



# Bridgwater College

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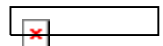
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**Basic information about the college**

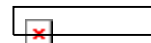


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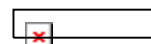
Name of college:	Bridgwater College
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	Fiona McMillan
Address of college:	Bath Road Bridgwater Somerset TA6 4PZ
Telephone number:	01278 455464
Fax number:	01278 444363

Chair of governors:	Derek Randall
Unique reference number:	130803
Name of reporting inspector:	Keith Abbott HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 February 2002

## Part A: Summary



### Information about the college



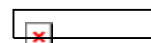
Bridgwater College was established as a tertiary college in 1973. It moved to its current location in 1979. The college is based on a modern, purpose-built campus. Many new buildings have been added over the past 23 years. Since 2000, new facilities have been opened for courses in motor vehicle engineering, construction, early years education, media studies, photography and business. In recent years, the college has developed courses in community locations, including Minehead, Cheddar and Bridgwater.

Bridgwater has a population of about 36,000. Its industrial base has declined over the years, but recently there has been a recovery as many small and medium sized enterprises have come into the area, attracted by proximity to the M5. The college is one of the largest employers in the area, with over 300 full-time and 250 part-time staff.

As a tertiary college, Bridgwater College provides the main progression route for young people leaving local secondary schools at 16. The proportion of 16 year olds in Bridgwater staying in full-time education has risen from 62% in 1997 to 76% in 2001. Over this period, the college has increased full-time student numbers by 10% and part-time numbers by 15%. In 2001, 9,278 students enrolled on further education (FE) courses. There were 1,658 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 709 full-time adult students. Of the remaining 6,911 part-time students, 733 were aged 16 to 18 and 6,178 were adults. The college offers programmes in 13 of the 14 areas of learning defined by the Learning and Skills Council. There is no provision in agriculture. This is offered locally by Cannington College, a specialist land-based college. Provision in hair and beauty is very small and was excluded from the inspection.

The aim of the college, set out in its mission statement, is to 'inspire the people of our community to achieve success by providing the best possible opportunities for learning, a creative and exciting partnership with our staff, and a welcoming and supportive environment.'

### How effective is the college?



Many areas of provision are outstanding. Staff are committed to providing an excellent service to students. Students appreciate the quality of education they receive at the college. Senior managers are dynamic. Managers and teachers work together effectively to ensure high quality teaching and

curriculum areas inspected and good in the other 7 areas. Governors provide clear direction. They monitor the performance of the college effectively. Accommodation is outstanding and the specialist resources in several curriculum areas are outstanding. There are a wide range of courses and excellent opportunities for students to enrich their studies. There are strong links with parents, employers and the community. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

### ***Key strengths***

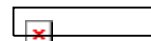
- commitment of staff to excellence
- outstanding pass and retention rates on many courses
- very good teaching and learning in all curriculum areas
- highly effective governance, leadership and management
- outstanding accommodation and equipment
- regular, thorough and fair assessment of students' work
- outstanding guidance and support for students
- wide range of courses and enrichment opportunities.

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

- unsatisfactory pass and retention rates on a few courses.

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

### **Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**

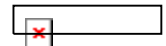


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Most teaching is well planned and effective. Pass rates on two-year General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses are good and in some cases outstanding. Good use is made of information technology (IT) to support learning. Curriculum management is effective. Pass rates on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses are unsatisfactory and there are low retention rates on most GCE A-level courses.
Construction	<b>Good.</b> Teaching in theory and practical lessons is good, although effective practice is often not shared between staff. Students produce a high standard of practical work. Retention rates on most courses are good. Resources are satisfactory, with the exception of the carpentry workshop.
General engineering	<b>Good.</b> Most teaching is good. Pass rates are improving for college courses and work-based training programmes. Retention rates are good on most courses. Accommodation and equipment are of a high standard.
Motor vehicle engineering	<b>Outstanding.</b> Leadership is dynamic. Accommodation and resources are outstanding. Teaching is well planned and effective. There are high retention rates on all courses and high pass rates on most courses. There are very strong links with industry.
Business and management	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Pass and retention rates on most courses are above the national average. Excellent resources are typical of commercial business centres. The curriculum area is well managed.
Information and communication technology	<b>Outstanding.</b> There is a wide range of provision. Pass and retention rates are good. Teaching is well planned and very effective. Resources are excellent.
Travel and tourism	<b>Outstanding.</b> A high standard of teaching leads to effective learning. Pass rates are outstanding on the advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course. There are good links with industry. Accommodation is good. There are excellent facilities for air cabin crew training.
Early years education	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates are high. Teaching is well planned and effective. Resources are excellent. Support for students is good. Leadership and management are effective. Teamwork is strong.
Health and social care and public services	<b>Outstanding.</b> Pass and retention rates are consistently outstanding. Much excellent teaching stimulates students to pursue their learning goals enthusiastically. Individual students are well supported. There are strong links with employers and the community.
Visual arts	<b>Good.</b> There are high pass rates. Retention rates are satisfactory on most courses, but GNVQ courses are below national averages. Almost all teaching is good or better. Most students produce a high standard of work. Most accommodation and resources are excellent, but the graphics studio is too small.

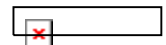
Performance arts	<b>Good.</b> There is a broad range of full-time courses and excellent opportunities for enrichment. Good teaching results in high pass rates on most courses. Accommodation and resources are outstanding.
Humanities, social sciences	<b>Outstanding.</b> Students enjoy their studies. Very good teaching helps them to learn effectively. There is a wide range of stimulating resources. Pass and retention rates are mostly high. Leadership and management are outstanding. Quality assurance activities are effective.
Humanities, English and languages	<b>Outstanding.</b> Teaching and learning is mostly very good or outstanding. Excellent use is made of the target language in language teaching. Pass rates on all courses are outstanding. Work is marked thoroughly and feedback is very effective.
Programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	<b>Good.</b> Most teaching is good or better, although some teaching for students who have complex learning difficulties does not meet their needs. Good target setting and progress reviews help individuals to develop appropriate life, social and vocational skills. Students are well supported in their lessons. There are good links with the community.
Basic skills	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Retention rates are good on all programmes, and pass rates are high on basic skills courses that are externally accredited. There is a broad range of courses. Resources are very good. Key skills are not well integrated on some foundation level programmes. Lifeskills provision is outstanding.

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



Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff and governors work together closely and have been successful in expanding the range of courses, raising academic standards, and developing the college site. Managers are particularly effective in securing external funding to improve the quality of provision for students. Quality assurance systems and procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection in 1997 and are now excellent. Procedures to monitor the quality of provision are effective and there are high levels of accountability. Close attention is given to the quality of teaching, which is overall very good. Management information is reliable and well used. A high priority is placed on the promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity. Marketing materials have improved since the last inspection and are good. The college's external links are excellent.

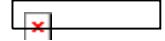
### To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



A major aim of the strategic plan is to ensure that the college is socially and educationally inclusive. This aim is steadily being achieved. The college regularly reviews its provision for members of minority ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged residents in the community. Strategies to improve involvement of these groups in education and to challenge any stereotyped attitudes towards them, have had an impact on the curriculum and enrolments. The college has been successful in enrolling one in six of Bridgwater's population aged between 16 and 64. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups in the college is three times higher than

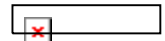
by the local Learning and Skills Council has increased from 1% in 2000 to 6% in 2001, an indication of the college's significant contribution to regenerative initiatives in the area.

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



Support for students is outstanding. Strong links with schools and a broad range of open days, taster days and information evenings provide good opportunities for prospective students and their parents to receive impartial advice about the college and its courses. Induction procedures are comprehensive. They include thorough assessment of additional learning needs and of individuals' preferred learning styles. Tutorial support is very effective. All full-time students follow a well-structured tutorial programme. Personal tutors know their students very well. Effective college systems ensure that personal tutors are well informed about their tutees' progress. Communication with parents of students aged 16 to 18 is very good. However, there is some ineffective communication with the employers of work-based trainees.

### **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***

- welcoming and supportive environment
- good teaching that makes learning enjoyable
- very good accommodation and facilities
- well-marked work with helpful feedback
- clear and helpful course advice and information
- good personal and academic support

- wide range of courses and opportunities
- staff who listen to and respond to students' views.

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

- some aspects of key skills teaching
- overcrowding in the refectory
- number of car-parking spaces
- provision of bus shelters.

**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) %

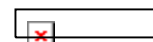


Teaching 16-18	88	10	2
19+ and WBL*	85	12	3
Learning 16-18	91	8	1
19+ and WBL*	83	14	3

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

*\* work-based learning*

## Achievement and standards



### 16-18 year olds

1. Nearly three quarters of full-time students are aged 16 to 18. These students take a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications. The college has consistently achieved retention rates well above the national average for students aged 16 to 18 in FE colleges. With the exception of GCE A-level science subjects, this success has been achieved in all curriculum areas and across levels of study. For example, in 2001, the overall retention rates on level 1, 2 and 3 long courses were 88%, 85% and 83%, respectively. These rates compare very favourably with national averages of 80%, 77% and 77%, respectively and place the college well into the upper quartile at each of the three levels. In both 1999 and 2000, the college was either at, or above, the national average at each level. For the three years from 1999, the overall trend at the college has shown an improvement in retention rates.

2. The college also achieves very good pass rates on courses for students aged 16 to 18. In 2001, overall pass rates on level 1, 2 and 3 long courses were 81%, 80% and 84% respectively. The national averages were 66%, 68% and 73% respectively. The college was therefore in the upper quartile at levels 1, 2 and 3.

3. In 2000, 96% of entrants for GCE A levels passed their examinations. In 2001, 94% were successful. Some 65% of entrants achieved grade C or above. The college achieved 100% pass rates in many subjects, including physics, chemistry, English language, English literature, French, sociology, drama, media studies, art and design, and business studies. Overall pass rates are excellent, particularly as the level of GCSE qualifications of students entering the college is slightly below the national average for 16-year-old school-leavers. Value added analysis shows that most GCE A-level students achieve better results than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. The college also achieved good GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) results in 2001; 91% of entrants passed and 64% achieved grade C or above.

4. The college achieves good GCSE pass rates in some subjects. For example, in GCSE English, in 2001, 73% of students achieved grade C or above. This rate is over 20% above the national average for further education colleges. In some GCSE subjects pass rates were unsatisfactory. In 2001, in mathematics and human biology, the pass rates were 28% and 30% respectively. These pass rates are below the national averages.

5. The college achieves good results on its vocational programmes. On most programmes, both retention rates and pass rates are above national averages. On many programmes, all of the students who complete the course achieve the qualification. Examples from 2001 include advanced GNVQs in leisure and tourism, art and design, health and social care and business studies and national diplomas in public services, media studies, performing arts, engineering and computing. There are very good pass rates on first diploma, foundation and intermediate GNVQs and on most

National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) programmes. In 2001, pass rates on Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses were also above national averages for most units tested. Most students with learning difficulties or disabilities learn sufficiently well to be able to get a job or become more independent.

6. In 2001, all full-time students studied key skills and had the opportunity to choose from a wide range of enrichment activities. Most students sat key skills tests in application of number, IT and communications. At levels 1 and 3, pass rates were well above the national average in application of number and IT. At level 2, pass rates were above the national average in all three key skills. The overall college pass rate in these tests was 75%.

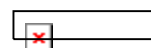
7. Standards of students' work observed in lessons during the inspection were generally good or better. Students in all curriculum areas are highly motivated. They work hard, make enthusiastic contributions to class discussions and produce good written and practical work. Attendance at lessons observed by inspectors was 82%. College attendance records for 2001 show an overall attendance rate of 86% for full-time students.

