressed from level 2 to 3 and plan to progress to HNC programmes. There is a good range of counselling courses

offering progression from level 2 to level 4 and resulting in improved job opportunities. A range of programmes is available in the workplace and in the community to meet individual student needs and encourage participation.

### **Achievement and standards**

78. There are good pass rates on level 1 and 2 programmes and on counselling courses. Students' achievements have been consistently above the national average on the GNVQ foundation programme. All counselling courses have high pass rates. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on two full-time courses, GNVQ intermediate and introduction to care practice. A new staff role of student mentor is now addressing this and students causing concern are interviewed at an early stage. Attendance is poor on some lower-level courses; overall it averaged 73%. Most students' work is of a good standard, meeting the requirements of the awarding body. Some students on the second year of the AVCE and national diploma programmes at level 3 are not reaching the standards expected at this stage of study, particularly those aspiring to HE entry.

79. Most students' work demonstrates good IT skills; one group had used IT skills to produce an interesting wall display denoting changes in social policy over the years.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in care, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	13	16	12
		% retention	54	53	91
		% pass rate	100	88	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	20	13	13
		% retention	84	85	62
		% pass rate	94	91	62
NVQ early years child education	2	No. of starts	60	16	62
		% retention	74	100	66
		% pass rate	95	94	79
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	47	25	61
		% retention	26	39	70
		% pass rate	75	100	51
Certificate in basic counselling	2	No. of starts	88	55	99
		% retention	84	81	83
		% pass rate	96	98	100
Counselling skills advanced	3	No. of starts	14	23	39
		% retention	71	74	79
		% pass rate	100	94	*
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	29	11	17
		% retention	89	91	82
		% pass rate	96	100	76

\*data incomplete

### ***Quality of education and training***

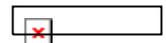
80. Most lessons are well planned. Course files provide clear guidelines on programme content with structured session plans for every unit. There is a range of well-produced handouts and appropriate exercises for teachers to use. On all courses, teachers make use of articles from journals and newspapers in order to keep students aware of current issues. Students are also encouraged to use the Internet when undertaking research. There is much good teaching and the majority of lessons are well taught and effective. Teachers make frequent changes of activity to engage students in learning; effectively link theory and practice. On counselling programmes students are involved in demanding group work and are given constructive individual feedback which increases their understanding and confidence. Key skills are well integrated with the curriculum and vocationally relevant assignments are used. Staff are properly qualified, have relevant vocational backgrounds and undertake an annual programme of industrial updating. Many of the part-time staff work in care occupations resulting in familiarity with current practice which is used to the benefit of students. The department has a suite of refurbished rooms which are all in close proximity on one floor. The three rooms reserved for counselling work are fit for purpose and have comfortable chairs and screens that are useful for small and large group work. Other rooms have been adapted for childcare or care courses. There is, for example, a craft room and a classroom with a working kitchen.

81. There are clear guidelines on assessment criteria. These are made clear to students in class, and most students have a good grasp of what is needed to reach higher grades. There are appropriate assignments for all units and students are encouraged to discuss them with the tutor so that they can improve their first draft. Many students reported that feedback on assignments provides them with good advice for improving their performance. Students are well supported; all full-time students are assessed on entry to determine the most suitable level of study. There is a well-planned induction which introduces students to the college and to their programme of study.

### ***Leadership and management***

82. The faculty is well managed with a regular calendar of meetings. Frequent observation of teaching and learning is undertaken by managers. Good links have been established with a wide range of organisations including those in HE, early years and childcare development. A link with a nearby Education Action Zone has facilitated training for classroom assistants. A partnership with a local primary school involves students reading with children, a high proportion of whom have English as their second language.

### **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- flexible provision to meet students' needs
- very good pass rates at levels 1 and 2
- effective practical and theoretical teaching

- high standards of assessed work
- effective tutorial and specialist support
- good staff teamwork and internal communications.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on hairdressing at levels 2 and 3
- some inadequate resources
- insufficient internal verification
- insufficient clients for assessment of vocational skills.

