



# ST JOHN RIGBY COLLEGE

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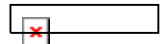
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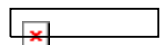
**Basic information about the college**



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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Name of college:             | St John Rigby Sixth Form College            |
| Type of college:             | Roman Catholic Sixth Form College           |
| Principal:                   | Mr John Crowley                             |
| Address of college:          | Gathurst Road<br>Orrell<br>Wigan<br>WN5 0LJ |
| Telephone number:            | 01942 214797                                |
| Fax number:                  | 01942 216514                                |
| Chair of governors:          | Michael Gray                                |
| Unique reference number:     | 130523                                      |
| Name of reporting inspector: | Wilf Hudson                                 |
| Date(s) of inspection:       | 24-28 September 2001                        |

**Part A: Summary**

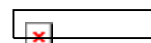


**Information about the college**



St John Rigby Sixth Form College, the first Roman Catholic sixth form college in England, was established in 1972. It is situated to the west of Wigan town centre and is under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. At the time of the inspection, 928 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 806 were aged 16 to 18 and studying on full-time programmes and 122 were part-time students over 19 years of age. The college has recently extended its range of provision by adding level 1 and level 2 courses to its portfolio, developing a higher education (HE) programme in association with Liverpool Hope University College, and increasing its provision for older students by offering evening courses in information technology (IT) and art. The college's mission is 'to provide high-quality education for all its students and to build a community based on Christian values in which each individual is respected and the talents of all are nurtured'.

### **How effective is the college?**



Inspectors judged the quality of education and training to be good in English and languages, business, visual and performing arts, psychology and sociology. Provision in science, mathematics, computing and IT, and physical education (PE) and leisure were judged to be satisfactory. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below:

#### ***Key strengths***

- college staff and the support they provide for their students
- strong leadership and clear direction
- outstanding contribution to Catholic education in the local community
- examples of high-quality teaching especially in arts, humanities and business subjects
- examples of good and improving achievements.

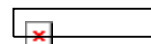
#### ***What should be improved***

- retention rates on a range of courses across the college
- effectiveness of some curriculum management

- quality and accessibility of some of the accommodation.

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

### Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

| Area                       | Overall judgements about provision, and comment   |
|----------------------------|---|
| English and languages      | <b>Good.</b> Leadership of English is outstanding. Most teaching is well planned, purposeful and effective. Pass rates and value added scores for all courses are good in 2001 and generally improving. Students are well supported and most are enthusiastic learners. The range of modern foreign language courses is narrow, but the quality of teaching and learning is good.   |
| PE and leisure studies     | <b>Satisfactory.</b> The quality of teaching and learning varies widely. Some outstanding teaching of PE contrasts with some unsatisfactory work, mainly in the vocational area. Teachers provide effective support for individual students outside formal lessons. Pass rates are good on general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) PE and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) leisure and tourism courses. Some courses have low retention rates. There are insufficient work placements and links with employers. |
| Mathematics                | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Mathematics provision is well planned and managed. There are good pass rates for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). GCE A-level pass rates are generally around the national average. Retention rates are improving, but some are below the average for sixth form colleges. Teachers make insufficient use of IT in their teaching.   |
| Computing and IT           | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching is especially good on adult courses in IT but some computing courses for students aged 16 to 18 are less effectively taught. There are good pass rates and value added scores on the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) programme. Computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) programmes for adults are successful. Pass and retention rates are declining in GCE A-level computing. Management and development of the curriculum are generally weak.  |
| Visual and performing arts | <b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are well planned and students are helped to develop their individual talents and meet their learning goals. Most students achieve good results, except in design and technology. Some courses have unsatisfactory retention rates.   |

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
|                          | Teams of subject teachers are well managed.   |
| Psychology and sociology | <b>Good.</b> Pass rates are good and retention rates are improving. Value added scores are high. Teaching and learning are well planned and effective. The needs of individual students are assessed and met. There is effective management of this curriculum area by a close-knit team of staff.  |
| Business                 | <b>Good.</b> There is some very effective teaching. Pass rates on all courses are high. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Some courses have low retention rates. Students benefit from effective work experience.   |
| Sciences                 | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching is well planned and the overall standard of teaching and learning is good. Students' attainments are good in most lessons. Students are well supported and their progress is well monitored. However, pass rates and retention rates in some subjects at GCE A level and advanced subsidiary (AS) level are unsatisfactory. Laboratories are well equipped, but not always used to best effect. |

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been effective management of change since the last inspection. The quality of most of the teaching remains good and there have been improvements in pass rates and in value added scores in several curriculum areas. Nevertheless, some pass and retention rates remain poor and there is some poor curriculum management. The college has improved the accuracy and use of data on students' achievements, but the data is not always used to full effect. Governors have a good understanding of the college and support its work effectively, but there are areas where their work falls short of best practice.

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

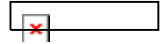
The college is strongly committed to a policy of inclusiveness. It has extended its range of provision over the last three years to attract students with a wider ability range and older students. There are excellent links with Hope Special School for students with learning difficulties. The college makes it clear that mutual respect and care for all is at the centre of its philosophy. Its policies on matters such as bullying and harassment are clearly expressed, widely distributed and well understood by staff and students.

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

The care and support given to students by staff is one of the key strengths of the college. There are effective systems to provide additional support to students who have particular learning needs.

education (FE) and HE, careers and employment is widely used by students, including those who are leaving the college before completing their courses. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. Support arrangements for adult students are effective. Some group tutorial time is not used effectively.

### **Students' views of the college**



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

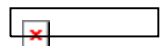
#### ***What students like about the college***

- support and help they receive from college staff
- quality of teaching
- range of enrichment activities
- tutorial work that helps them to progress.

#### ***What they feel could be improved***

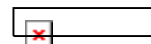
- quality and size of social areas
- some overcrowded and noisy classrooms.

### **Other information**



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

## Part B: The college as a whole



### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

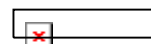
| Aspect & learner type | Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) % | Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) % | Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) % |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Teaching 16-18        | 72.8                                    | 20                              | 7.2   |
| 19+ and WBL*          | **                                      | **                              | **  |
| Learning 16-18        | 68.8                                    | 20                              | 11.2  |
| 19+ and WBL*          | **                                      | **                              | **  |

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

\* work-based learning

\*\* only a small number of lessons were observed, all of which were graded good or better

### Achievement and standards



1. The college has widened its range of courses over the last three years, especially at levels 1 and 2. Generally, these new courses have proved successful. Most of them have retention rates and pass rates in the top 50% of the sixth form college (SFC) sector. Numbers of students on level 1 programmes have increased over the last three years and these programmes have both high and improving retention and pass rates. Pass rates on level 2 programmes are generally good and improving, but retention rates vary widely and on some courses they are below the SFC sector average.

2. At GCE A level, examination pass rates are generally good. The college has been particularly successful in some subjects, such as art and English, which have had consistently high pass rates for several years. In several subjects, such as psychology and sociology, there have been significant improvements in pass rates over the last three years. Other subjects, such as the sciences and computing, have shown less overall improvement, although particular courses have been successful. In 2001, pass rates on GCE AS levels equalled or exceeded national averages in most subjects. In several curriculum areas, retention rates have been around or below the national average for some time.

3. Until recently, the number of adults studying at the college was low but the number of adults taking IT and art courses, mainly in the evenings, has increased significantly over the last three years. Most adult students make good progress with their studies and many of them progress to further study.

4. The standard of students' work in lessons varies between subjects. In art and humanities subjects, standards achieved by students were generally high. Art students showed particular enthusiasm and creativity in their work in lessons. Standards in foreign languages, computing and leisure and tourism were more variable, but generally satisfactory. Students in some foreign language lessons struggled with some aspects of grammar and vocabulary. Students on vocational courses would benefit from more work experience and other contacts with the relevant industries.