### **Adult learners**

8. The achievements of the college's adult students are outstanding. About 28% of the college's full-time students are adults. Many other adults take part-time courses in business, art and design or IT. Many of these students study at the college's centres in Minehead, Cheddar and Bridgwater town centre. Both pass and retention rates for adult students have been consistently above national averages for FE colleges. In each of the last three years, retention and pass rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 were above the national average.

9. Work-based training in construction and motor vehicle engineering is new provision and few students had completed by this inspection. The retention rates of general engineering modern apprentices has been good, but the number of completions by the time of the inspection was low.

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



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 265 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 87% of these sessions, satisfactory in 11% and less than satisfactory in 2%. The quality of teaching was consistently very good in all curriculum areas. It was particularly effective on courses in travel and tourism, information and communication technology (ICT) and health and social care where, in each case, all lessons were good or better. Learning is also very effective. The proportion of lessons graded for learning as good or better, satisfactory and less than satisfactory were 88%, 10% and 2%, respectively.

11. A feature of many of the effective lessons is appropriately detailed planning that takes full account of the individual needs and preferred learning styles of the students. In almost all lessons, clear objectives are set and achieved. Students are skilfully involved in discussions, role-play and presentations. Teachers approach their subjects with enthusiasm. There are very good working relationships between teachers and students. Students are highly motivated and enjoy their studies. They work well in groups, assist each other in managing the tasks and exchange ideas with confidence. In many curriculum areas, students benefit from visiting speakers, industrial visits, residentials and field trips. Groups of students have recently been on study visits to Moscow, New York, Paris, Prague, Berlin and Italy.

12. Practical lessons, in laboratories and workshops are also very well organised. Students are suitably briefed about the tasks they need to perform. They are closely supervised and well supported. Teachers relate theory to practice clearly and effectively. Practical activities are also

linked to students' and trainees' workplace experiences. Teachers handle practical demonstrations competently. Close attention is paid to health and safety issues. In many lessons, students used computers with confidence.

13. In the less than satisfactory lessons and in some lessons that, overall, were satisfactory, there were weaknesses. These included; failure to check that students were understanding the work; poor arrangement of the classroom furniture; missed opportunities to use IT; failure to involve students in class discussions; and some activities that were either too easy or too difficult for some of the students.

14. Assessment of students' learning is well managed. A comprehensive framework contains standards for assessment that meet both internal and external requirements. Procedures to monitor students' attainment and progress are adhered to across the college. Thorough initial assessment of full-time students and part-time students on long courses identifies levels of competence in key skills and preferred learning styles. Foundation level students have a searching assessment of their basic skills needs which ensures that most students are placed on suitable programmes, and have realistic goals. Teachers make good use of information about the learning styles of individual students when planning their lessons.

15. Methods of assessment are appropriate for students and are linked to the standards required by awarding bodies. Assessment is regular, thorough and fair. Most students are well informed about assessment arrangements and know the standard of work expected of them by teachers and awarding bodies. Where relevant, for example in childcare, assessment is closely linked to placement or workplace activities. This arrangement ensures that there is good integration of theory and practice. Childcare staff also use photographic and video evidence for assessment.

16. In most curriculum areas, teachers' comments help students to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to learn how to improve. Students value the quality and regularity of feedback. However, in visual arts, students do not get enough information on the factors that determine their grades for individual pieces of work. The college makes good use of the staff designated as 'advanced teaching practitioners' to improve the consistency and quality of feedback.

17. Twice each year, subject teachers write reports on each student. Personal tutors use these reports, in consultation with each student, to review their tutees' individual targets. In most curriculum areas, the target setting and review process for students is effective, but in engineering the targets are not sufficiently demanding. There are also effective procedures to identify under performance. 'Cause for concern' slips are used to inform tutors about poor performance. Prompt and effective action usually follows. Parents are well informed about their son's or daughter's progress. They receive three written reports each year and there is one parents' evening each year. Parents are satisfied with these arrangements, and with the timeliness of action taken following initial assessment. New Deal clients, their personal advisers and employers are appropriately involved in progress reviews. Workplace supervisors contribute to the assessment of work-based trainees. College assessors visit workplaces to carry out observations and other assessment activities.

18. There is an effective system for internal verification. All programme areas have a lead internal verifier who ensures that internal verification standards are maintained. Lead internal verifiers share good assessment practice at regular meetings. Programme managers and senior staff scrutinise external verifiers' reports. When required action is taken quickly and monitored to ensure compliance.

19. The college provides impartial advice and information for prospective students. It has extensive links with partner schools. For example, college staff attend school parents' evenings and hold guidance sessions in schools. In 2000, the college was awarded a Beacon Award for school-college partnerships. Open days, taster days and information evenings for parents are well attended. A two-day 'familiarisation event' in July enables prospective students to get to know staff and other students. Interviews for all full-time and substantive part-time students are well organised. Marketing information is clear and informative. Induction programmes provide students with a good introduction to the college and their courses. The programme includes assessment of students'

learning support needs.

20. Tutorial support for students is outstanding. All students have a personal tutor. All full-time students follow a well-structured tutorial programme. The programme is managed by a team of senior tutors, which meets regularly to plan and review activities. It includes termly cross-college theme weeks related to college or national issues, for example 'equal opportunities', 'health and environment' and 'leaving home'. Good support is provided for students applying to university or seeking employment. Full-time students have regular meetings with their tutors at which their progress towards agreed targets is reviewed. Part-time students receive appropriate tutorial support. They are well informed about the support services available to them in the college.

21. The college maintains close contact with the parents of its students aged 16 to 18. Parents receive course timetables, information about visits and regular progress reports. They are encouraged to contact their son's or daughter's named personal tutor if they have any concerns. However, communication with employers of trainees on work-based learning programmes is sometimes ineffective. As a result, some employers lack sufficient understanding of training programmes and trainees' qualifications.

22. Good specialist support services are provided for students and include confidential counselling; financial advice; first aid advice; and a twice-weekly doctor's surgery. Childcare is provided in an excellent centre with 71 places. The students' union is very active. A student support officer funded by the college helps to organise a wide range of social, recreational and fundraising activities. In 2001, the college raised over £4,000 for charity.

23. The college provides an extensive range of courses. Courses are offered at entry or level 1 through to levels 3 and 4 in most curriculum areas. Work-based programmes are available in construction, general engineering and life skills. The college is very responsive to local community and employer needs. New courses are steadily introduced. There is a diverse programme of community-based provision. The centres in Minehead, Cheddar and Bridgwater town centre, mainly offer IT courses. Some 37 other venues are used for a variety of short programmes successfully aimed at widening participation in FE.

24. The reforms known as 'Curriculum 2000' have been successfully introduced. The college timetable provides good opportunities for students to mix academic and vocational programmes. Many students have increased the breadth of their studies. In 1999/2000, prior to Curriculum 2000, only four students took four GCE A levels. In 2000/01, 91 students started a four GCE AS programme and in 2001/02, 155 students. Many students combine a GCE AS with their main vocational programme. In 2001/02, 148 students chose such a combination. In 2000/01, 22 GCE A-level students combined an AVCE with their GCE A levels. Only four students had chosen this opportunity in 2001/02.

25. The teaching, assessment and co-ordination of key skills are good in most curriculum areas. All full-time programmes include key skills lessons or other activities designed to enable students to provide the evidence necessary for assessment. In most curriculum areas, key skills are an integral part of their courses. In a few areas, such integration is ineffective and students lose interest in work on key skills. Although the college achieved good results in key skills tests in 2001, it sought to strengthen the provision by making new arrangements for key skills teaching from September 2001.

26. The college organises comprehensive enrichment programmes both within course programmes and as optional activities available to all students. Many students gain useful qualifications in, for example, first aid, food hygiene, sports coaching and self-defence. Students have excellent opportunities to go on overseas trips, organise fund raising events and participate in a wide range of sports, although the structure of the timetable makes it difficult for some students to take part in sport. Timetabled weekly enrichment opportunities include courses in French, Spanish, photography, ceramics, music, and massage techniques. Students are also able to take the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

27. The college has excellent external links. Local community groups, employers, public services

and local schools regard the college as highly responsive. Staff and governors communicate effectively with them. For example, there are industrial liaison advisory panels, chaired by a college governor, in all the main curriculum areas. The college's business development unit has four training officers who liaise with employers to support the modern apprenticeship programme. Links with schools are excellent. The college is responsive to their needs. For example, a new level 1 beauty therapy course was developed following discussions with several schools. Many students progress to further study at the college or at university. The college has effective links with an expanding group of partner universities.

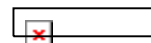
28. Accommodation and resources are outstanding. All areas of the college are attractive, well decorated, clean and free from graffiti. Common areas are welcoming and have clear signage. There are excellent displays of students' work around the college and relevant teaching materials are displayed in classrooms which are well furnished and suitably equipped. The college has significantly improved its accommodation and equipment since the last inspection. Major new developments include: an early years education centre and college nursery; a large floodlit all-weather pitch; very spacious motor vehicle workshops; and a media, photography and business centre. The college grounds are attractive and well maintained. Specialist facilities in many curriculum areas are outstanding, for example, motor vehicle engineering, early years education, photography, performing arts, business studies and computing.

29. There are sufficient up-to-date computers for students. There is one computer for every 4.8 full-time equivalent students. All students have e-mail addresses and good access to the Internet. Some course teams have placed course notes on the college intranet. Students can access the intranet in college and remotely from home. The centres in Bridgwater town centre, Minehead and Cheddar also have adequate computing facilities and technical support. The college has a comprehensive IT development strategy. There are sufficient computers for staff, but some staff rooms are cramped and untidy.

30. The spacious learning resources centre is well used by students. Facilities include a careers library; a children's library; drop-in computing; quiet study areas; and a staff reference area. The multimedia services department provides colour and monochrome printing and binding and lamination services for staff and students. A wide range of equipment is available to staff and students, including televisions, video recorders, video cameras, digital cameras, laptop computers and, for field trips, mobile phones.

31. Teachers are well qualified. Full-time staff teach about 90% of lessons. Almost all teachers, both full time and part time, have degrees or higher technical qualifications. Most have teaching qualifications and those that do not are required to obtain one. There are good opportunities for staff development. For example, in 2001, 30 undertook some industrial updating. Annual cross-college staff development activities focus on teaching and learning. The college's 12 'advanced teaching practitioners' work with staff to improve teaching and assist with curriculum developments, for example, in relation to key skills, value added and examination preparation. The college's thorough approach to the selection and appointment of teachers focuses on applicants' competence as teachers. The principal or vice principal are directly involved in all appointments of teachers and support staff.

## **Leadership and management**



32. Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff and governors work closely together and have raised standards at the college. Since the last inspection in 1997, the range of provision has expanded significantly especially at level 1, academic standards have risen, and the college site has undergone major development. Retention and pass rates are well above national averages at all three levels. Centres of excellence have been developed in three curriculum areas, early years,

possible service to students permeates the college and reflects its mission statement.

33. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction. Governors attend an annual residential event with senior managers to develop strategic objectives. Extensive consultation with staff then follows before final objectives are published. These objectives are closely monitored each term and are effectively built in to college and departmental operating plans. Governors closely monitor academic achievement through the standards committee. They have an excellent knowledge of curriculum issues. Governors chair the curriculum area review groups that meet three times each year to monitor the standard of provision.