### ***Scope of provision***

83. Full-time courses are offered in beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3 and hairdressing at foundation level and levels 1, 2 and 3. There are only five students studying hairdressing at level 3. Part-time courses include hairdressing at level 1, hairdressing and beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3 and OCN reflexology intermediate. A range of ten-week part-time courses is also offered, including aromatherapy and Indian head massage. There is a limit to the number of courses that can be offered because of the lack of space and facilities. The college works with a local managing agent to provide off-the-job training for 40 modern apprentices. Students aged 16 to 18 work to develop key skills, although this is optional for students who are 19 and over. Provision in this area of learning is flexible to meet students' needs. Negotiated start times are available for parents and carers and this is well managed by teachers.

### ***Achievements and standards***

84. There are very good pass rates on most courses, in particular in hairdressing at level 1 and beauty therapy at level 2, both with 100% pass rates. Retention rates in beauty therapy are at, or above, the national average. There are poor retention rates in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3. For example at level 2, 45% of students completed in 2001, compared with a national average of 64%. Students' practical work is of a good standard. Students demonstrate good customer care skills. Often there are insufficient clients for all students in practical sessions, this also limits assessment opportunities. Students' portfolio work is of an excellent standard in beauty therapy and good in

hairdressing. Key skills are integrated with beauty therapy assignments.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Hairdressing	1	No. of starts	26	46	45
		% retention	71	78	70
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	24	14	49
		% retention	88	77	78
		% pass rate	86	100	100
Beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	7	12	14
		% retention	57	83	79
		% pass rate	75	90	73
Hairdressing	2	No. of starts	78	53	93
		% retention	60	26	45
		% pass rate	88	100	97

***Quality of education and training***

85. There is some very effective teaching in practical and theory lessons. In the best lessons, teachers use visual aids imaginatively. In a beauty therapy lesson, for example, a game of 'pass the skull', enabled students to learn about bones and muscles. Practical lessons are effective when there are sufficient clients to simulate a realistic work environment. However, there are often insufficient models to enable students to achieve the full range of assessment opportunities. Full-time and part-time staff teach equally effectively although more work could be done to share good practice. The dispensary is well stocked and a wide range of professional products are available for use. Regular promotions take place which are linked to the curriculum. There is no computer for use in reception.

86. All staff have appropriate vocational, academic and assessor qualifications. Some part-time staff are employed in local salons. All full-time staff have an annual review which identifies their training needs. A mentoring scheme is used to support part-time staff. There are some inadequate resources. One hairdressing and one beauty therapy salon are not suitable for commercial salon work. One beauty therapy salon is too small. There is no accommodation suitable for holistic therapies. There are no shower or changing facilities for students and models. There is good access to IT in the college, but students do not use IT in the commercial environment.

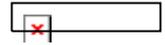
87. Assessments are thorough and teachers give constructive feedback to students. The monitoring of students' progress is good. All parties involved in the assessment process know what is required for successful completion of the qualification. This aids assessment planning, which is good in all cases. The internal verification system is good although there is insufficient sampling of assessments to standardise the process. The tutorial system is effective and supports the progress of students. Targets for students are negotiated and monitored in conjunction with vocational specialists. Additional support is available for students both individually and in classrooms. Full-time students have work experience. This is monitored by telephone and uses witness testimonies for assessment.

***Leadership and management***

88. Leadership and management are good. Staff teams work well together and there is effective

internal communication. Regular meetings are held and these are minuted and actioned. The division produces a newsletter which is distributed to clients, staff and students. Student representatives attend meetings with the head of division and report back to their course groups. Further development is needed on setting realistic targets for students, particularly for retention and attendance.

## Visual and performing arts



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates in full-time art and design courses
- high standards of practical work in all areas
- well-planned teaching
- good specialist resources and studio accommodation
- thorough assessment of students' work.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on some part-time courses
- significant shortcomings in the accommodation for drama
- restricted access to design computers outside lesson times
- ineffective tutorial support.