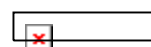
5. In 61% of lessons observed, students were reaching good or better standards of work. In 30% of lessons they were only reaching satisfactory standards of work. The proportion reaching only satisfactory standards was particularly high among students starting GCE AS-level courses, at around 50%. In contrast, around 80% of GCE A-level students (who are all in the second year of their courses) are reaching either good or very good standards in lessons. This suggests that once students have reached the second year of study at advanced level, they are likely to succeed. Many of the students who drop out of two-year courses do so at the end of the first year.

6. The college uses two systems to measure students' progress and to compare their final grades with those predicted on the basis of their qualifications on entry (value added measures). Overall, value added scores have increased over the last two years. Students studying arts, humanities, English and business courses tend to have higher value added scores than those studying sciences, languages, computing and technology.

7. The overall attendance rate in lessons observed by inspectors was 85%, which is barely adequate, and does not meet the college's own target figure of 90%. The average group size was 14 students in each lesson. Some poor punctuality by students at the first lesson of the day was caused by transport problems, which delayed the arrival of college buses.

8. The college has successfully introduced Curriculum 2000 and offers students a wide choice of subjects at GCE AS level. Almost all students are able to study their first-choice subjects at GCE AS level. The timetable includes time for students to participate in the enrichment programme. There are 22 options within this programme in addition to a range of team sports. The most popular choices are music options, criminology, sports and preparation for medicine. Many full-time students take advantage of the enrichment programme although the increase in academic work from the introduction of Curriculum 2000 has resulted in some decline in participation. Key skills are incorporated into students' programmes and are often taught effectively. Results in external tests have generally been good.

## Quality of education and training



9. The college recruits from seven Catholic partner high schools, and also draws students from other schools in the area. Contacts with the partner schools are strong. Link tutors distribute the college prospectus and information about college courses to year 11 pupils. Teachers of the same subject in the college and the schools meet to discuss the curriculum. There are open days and information evenings. Every pupil who applies to the college is given a personal interview.

10. The college provides a good range of full-time programmes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. There is a wide choice of over 30 GCE AS-level subjects and a narrower range of four advanced vocational programmes and three GNVQ intermediate programmes. The foundation programme is appropriately challenging for the students enrolled and provides a broad introduction to vocational subjects. Students often progress from intermediate GNVQ programmes to advanced vocational programmes. There is good progression from the college to HE. The college has excellent links with Hope School for students with learning difficulties. These students study part-time at the college on accredited courses.

11. The college is committed to encouraging the local community to participate in education. Over



the last three years there has been substantial growth in the number of adults attending IT and art programmes at the college. Adults say that they are attracted by the ethos of the college, the ample car parking and the pleasant, safe environment. Tutors with specific responsibility for adult learners have developed appropriate strategies for providing information, guidance and advice to adult students. They have developed links with local employers to publicise courses. Lessons for adult students are taught well. In several IT lessons for adults, teachers had designed tasks that enabled students to work at a pace that suited them. In one introductory lesson, employees of a local firm were introduced to the use of computers in a clear and well-organised manner and they made good progress. There is good progression of adults from the entry-level IT course to the CLAIT course, and 70 students are studying on an undergraduate programme organised in association with Liverpool Hope University College.

12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 125 sessions. Within this, 93% of the teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better, 62% was judged to be good or very good and 11% was judged to be excellent, much of this on GCE A-level and GCE AS-level courses. The highest proportion of excellent and very good teaching was found in art, English, business and psychology and sociology. Much of the teaching in science was good, while much mathematics teaching was satisfactory. There was almost no poor or very poor teaching. Unsatisfactory teaching was found in 7% of lessons, the majority of which were in the computing and leisure areas. In computing, the teaching of adult students was more effective than the teaching of students aged 16 to 18. At level 3, 78% of the teaching was judged to be good or better. Level 2 courses were less well taught, with 56% of the teaching judged to be good or better. Teaching and learning on the GNVQ foundation course was generally good.

13. Many teaching groups in the college consist of students with a wide range of abilities. In the most effective lessons, teachers gained and kept the interest of all the students in their group and made sure they were working at an appropriate level throughout the lesson. In 11% of lessons, learning was judged to be unsatisfactory. In the overwhelming majority of cases this was due to a proportion of the group not working hard enough or finding the tasks they had been given too easy.

14. There are clear policies and procedures for the assessment and monitoring of students' progress. These cover progress reviews, homework and procedures and action to be taken if work is not completed. However, the policies are not implemented consistently across the college. In many subjects there is regular, timetabled common assessment across parallel groups, common marking schemes and moderation of marks but in a few subjects, formal assessment is not planned or carried out regularly. In the best cases, all assessed work is handed back to students with feedback on a comments sheet indicating good features and providing guidance on how to improve.

15. Most teachers maintain up-to-date records of students' progress. Students are informed of their target grades, which are based on prior attainment. Pastoral tutors and subject teachers are provided with information on prior achievements and targets and use these as a basis for monitoring students' progress. Information about target grades is not used effectively by all teachers to help them plan teaching and learning activities. The information is used during the progress reviews and the outcomes of these reviews are discussed at parents' evenings. The college closely monitors student's actual results against those predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications.

16. The college has clear internal verification procedures which are carried out effectively. Written feedback is provided to teachers and appropriate records are kept of all work seen with an overall comment highlighting any issues identified. Staff development in assessment and verification has been provided for key skills tutors.

17. The college's mission to build a community based on Christian values is emphasised through public acts of worship and assemblies. There are morning prayers in the chapel every day. Mass is celebrated regularly throughout the academic year on the first Friday of every month and on feast days. Special events are organised, often in response to student initiatives. An African awareness day raised £2,000 for medical supplies for a mission hospital. On justice and peace day, outside speakers helped students to reflect upon important issues of social justice and the importance of the Christian message in today's world. The student council organised an act of remembrance for the victims of the recent tragedy in America. It was attended by over 500 students.

18. Many students take up the opportunities available for personal and spiritual development. The college has a comprehensive general religious education programme and is working with another SFC and diocesan advisors to introduce an innovative programme of religious education, in a drive to establish a more dynamic vehicle for bringing matters of faith and morals to the attention of young people. At the time of the inspection, the post of head of religious education was vacant and a replacement was being sought urgently.

19. A full-time chaplain who is a qualified youth worker manages the chaplaincy. There is a chaplaincy base where students meet informally and get advice on personal matters. They are referred to appropriate external agencies if necessary. The chaplain has extensive links with public services and diocesan agencies. The chaplaincy team is open to anyone wishing to serve on it. It organises morning prayers each day in the chapel, which is centrally sited in the main building. This period of quiet reflection is well attended by both staff and students. Liturgy and assemblies are held at regular times to offer more formal opportunities for worship. Students are actively involved in the preparation of these events. They prepare music, readings and displays to reflect the theme of the day. The student council is a very active group. It arranges social activities and is very involved in raising money for good causes.

20. Each student has a personal tutor who is responsible for monitoring their progress and ensuring they receive appropriate support. Students meet every day in tutor groups of about 20, all of whom are following similar courses and their tutor is either a teacher of their subject or of a similar subject. Students follow a comprehensive tutorial programme and a general studies and key skills programme. Inspectors observed some good practice in tutor groups but there were instances when they judged that better use could have been made of the time. Students' views on the quality of support from their personal tutor were very positive.

21. There is effective help for students with financial problems. This help is widely publicised and easily accessible. The college uses access funds and has a hardship fund to alleviate difficulties. The information about this help is prominently displayed in the college.