34. Leadership and management are dynamic and effective. Managers in curriculum areas provide effective, enthusiastic and often inspiring leadership. Their roles and responsibilities are clear and understood. Courses are well organised and give students a clear and coherent context for their learning. Communication is excellent. There are effective and informative meetings at all levels, the main details of which are outlined in a comprehensive schedule given to all staff. The senior management team meets twice a week. In addition, individual members have weekly meetings with either the principal or the vice principal. Members of the senior management team meet with their teams twice weekly and disseminate information. Staff are well informed and appreciate the frequent contact with the principal and senior managers. Thorough staff appraisals are carried out annually and targets for improvement and development are identified and monitored.

35. Quality assurance systems have improved since the last inspection and are now excellent. Monitoring of performance is comprehensive and thorough across all programmes and services in the college. There is a high level of accountability. Curriculum areas are reviewed thoroughly three times a year at course level and three further times at area level. Action plans are produced and there is regular monitoring of their implementation. The views of students, employers and other external partners are sought and used to improve both the quality and range of courses offered. Target setting and monitoring are thorough in most areas, although inconsistently applied in work-based learning.

36. Close attention is given to the quality of teaching. Advanced teaching practitioners are effective in disseminating good practice in teaching and learning and supporting new teaching staff. The lesson observation programme is comprehensive and effective. The profile of grades awarded by inspectors for teaching, learning and attainment is similar to the profile that was identified by the college in its self-assessment report. The overall grades awarded by inspectors were the same as in the report in 9 out of 15 curriculum areas. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than the college in two areas and a lower grade in four areas. The self-assessment process is well established and takes account of the views of staff, students and employers.

37. Management information in the college is good and staff have confidence in the reports produced. The management information officer attends individual programme reviews and anomalies between registers and the data are promptly resolved. Staff have on-line access to management information and regularly review performance against national averages.

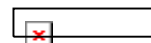
38. Equality of opportunity is given a high priority. An equal opportunities co-ordinator and committee ensure that policies are clear and that curriculum areas' equal opportunities plans are carried out. Recruitment activities, retention rates and student achievement are regularly monitored by gender, ethnicity and disability. Measures for dealing with racial and sexual harassment, bullying and students' grievances are clear and well understood. Student and staff awareness of issues involving equality of opportunity is increased through regular events. These have included a recent staff conference that concentrated on gender issues in teaching and learning and a tutorial week that focused on a range of equal opportunities matters. Publicity materials are of a very good quality and pay particular attention to promoting equality of opportunity.

39. Staff have strong external links and are involved in many effective partnerships to widen participation in FE and meet local needs. There are good links with local schools. Courses in some of the college's curriculum areas are linked to those in schools and are jointly taught by staff from the school and the college. The college also provides educational opportunities for pupils who simply do not seem to settle and get on in schools. Local partnerships include a project on youth

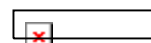
offending and a regeneration project for two nearby housing estates. Links with employers are good. However, employers and work-based supervisors need to be better informed of the content of modern apprenticeship programmes.

40. Management of the college's finances is good. Financial expenditure is carefully monitored and reporting on financial matters to governors is good. Most budgets are devolved to section level. Regular reports ensure that income and expenditure are closely monitored. The college is particularly effective in securing external funding to improve the quality of provision for students. The outstanding automotive, early years and visual arts and media centres were built using a combination of funding from different sources.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science and mathematics



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

#### **Strengths**

- well-planned and effective teaching
- good pass rates on two-year GCE A-level courses
- effective curriculum management.

#### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory retention rates on two-year GCE A-level courses
- poor pass rates on GCSE courses.

#### **Scope of provision**

41. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in biology, chemistry, environmental science, human biology, physics and mathematics. There are GCSE programmes in human biology and

mathematics. Human biology and mathematics options are available on an access to HE programme. There are a small number of students on an AVCE programme in science. There is also a national certificate course in science.

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

42. Attendance at lessons observed by inspectors was 83%. Most students were punctual. The retention rates on GCSE courses in mathematics and human biology and on the one-year GCE A-level human biology course are satisfactory. However, retention rates on the two-year GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics are unsatisfactory and were all below national averages in 2001. The GCE AS programmes in chemistry, environmental science and physics had good retention rates in 2001.

43. Pass rates on two-year GCE A-level courses are very good. All subjects achieve pass rates above the national average and some results have been consistently outstanding. For example, all students taking the GCE A-level examination in chemistry and physics in the three years from 1999 have been successful. However, the pass rate on the one-year GCE A-level human biology course has been below the national average for the past two years. The number of students passing with grades C or above at GCE A level is above the national averages in chemistry, physics and environmental science. Pass rates on the GCE AS programmes are above the national average in some subjects. In 2001, all chemistry and environmental science students were successful. Pass rates on the two GCSE courses are poor. They have been well below the national average in each of the past three years.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GCSE human biology	2	No. of starts	25	6	31
		% retention	84	100	74
		% pass rate	17	33	30
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	204	216	121
		% retention	73	69	80
		% pass rate	16	23	28
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	22	10	21
		% retention	91	90	57
		% pass rate	87	100	92
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	15	20	17
		% retention	73	55	65
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	17	20	11
		% retention	71	65	73
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level mathematics (2 year)	3	No. of starts	36	43	40
		% retention	56	63	50
		% pass rate	95	81	75

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



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

44. There is much effective teaching and learning. Most lessons observed by inspectors were good or better. Lessons are meticulously planned. Clear objectives are set and achieved. Review and consolidation of learning are strong features of the most effective lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Good use is made of computers, data projectors and projection microscopes in lessons. In a few lessons, teachers did not check sufficiently thoroughly that students understood the work or made appropriate demands on all students. In many lessons, the real-life applications of science were clearly illustrated. For example, in a human biology lesson, the teacher used the smallpox eradication story to illustrate vaccination and immunological memory.

45. Laboratory activities are well organised. In practical lessons, teachers relate theory to practice clearly and effectively. For example, in a chemistry practical lesson, students undertook experiments on the relative stability of halogeno-alkanes. This approach enabled them to understand problems arising from the chemical stability of chlorofluoroalkanes, the gases that are responsible for the depletion of the ozone layer.

46. In the most effective mathematics lessons, teachers stimulate students' interest in learning. For example, in one GCSE class, the teacher motivated students by using the fat content displayed on products such as chocolate bars, crisps and biscuits as data from which students calculated mean, median and mode values. The lesson concluded with a game of three-dimensional noughts and crosses. This was an imaginative way to revise mathematical concepts. In some mathematics classes, teaching does not maintain students' interest. Some teachers make insufficient checks to discover if students are learning the work.

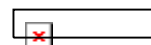
47. Most students are well motivated. They work well and contribute effectively in lessons. Most students' work is of a high standard. They acquire good IT skills. Homework is set each week and students' progress is monitored through regular tests. Assignments are imaginative and purposeful. Marking is thorough and feedback is constructive.

48. Teachers are well qualified and most have relevant specialist teaching experience. There is good support from technicians. A good range of textbooks and laboratory manuals is provided for each student. The library is adequately stocked with books, videos and CD-ROMs and a suitable range of scientific periodicals. Accommodation is good. Laboratories are spacious and appropriately equipped. Attractive posters and examples of students' work are displayed in all rooms. A few mathematics rooms were too small for the larger groups of GCE AS students.

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

49. The programme area is well managed. There is an excellent team spirit and staff share teaching resources with each other. Managers concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and on adequate preparation of students for examinations. There are effective procedures for monitoring students' progress. Target setting is well established and student retention and pass rates are monitored and carefully analysed. Action plans to address weaknesses identified through self-assessment have been implemented. They have led to some improvement in retention rates and a review of entry criteria for GCSE mathematics students.

### **Construction**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good teaching in theory and practical lessons
- effective work-based assessment in electrical installation
- good retention rates on many courses
- high standard of practical work
- strong links with employers.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some unsatisfactory progress reviews
- insufficient sharing of good practice
- poor layout of the carpentry and joinery workshop.

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

50. The college offers a wide range of construction programmes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These include carpentry and joinery, brickwork and electrical installation programmes. Most students follow foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and attend on either a day-release or evening-class basis. Programmes are based at Cannington, which is about five miles from the main campus.

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

51. The quality of practical work produced by students is good. Realistic practical projects are set in workshops and students work to industry standards. For example, students on the first-year carpentry and joinery course are able to produce work to accurate tolerances working from their own drawings. Many work-based learners' portfolios contain photographic evidence of good work completed on site.

52. Retention rates for modern apprentices are consistently above national averages. Pass rates on most programmes are higher than the national averages. For example, the pass rate on NVQ level 2 carpentry and joinery was 75% in 2001, which was 26% above the national average. The NVQ level 2 bricklaying pass rate of 100%, in 2001, was 44% above the national average. However, the

50% pass rate for NVQ level 2 in electrical installation is slightly below the national average. NVQ level 1 electrical installation students have been slow to complete their programmes. None of the students due to complete in 2001 had achieved completion by the time of the inspection.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ trowel occupations	1	No. of starts	*	39	24
		% retention	*	85	88
		% pass rate	*	94	95
NVQ carpentry and joinery	1	No. of starts	*	34	22
		% retention	*	76	95
		% pass rate	*	48	100
NVQ electrical installations	1	No. of starts	10	10	16
		% retention	80	70	73
		% pass rate	80	60	0
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	*	6	14
		% retention	*	100	64
		% pass rate	*	83	100
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	12	15	18
		% retention	67	100	89
		% pass rate	75	100	75
NVQ electrical installations	2	No. of starts	33	21	17
		% retention	94	95	94
		% pass rate	30	85	50

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

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

53. Teaching and learning are well planned. Good schemes of work and lesson plans are used on all programmes. Teaching is effective. Most lessons observed by inspectors were good or better. No lessons were less than satisfactory. Theory lessons are linked to practical activities and to students' experience in the workplace. Good use is made of students' industrial experience to illustrate key points and promote discussion. Teachers make suitable references to codes of practice, British standards and technical journals. They use handouts well in both theory and practical lessons to illustrate key points and present complex information, and they regularly check that students understand the work. Group work is a strong feature of some lessons. In one lesson, key skills were well taught through group work, but in another lesson, poor furniture layout restricted group discussions.

54. Workplace assessment of electrical installation students is good. Employers provide a wide range of training opportunities and regular assessment in the workplace. Employers and their students are actively involved in identifying opportunities for assessment. The use of workplace evidence in brickwork and carpentry and joinery is satisfactory. Site diaries for recording witness testimonies are used to assist students with this recording of workplace evidence. College staff carry out regular reviews of students' progress in the workplace. However, some reviews do not

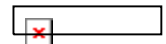
give sufficient guidance to students about their targets. Employers are not sufficiently involved in this process, and as a result, opportunities to develop their understanding of NVQ requirements are missed.

55. The construction area has suitable workshops for brickwork and electrical installations and adequate computing facilities. The workshops have sufficient materials and equipment to enable students to work effectively. The layout of the carpentry workshop is unsatisfactory. There are blind spots that prevent tutors from seeing all students in the room. Classrooms are clean and well decorated. Posters and technical information displayed on classroom walls help to provide a stimulating learning environment. Staff are well qualified. They have relevant vocational qualifications, industrial experience and assessor awards.

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

56. Construction provision is well managed. Course files are well maintained. Internal verification is effective, including verification of workplace assessment and portfolios. Course teams meet regularly. Staff are informed about immediate operational matters at twice weekly team briefings. Self-assessment activities focus on students' achievements on issues identified through self-assessment. For example, the provision of workshop space was increased following self-assessment analysis. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice amongst teachers. For example, the good work-based assessment practice in electrical installation is not shared with the other construction disciplines. The construction advisory board provides a link with construction employers. It meets termly, but there are no representatives from the electrical installations employers. The appraisal of staff is systematic and identifies opportunities for staff development.