### **Scope of provision**

89. A broad range of courses is provided in art and design, drama, music and media at levels 1 to 3. About a third of students study on drama, media and music courses. At level 3, students can specialise in national diploma qualifications in graphic design, fashion clothing, design crafts, media, drama and music technology; the diploma in foundation studies in art and design is also offered. Additional qualifications for students include GCE A levels in art and design, critical thinking and music technology as well as other awards in photography and media. Students benefit from educational trips and visits to art galleries and exhibitions in London and Paris.

90. Part-time courses are comprehensive and range from embroidery to music courses in 'DJ' skills. The college has links with local schools from which excluded and special needs pupils come into college. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils who are disengaged from school are taught the GNVQ foundation in performing arts. Enrolments have declined in the year 2000/01; targets on the majority of courses have not been met.

### **Achievement and standards**

91. Pass rates are good on most art and design courses and are consistently above the national average. Students on the diploma in foundation studies, for example, achieved a 100% pass rate in 2001. Retention rates on the majority of art and design courses are good. On other full-time courses, for example, the first diploma in performing arts, retention rates are unsatisfactory. There are poor pass rates across the majority of part-time courses, where students often undertake the course for recreational reasons.

92. Full-time students in all subjects produce high standards of written and practical work. In graphic design and experimental textiles, students' artwork shows a high level of creativity and use of media. In drama, students achieve controlled and articulate physical and vocal characterisations. The assessment of students' work is structured and part of lessons; students engage in much critical analysis and reflection. Students are able to articulate their ideas and understanding of the subject well at all levels. For example, the disengaged school pupils who study on the GNVQ foundation course enthusiastically discussed the research they had undertaken and had clear plans for the resulting presentation of findings.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
First diploma performing arts	2	No. of starts	13	27	21
		% retention	54	65	67
		% pass rate	100	93	94
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	19	19	23
		% retention	74	89	78
		% pass rate	64	81	89
National diploma in media	3	No. of starts	19	16	14
		% retention	67	56	79
		% pass rate	75	100	82
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	11	14	14
		% retention	82	79	92

		% pass rate	78	73	100
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	21	30	20
		% retention	80	87	68
		% pass rate	75	88	92
Diploma in foundation art	3	No. of starts	30	37	28
		% retention	87	94	86
		% pass rate	92	97	100

### ***Quality of education and training***

93. Most of the teaching was good. There were examples of some very good teaching, which was well planned and built around individual students' prior knowledge of theory, through the practical exploration of exercises, presentations and artwork. In the best lessons, there was evidence of students being able to work through the creative and design process with independence, confidence and co-operation. Overall, students were enthusiastic, imaginative, self-reliant, and focused closely on the tasks they were undertaking. Individual students were well supported by teachers who successfully identified their particular needs and strengths and encouraged them to progress appropriately.

94. In visual arts, rooms are well equipped and have good natural light. Students with restricted mobility were able to move easily around the spacious studios. Students on the national diploma in graphic design have individual workstations complete with computer and personal storage, simulating a professional working environment. Students' work is displayed to a good standard on studio walls and corridors. In music, a recording studio and associated rehearsal rooms provide students with the experience of creating and recording music on their own label. The theatre and other rehearsal spaces for students studying drama and production skills are in need of refurbishment. There is insufficient rehearsal and performance space to meet the demands of the curriculum. Efforts have been made to promote and integrate ICT across the curriculum although the computers used are now ageing and access to them is restricted outside lesson time.

95. Assessment practice is thorough and effective. Assignment briefs are clear and well written; learners' progress is monitored carefully. Detailed marking and helpful feedback to students clearly indicate when standards have been met and where action is needed to improve performance. Students identified the advice, support and generation of discussion during the assessment as a valuable part of their learning experience.

96. All students are screened to establish the level of course most appropriate for them prior to their specialist interview. Those identified with additional or specific needs are referred to appropriate support staff. Students with special needs are successfully included in mainstream classes, though support workers assigned to students were not in attendance in three of the classes observed. The introduction of a new tutorial system, replacing the course tutor with a tutor from outside the curriculum area, has resulted in some students feeling that they no longer receive the academic and pastoral support they require.