22. During their induction, full-time students are given an initial assessment to determine what extra support they may need. The outcomes of this assessment are comprehensive and support is provided quickly if it is needed. Most of the students identified as needing support in 2000/01 took up the opportunity. An analysis of the examination results of students who had received one-to-one support showed that 70% of them achieved grades better than their target grade.

23. Careers guidance and advice, in partnership with Wigan careers service is easily accessible and well used. Applications to HE are efficiently managed. There is a coherent schedule of activities to ensure that students have information about application procedures and make wise choices for progression. Students and their parents are able to meet university admissions tutors. Groups of students go to Edge Hill College to receive personal tutoring in the preparation of their university applications. The University of Central Lancashire offers students the chance to shadow undergraduate students throughout a typical day. The college gives high priority to helping those students whose immediate objective is to get employment. There is a process to assist mid-course leavers. They are given guidance by their teachers and the careers service and also by the principal. In 2000, 109 students left before completing their courses. An analysis of the reasons for non-completion showed that 56 of them went into full-time education, training or employment, or left the area.

24. Attendance and punctuality are monitored carefully. All unexplained absences are followed up by student services. During 2000/01, the average attendance rate at lessons was 85%, which was also the rate in the lessons observed by inspectors. The college target is 90%.

25. Parents are appreciative of the care and support which the college staff show to their children. They praise in particular the welcoming atmosphere in the college, the quality and timeliness of academic reports and the sensitive treatment of students with health problems or personal difficulties. The college conducted a survey of parents' views in the summer term 2001. The response from parents was very positive.

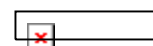
26. Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and all of them hold a teaching qualification. In a few curriculum areas teachers have insufficient recent industrial experience and this reduces the quality of some teaching and learning. Relationships between teachers and students in lessons were uniformly good. Teachers know their students well and give them effective individual support during lessons.

27. The college provides a welcoming and safe learning environment for students. Sports facilities are excellent and include large areas of playing fields. In many rooms, displays of students' work help to create a stimulating learning environment. There are adequate study spaces in the library. Overall, the equipment and resources to support learning are satisfactory. The college has suitable IT workstations distributed around the college and connected by a high-capacity network. Most classrooms in the central college campus have at least one networked workstation and some have a suite of workstations, all with Internet access. Teachers in several subject areas have developed or are developing learning materials for the college intranet. These include a website produced by English teachers containing useful reference material and new teaching materials for media studies. Inspectors observed several examples of effective use of computers in the classroom to enhance learning. There are computer workstations in the learning resource area within the library but they are insufficient in number to meet student demand. Suites of workstations in some classrooms are underused.

28. The library and learning resource area provide good learning environments. Library staff provide good support for students and teachers. They assist students in developing research and study skills and IT skills. Teachers can have resource packs on specific topics created for them. The book stock, periodicals, CD-ROMS, videotapes and audiotapes are adequate to support the study of most subjects. The library does not open in the evening, which is inconvenient for adult students.

29. The college has recognised that some of the accommodation is not ideally suited to its purpose and consultants are currently updating the accommodation strategy. Some classrooms are of an inappropriate size for the groups using them while in others the noise from other learning activities in adjacent rooms is intrusive. There are few areas in which students can socialise and the refectory is overcrowded at peak times such as lunchtime. It is not possible for students with restricted mobility to gain access to all areas of the college. The college has commissioned a study to enable it to meet the requirements of the disabilities act and aims to complete this work by autumn 2002.

## Leadership and management



30. The principal provides effective leadership of the college and, together with senior managers, has a clear vision of the college's contribution to the community: the promotion of Christian ethos; a systematic repositioning of the college in order to provide a relevant curriculum; and the development of a challenging and questioning culture, leading to improvements in pass and retention rates. To this end the college has responded constructively to most of the issues raised in 1997 in the report by inspectors of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and in the college's own self-assessment reviews. Provision is good or satisfactory in all of the curriculum areas inspected. Retention and pass rates have varied considerably over the last few years but for most courses the overall trend is upwards. The quality of teaching and learning was good or better in 73% of the lessons seen but there are some substantial differences between subjects, in the quality of learning and in students' attainments, especially at level 3.

31. The college recently revised its new management structure. This has strengthened the links between academic and pastoral work. Major responsibilities are shared effectively by the principal, two directors and the central services manager. Detailed job descriptions emphasise the need for all staff to focus on the core functions of raising standards and monitoring progress. Links with a neighbouring Catholic college with Beacon status, and the training of senior and some middle managers, have sharpened the college's strategic planning and its identification of priorities.

32. Quality assurance procedures have been improved. Self-assessment reviews are carried out thoroughly and validation panels have been established. There are good examples of departmental staff working together on their self-assessment report and agreeing as a team on priorities for action and improvement. However, in a few cases, the data used has been insufficiently accurate. The programme of lesson observations has gained in effectiveness from the training of staff and the provision of clear criteria. College and student targets are set and reviewed but some departments have not set themselves targets. While staff at all levels are becoming aware of the need to evaluate their work, some judgements in the current self-assessment report are too generous and there are a few gaps in coverage: for example, the tutorial programme and the impact of new timetable arrangements. The college achieved Investor in People status in December 2000 and was one of the first sixth form colleges to be awarded the Guidance Accreditation Board's Quality Mark for information and advice relating to learning and work. Among other benefits, this has ensured that the many support staff have their developmental needs recognised. Surveys of students' opinions have identified ways in which enrolment, induction and the provision of careers advice might be improved. Students have received feedback on the action to be taken. Partly as a result of such surveys, senior staff are beginning to analyse students' preferred learning styles.

33. The management of the curriculum is most effective in English, mathematics, science, psychology, sociology and art and is characterised by: good teamwork; sharing of responsibilities; the provision of course guides for students; clear deadlines for coursework and assignments; and the sharing of good practice. Several departments now have effective subject-specific, initial assessment procedures for new students. Departments provide for the needs of students with different abilities with varying degrees of success. Across the college there is a lack of consistency in the quality of management. Nevertheless, subject development plans, with targets, proposed actions, time-scales and responsibilities provide a good basis for improvement.

34. The college's good strategic planning, setting of objectives and targets, comprehensive documentation and improved management information allow senior staff to monitor performance accurately. The use of challenging benchmarks is bringing further rigour to the process. Value added scores have improved this year. The information about students' achievements is not yet used effectively by all staff. In the conduct of their daily routine, students and staff gave many indications, both consciously and intuitively, of their personal commitment to the ethos of the college. Students know that they are valued, supported, nurtured and respected as individuals. The college provides them with a sound appreciation of their rights and responsibilities and encourages them to see themselves as having a role to play in creating a better world. The trustees, the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and the governors support the principal and staff in fulfilling the college's mission. The college makes a valuable contribution to Catholic education in Wigan and the surrounding area. The college's mission statement is prominently displayed and there are frequent reminders of its Christian mission in posters, displays and student artwork, as well as in the conventional religious symbols. The mission to build a community based on Christian values is emphasised through public acts of worship and assemblies.

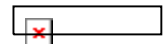
35. Governors know the college well and work effectively with senior managers. The governing body is well informed about the college's academic and financial performance and plays a constructive role in setting its strategic direction. Attendance at governors' meetings is good. The meetings are chaired effectively and the committee system works well. However, some aspects of governance fall below best practice and there is no programme of training for governors. The governing body seeks to back successful departments and to support any that are under-performing. It plays a helpful role in validating self-assessment reviews. The principal's reports to governors ensure that members are aware of trends in enrolments, attendance, retention rates, pass rates, destinations and other key indicators.

36. The college's equal opportunities policy reflects its overall mission and emphasises the need to value individuals and meet their needs. Students are treated well at enrolment, in lessons and around the college. Their views are sought and acted upon. The college is having some success with its attempt to widen participation by introducing adult classes and collaborating with Liverpool Hope University College. All students, whatever their religious affiliation, have access to the college's facilities and services. The college achieved the Positive About Disability Award in June 2000.