### **General engineering**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good teaching
- good retention and pass rates in 2001
- consistent and significant improvement in pass rates
- good workshop facilities
- strong links with industry and schools

- effective teamwork and management.

### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory target setting for some work-based trainees
- missed opportunities to use IT in a few lessons.

### **Scope of provision**

57. The inspection includes full-time and part-time engineering craft courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, including an AVCE engineering programme and GCE A-level design and technology. At the time of the inspection, there were 44 work-based trainees, 38 on advanced modern apprenticeships and 6 on foundation modern apprenticeships. The college also acts as a sub-contractor for a further 15 work-based trainees. Work-based trainee numbers are increasing, whereas full-time enrolments are generally decreasing.

### **Achievement and standards**

58. In 2001, retention and pass rates on college courses were good. All were above national averages. All students who completed the national diploma in engineering and NVQ level 2 engineering manufacture achieved the qualification. GCE A-level design and technology had few students, but the retention rate was 100% in both 2000 and 2001. Pass rates on the City and Guilds mechanical production competences course were poor in 1999 and 2000, but improved significantly in 2001. The overall trend for retention and pass rates on college courses is one of improvement. There have also been improvements in work-based trainees' achievements, although too many trainees do not complete by the expected end date. Of the modern apprentices with end dates in 2001, 71% were retained, but only 29% completed the full framework. Current work-based trainees are making good progress with the acquisition of key skills. Most students produce good quality practical work in the engineering workshops.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds basic engineering competences	1	No. of starts	*	20	12
		% retention	*	80	100
		% pass rate	*	81	75
City and Guilds mechanical production competences	2	No. of starts	19	13	22
		% retention	95	77	86
		% pass rate	13	20	94
NVQ engineering manufacture	2	No. of starts	27	22	14
		% retention	96	77	86
		% pass rate	62**	76**	100

National diploma in engineering and production technology	3	No. of starts	16	15	14
		% retention	75	80	71
		% pass rate	73	100	100

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

\* course did not run

\*\* college data

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

59. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons are well planned. Opportunities to acquire and assess key skills are indicated with in lesson plans. Students' interest is effectively maintained in most lessons. For example, in one lesson, students were split into groups to make short presentations on polymer forming processes. Learning was then consolidated using a quiz based on the production of a number of commonplace moulded articles. In an engineering drawing lesson, cardboard cut outs were used to simulate sheet metalwork shape development. Students are well motivated in lessons and there are good working relations between staff and students. The industrial experience of work-based trainees is often used effectively in lessons. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on health and safety issues in practical lessons. In a few lessons, the teaching was unimaginative and there were missed opportunities to use IT in the classroom. Written assignments are generally clear and grading criteria is properly identified. Most staff provide appropriately detailed and constructive feedback on written work, although poor spelling is often not corrected.

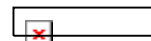
60. Work-based trainees are visited by the engineering section's NVQ assessor every two weeks. The purpose is to conduct on-the-job assessments and to review progress against previously set tasks. Evidence is drawn from witness testimonies and photographs of students' work. A clear proforma is used to record assessment visits. The trainee and the employer both grade on a range of parameters, such as timekeeping and enthusiasm. The framework for the assessment of work-based trainees is appropriate. It involves the setting of both short-term and long-term targets. However, some long-term targets set for trainees' achievement of NVQ and key skills units are not sufficiently demanding. In addition, some assessment plans in trainees' portfolios lack sufficient detail.

61. Teaching staff have appropriate qualifications, although some lack recent industrial experience. The engineering equipment and facilities are very good. The college has recently invested in new hydraulic and pneumatic testing equipment, milling machines and computer aided design equipment. However, old lathes adversely affect the quality of students' work. Most theory lessons take place in modern accommodation that is enhanced by the posters and displays of students' work. Some of the older rooms, used for design and technology are unnecessarily cluttered.

### **Leadership and management**

62. The engineering staff are an effective and well-led team. Every day, there is a short staff meeting before lessons start. Problems are tackled promptly; imaginative solutions are often found. Appropriate consideration is given to comparison of performance against targets. Curriculum development and staff development are well managed. There are strong links with local schools and employers. For example, the college has worked with schools to encourage more girls to enrol on engineering courses. Last year, 20 girls from 5 local schools came to the college on a one-week 'women into science and engineering' programme. There is an active advisory group of employers. The section works effectively with the college's business development unit in relation to work-based trainees. Responsibilities for interviewing and assessing potential trainees for established achievement of targets and contractual issues have been clear.

### **Motor vehicle engineering**



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

### ***Strengths***

- outstanding accommodation and resources
- high pass rates on most courses
- high retention rates on all courses
- very strong links with industry
- well-planned and effective teaching
- dynamic leadership of the curriculum area.

### ***Weaknesses***

- no key weaknesses.

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

63. There is a wide range of craft, technician and higher technician courses in motor vehicle engineering, including light vehicle, heavy vehicle and vehicle body repair and refinishing. Attendance patterns include full time, part time and block release. Very strong links have been forged with vehicle manufacturers, dealerships and managing agents. Specific block-release courses have been designed for them and students are recruited from across England. At the time of the inspection, there were 80 students aged 16 to 18 undertaking a full-time programme comprising an AVCE in engineering with a motor vehicle bias, the first certificate and NVQs in motor vehicle engineering. These students alternate weeks in college and a week in a work placement. There were 34 adults studying full-time courses. In 2000/01, there were 688 part-time students, of whom 63 were aged over 19. All are modern apprentices. Substantial numbers of students from local schools attend the college on a weekly basis to study units from an NVQ motor vehicle course.

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

64. Pass rates on the first certificate in motor vehicle engineering course and on NVQ programmes are very good. Outstanding pass rates have been achieved for the large numbers of students taking

NVQ level 1 qualifications. Few students take the national diploma in motor vehicle engineering. In 2001, the 50% pass rate on this course was well below the national average. The college has replaced the course with the AVCE in motor vehicle engineering. There are consistently high retention rates on all courses.

65. Students are industrious and demonstrate good practical competence. They pay particular attention to health and safety matters. Their punctuality is exemplary. Assignment work is very good and students' portfolios are well structured and clearly presented, although there are some examples of poor grammar and spelling.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ vehicle maintenance service replacement	1	No. of starts	24	259	223
		% retention	88	73	72
		% pass rate	89	98	100
NVQ vehicle valeting	1	No. of starts	*	*	279
		% retention	*	*	88
		% pass rate	*	*	97
First certificate in motor vehicle engineering	2	No. of starts	*	10	9
		% retention	*	80	89
		% pass rate	*	100	83
NVQ vehicle body and paint operations	3	No. of starts	*	*	43
		% retention	*	*	91
		% pass rate	*	*	82
NVQ vehicle maintenance and repair	3	No. of starts	46	51	49
		% retention	93	80	94
		% pass rate	86	83	89

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

\*course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

66. Teaching is extremely well planned and effective. All lessons are well organised. Teachers prepare appropriately detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Both theory and practical lessons begin with teachers stating the objectives. In theory lessons, teachers make good use of visual aids. For example, a full size car windscreen and associated repair tools were used effectively to promote a lively discussion about smart repairs. Demonstrations and group work are other positive features of theory lessons. For example, one group of students operated a tensile testing machine, while another group measured the specimens and a third carried out calculations and recorded answers. This approach resulted in a hive of activity and excellent understanding among students of the effect of tensile forces on different materials. A feature of many lessons, where group discussions related theory to workplace practice, were teachers' questions to check that students were understanding the work. In a few lessons, not all students were attentive and responsive. Handouts are particularly well designed and effective use is made of a PowerPoint presentation. Computer simulation systems aid students' learning of vehicle electronics very well.

67. In workshop lessons, there is strict adherence to health and safety rules. Students are well



briefed about the tasks they need to perform. Teachers give them good support and ask penetrating questions. For example, a group of students removed a clutch from a heavy goods vehicle and the teacher expertly questioned them about the likely cause of clutch judder.

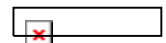
68. At the start of their programmes, all students are assessed to determine whether they need any additional learning support. Those requiring support receive particularly effective help from a full-time learning support tutor who works in the motor vehicle section. Tutorial support for full-time students is also well organised and effective. Students' progress is regularly monitored. Internal verification procedures are thorough. Visits to vehicle manufacturers and motor-sports events are regularly organised for students. They also have the opportunity to visit Mississippi and learn how American garages and automotive companies operate.

69. Accommodation and resources in motor vehicle engineering are outstanding. The foyer is designed as a modern car showroom. Exhibits include new cars lent by dealers for up to a month. There are well-designed classrooms and a diagnostic training laboratory, which also provides students with good access to computer facilities. All workshops are light, spacious and well organised. Manufacturers have donated a number of modern vehicles. The workshops contain an extensive range of service equipment and current diagnostic test equipment. A fully equipped vehicle body repair and refinishing workshop and a heavy goods vehicle workshop have recently been commissioned. Teachers display a sound knowledge of their subjects and many have recent industrial experience. They regularly attend technical updating sessions run by major car manufacturers.

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

70. The section is extremely well organised. There is an excellent team spirit. Leadership is dynamic. Effective communication is achieved through a daily early morning meeting of all staff. Courses are well planned and day-to-day organisation is excellent. Programme managers, in conjunction with the section manager, set appropriate targets for individual students and effectively monitor them. Students appreciate the friendly and helpful staff; they clearly benefit from their enthusiasm and dedication.

### **Business and management**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on many programmes
- well-planned and highly effective teaching
- very good resources
- highly satisfied students

- very good management and teamwork.

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficiently detailed feedback on some students' written work.

### **Scope of provision**

71. At the time of the inspection, there were 338 students taking business and management courses, of whom 163 were aged 16 to 18 and 175 were adults. In addition, there were nine modern apprentices working towards NVQs in administration. The range of courses includes GCE A level, AVCE, GNVQ, and certificate and diploma programmes. Professional courses include accounting, personnel practice and management. There is a foundation GNVQ in retail and distribution. The department also offers a range of HE and commercial courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

72. There are high pass rates on many programmes including GCE A-level business studies, intermediate and advanced GNVQs, the certificate in personnel practice and the certificate in management. For example, the GCE A-level business studies course and the advanced GNVQ course had 100% pass rates in 2000 and 2001. On most courses, pass and retention rates are above the national averages. Pass rates on the NVQ accounting programmes are satisfactory. They have improved over the three years from 1999. In 2001 they were slightly above national averages. Students contribute effectively in lessons. Inspectors observed examples of mature debate and appropriate emphasis on current business affairs. The quality of their written work is also good. Many adult students produce excellent work both during lessons and in their assignments. Progression rates to HE are good. Last year over three quarters of the students who passed the advanced GNVQ course went to university.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	151	92	29
		% retention	68	80	86
		% pass rate	78	92	79
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	25	14	10
		% retention	76	79	70
		% pass rate	84	90	100
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	45	28	38
		% retention	76	81	71
		% pass rate	77	100	100
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	29	44	35
		% retention	66	98	82

		% pass rate	94	100	100
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	14	24	13
		% retention	93	88	85
		% pass rate	100	100	91
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	44	49	40
		% retention	95	96	83
		% pass rate	48	47	55
National Examination Board Supervisory Management (NEBSM) certificate	3	No. of starts	23	25	15
		% retention	100	92	100
		% pass rate	95	95	93
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	31	18	17
		% retention	97**	100	76
		% pass rate	23**	53	54

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

\*\* college data

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

73. Almost all lessons observed by inspectors were good or better. Lessons are carefully planned. There is good use of role-play. For example, in one lesson students prepared cases for the prosecution and defence concerning a burglary at a warehouse. There was mature discussion and convincing arguments were presented on both sides. In another lesson, the teacher created a good working atmosphere by re-arranging classroom furniture to simulate a small office. Lessons are characterised by a good balance of knowledgeable exposition, stimulating discussion and effective involvement of the students. Students particularly enjoyed lessons in which they were required to analyse information and make judgements. In several lessons, IT was used effectively to improve the teachers' presentations. In a few lessons, a few students were inattentive. Good teaching ensures that students progress at an appropriate rate. Adult students benefit from a short residential course designed to improve their teamwork. Business and secretarial students have good opportunities to make residential visits to Europe.