### ***Leadership and management***

97. The curriculum area has a clearly articulated strategic and artistic development plan. Full-time and part-time staff work well together and there is ample support within the faculty for individual team members. The self-assessment report gives insufficient emphasis to media, drama and music. The problems that inspectors identified concerning the accommodation for drama courses were not included in the overall report.

## **Humanities**

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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on the access course and GCSE history
- well-designed learning materials
- effective assessment
- strong commitment to social inclusion.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on GCE A-level and GCSE subjects
- low achievement for 16-18 year olds at GCE A level compared to their GCSE results
- unsatisfactory attendance in English lessons
- failure to motivate less confident learners
- inappropriate GCSE English provision.

### ***Scope of provision***

98. Courses for full-time students operate in the central sixth form college and students aged 16 to 18 can choose from a variety of GCSE and GCE AS/A-level courses in humanities, social sciences and English. Adult students can study a similar range of subjects together with different modern foreign languages. Access to HE programmes in humanities are available at levels 2 and 3. Some subjects, such as sociology and modern foreign languages, are available through distance learning. Large numbers of students take GCSE English language; small class sizes exist in some of the GCE AS/A-level subjects. Many students have low levels of prior attainment on entry and the college is committed to including students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to study the range of subjects at the different levels offered.

### ***Achievement and standards***

99. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on GCE A-level courses are poor. For example in 2001, only 46% of full-time students passed English language and 33% passed psychology. Nearly all GCE A-level students achieved lower grades than predicted by their GCSE results. In 2001, GCE AS-level results showed some improvement in the grades achieved, compared to prior attainment at GCSE. Historically, GCSE English pass rates have been good until 2001 when they halved. Adult students on modern foreign languages courses achieve satisfactory pass rates; achievements by this group on the access course and on some GCSE courses, for example history, have been good. Retention rates are poor on all GCE A-level and GCSE courses. On some courses the retention rate is close to 50%. Attendance at lessons is also poor in English where, for those observed, it averaged 61%.

100. Most students aged 16 to 18 find difficulty taking notes in a lesson; some find it difficult to annotate texts. Adult learners on the access course work at a standard appropriate for progression to HE. Some students enrolled on the GCSE English language course are not ready to undertake this level of study. These include students who speak English as a second language, those whose existing GCSE grades are very low and some adults with poor levels of literacy. Some students taking GCE A-level English language do not have the necessary grasp of grammatical structure to undertake the linguistic analysis required of them. In contrast, English literature students engage in active literary debate and are able to clearly articulate their ideas.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
OCN modern languages	1	No. of starts	114	48	146
		% retention	68	73	60
		% pass rate	89	66	76
GCSE history	2	No. of starts	16	24	14
		% retention	75	71	57
		% pass rate	75	82	62
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	201	266	212
		% retention	63	63	57
		% pass rate	60	66	35
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	13	14	25
		% retention	50	75	57
		% pass rate	50	67	46
Access certificate HE humanities	3	No. of starts	29	23	25
		% retention	74	70	84
		% pass rate	95	81	100
GCE A-level psychology and sociology	3	No. of starts	32	55	33
		% retention	31	51	51
		% pass rate	70	50	29

### ***Quality of education and training***

101. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The best lessons are well structured and teachers use carefully designed worksheets which contain detailed questions and model examination answers.

These are used to promote discussion and to develop students' conceptual knowledge. However, teachers fail to cater for the wide range of abilities present in class. Equal opportunities issues were sensitively handled. For example, human rights were discussed in a GCSE general studies lesson and students were able to express a wide range of beliefs. In a history lesson for adult students, well researched and interesting presentations gave rise to some lively and wide-ranging discussion.

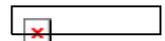
102. Some weaker lessons are poorly structured. The teacher talks too much and fails to develop students' cognitive abilities. Less confident learners are not engaged and contribute little, if anything, to class discussions or group work. Teachers rarely make use of the computers available in most of the classrooms. Nor do they use methods which allow students to work at their own pace. Language development is not supported by the use of authentic written material, Internet links or the language laboratory facilities. Courses are mainly timetabled in base rooms. These classrooms are bright, well furnished and equipped, and decorated with relevant displays.