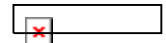
37. Financial matters are handled centrally by a small team which monitors income and expenditure against the college budget. Financial awareness across the college is good. Budget holders bid for funds in the light of their plans and senior managers make recommendations to the governing body. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

38. This is a college that is based on Christian values which respects and provides well for the needs of individuals. Senior staff are aware of the college's current strengths and what needs to be done to make further improvement.

### Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



#### English and languages



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

#### **Strengths**

- pass rates at or above national averages in 2001
- positive value added scores in English
- good teaching and student support
- good accommodation and resources used efficiently and effectively
- rigorous monitoring and evaluation leading to continuous improvement
- outstanding leadership.

#### **Weaknesses**

- retention rates below national averages on most courses

- failure by some teachers to set targets for improvement on marked work
- poor attendance rates in some English lessons
- lack of detailed assessment policies and guidelines in modern foreign languages.

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

39. The English department offers GCSE English as a one-year course and GCE A and AS-level courses in English language, English language and literature, and English literature. Recruitment to all these courses is good. The college offers advanced-level courses in French and Spanish, and GCSE Spanish if there is sufficient demand. Languages have only been studied by a few students in the recent past, but numbers have increased with the introduction of GCE AS-level courses.

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

40. In 2001, the pass rates on all the English courses met or exceeded national sixth form college averages. Value added figures have been positive on all level 3 courses for the last two years, showing that students are achieving grades at a higher level than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades on entry. Pass rates were good on the new GCE AS-level courses and a high proportion of students achieved the higher A-C grades. The standard of students' work is generally good. Most course work is of a high standard. Students produce good notes in well-organised files, which are monitored regularly by teachers. Students speak confidently and re-draft their written work effectively. They are acquiring good critical and analytical skills. Retention rates are below national averages on all the courses except the one-year GCSE. The attendance rate at lessons observed during the inspection was 79%.

41. Pass rates on GCE AS-level French and Spanish courses are good. Those on GCE A-level courses are above the national average for sixth form colleges in French and German but below in Spanish. Examination results in GCSE Spanish are well above the national average. Second-year GCE A-level students demonstrate fluency and accuracy in speaking French and Spanish and have acquired appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subjects. They are developing their powers of critical analysis. Students are enthusiastic and participate well in lessons. Some students, however, find the transition from GCSE to GCE A level very demanding and require more support and guidance to help them to adjust to the more advanced regime of teaching and learning.

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

| Qualification                      | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCSE<br>English<br>(1-year course) | 2     | No. of starts    | 101  | 68   | 72   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 72   | 88   | 75   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 97   | 100  | 100  |
| GCE A-level                        | 3     | No. of starts    | 41   | 50   | 67   |

|                                 |   |               |     |    |     |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------|-----|----|-----|
|                                 |   | % retention   | 100 | 76 | 75  |
|                                 |   | % pass rate   | 95  | 86 | 91  |
| GCE A-level                     | 3 | No. of starts | 49  | 42 | 34  |
| English language and literature |   | % retention   | 94  | 81 | 81  |
| (2-year course)                 |   | % pass rate   | 93  | 88 | 96  |
| GCE A-level                     | 3 | No. of starts | 16  | 11 | 10  |
| French                          |   | % retention   | 94  | 73 | 60  |
|                                 |   | % pass rate   | 71  | 86 | 100 |
| GCE A-level                     | 3 | No. of starts | 2   | 6  | 8   |
| Spanish                         |   | % retention   | 100 | 67 | 33  |
|                                 |   | % pass rate   | 100 | 75 | 50  |

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

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

42. Teaching and learning were very effective in most English lessons. Fifteen lessons, covering all four courses, were observed. Some 60% of the teaching was judged to be very good or excellent. Most lessons were well planned, and included a wide range of appropriate and often original learning activities. All teachers demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their subjects. Their high expectations of the students in terms of attendance, punctuality, effort, depth of response and presentation were mostly met. They provided a caring, supportive classroom environment. The lesson observation grades indicate that teaching and learning are very effective, and that students' attainment during lessons is good.

43. Teachers' subject knowledge and teaching expertise enable them all to teach the full range of language and literature courses. Most lessons contained a range of teaching techniques and learning styles. Students made good progress in most of the lessons observed. A particular strength was the in-depth textual analysis, both in language and literature lessons. The planning of courses was outstanding. Most lessons were tightly scheduled, varied in content and approach and conducted at an appropriate pace. Teachers know students well and provide appropriate help when needed. Teachers emphasised the benefits of re-drafting work, but did not give sufficient guidance on the use of IT for this purpose.

44. In modern languages, teaching is generally good. Seven lessons were observed. Lessons were well planned and usually included an appropriate range of activities. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They give willingly of their time to help individual students. Considerable emphasis has been placed on making more use of the language being studied during lessons. This is helping to improve students' fluency. Students are encouraged to use IT, the Internet and satellite broadcasting facilities in their work. Schemes of work and assessment schedules need to be improved to enable students to monitor their own progress more effectively.

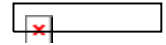
### **Leadership and management**

45. The head of English displays outstanding leadership qualities. Departmental documentation is exemplary. There are clear, well-implemented policies, highly organised resources and a supportive, collegial approach, all of which contribute to an effective learning environment for students. Self-assessment has been carried out rigorously and has led to a realistic development plan. Students' views have been carefully collected and analysed, and used in action planning. Classroom observation is now part of departmental monitoring; further strategies to disseminate

excellent teaching practice now need to be developed.

46. There is no full-time head of department of languages, but a new part-time course leader has been appointed. The situation is under review by senior management.

### **PE and leisure studies**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good teaching and good pass rates on GCE A-level PE course
- positive value added scores for GCE A-level PE
- good pass rates on GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism courses
- rigorous marking and detailed feedback on students' work
- well-attended sports enrichment programme
- effective support for individual students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on some courses
- some unsatisfactory teaching
- no work placement opportunities for vocational students



- teachers' lack of vocational expertise and experience.

### **Scope of provision**

47. The college provides leisure and recreation courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. GCE A-level PE is also offered. A small range of part-time courses is offered to broaden students' experience, for example, a fitness instructor course, community sports leaders' course and a basic treatment of injury course. Students can take part in a wide range of sports, including many team sports, as part of the college's enrichment programme. These sports form an important part of college life and a high proportion of students take part.

### **Achievement and standards**

48. The GCE A-level PE pass rate has matched or marginally exceeded the national average for the last five years with the exception of 2000/01 when it dropped to 79%. The proportion of students gaining high grades has steadily improved from 37% in 1998/99 to 47% in 1999/2000, but dropped to 26% in 2000/01. Students have achieved higher grades in GCE A-level PE than would have been predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades on entry for the last two years. However, over the same period of time, retention rates have declined. The pass rate on GNVQ intermediate is very good. In 2000, 86% of students achieved the award, which was well above the national average. However, the retention rate on this course is low. Pass rates on the community sports leader award have been unsatisfactory for the last two years, but retention rates have usually been good. The fitness instructor qualification has had good pass rates and satisfactory retention rates for the last three years. The treatment of injury course achieved excellent results in 2000/01. In 2001 43% of students moved on to HE and 26% entered employment.

49. Some students' written work, on the GCE A-level and AVCE courses, is well presented and demonstrates good independent research skills. Some students make good use of IT to improve the presentation of their work but others are much less competent in this respect. Students demonstrate appropriate levels of attainment in lessons. Their work is at, and sometimes above, the level that would be expected.