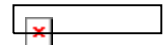
74. Assessment and internal verification are generally carried out effectively and in accordance with college procedures. Most assignments are carefully marked. Most feedback to students is appropriately detailed and helpful, but some teachers' comments do not enable students to identify how they can improve their work. Tutorial support is good. For full-time students, individual targets are set and monitored every 10 weeks. There are regular group and individual tutorials for full-time and part-time students. Students appreciate the good advice they receive on their academic progress, career choices and personal issues. There is regular feedback to parents and employers. Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the college and their courses.

75. Business and management resources are very good. A new business and media building has spacious rooms. Furniture and fittings are comparable with a good, modern commercial business centre. Students have good access to up-to-date computing facilities. Assignments are frequently word processed and e-mailed to tutors. A wide range of books, business reports and current business journals are available to students. There are good links with local industry. Many staff teach on the commercial courses for industry, some go on secondments to local companies, and most visit students on work experience. However, of the 28 teaching staff, 10 do not have an appropriate teaching qualification. Most of these are part-time lecturers who are working towards a qualification.

### **Leadership and management**

76. Business and management courses are very well managed. There is good communication between managers and teachers. The team shares good practice and its members work closely together to improve quality. They review courses regularly. They establish action plans to, for example, improve retention rates on the advanced GNVQ and AVCE business courses, to improve the quality of work placements for GNVQ students and to raise pass rates on the NVQ accounting programmes. Staff development often focuses on improving teaching and students' achievements. For example, a recent staff conference concentrated on ways to improve the achievement of boys. The quality of management information is good and staff have easy access to the data through the computers at their desks.

### Information and communication technology



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

#### **Strengths**

- comprehensive range of provision
- good retention and pass rates
- exceptionally well-planned, very good teaching
- excellent resources for teaching and learning
- very good monitoring of students' progress
- good management.

#### **Weaknesses**

- over dependence of students on teachers in a few practical lessons.

#### **Scope of provision**

77. The college offers a comprehensive range of courses that enables students to progress from

basic computer literacy to GNVQ, GCE A level, AVCE, and Higher National Diploma (HND) courses. In addition to the full-time courses there is a wide range of general and specialist short courses in word processing, computer literacy, IT, Internet technologies, technical computing and web-page design. These popular courses are offered in Minehead, Cheddar and Bridgwater town centre. There are good internal progression rates. Over half the students who completed the intermediate GNVQ in 2001 progressed to the AVCE course. A quarter of the students completing a short course at one of the centres in the community in 2001 enrolled on a further course of study.

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

78. The development of a broad range of courses that is well matched to students' needs has contributed to improving retention and pass rates over the three years from 1999. For example, the pass rate on the advanced GNVQ in ICT has risen from 72% in 1999, to 83% in 2000 and to 91% in 2001. Retention and pass rates on all full-time courses were well above average in 2001. On the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course, where student numbers are particularly large, pass rates have been good in both 2000 and 2001. During the same period, every student who started the national diploma in computing and electronics course completed the programme and achieved the qualification. The specialist short courses also have good retention and pass rates. The web-page design course had a 100% retention rate in 2001. On the GCE A-level course, retention and pass rates are satisfactory.

79. In most lessons, students show a good understanding of basic concepts and in practical lessons they use computers with confidence. Work observed in lessons and in students' files shows that attainment is very good or outstanding for most students. In lessons students make very good progress and learn well, often demonstrating knowledge and understanding beyond the demands of their course. They confidently discuss their work. In a foundation GNVQ lesson, students working in pairs assessed the quality of documents advertising college courses. They were confident in coming to the front of the class and presenting their findings. Students are able to recall learning from previous practical work and transfer this knowledge to new situations, extending their understanding as they do so.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	*	505	228
		% retention	*	86	87
		% pass rate	*	71	84
GNVQ foundation ICT	1	No. of starts	*	10	9
		% retention	*	90	89
		% pass rate	*	56	100
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	16	19	25
		% retention	69	58	80
		% pass rate	91	100	70
GNVQ advanced ICT	3	No. of starts	30	29	45
		% retention	60	90	73
		% pass rate	72	83	91
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	21	42	33
		% retention	56	64	72
		% pass rate	56	70	62

National diploma in computing and electronic	3	No. of starts	15	12	12
		% retention	93	100	100
		% pass rate	83	100	100

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

\* course did not run

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

80. Teaching and learning is exceptionally good. Teaching was good or better in all lessons observed by inspectors. Lessons are very well prepared. Teachers share clear objectives with students at the start of each lesson. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge. They deal with simple and complex questions with confidence and use questioning to consolidate learning. If a student gives an incorrect answer to one of their questions, the reasons for the mistake are carefully investigated. Working relationships between students and teachers are excellent. The teaching is relaxed and purposeful and students clearly enjoy their studies. Tutorials are effective. Students' progress is well monitored against targets. Teachers give positive feedback to students on how to improve their work; they provide any additional support that is necessary.

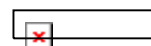
81. Good lesson plans ensure that staff use the full range of available resources effectively. Most classrooms have equipment that allows the teacher's computer screen to be projected onto a screen at the front of the class; one room is equipped with an interactive whiteboard. In an evening class on web-page design, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to gain access to Internet software and demonstrate the theory in practice. In an AVCE lesson on data base design, the teacher developed the theory of normalisation by getting the students to download three different versions of a data base from the college network and investigate the integrity of the data as amendments to the structure of the data were imposed. This approach linked theory to practice and gave the students a good understanding of the structure of databases.

82. In practical lessons, students usually work on assignments and teachers provide support for individuals. In most lessons, the support is appropriate. In one lesson, students were working on different assignments at a variety of levels. The teacher provided continual advice and guidance on problems with word processing, spreadsheets, databases, graphics, Internet exploration and web-page design without any need to refer to support materials. On occasions, this level of support inhibited learning since the students tended to ask questions rather than investigate for themselves the outcomes of their actions. In some cases, they did not make adequate notes for future reference on the advice they had been given.

### **Leadership and management**

83. ICT courses are managed within two college sections. Excellent working relationships between the two heads of section and their staff have led to well-integrated and coherent provision. Courses are managed effectively and teachers work well in teams and share ideas and resources. Course tutors' files provide evidence of efficient day-to-day organisation and good planning for course development. Thorough course review and evaluation help to maintain the good quality of the courses. There are very good relationships between the support staff and the teachers. The consistent high quality of resources and provision at all sites reflects the close attention to detail and good leadership of these courses.

### **Travel and tourism**



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

### ***Strengths***

- outstanding pass rates on the advanced GNVQ in leisure and tourism
- stimulating and effective teaching
- excellent facilities for cabin crew training
- teachers with current experience of the industry
- excellent links with industry
- good range of qualifications available to full-time students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient opportunities to work in the college travel shop
- lack of level 1 qualifications.

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

84. The main provision comprises the AVCE in travel and tourism, which replaced the advanced GNVQ in 2001 and an intermediate course in travel operations which is based on the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) primary and advanced certificates. These core qualifications have been successfully combined with a range of additional vocational qualifications to provide a level 2 programme designed to meet the needs of the travel industry. These additional qualifications include the European Metropolitan Transport Authority (EMTA) air cabin crew certificate; Edexcel tourist guiding operations; NCFE certificate for resort representatives; Edexcel advanced certificate in overseas operations (children's couriers); and the English Tourist Board (ETB) welcome host certificate. No level 1 qualifications are offered.

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

85. Students' achievements are very good. Pass rates on the advanced GNVQ leisure and tourism course were outstanding in 2000 and 2001. All students achieved the qualification. The retention rate on the course has also been above the national average in each of the three years from 1999. Retention and pass rates on the qualifications that make up the current intermediate programme

have been above the national average, with the exception of the 38% pass rate on the airfares and ticketing course in 2001. At the time of the inspection, the retention rate of students was good; no students had withdrawn from the AVCE programme. Students demonstrate good levels of attainment in their written work and in their contributions during lessons. The quality of their written work is outstanding. Good use of IT is also apparent from inspection of students' files.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC) (primary level)	2	No. of starts	*	*	33
		% retention	*	*	75
		% pass rate	*	*	71
ETB welcome host	2	No. of starts	*	6	141
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
NCFE certificate for resort representatives	2	No. of starts	*	20	33
		% retention	*	85	75
		% pass rate	*	94	78
Air fares and ticketing (level 1)	2	No. of starts	*	*	33
		% retention	*	*	72
		% pass rate	*	*	38
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	29	13	25
		% retention	76	77	77
		% pass rate	95	100	100

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

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

86. Most teaching is good or very good. Teachers prepare appropriately detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Most lessons are well organised and lively. Teachers successfully draw on students' experiences to illustrate key points. Imaginative revision techniques included quizzes and card games. In some lessons, students evaluated the quality of each other's work. The teaching of key skills is an integral part of courses. For example, one key skills teacher used a range of well-planned activities to motivate students in an 'application of number' lesson by making clear links to the travel industry. Key skills are also well developed in assignments. Teachers give useful feedback on assignments, which enables students to improve and progress with their studies.

87. Many of the part-time staff teaching on travel courses work in the travel and tourism industry. Their current experience enhances their teaching. Full-time staff are also up-to-date. One of the teachers works as a ski representative during college holidays. The college has some outstanding resources, in particular a mock aircraft cabin used for cabin crew training. Students studying for the cabin crew certificate wear cabin crew uniforms to lessons and use the mock cabin to learn professional working practices. The college travel shop is linked to a local travel agency. It provides realistic work experience for students. A member of staff is employed to work in the travel shop and to provide specialist training for students. Students do not get enough opportunities to work in the travel shop. Experience is not offered to AVCE students. Level 2 students only work in the shop for



one day every two weeks. There is a good range of books, periodicals and videos in the library, but some of the travel guides in the travel shop are out of date.

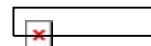
88. There are good links with a range of well-known travel organisations. A partnership with a major tour operator has resulted in a range of benefits for students and staff which includes employment of students as resort representatives, support with resources, and financial support for the promotion of the travel and tourism curriculum. Travel industry practitioners often attend the college as guest speakers to give students an insight into employment in the sector. Students also benefit from a well-organised overseas residential course which is an integral part of their programme.

89. Tutorial support is well structured and effective. There are good procedures to identify students who are experiencing problems and who might leave the programme before completion. Tutorials are often used to help students wishing to enter employment after their studies. For example, students who were previously on the GNVQ programme were invited to a tutorial to share their experience of working at a residential camping centre in Brittany with students who were applying for jobs there.

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

90. Curriculum management is good. The manager works well with the course team. There are regular team meetings at which students' progress is monitored and discussed. Outcomes of the lesson observation programme are used effectively to improve teaching and learning. Annual self-assessment accurately identifies key strengths, issues and development needs. Appropriate action is then taken. The course team has a clear vision of how the programmes should be developed and teachers play an active role in curriculum development.