103. Assessment is carefully and accurately carried out across the area. Access students produce essays which are well researched, logically structured, clearly expressed and argued using correct methods of source referencing. Marking is detailed and supportive. Particular emphasis is given to examination techniques, in response to feedback. Marking at GCE A level is linked to potential examination grades and this is helpful in enabling students to monitor their progress. Some GCSE English language students produce work which is original and powerfully written with a sense of drama, audience and purpose. All too frequently, however, students make mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Work is carefully marked to the correct standard and feedback is comprehensive.

### ***Leadership and management***

104. English, modern languages and humanities provision comes within the science and humanities faculty. The majority of English teaching staff are new to the college, but not new to teaching. The staff are supportive of the head of faculty and confirm that they are closely involved in formulating faculty plans and the self-assessment report, which builds on course reviews. They are also involved in setting targets for achievement. These have been designed to be realistic and yet take into account national benchmarking data. New staff appreciate the help which the mentoring system has given them.

### **Foundation studies**



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

### ***Strengths***

- extensive range of community learning programmes
- high retention rates
- good progression to higher levels of study.

### ***Weaknesses***

- narrow range of teaching methods in some lessons
- insufficiently specific targets in individual learning plans
- little use of college-based IT facilities for learning.

### ***Scope of the provision***

105. The inspection covered basic skills, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The basic skills provision includes courses for adults, classroom support for students of all ages and individual lessons in the Learning Centre. Provision in ESOL consists of a full-time course and a wide range of part-time courses for local residents and asylum seekers. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities include those with severe learning difficulties and associated physical or sensory problems and students with behavioural difficulties. There are courses to prepare students for work, for progressing to level 1 vocational programmes, and to develop life skills. Community provision is extensive. It includes family learning classes, basic skills through IT for parents of young children, ESOL classes and classes for adults with mental health problems. This year there are over 1,000 enrolments for basic skills and ESOL classes and nearly 500 enrolments on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### ***Achievements and standards***

106. Completion rates for learners across the provision are good. In ESOL, for example, the retention rate has improved from 59% in 2000 to 79% in 2001. On courses for adult returners, retention rates have also improved from 70% in 2000 to 85% in 2001. For ESOL and foundation programmes there is good progression for learners, both on to mainstream courses and within their programmes. Many students in ESOL classes are refugees who come with little understanding of English; they make good progress. A large proportion of the students on foundation programmes have had disrupted or minimal levels of prior education. These learners successfully gain the ability to work on their own and are appropriately prepared for participation at work and in the community. Support, which is given to students on their mainstream vocational courses, results in most students making good progress and achieving their main qualification aim.

### ***Quality of education and training***

107. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of teaching methods which stimulate and motivate learners. For example, during a lesson held in a community centre, parents were learning about their children's experiences in the literacy and numeracy hour at school whilst also improving their own basic skills. The best teaching in basic skills enables students to pursue individual aims in a structured way. Learning activities are linked to students' interests and life situations or vocational goals. Students work at their own pace but are encouraged to extend their learning and develop independent study skills. The use of grammar and spelling is taught through contexts relevant to learners. Sometimes teaching is unsatisfactory because the reliance on whole class teaching methods does not take into account individual learning goals or learning styles. Exercises and handouts are sometimes not sufficiently varied for learners of different abilities. Some grammar and spelling is taught unimaginatively.

108. There is some good teaching in ESOL. Students are highly motivated and eager to learn. Teachers are responsive to learners' questions and seize opportunities to use these to extend and develop learners' language skills. Lessons are lively and learners have frequent opportunities to engage in speaking as well as listening. In some unsatisfactory lessons, teachers do most of the talking and too much time is spent on written exercises on worksheets. Teachers do not check or take account of learners' previous knowledge. Most teaching for students with learning difficulties is good. In the best lessons, the learners use the community as a resource to develop their life skills, the Internet for research, and share in the experiences of learners from other cultures. Classroom management is good: staff anticipate problematic behaviour and deal with it quickly and effectively. In less satisfactory lessons, students are inactive for long periods of time and teachers fail to engage them in appropriate work.