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

| <b>Qualification</b>             | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Fitness instructor award         | 1            | No. of starts           | 18          | 20          | 24          |
|                                  |              | % retention             | 100         | 80          | 75          |
|                                  |              | % pass rate             | 94          | 88          | 67          |
| Basic treatment of injury award  | 1            | No. of starts           | *           | *           | 19          |
|                                  |              | % retention             | *           | *           | 95          |
|                                  |              | % pass rate             | *           | *           | 100         |
| Intermediate leisure and tourism | 2            | No. of starts           | *           | *           | 21          |
|                                  |              | % retention             | *           | *           | 67          |
|                                  |              | % pass rate             | *           | *           | 86          |
| Community sport leader award     | 2            | No. of starts           | 23          | 11          | 21          |
|                                  |              | % retention             | 87          | 90          | 38          |
|                                  |              | % pass rate             | 88          | 40          | 38          |

|                                   |   |               |    |    |    |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|----|----|----|
| GCE A-level PE<br>(2-year course) | 3 | No. of starts | 67 | 60 | 56 |
|                                   |   | % retention   | 94 | 77 | 70 |
|                                   |   | % pass rate   | 89 | 88 | 79 |

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

\* course did not run

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

50. There is some excellent teaching of PE, but also some unsatisfactory teaching, particularly on vocational courses. In the successful lessons, tutors struck an appropriate balance between theory and practice. They shared their enthusiasm for their subject with the students, who were completely engaged throughout. The lessons provided students with opportunities to work co-operatively, to develop their personal skills and to learn from each other. Students were encouraged to think for themselves and to contribute to class discussions. Teachers provided well for students of different abilities by framing their questions carefully and setting a range of tasks to be completed during the lesson.

51. In practical lessons, warm-up sessions are thorough. Teachers emphasise safe techniques and remind students of theory work in anatomy and bio-mechanical units. However, some practical lessons were not well planned. The time allocated to activities was inappropriate and students were not given the opportunity to improve their skills through a programme of progressively more demanding activities. Some students were left with nothing to do when they could have been used in a coaching or officiating capacity.

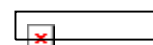
52. Students speak highly of the help they receive from the teachers, either in the subject they are studying or to help them improve their literacy or numeracy skills. Vocational students are not provided with work experience, and are given too few opportunities to take part in external visits. There are good links with local schools. For example, children with severe physical and mental disabilities from a local school attend the college for a weekly PE lesson.

53. Many staff have little recent experience in the sport and leisure industry and some have insufficient expertise in some aspects of the vocational courses they teach. Learning resources for GCE A-level PE are outstanding. Resources for the vocational courses are no more than adequate. There is an appropriate range of texts in the library but there are few relevant journals.

### **Leadership and management**

54. GCE A-level PE and the fitness instructor course are well managed but no one has an overview of the AVCE leisure and recreation course. Students' attendance is monitored closely and a central team check on students who are frequently absent. Progress reviews take place three times a year to monitor students' performance against targets. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently self-critical, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. Action points in the report are vague and do not provide a clear strategy for improvement.

### **Mathematics**



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

### **Strengths**

- good pass rates in GCSE mathematics
- strong team leadership
- well-planned provision.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates in GCE A-level mathematics
- insufficient opportunities for students to work at their own pace.

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

55. The college provides a range of mathematics courses at intermediate and advanced levels, including City & Guilds numeracy, GCSE and GCE A and AS level. These are aimed at full-time students mainly between 16 and 18 years of age. Currently there are no mathematics courses aimed specifically at older students.

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

56. Pass rates at grades A-C in GCSE mathematics are above the national average. Many students who are repeating GCSE mathematics improve by at least one grade. Retention rates vary from year to year but are similar to the average for this type of college. Students' attainments in lessons were generally satisfactory, but in a few lessons, for example, one on vulgar fractions, some of the students struggled with the basic concepts and the practical applications.

57. All students who do not have a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics when they join the college are strongly encouraged to study the subject. These students first take City & Guilds numeracy qualifications. The 99% pass rate in this motivates students to work hard towards the GCSE qualification.

58. The pass rate in GCE A-level mathematics has been very good in the recent past, with over 94% of students gaining grades A to E in 1999/2000, although the figure fell to 82% last year. The retention rate on GCE A-level mathematics is improving, but remains below the national average. Standards reached by students in GCE A-level lessons were generally good.

59. In 2001, 62% of the first cohort of students taking the new GCE AS-level examination achieved grades A-E. Over 80% of the GCE A-level students progress to HE with a significant proportion of these studying mathematics-related degree subjects.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|---------------|-------|------------|------|------|------|
|---------------|-------|------------|------|------|------|

|                            |   | year:         |     |     |     |
|----------------------------|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| GCSE<br>mathematics        | 2 | No. of starts | 191 | 153 | 210 |
|                            |   | % retention   | 77  | 81  | 75  |
|                            |   | % pass rate   | 48  | 46  | 50  |
| GCE A-level<br>mathematics | 3 | No. of starts | 65  | 70  | 49  |
|                            |   | % retention   | 62  | 61  | 71  |
|                            |   | % pass rate   | 76  | 94  | 82  |

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

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

60. Teachers prepare their lessons well. They ask well-targeted questions and make use of appropriate graded exercises. Particularly good use is made of overhead transparencies to show step-by-step explanations in solving mathematics problems. Whilst computers are available in each mathematics classroom, they are insufficiently used. All courses have detailed schemes of work, including detailed homework schedules and these are shared with the students. All homework is carefully marked; corrections are shown and appropriate comments made by teachers. The teachers keep accurate records of students' progress but do not inform students of the numerical marks awarded. This limits students' ability to monitor their own progress against their personal targets. Personal tutors are informed when a student's work indicates that extra support is required or homework is not being completed. Students taking GCSE mathematics are able to attend two extra sessions a week if they need extra academic support. There is no similar provision for GCE AS or A-level students.

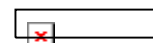
61. GCSE classes contain students with a wide range of abilities. In a minority of lessons, the more able students were encouraged to work on more challenging exercises. However, in most lessons there were too few opportunities for students to progress at their own pace. Target grades are set for students but students are not given regular short-term targets.

62. Mathematics teachers are well qualified and experienced. Some have experience of examining. One teacher is a member of a local mathematics teachers' association and shares the knowledge gained with colleagues. All staff have been prepared well for Curriculum 2000. One teacher used research into under-attainment by boys to assist colleagues when preparing new schemes of work.

### **Leadership and management**

63. Leadership and management are effective. The mathematics teachers work well as a team. They share learning materials, agree schemes of work and have a common policy on assignments and assessments. The new college management structure has assisted teaching staff by providing more effective links between them and senior managers. Through departmental meetings, which take place several times a term, teachers are able to make known their opinions and needs to senior managers and governors. All the teachers are involved in preparing the annual self-assessment report.

### **Computing and IT**



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

### **Strengths**

- good teaching and learning on adult courses
- good pass rates on the AVCE and CLAIT courses
- general improvement in pass and retention rates in 2000/01.

### **Weaknesses**

- teaching that fails to meet the needs of students of different abilities
- weak management and development of the curriculum
- insufficient use of information and learning technology.

### **Scope of provision**

64. The college provides GCE A/AS-level computing and AVCE IT courses. It ran GCE A-level computing until 2000, but removed this from its curriculum, as results were often poor. The AVCE IT course started in 1999.

65. The college has responded to the needs of adult learners and provides introductory and basic level courses in IT. These include 'computers for the terrified', CLAIT programmes and integrated business technology (IBT) courses in the evenings. There is progression between these courses. The college also responds to the needs of a local employer by running a basic information and communications technology (ICT) course for their employees.

### **Achievement and standards**

66. Retention and pass rates in GCE AS-level computing were good in 2001 at 91% and 80% respectively. The practical skills of the students were good. They could develop complex databases with some advanced features, but did not apply theory to practice effectively. For example, in an assignment on the development of a database, none of the students used any database design methodology.