### **Early years education**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
- very good internal progression
- excellent early years skills of students
- very good, often imaginative, teaching
- an excellent range of opportunities for working with children

- excellent resources for integrating theory and practice
- very good individual support for students
- effective curriculum management.

### **Weaknesses**

- no key weaknesses.

### **Scope of provision**

91. The college offers a wide range of courses from level 1 to level 4. At the time of the inspection, there were over 150 full-time students, mainly aged 16 to 18. There were 93 part-time NVQ level 3 students and a further 51 part-time students studying pre-school practice at certificate or diploma level, and the award for classroom assistants. The college also offers a locally devised 'Forest School' award that is validated by a national examination body. NVQ provision is offered at several centres in the community. Full-time students may take additional qualifications in first aid, food hygiene and deaf awareness. Additional qualifications are also offered to part-time students on pre-school practice courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

92. Pass rates are high. On all courses, except the diploma in nursery nursing in 2001, pass rates were above national averages. The retention rate on all courses is also above national averages. On many courses, a high proportion of students achieve high grades. For example, 25% of pre-school practice diploma students obtained a grade A in 2001, compared with a national average of 4%. Full-time and pre-school practice students are successful in gaining additional qualifications in first aid, food hygiene and deaf awareness. There is very good internal progression; 77 % of full-time students progress from foundation to certificate level and 88% from certificate to diploma level.

93. Students acquire sound theoretical knowledge and demonstrate excellent practical skills with children. They establish good relationships with the children and they understand how to foster children's' development. For example, foundation students each collected a child from the college nursery and supervised them making a pizza. The students encouraged the children's' independence and language skills. All students work effectively in groups. They assist each other in planning and managing the work and exchange ideas with confidence. Timetabled lessons in the learning resources centre enable full-time students to develop effective research skills. Their written work is good.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in early years education, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001

Foundation award in caring for children	1	No. of starts	*	*	16
		% retention	*	*	69
		% pass rate	*	*	82
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	11	10	31
		% retention	64	70	87
		% pass rate	86	83	89
Intermediate award for classroom assistant	2	No. of starts	18	19	23
		% retention	100	100	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	26	21	27
		% retention	92	100	85
		% pass rate	100	95	96
Pre-school practice diploma	3	No. of starts	38	45	60
		% retention	95	89	88
		% pass rate	94	93	93
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	7	13	33
		% retention	86	92	88
		% pass rate	80	100	83

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

\* course did not run

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

94. Teaching is very good. Often it is exciting and imaginative. Appropriately detailed lesson plans identify individual support needs and students' preferred learning styles. Whenever possible, teachers use the teaching methods of the early years curriculum to produce lively and active opportunities for learning. Early years teachers work closely with the Early Excellence Centre - the college's day nursery for the children of staff and students. These close links ensure that many of the skills that are developed in the classroom can be put into almost immediate practice. For example, diploma students selected stories and toys from a good range of story sacks, which included three-dimensional models, glove puppets and model animals to accompany the storybooks. They practised their story in front of their peers. Following supportive and effective evaluation by other students, they told the stories to small groups of children in the centre. In many other lessons, there was a 'buzz' of lively interest as teachers involved students in an imaginative range of practical activities. Teachers make regular checks to ensure that their students understand the work and often ask them to identify whether the learning objectives have been met. There is a comprehensive programme of visiting speakers to ensure that the latest good practice is shared.

95. Full-time students have an excellent range of opportunities to gain experience of working with children which include: family placements; residential courses and visits; and work in the college children's centre and at the Forest School. The Forest School, which won a Queen's Anniversary prize in 2000, is an imaginative development that enables the students to work with children in a forest environment. The children carry out woodland tasks, learning how to use tools safely. The students work with them, promoting their own and the children's self esteem and competence. Residential activities provide students with an insight into childcare in different settings and cultures. Students have visited London for a residential conference on working with travellers. Visits to European cities have also been arranged.

96. Teachers work together as an effective team. They understand the importance of promoting

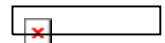
their students' self-esteem and giving them strong support. They have good knowledge of individual students' educational, social and emotional needs, which helps them to plan appropriate lesson activities. Staff encourage their students and value their contributions. Their approach builds up the confidence of students and maintains high levels of motivation. Courses are well structured. There are timetabled portfolio, assignment and key skills sessions. The monitoring of students' progress is thorough. Detailed individual reviews identify areas for improvement and lead to effective action planning. There is careful monitoring of attendance and punctuality. Assignments and homework are set and marked regularly. The assignments are linked to the placements. Teachers use sound assessment methods including those suitable for students with support needs.

97. The college has excellent accommodation and resources. The location of well-equipped teaching rooms next to the children's centre helps in the integration of theory and practice. An observation booth enables the children in the centre to be observed without disturbing them. Excellent guides to observation are located in the booth. Teachers have produced a very good range of study guides and handbooks. Students are enthusiastic about the use of virtual babies. These electronic model babies are loaned to individuals, usually for 48 hours. They are programmed to require attention at different intervals. The students are not aware of the programming. They stay with their virtual baby at all times. They find this experience useful in helping to prepare for family placements. Teachers are appropriately qualified, and have a wide range of relevant, vocational expertise. There are good staff development opportunities, including a planned programme of vocational updating.

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

98. There is strong leadership and effective management of the programme area. A cohesive team achieves constant improvement through regular reflection on their work. Issues raised by students, employers and examination bodies are responded to and acted upon quickly. Links with placement providers, the community and early years professionals are very good. The team is active in a range of initiatives in the local community, for example, training programmes for young mothers. Early years professionals are involved in reviews of the curriculum and student interviews.

### **Health and social care and public services**



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

### ***Strengths***

- much excellent teaching
- outstanding retention and pass rates
- highly motivated students
- a good range of additional qualifications and enrichment opportunities

- strong links with employers and work placement providers
- outstanding course management.

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient integration of work on key skills within courses.

### **Scope of provision**

99. At the time of the inspection, there were over 300 students studying health and social care and public services courses. Approximately two thirds of students were aged 16 to 18. Most adult students are enrolled on part-time courses. Full-time public services courses are offered from level 1 to level 3. There are foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses in health and social care and an AVCE course. Counselling, British sign language and deaf awareness are offered at the college and at community venues. There are a small number of work-based students taking NVQs in care, at levels 2 or 3. Students are offered excellent opportunities to gain additional qualifications. For example, public services students are offered awards in sports coaching, climbing, community sports leadership, outdoor pursuits as well as entry tests for the armed forces.

### **Achievement and standards**

100. Students' achievements are outstanding. In 2001, pass rates on the foundation, intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses were all above the national averages. Pass rates on public services courses have been consistently very good. All the national diploma public services students were successful in 2001. The retention rate has also been consistently very good, although on the advanced GNVQ it fell slightly below the national average in 2001. Students' achievements on part-time courses are also very good. On the GNVQ courses and the national diploma in public services, the proportions of high grades are also well above the national averages. Progression rates are good. For example, 70% of full-time students from the access to nursing course progressed to HE and 30% found employment. Most full-time students achieved the three mandatory key skills in 2001. However, work on key skills is not always an integral part of their vocational studies. As a consequence many students do not see the relevance of key skills.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care and public services, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	15	14	6
		% retention	67	71	100
		% pass rate	89	70	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	15	12	14
		% retention	80	75	100
		% pass rate	92	100	100

NVQ care	2	No. of starts	10	13	11
		% retention	100	92	91
		% pass rate	***	100	100
First diploma in public services	2	No. of starts	20	28	23
		% retention	80	68	86
		% pass rate	93	94	89
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	23	28	30
		% retention	91	71	67
		% pass rate	95	80	100
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	16	13	20
		% retention	75	85	65
		% pass rate	92	100	100
Access to nursing	3	No. of starts	18	16	24
		% retention	83	91	92
		% pass rate	73	100	82

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

\*\*\* data unreliable

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

101. There is much excellent teaching. Lessons are well planned, imaginative and stimulating. They provide many opportunities for students to develop relevant skills, for example, skills related to presentations and analysis. Staff create friendly, purposeful learning situations. Teachers are very aware of the needs of individual students. They know students' preferred learning styles, their attendance records, their individual target minimum grades, and any additional support that has been, or is to be, given. Such information is used for lesson planning and in their teaching. Students are highly motivated and are keen to participate and to learn. They prepare their work thoroughly and collaborate well in small groups. Role-play is often used effectively. For example, in one public services lesson, students adopted authentic roles as members of emergency rescue teams to determine training and equipment priorities. In a few health and social care lessons, teachers did not provide sufficiently demanding activities for the more able students and occasionally the required outcomes were not attainable within the time available. Assignments are suitably demanding. Students are given helpful feedback on their assignments and their progress is regularly reviewed during tutorials.

102. Students have good opportunities for visits and residential courses. Public services students are very well prepared for demanding residential courses in varied and difficult environments. Level 3 health and care students are offered the opportunity to travel to Prague and observe as well as participate in childcare and adult care provision. Public services students frequently attend training activities with the public service providers.

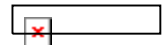
103. Support for students is good. They receive sound initial guidance and a helpful induction programme. Students who are identified as needing additional support obtain that support in lessons and workshops. The work-based NVQ care students are well supported through the close liaison between the college staff and the work place supervisors.

### **Leadership and management**

104. Course management is outstanding. As a consequence, staff are very committed to their work and students are well motivated and successful. Staff co-operate closely to develop and improve

the quality of the provision. Records of students' progress and of course and section management are impeccably maintained. Students have good access to managers and to teachers. Their views are taken into account. Managers and staff have forged strong links with public services employers and with health and social care work placement providers. Regular course reviews lead to prompt action when necessary, for example, if there is concern about a fall in the retention rate. Lesson observations lead to action that is reviewed after the next observation. Equality of opportunity is promoted. For example, students with learning difficulties or disabilities are provided with learning assistants in the classroom.

## Visual arts



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

### **Strengths**

- good teaching
- high pass rates on most courses
- good work by students on craft courses
- outstanding facilities for three-dimensional crafts and photography
- good progression within the college and to HE courses.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on some courses
- some unsatisfactory grouping of students
- unsuitable accommodation for graphic design.

### **Scope of provision**

105. At the time of the inspection, over 150 students were studying art and design courses, including GCE AS and A-level courses in art and design, photography and graphic design, foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses and AVCE art and design. A further 250 students were taking Open College Network (OCN) and City and Guilds craft courses in furniture, upholstery, photography, metal and glass, and jewellery from beginners to advanced level. These courses are of a high standard and students travel considerable distances to attend. In 2001, a national diploma in design crafts and a HE foundation course in art and design have been added to the portfolio of courses. The section organises an extensive range of enrichment opportunities that includes visits from practising artists and designers, visits to galleries and residential short courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

106. There are good achievements on all courses. In 2001, with the exception of GCE AS art and design, all courses had pass rates above national averages. On the GCE A-level course, all students passed and 63% gained grades A to C. This record is well above the national average for high grades. In 2001, on the City and Guilds advanced furniture crafts course, both the retention rate and pass rate were 100%. The retention rate on most courses in 2001 was satisfactory. It was above the national average on the GCE A-level courses in photography and art and design, a significant improvement on an unsatisfactory retention rate in 2000. However, the retention rate on the intermediate and advanced GNVQ art and design courses was below the national average in 2001. Progression rates within the college and to external institutions are good. For example, all students from the HE foundation course who applied for specialist art and design HE courses were accepted.

107. Adult students on craft courses produce a high standard of work. In photography, furniture design, metal and glass, and upholstery, students produce work of exceptional quality in design and craft, well beyond the level normally expected from students taking these courses. In art and design, at all levels, students are developing sound visual research skills and making good references to contemporary artists and designers in their work. Most students are developing good observational drawing skills. Frequent use is made of computer generated images on all courses, including the craft and photography courses.