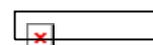
109. Teachers are well qualified and have undertaken appropriate specialist training. Good use is made use of IT in community provision, but little use is made of IT facilities in the college to improve learning. There are no computers in ESOL classrooms in the college. There are some very good learning materials produced by the college that are appropriate in level and age for the different types of learner. Some of the accommodation restricts learning opportunities. For example, there is a lack of facilities for learners in wheelchairs to reach either a sink or a cooker in the family learning centre.

110. Procedures for the initial assessment of learners are clear. All students have separate individual learning plans. However, the targets and goals in the plans are often not specific enough. In some instances, plans contain vague targets such as 'improve writing'; in others, the targets are too narrow or not matched to the ability of learners.

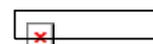
### ***Leadership and management***

111. Leadership and management across the provision are good. There is a commitment to improving standards and developing learning opportunities for adults and young people. Communication is effective. Regular meetings of course teams focus on improving the learners' experience. The development of basic skills courses is integral to the college's strategic plan. The basic skills policy contains clear action points for the development of the area. There is active participation in national basic skills initiatives. The self-assessment report is generally accurate in identifying strengths and areas for future improvements. Staff are aware of equal opportunities issues and reflect this in their teaching.

## **Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01**



<b>Level</b>	<b>16-18 %</b>	<b>19+ %</b>
<b>1</b>	26.2	36.0
<b>2</b>	40.0	37.6
<b>3</b>	26.0	13.1
<b>4/5</b>	0.1	1.0
<b>Other</b>	7.7	12.3

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
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Source: provided by the college in autumn 2001

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01**

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>16-18 No.</b>	<b>19+ No.</b>	<b>Total Enrolments</b>
Science	172	1,979	15.1
Agriculture	0	6	0.0
Construction	222	325	3.8
Engineering	142	828	6.8
Business	154	1,462	11.4
Hotel and catering	227	1,198	10.0
Health and community care	317	2,079	16.9
Art and design	289	792	7.6
Humanities	194	1,539	12.2
Foundation studies	152	2,138	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,869</b>	<b>12,346</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2001

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

<b>Level (Long courses)</b>	<b>Retention &amp; pass rate</b>	<b>16-18</b>			<b>19+</b>		
		<b>1997/98</b>	<b>1998/99</b>	<b>1999/00</b>	<b>1997/98</b>	<b>1998/99</b>	<b>1999/00</b>
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	884	651	800	1,510	1,358	2,217
	Retention rate (%)	88	79	80	84	78	76
	National average (%)	77	75	76	76	73	76
	Pass rate (%)	44	73	84	71	66	77
	National average (%)	48	59	64	55	58	66
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,119	1,047	1,433	1,373	1,718	2,527
	Retention rate (%)	75	71	70	80	72	62
	National average (%)	75	72	73	76	74	74

	Pass rate (%)	40	79	77	49	67	79
	National average (%)	57	65	69	57	63	66
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	699	524	480	1,242	1,124	952
	Retention rate (%)	82	73	75	76	75	76
	National average (%)	77	73	75	76	75	76
	Pass rate (%)	64	73	71	51	56	76
	National average (%)	59	65	66	59	63	67
<b>4</b>	Starters excluding transfers	15	27	16	530	333	250
	Retention rate (%)	93	78	75	92	88	82
	National average (%)	*	*	*	81	78	75
	Pass rate (%)	50	90	92	41	71	83
	National average (%)	*	*	*	50	56	55

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 and tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

\* data not available

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 1998/99 - 1999/2000: Benchmarking Data (1998/99) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

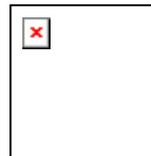
3. College rates for 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.

**Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level**

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	57	34	9	81
Level 2 (intermediate)	61	33	6	78
Level 1 (foundation)	58	39	3	31
Other sessions	65	19	16	31
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>221</b>

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