67. All the students who completed the AVCE IT course in 2001 gained the qualification, and performed well in relation to their qualifications on entry. Many of the AVCE students have a good practical knowledge of application software packages. These students use advanced features of word processing and presentation software. The students use the Internet for research to enhance their assignments. For example, they searched the Internet to find the best features of web page design which they could then use to help them design their own web pages.

68. The retention rate on CLAIT programmes is good and the pass rate improved to 83% in 2000/01, which was above the national average. The standard of work in CLAIT lessons was good. Students have the opportunity to progress to other courses and complete some elements of these courses quickly. For example, a number of the students who had completed the CLAIT course in the previous term, took the word-processing module of the IBT course three weeks after the start of the course.

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

| Qualification         | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| CLAIT                 | 1     | No. of starts    | 75   | 224  | 37   |
|                       |       | % retention      | 100  | 84   | 97   |
|                       |       | % pass rate      | 50   | 54   | 83   |
| GCE A-level computing | 3     | No. of starts    | 31   | 37   | *    |
|                       |       | % retention      | 90   | 73   | *    |
|                       |       | % pass rate      | 64   | 50   | *    |
| AVCE IT               | 3     | No. of starts    | *    | *    | 50   |
|                       |       | % retention      | *    | *    | 74   |
|                       |       | % pass rate      | *    | *    | 100  |

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

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

69. Teaching and learning are consistently good on the part-time course for adults. The tutors provide a wide range of activity sheets enabling students to progress at their own speed. The sessions are well planned and students are aware of the assessment arrangements. The tutors accurately record the progress of the students and provide them with timely feedback. The tutors explain computing terminology clearly to adult learners. The relationship between tutors and students is very good and is a critical factor in maintaining good retention and pass rates. In one lesson two of the students attributed their good progress to the increased confidence which the tutor had helped them to achieve.

70. In contrast, the quality of teaching and learning on GCE and AVCE courses varies. In the better lessons, students choose from a range of activity sheets and this helps them to achieve their learning objectives at a pace which matches their needs. For example, in one lesson, different students were working on eight different tasks, each one building on the one before. In another lesson, the students used word-processing software to create a questionnaire; the tutor used the result of a skills screening test to monitor and direct each student's progress and one student with poor literacy skills was asked to spend more time on the text of the questionnaire. Most of the unsatisfactory lessons were poorly planned. Schemes of work were insufficiently detailed and the progress of students was not recorded. In two lessons the replacement supply tutor had not been provided with the schemes of work and the students' progress record and so could not provide the necessary continuity of teaching and learning. In a small number of lessons, teachers did not cater adequately for the range of students' needs and abilities. The more able students were not sufficiently stretched. For example, in one lesson, a student who had completed the class activity waited 20 minutes for his peers to complete the task.

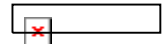
71. There is insufficient use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in this curriculum area and the college's intranet is under-utilised. Most teachers mark students' assignments satisfactorily and

provide helpful comments. The introduction of Curriculum 2000 has widened the students' choice of courses and some of the IT students are taking additional qualifications. A number of students in other curriculum areas have chosen to study IT. Links with industry are weak and computing and IT students are not given opportunities to gain industrial experience or to hear visiting speakers.

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

72. The management and development of computing courses are weak. Different college departments manage full-time and part-time courses for adults. Since there is no joint planning between the two departments opportunities to share good practice are limited. There are inconsistencies in the availability of schemes of work, lesson plans and assessment plans. The actions agreed at course meetings are not implemented and monitored. Curriculum development does not reflect industrial practices. For example, the students have had no practical experience of computer networks. The self-assessment report is insufficiently rigorous and did not identify weaknesses of teaching and learning.

### **Visual and performing arts**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- excellent pass rates in art, media, performing arts and music
- regular achievement of grades above those predicted on the basis of entry qualifications
- students' rapid progress towards their learning goals
- imaginative use of good IT resources
- well-planned teaching based on integrated teaching schemes
- frequent and exciting enrichment activities.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates and value added scores in design and technology

- unsatisfactory retention rates on some courses
- some poor punctuality and attendance.

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

73. A wide range of subjects is provided at GCE AS and A level in visual and performing arts and media. Nearly all full-time students are aged 16 to 18. In 2001, the department began a life drawing class for adults in the evening which has recruited well. GCSE photography and dance have also started in the last year and recruited well.

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

74. The pass rates for most GCE AS and A-level arts courses are above national averages, but those in design and technology are well below average. Students' achievements are compared with predictions based on their prior attainments to assess the added value arising from courses. This added value is outstanding in art and is very good in most other subjects. The standard of attainment observed in lessons was generally good. Many examples of students' completed work were excellent. They demonstrated a thorough understanding of the appropriate key media and expertise in their use. Independent learning skills are well developed, and students in all subjects negotiate the content and form of their own examination projects, either singly or in groups. A high level of creativity is shown in the resulting work, especially by art and performing arts students. An adventurous use of IT is increasingly evident in research and in the production of finished work.

75. Students understand the importance of a planned working process and safe working habits. They are developing good research skills. Most theory work is at least satisfactory although the grammar and spelling of some students is inaccurate. Too many students leave their courses early, although retention rates are gradually improving. Over one fifth of the students failed to attend the lessons observed and several lessons were disrupted by students who arrived late.

76. Pass rates at GCE A level have been at or near 100% for three years in art, and have improved to 100% in music and media. The pass rate is also above national average in theatre studies, but well below in design technology. The proportion of higher grades is generally lower than national averages but still higher than expected for the level of entry.

### ***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> |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GCE A-level<br>art   | 3            | No. of starts           | 42          | 55          | 37          |
|                      |              | % retention             | 90          | 69          | 73          |
|                      |              | % pass rate             | 96          | 100         | 100         |
| GCE A-level<br>media | 3            | No. of starts           | 29          | 40          | 26          |
|                      |              | % retention             | 100         | 66          | 85          |
|                      |              | % pass rate             | 97          | 81          | 100         |

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



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

77. Most teaching in visual and performing arts is very good. Teaching is very well planned. Effective use of broad projects generates students' enthusiasm across a range of topics. For example, the first term in art brings together theory, practice and enrichment activities in one project. Principles learned on studies of still life in art history are applied in studio work and further explored on a visit to London galleries. Teachers work together in teams to ensure that all aspects of projects, including theoretical understanding and practical skills, are equally well developed. All teachers are well qualified in the subjects they teach, though few have industrial or professional experience.

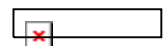
78. Almost every lesson was well structured and formed part of a well-planned sequence. For example, GCSE photography students developed basic photographic skills in making self-portraits for homework which were then scanned into computers. After a brief group session to introduce ideas about image composition, the students returned to their computers and refined their compositions by re-formatting and reprinting. A wide and appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods are used, often in the same lesson. Many practical lessons were helpfully informed by historical examples. For example, a specially mounted wall display of flower paintings helped foundation students refine their approaches to drawing sunflowers. Individual and small group tuition is used to encourage creative development. Art rooms are inadequately equipped with visual aids, but those available are used efficiently. Most assignment briefs are well written and include aims, objectives, tasks, deadlines and assessment criteria. A few are inadequate. Homework is well used to encourage research. Research skills are developed effectively by staff who specify appropriate sources for new students but give progressively less help in the later stages of courses. Assessment is well planned, carried out and recorded. Feedback is frequent, prompt and full. Students receive grades and written comments, often supplemented by individual discussion of their work.

79. Relations between staff and students are excellent. Firm guidance, sensitive support and humour all play a part. The resulting atmosphere generates the commitment and creativity which are important for success. However, some teachers respond inadequately to lateness, disruptive behaviour or inaccurate work. Most accommodation is adequate and well organised though some is overcrowded and some is subject to intrusive noise. IT resources are improving rapidly and are being used adventurously for analysis, research and creative production. The three dimensional design area is unsuitable but there are plans to improve it.