1.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	14	15	15
		% retention	92	73	57
		% pass rate	67	100	86
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	17	14	16
		% retention	63	79	69
		% pass rate	80	100	100
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	*	52	26
		% retention	*	49	75
		% pass rate	*	88	100
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	6	13	11
		% retention	100	42	91



		% pass rate	100	80	90
City and Guilds advanced furniture crafts	3	No. of starts	13	13	14
		% retention	92	92	100
		% pass rate	85	100	100

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

\* course did not run

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

108. Teaching is well planned and there are appropriately detailed schemes of work for all courses. In most lessons, good sequencing of activities develops learning effectively. For example, in one lesson students were developing self-portrait drawings. Well-structured, progressive exercises and changes of media enabled them to develop very sensitive and original drawings. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not give sufficient opportunity to students to learn through practical work. Group work is used effectively to develop ideas. Teachers ensure that students' work relates to the work of leading artists and designers. They also use their own experience as professional artists and designers to ensure that students are well informed about current issues and professional practice.

109. In response to the low number of students on several courses, students who are on different courses and at different levels are taught in the same lessons. This arrangement ensures that courses with low numbers are viable, and enables the college to provide a wide range of options, for example, in fashion, textiles, graphic design, three-dimensional and craft studies and film and video. However, the arrangement is unsatisfactory for students on foundation and intermediate courses, since it requires them to specialise too early in their education. These students are sometimes at a disadvantage in lessons where most students are taking level 3 courses.

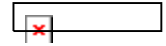
110. The assessment of students is thorough and most students are given sufficient verbal and written feedback on their progress. However, the assessment of AVCE students does not provide sufficient information about grades for individual pieces of practical work. Regular reviews are held with students when their progress is discussed in the light of predicted grades.

111. Students benefit from the excellent three-dimensional facilities. The workshops for wood, metal, and pottery are very well managed, which contributes to the high quality of students' work, particularly in furniture making. The photography facilities in the new media and business centre offer superb opportunities for photography and enable students to produce the highest standards of work. The general art studios are adequate, but sometimes they become too cramped for large-scale work. The graphics studio is not large enough to accommodate all students, with the result that some have to work in an adjacent studio. The specialist computers for graphics are out of date and slow.

### **Leadership and management**

112. The visual arts staff work well as a team. They have introduced new courses and developed progression routes within the college. The quality assurance systems are thorough and weaknesses identified through self-assessment are acted on. The college self-assessment report was accurate. There are good communications within the section and with college managers. There is a positive approach to equal opportunities in the section. Many students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties benefit from the assistance of support workers and are successfully developing their artistic ability. There are good opportunities for adults on the design craft course and the HE foundation course. Women on the metal craft courses are developing skills in welding, forging, casting and machining metal.

## Performing arts



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

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates on most courses
- very good teaching
- outstanding resources and accommodation
- broad range of provision
- excellent teamwork.

### **Weaknesses**

- some low attainment on level 2 courses
- late arrival of students to some lessons.

### **Scope of provision**

113. At the time of the inspection, there were over 450 students study performing arts and media on a broad range of vocational and academic courses at levels 2 and 3. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in dance, drama, music, music technology, media and film studies. First diplomas are available in performance and performing arts (media and music). National diplomas in classical music, media studies, music technology and performing arts allow for progression from level 2 to level 3. There is also a GCSE course in media. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. The 61 students studying for a music qualification are offered individual music lessons, free of charge. Students also have the opportunity to study a comprehensive range of additional performing arts qualifications to complement or extend their main course.

### **Achievement and standards**

114. Students' achievements are good. There are outstanding pass rates on most courses. In 2001, the media and performing arts national diplomas and the GCE A levels in drama and media had 100% pass rates; 96% of the media students achieved grades A to C. However, the 25% pass rate in GCSE media in 2001 was unsatisfactory. The retention rate on most courses is good. In 2001, only the national diploma in media was below the national average. Progression from first diploma in performing arts is satisfactory; half of the students progress to the national diploma.

115. Students on level 3 courses produce high standards of written and practical work. They progress quickly through some demanding theory and technical instruction. In music technology the students were introduced to 'logic environment'. Once the initial technique had been taught, they quickly managed to get inserted faders to respond to pitch bend. Evaluation of students' practical work is a structured part of lessons in media, dance, music and drama and is used to good effect. Students' comments and answers show high levels of understanding and maturity.

116. In some level 2 lessons, students do not demonstrate the standard of work expected at this stage in their course. Many students' responses to questions lacked clarity. In a GCSE media class, several students failed to complete their work in the time allowed. Later in the lesson, they showed little interest in evaluating their fellow students' work. In a first diploma drama lesson, students' practical work in characterisation showed a lack of basic performance skills, such as understanding of staging and use of space.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE media and communications	2	No. of starts	17	13	13
		% retention	24	62	62
		% pass rate	75	75	25
First diploma in performing arts	2	No. of starts	*	14	20
		% retention	*	93	90
		% pass rate	*	100	89
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	21	21	16
		% retention	52	71	75
		% pass rate	82	100	100
National diploma in media	3	No. of starts	28	22	19
		% retention	96	82	63
		% pass rate	96	100	100
National diploma in music technology	3	No. of starts	16	16	22
		% retention	31	88	77
		% pass rate	100	100	93
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	39	27	39
		% retention	72	100	72
		% pass rate	100	93	100
GCE A-level drama	3	No. of starts	19	17	22
		% retention	68	76	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level dance	3	No. of starts	8	13	11

		% retention	13	46	82
		% pass rate	0	100	89

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).  
 \* course did not run

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

117. Most teaching is very good. There is a good balance between the teaching of theory and practical work. The GCSE media qualification is part of the programme for first diploma media students. The course improves the students' knowledge of theory. Excellent schemes of work and lesson plans cover the syllabus comprehensively and meet students' needs. Effective and skilful teaching in a first diploma choreography class enabled the most able to make rapid progress, while weaker students, as they progressed more slowly, were well supported and the positive qualities of their work were praised.

118. Assignments are well designed and stimulating. Students' work is assessed with integrity. Teachers make appropriately detailed written comments on assignments and give helpful verbal feedback. In a GCE AS media lesson, students were encouraged to read each other's work to help them improve their own work. Teachers collaborate and share good practice, which results in a holistic approach to teaching and learning. For example, a recent integrative assignment called 'Untitled', performed in college, was a synthesis of original dance, music, drama and multimedia performance. Performance is an important and integral part of the students' learning. Staff see the work of the section as contemporary and experimental.

119. Most students are well motivated, although a few level 2 students sometimes find it difficult to sustain their concentration. Learning is sometimes disrupted by some students' late arrival. Independent learning is supported and promoted by staff. For example, staff provide access to college facilities on Saturday mornings and weekday evenings. In music technology, lecture notes and additional learning materials are available on the college intranet. In GCE AS drama, extra evening rehearsals have been arranged to help students to prepare for the examination. Students value the support they receive from staff. They are kept accurately informed of their progress.

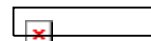
120. Teachers make good use of links with industry and the community. Two national diploma students have shot a commercial programme called 'Tamsin's Weekends' with a company in London. It will be released nationally. Students are involved in sound and music production for local events such as the Bridgwater Carnival, concerts and local music and choral societies.

121. Accommodation and resources are outstanding for dance, drama, media and music. Dance students benefit from a large studio with sprung floor, mirrors and barres. The performance area has a computerised lighting and sound system and mobile tiered seating. Media facilities include a well-equipped soundproof studio. Staff are well qualified. Students follow current professional practice. For example, in dance lessons students are appropriately dressed, work bare foot and remove jewellery.

### **Leadership and management**

122. The curriculum area and individual courses are well managed. There is clear creative and artistic vision. High levels of skill and creative energy promote strong teamwork. Regular section meetings ensure that staff are fully involved in procedures for the quality assurance of a section's work in, for example, self-assessment, target setting and action planning.

### **Humanities, social sciences**



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

### ***Strengths***

- consistently high pass rates on two-year GCE A-level courses
- good retention rates on one-year GCE A-level courses
- very good teaching and learning
- wide range of resources
- thorough assessment, monitoring and review of students' progress
- outstanding leadership and management.

### ***Weaknesses***

- no key weaknesses.

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

123. There is an extensive range of courses at GCE A level. At the time of the inspection, some 600 students aged 16 to 18 had enrolled. New subjects recently introduced include critical thinking and classical civilisation. Growth in the number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 reflects a provision responsive to their needs and interests. Four GCE A-level subjects are available to adult students in the evening. There is an access to HE programme that enables students to progress to the first year of a humanities degree course at the college. Recruitment of adult students to social science courses has declined in recent years.

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

124. Students aged 16 to 18 achieve well at GCE A level. In all subjects, pass rates and the proportion of grades A to C are consistently well above national averages. In 2001, 92% of psychology students on two-year GCE A-level course gained high grades, compared with the national average of 44%. Pass rates on one-year GCE A-level courses have improved significantly and, in 2001, were good in the three subjects where they were low in 1999. Pass rates for adult students have remained consistently above the national average in GCE A level psychology. In

GCE A-level law, the pass rate fell sharply below the national average in 2001. In 2000 and 2001, the retention rate has been consistently above average for adult students and mostly above average for students aged 16 to 18. At GCE AS in 2001, there were good pass and retention rates, with the exception of low pass rates for the small number of students taking philosophy and politics. Over the three years from 1999, the percentage of students gaining their access to HE award has increased from 60% to 86%.

125. Standards of work are good and often high. Most students make sound progress towards fulfilling their potential. GCE AS politics students were producing much more thoughtful written work at the time of the inspection than when they started the course in September 2001. Sociology students write well-argued essays within the time allowed in examinations. Students derive enjoyment and satisfaction from their learning. Their enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding are evident from their lively and well-informed contributions to lessons. Philosophy students show independence of thought as they tussle with complex ideas. On the access to HE course, psychology students worked well in small groups. Their presentation of the findings of the hypotheses they were testing showed effective use of key skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level archaeology (1 year)	3	No. of starts	19	26	17
		% retention	74	69	71
		% pass rate	58	78	100
GCE A-level sociology (1 year)	3	No. of starts	15	24	16
		% retention	60	79	81
		% pass rate	25	37	69
GCE A-level psychology (1 year)	3	No. of starts	29	25	31
		% retention	69	72	74
		% pass rate	76	61	78
GCE A-level geography (2 year)	3	No. of starts	26	33	24
		% retention	62	91	96
		% pass rate	93	97	96
GCE A-level history (2 year)	3	No. of starts	32	32	32
		% retention	81	84	84
		% pass rate	100	96	85
GCE A-level law (2 year)	3	No. of starts	35	33	30
		% retention	86	88	77
		% pass rate	88	79	82
GCE A-level psychology (2 year)	3	No. of starts	72	78	57
		% retention	53	74	44
		% pass rate	97	96	96
GCE A-level sociology (2 year)	3	No. of starts	24	29	21
		% retention	71	59	71
		% pass rate	100	94	100

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

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

126. Almost all teaching ranges from good to outstanding. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff produce very well-planned lessons. They use a suitable variety of methods and resources to stimulate learning. For example, history students investigating collectivisation under Stalin were developing their historical skills. They used information presented by the teacher, studied video-clips, worked on group exercises and considered good source material. Coursework is used effectively to extend knowledge and sharpen students' analytical skills. Philosophy students dissected a chapter of J.S. Mill's 'On Liberty' before framing demanding questions for each other. Group work is particularly successful in stimulating learning. Adults studying law in small groups made good progress in understanding the issues associated with the fusion of the barristers' and solicitors' professions. In a few lessons, teachers' questions failed to engage the attention of all students, check that they understood the work, or promote discussion.