### **Leadership and management**

80. The department is organised into subject teams which work well together. Staff meet regularly but infrequently. Quality assurance is based on the analysis of students' performance, self-assessment reports and student surveys. The outcomes of these lead to actions for improvement.

### **Psychology and sociology**



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

#### **Strengths**

- effective teaching and learning
- many students' final grades exceed those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results

- steady improvement in retention and pass rates
- regular and effective assessment and review of students' progress
- teaching which meets the needs of individual students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some retention and pass rates below national averages
- inadequate challenge to more able students by some teachers
- overcrowded classrooms.

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

81. The college provides psychology and sociology courses at GCE AS and A level. All of the students are full-time and aged 16 to 18. The department offers criminology as an enrichment course which is open to students across the college. The department also contributes to the teaching of general studies.

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

82. Over the last three years, the retention rates for psychology and sociology have been below national averages in some years but have improved steadily. Over the same period, there has been an improvement in the information which students receive before they start their course, and a revised method of providing subject induction. Both of these developments have been evaluated by students as being very useful, and may have contributed to improved retention rates.

83. Pass rates in both subjects at GCE A level have improved over the last three years, and now exceed the national averages. Pass rates at GCE AS level in both subjects are around the national average. While the percentage of high grades in both subjects is below the national average, value added measures show that a significant number of students achieved higher grades than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Attendance has improved since the introduction of a rapid monitoring and action system. However, it does not match the college's target. Staff are vigilant in checking punctuality.

84. The percentage of psychology students going on to HE has increased in each of the last three years, as has the percentage entering employment. In 2000/01 80% of psychology students progressed to one or other of these two destinations. In the same year around 60% of sociology

students progressed to HE and around 30% went into employment.

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

| Qualification          | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCE A-level psychology | 3     | No. of starts    | 88   | 65   | 80   |
|                        |       | % retention      | 73   | 69   | 72   |
|                        |       | % pass rate      | 86   | 82   | 98   |
| GCE A-level sociology  | 3     | No. of starts    | 23   | 11   | 25   |
|                        |       | % retention      | 57   | 64   | 76   |
|                        |       | % pass rate      | 77   | 86   | 100  |

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

***Quality of education and training***

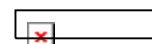
85. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and they communicate this enthusiasm to the students. Teachers have up-to-date knowledge about their disciplines and about teaching/learning methodologies. They provide their students with a rich and diverse learning experience. Teachers keep students firmly focused and create productive working environments. The teaching team shares the development of high-quality teaching materials. Students enjoy their learning and appreciate the well-designed practical exercises which enable them to demonstrate their learning and make progress. In one good lesson, students experimented with a test of memory recall which they had researched in advance. They worked systematically and carefully. In another lesson they tested their ability to recall two verbal noises going on at the same time. This personal experience made research findings more meaningful to them. Students worked well collaboratively, independently and in whole-class activities. Mechanisms for checking learning and understanding were an integral part of each lesson. Students were able to apply their understanding of theoretical concepts to interpret individual and social behaviour. Most students demonstrate the ability to research, debate, compare and analyse. Extra support is offered to those students with particular learning needs. Additional challenges are not always provided for the more able learners. Assignments and homework are regularly set and marked and most learners receive comments which will help them to make further progress.

86. Some classrooms are overcrowded and there is little scope for varying the layout of the furniture. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to organise effective group work.

***Leadership and management***

87. The teaching team is well led and has tackled in a purposeful and productive way weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Teachers produce and share good learning materials and they have begun to share successful approaches to teaching and learning. There is a shared responsibility for early intervention when the progress of an individual learner is a matter of concern.

**Business**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on all courses
- some very effective teaching
- well-planned work experience in the vocational subjects
- good links with employers
- final examination grades exceed those predicted on the basis of GCSE scores on entry
- good progression to HE and employment.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on some courses
- failure to provide for the differing needs and abilities of students in some lessons.

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

88. The college provides a good range of full-time academic and vocational courses in business studies at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. There are no evening courses or other provision aimed specifically at adults.

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

89. The pass rates on intermediate and advanced GNVQ programmes in business have been 100% for the last three years. In 2001, the proportion of students obtaining high grades is well above the national average and shows a significant improvement on previous years. Progression is good: 36% of students progressed to HE on completion of the advanced programme; 44% progressed from the intermediate to the advanced programme. The foundation programme is new for 2001. The standard of attainment in lessons and in students' portfolios is good, especially at advanced level. The students readily join in classroom activities, work in a focused manner and usually make good progress. In a lesson at foundation level, the students took part in a discussion on contract law and successfully completed the associated tasks. In an advanced lesson, students extended their understanding of case law through discussions. In another lesson, role-play activities were used to

develop students' understanding of collective and individual bargaining. Attendance at lessons is 85%, compared with the college's target of 90%.

90. The pass rates for GCE AS and A level are high. In 2001, 97% of students passed the GCE A-level examination and 59% of them achieved grades A-C. Many students are achieving grades which are higher than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades on entry. Some 68% of students who had taken GCE courses in business went on to study on business-related degree programmes. Retention rates on some courses are below national averages.

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

| Qualification                    | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|----------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GNVQ<br>intermediate<br>business | 2     | No. of starts    | 34   | 32   | 18   |
|                                  |       | % retention      | 71   | 81   | 72   |
|                                  |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 100  | 100  |
| GNVQ<br>advanced<br>business     | 3     | No. of starts    | 22   | 32   | 29   |
|                                  |       | % retention      | 91   | 59   | 83   |
|                                  |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 100  | 100  |
| GCE A-level<br>business          | 3     | No. of starts    | 49   | 48   | 49   |
|                                  |       | % retention      | 90   | 70   | 70   |
|                                  |       | % pass rate      | 91   | 97   | 97   |

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

***Quality of education and training***

91. Most teaching is good and in some lessons it is very good or excellent. Most lessons were well planned. A variety of activities were used effectively to promote and enhance learning. Teachers are demanding of their students and in some cases inspire them. Group work is widely undertaken and is managed effectively by teachers. Lesson time is often productively devoted to the correction of common errors found in students' work. The relationship between students and teachers is always good and this helps to promote a purposeful atmosphere. In a few lessons, teachers gave over-long explanations and failed to take account of the differing abilities of students in the class. In one lesson, the teacher had an inadequate command of their subject.

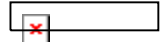
92. Teachers provide detailed and helpful written feedback to students about their academic progress and their key skills. Opportunities to develop students' key skills are identified in schemes of work. Evidence of students' competence in key skills is an integral part of their portfolios of work and is assessed and verified at level 3 on the advanced course and at level 2 on the intermediate course. Teachers make frequent and effective use of examination questions and other tests to check students' understanding and reinforce their learning. Tutors set targets which are based on entry qualifications. Work experience is offered to all vocational students. The feedback from employers and learners is positive. Students value the opportunity to participate in enrichment activities.

***Leadership and management***

93. The business studies team is well led. There are good communications and regular meetings. The team follow the college's quality assurance procedures and are fully involved in self-

assessment and curriculum planning. Monitoring of teaching by the head of department is regular and outcomes are linked to staff development. There are regular reports on pass and retention rates and effective strategies to improve them.

## Sciences



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

### **Strengths**

- good pass rates in GCSE science
- good teaching in most lessons
- good attainment by students in most lessons
- well-equipped science laboratories
- systematic review of students' performance against target grades
- subject-specific initial assessment and support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rates on GCE A-level biology and chemistry courses
- poor pass rates in some GCE A-level subjects, particularly physics
- some accommodation is inappropriate for its purpose.

### **Scope of provision**

94. The college provides a relatively narrow range of science courses: GCSE science and GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics. Recruitment to most of these courses has declined in recent years, especially in chemistry. The introduction of GCE AS-level courses has improved recruitment in biology and physics.

### **Achievement and standards**

95. Pass rates in GCSE science have improved and are now well above the national average. Marks in assessed practicals are generally good and external moderation confirms the rigour of internal assessments. Pass rates at GCE A level vary between subjects. Some are below the national averages for sixth form colleges. In physics the pass rate is substantially below average. Pass rates in biology and chemistry at GCE AS level are satisfactory but the physics pass rate is poor. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses are declining and are below national averages. Retention on GCE AS-level courses is generally satisfactory and it is 100% in physics. Students who complete their courses in science often progress to related degree programmes. In 2001, 88% of students took this route.

96. In most lessons, students were reaching appropriate standards and learning effectively. For example, in a lively discussion on the role of the liver in homeostasis, students demonstrated very good understanding of the processes involved. They showed that they could apply knowledge gained in a previous lesson and displayed good powers of critical thinking. In another lesson on nuclear magnetic resonance, students were able to interpret and predict spectra. Standards of attainment in GCE AS-level lessons were generally below those observed in other lessons and in some cases students were unable to relate what they were doing in practical to theoretical work they had done earlier.

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

| <b>Qualification</b>  | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GCSE sciences         | 2            | No. of starts           | 62          | 52          | 41          |
|                       |              | % retention             | 69          | 85          | 68          |
|                       |              | % pass rate             | 28          | 59          | 62          |
| GCE A-level biology   | 3            | No. of starts           | 96          | 103         | 70          |
|                       |              | % retention             | 96          | 85          | 56          |
|                       |              | % pass rate             | 87          | 73          | 82          |
| GCE A-level chemistry | 3            | No. of starts           | 40          | 31          | 13          |
|                       |              | % retention             | 90          | 62          | 46          |
|                       |              | % pass rate             | 72          | 67          | 83          |
| GCE A-level physics   | 3            | No. of starts           | 27          | 36          | 15          |
|                       |              | % retention             | 81          | 56          | 80          |
|                       |              | % pass rate             | 64          | 67          | 50          |

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

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

97. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. All lessons were well planned. Effective

questioning was used to test students' understanding and, particularly in GCE A-level lessons, students contributed effectively to discussions. In most lessons, students worked on their own when required to do so, and demonstrated knowledge and understanding appropriate to the level of the course. In a biology lesson, a variety of resources, including a computer simulation and a microscope linked to a video display, were used by students to develop their understanding of kidney structure and function. The teacher led a lively discussion, during which all students contributed and demonstrated their ability to analyse and interpret information. In a physics lesson, students contributed effectively to a discussion on the diffraction of light and to the development of models to explain what was happening. Students conducted practical work effectively and paid appropriate attention to safety. Homework was set regularly and assessed work was returned promptly. More able students benefit from the provision of extension activities. Some have worked as part of a molecular biology research team at Liverpool University and the outcomes of their work provide an interesting display in one of the laboratories.

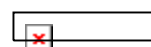
98. Students' progress is monitored effectively and regularly against target grades set at entry. Regular assessment using practicals, tests and homework enables students to monitor their own progress. Support for students is good. In addition to the general initial assessment carried out by the college, each of the science subject teams carries out additional, subject-specific assessment in the first weeks as part of the induction process. These assessments are effective in identifying the need for additional support, particularly in terms of mathematical support for chemistry and physics. There is effective additional tutorial support for individuals and groups. Students are enthusiastic about the level and quality of the support they receive.

99. The science laboratories are well equipped, but they are used for both theory and practical lessons. Some are not suitable for both purposes. The furniture in the biology laboratories can be organised in different ways to suit a range of teaching and learning activities. However, some of the classes using these laboratories are large, resulting in overcrowding and a potentially unsafe environment for practical work. Chemistry and physics laboratories are more difficult to re-organise and some students have to sit with their backs to the teacher during theory lessons.

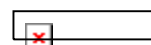
### ***Leadership and management***

100. Management of these subjects is good. Poor pass and retention rates have been identified as weaknesses and an action plan has been devised to generate improvements. There are regular team meetings at which progress is monitored.

## **Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**



| <b>Level</b> | <b>16-18<br/>%</b> | <b>19+<br/>%</b> |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>1</b>     | 1                  | 11               |
| <b>2</b>     | 11                 | 82               |
| <b>3</b>     | 65                 | 7                |
| <b>4/5</b>   | 0                  | 0                |
| <b>Other</b> | 23                 | 80               |



|              |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |
|--------------|------------|------------|

Source: Provided by the college in 2001.

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/2001**

| Curriculum area           | 16-18        | 19+        | Total        |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
|                           | No.          | No.        | Enrolments % |
| Science                   | 716          | 107        | 19           |
| Agriculture               | 0            | 0          | 0            |
| Construction              | 0            | 0          | 0            |
| Engineering               | 0            | 0          | 0            |
| Business                  | 191          | 18         | 5            |
| Hotel and catering        | 46           | 0          | 1            |
| Health and community care | 124          | 0          | 3            |
| Art and design            | 387          | 19         | 10           |
| Humanities                | 2,473        | 37         | 56           |
| Basic education           | 167          | 116        | 6            |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>4,104</b> | <b>297</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Provided by the college in 2001.

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

| Level<br>(Long Courses) | Retention and pass rate      | Completion year |               |               |               |               |               |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                         |                              | 16-18           |               |               | 19+           |               |               |
|                         |                              | 1997/<br>1998   | 1998/<br>1999 | 1999/<br>2000 | 1997/<br>1998 | 1998/<br>1999 | 1999/<br>2000 |
| <b>1</b>                | Starters excluding transfers | 17              | 116           | 224           | 1             | 1             | 3             |
|                         | Retention rate (%)           | 76              | 98            | 89            | *             | *             | *             |
|                         | National Average (%)         | 78              | 81            | 82            | 72            | 69            | 74            |
|                         | Pass rate (%)                | *               | 33            | 81            | *             | *             | *             |
|                         | National Average (%)         | 69              | 71            | 77            | 67            | 75            | 76            |
| <b>2</b>                | Starters excluding transfers | 695             | 486           | 349           | 13            | 9             | 10            |

|          |                              |       |       |       |     |     |     |
|----------|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
|          | Retention rate (%)           | 76    | 75    | 82    | 92  | 78  | 90  |
|          | National Average (%)         | 79    | 80    | 82    | 71  | 71  | 75  |
|          | Pass rate (%)                | 93    | 93    | 98    | 100 | 100 | 71  |
|          | National Average (%)         | 84    | 85    | 82    | 75  | 77  | 77  |
| <b>3</b> | Starters excluding transfers | 1,223 | 1,824 | 1,444 | 11  | 10  | 17  |
|          | Retention rate (%)           | 74    | 65    | 67    | 27  | 80  | 82  |
|          | National Average (%)         | 77    | 78    | 80    | 62  | 65  | 69  |
|          | Pass rate (%)                | 85    | 86    | 80    | 0   | 71  | 100 |
|          | National Average (%)         | 86    | 85    | 85    | 69  | 71  | 74  |

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 1997/98-1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

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

\* data not available

**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)     | 77.7                   | 16.5           | 5.8                      | 85                      |
| Level 2 (intermediate) | 56                     | 28             | 16                       | 25                      |
| Level 1 (foundation)   | 62.5                   | 37.5           | 0                        | 8                       |
| Other sessions         | 85.7                   | 14.3           | 0                        | 7                       |
| <b>Totals</b>          | <b>72.8</b>            | <b>20</b>      | <b>7.2</b>               | <b>125</b>              |

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