127. An extensive range of visits and fieldwork enrich learning. For example, sociology students visit a prison, geography students undertake residential fieldwork and archaeology students share summer excavations with archaeologists from Bournemouth University. An annual visit to three European countries offers specific activities for law, archaeology and geography students.

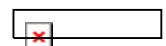
128. Suitably qualified staff are deployed effectively. Well-equipped classrooms contain stimulating wall displays. A wide range of good resources is used skilfully to support students' learning. There are adequate up-to-date books, journals, videos and CD-ROMs. Staff and students make good use of these resources. The college intranet contains extensive entries, in particular in history, psychology and geography. Students are making increasing use of these entries for independent study. However, insufficient use is made of IT in the classroom.

129. Assessment and monitoring of students' performance are carefully planned. Students with specific learning needs receive prompt specialist support. Early in the course, teachers set tasks to gauge students' responses to the challenge of GCE AS level work. Teachers also identify students' preferred styles of learning and take these into account in planning lessons. Work is set regularly and returned promptly. Fair and accurate marking give students a reliable profile of their performance measured against the requirements of awarding bodies. Feedback is helpful. Regular reviews of progress enable students to discuss their performance against their target grades. Students are encouraged to set their sights higher than their predicted grades that are based on their GCSE grades.

### **Leadership and management**

130. Leadership and management of the curriculum are highly effective. Teachers work well as a team under purposeful and consultative leadership. Courses are well planned to ensure students consolidate their knowledge and apply their skills. Findings from lesson observations are used in drawing up plans for staff development. Thorough evaluation of the curriculum area's performance helps to shape action plans which are effectively monitored. Since 1999, pass and retention rates at GCE A level have shown significant improvement and, in most subjects, the proportion of high grades has risen.

### **Humanities, English and languages**



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

### **Strengths**

- outstanding pass rates on all courses
- much excellent teaching and learning
- imaginative use of IT in modern languages
- very good use of the target language in French, German and Spanish
- strong emphasis on pair work, group work and student presentations in English
- thorough marking and effective feedback.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rate in English language in 2001.

### **Scope of provision**

131. The inspection covered GCSE English and GCE A levels in English language, English literature, French, German and Spanish. The number of students studying modern languages has declined and at the time of the inspection was low.

### **Achievement and standards**

132. Pass rates on all courses are outstanding. Pass rates in GCSE English have been consistently well above the national average for both students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Pass rates and the proportion of grades A to C in GCE A-level English language, English language and literature, and English literature were also well above the national average in 2000 and 2001. In modern languages, the pass rate was 100% in all three languages in 2001. The retention rate is good in most subjects, but it was below the national average in English language and German in 2001.

133. Students are enthusiastic learners. They are keen to join in discussions and to undertake tasks in small groups. They enjoy making presentations and respond well to the established culture of expressing opinions on key themes. Students of English keep well ordered files and have been well trained in note taking. In modern languages, students are confident when speaking in French, German or Spanish. For example, in a French GCE A-level lesson, students were able to engage in a debate in good French on the topic of the death penalty.



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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English (students aged 16 to 18)	2	No. of starts	152	160	74
		% retention	76	67	70
		% pass rate	66	73	73
GCSE English (students aged 19 and over)	2	No. of starts	***	31	12
		% retention	***	74	83
		% pass rate	***	82	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	27	20	16
		% retention	70	80	50
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level English literature (students aged 16 to 18)	3	No. of starts	19	23	22
		% retention	63	65	91
		% pass rate	88	93	100
GCE A-level English literature (students aged 19 and over)	3	No. of starts	17	9	11
		% retention	100	67	82
		% pass rate	53	100	89
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	23	9	9
		% retention	48	67	78
		% pass rate	100	83	100

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

\*\*\* data not available

***Quality of education and training***

134. Most teaching is very good or outstanding. In English lessons, there is a strong emphasis on pair work, group work and student presentations. The selection of resources and sequence of activities are well thought through. In a lesson on Arthur Miller's play, 'The Crucible', the teacher presented students with challenging statements on the main themes of the play. The students had to select the two most appropriate statements and justify their selection to the class. The ensuing discussion demonstrated the students' sound knowledge of the text and of Miller's characterisation. The teacher then showed a video of Miller's trial during the period of McCarthyism in America. The video linked effectively with the coursework and an essay that the students were then given for homework. Teachers of English use a variety of imaginative techniques to stimulate discussion. In a lesson on English literature, the teacher got the lesson off to a lively start by writing a pun from Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure' on the board. To conclude another lesson, students had to imagine who they were out of the characters in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and then say how they felt at the end of a particular scene. The students responded with humour and intelligence.

135. Language lessons are conducted entirely in the target language. In a GCE A-level French lesson, the teacher carefully built up the students' vocabulary on the subject of smoking by asking for various synonyms and then encouraged students to use the new vocabulary in poster work stating the reasons why people smoke. The students wrote in complex, accurate French in several lessons. Students used IT effectively. For example, in a Spanish lesson a student gave a PowerPoint presentation on pollution of the Spanish coastline. In a few language lessons, the activities were not well devised and lacked a sufficient sense of purpose.

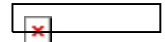
136. All work is marked thoroughly, including initial assessment tests in listening, writing and grammar. In English, appropriately detailed feedback is given at regular intervals on coursework. Students are very satisfied with the high standard of teaching and their good working relationships with their teachers. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their students' academic progress and personal needs.

137. Resources for both English and modern languages are excellent. A language centre is available for private study. The centre is equipped with 18 video stations, access to the Internet and satellite television in French, German and Spanish. The library is well stocked with literary journals and recent texts in English on the main. Accommodation is excellent.

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

138. Leadership and management of the curriculum are very good. There is a strong emphasis on the development of good teaching and learning. For example, in the teaching of English, teachers share good practice relative to pair work and group work, and in modern languages the use of IT.

### **Programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- much good teaching
- effective use of learning support staff
- good individual learning plans
- effective links with other organisations
- good resources.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- some unsatisfactory teaching of students with complex learning difficulties.

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

139. The college offers programmes from pre-entry to level 1. At the time of the inspection, there were over 280 students with learning difficulties that included emotional and behavioural problems, mental health and other cognitive impairments such as autism. Students study on individually tailored programmes that concentrate on developing life and social skills or lead to appropriate qualifications, for example, food hygiene certificates and NVQ level 1 catering. Programmes are offered on the college campus, in partnership with Foxes Hotel in Minehead and at other community locations. Foxes Hotel specialises in training young people with learning difficulties for work in the catering and hotel industry. Courses are offered in partnership with the social services in Huntspill and Minehead, and with the National Autistic Society in Burnham-on-Sea.

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

140. Achievement is good on programmes where students have realistic and specific individual learning objectives. Students on these programmes learn efficiently well to be able to get a job and become more independent. There are good rates of progression to FE or employment. In 2001, 12 students progressed to level 2 courses in, for example, retailing, art and design and construction. A further 12 students entered employment or sheltered employment. Other students progressed within the entry-level programmes. Many Foxes Hotel students gain employment in the hotel and catering sector. Where appropriate, students are entered for external awards that help them gain employment. In 2001, seven students achieved an NVQ 1 in catering and progressed to employment, foundation courses or modern apprenticeships.

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

141. Initial assessment is good. After an initial assessment of their learning needs, teachers develop learning objectives in consultation with students. Lesson plans are drawn up to meet these individuals' objectives. Each student's progress and achievement are assessed and recorded by teachers in each lesson. There are good monitoring systems for recording individual achievements. Effective weekly tutorials ensure that most students understand their objectives and know how well they are progressing.

142. There is much good teaching. Some lessons are excellent. In these lessons, full account is taken of students' aims and learning styles. Students are given tasks that make full use of their abilities and extend their learning. There is very good individual tuition and support in lessons. Most students concentrate on their work. Any inappropriate behaviour is discouraged. The most effective lessons combine the acquisition of good vocational skills with progress towards the achievement of individual objectives. An example involved students making pizzas in the college bistro. The lesson was well planned and students' progress was discussed with them and recorded.

143. Some teaching for the most complex cognitively impaired students is unsatisfactory. The tasks do not always match the needs of some or of all the students in the class. In one lesson, the students already possessed the skills being taught. In another, the task was inappropriate for the whole class. Students were asked to find out and record the price of various drinks during their refreshment break. Some found the task straightforward. Most had little or no understanding of what was required of them or of the value of money; they were confused.

144. Many students benefit from well-organised work placements which take account of the skills and needs of individual students. One of the learning support co-ordinators works as job coach, and helps students through the initial stages of work placements. Some students without previous experience of work gradually settle into work environments and learn new skills. Three students are employed by work-placement providers as a result of successful work placements.

145. Students are well supported. For example, the college makes good use of speech therapy both on an individual basis and in lessons. Students with more complex cognitive impairments use a communication book, linking home and college. This book provides information about skills learned

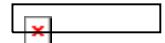
in college and gives parents or carers the opportunity to comment on whether these skills have been successfully transferred into life at home. Parents and carers speak very highly of the college and the effective links between college and home.

146. The college has good resources, including facilities for catering, horticulture, IT and photography. The college uses a woodland area, known as 'The Forest School' for some courses to promote team building and problem solving, and to provide opportunities for students who have been unsuccessful in classroom settings.

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

147. The curriculum area is well managed. Issues involving achievement, retention and the curriculum are regularly monitored at effective course team meetings. Teamwork and communications are good. Lesson observations are used as a basis for staff appraisal and training. Induction into the college is effective. Students attend the college for two days in the summer term are introduced to staff and sample some of the activities in the curriculum. The students made a smooth transition in to the college in September. There are strong and effective school links with special schools and secondary schools in the area.

### **Basic skills**



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning (Prince's Trust Volunteers) is **outstanding (grade 1)**

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates
- good retention rates on all courses
- broad range of provision
- exceptionally well-organised and successful Prince's Trust programme
- very good resources
- effective use of initial assessment and individual learning plans.

## **Weaknesses**

- insufficient integration of key skills within vocational specialism on some foundation level programmes
  
- inappropriate tasks for some students in some lessons.

## **Scope of provision**

148. The college offers a broad range of provision in basic skills. The adult basic education programme includes basic literacy, basic numeracy, family literacy, and 'return to learn' courses. Students have the opportunity to take appropriate qualifications offered by City and Guilds or the OCN. Courses are offered on the college campus and at community venues. Additional support for English and mathematics is provided on an individual or small group basis for students on other college programmes. Basic skills support is provided for all students on foundation level programmes through their key skills classes. Basic skills support is integral to the Prince's Trust Volunteers programmes run by the college. At the time of the inspection, there were 199 students on adult basic education courses, 148 students receiving additional support in literacy and numeracy, 232 students on foundation level programmes, and 45 students on Prince's Trust programmes.

## **Achievement and standards**

149. The retention rate of students on all courses is good. The retention rate of 93% for students receiving additional support is higher than the overall college retention rate. The pass rate in all the basic skills qualifications was 100% in 2001. However, in key skills at level 1, the pass rate in 2001 in communication was 73% and in application of number was 67%. Rates of progression to other FE courses or employment are good. Students, particularly those on the adult basic education courses, are keen to learn. They work well during lessons. Most students' work shows evidence of good progress and achievement at appropriate standards. Students are punctual, but attendance patterns are erratic on some of the adult basic education courses. During the inspection, attendance in the observed lessons averaged 68%.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
City and Guilds communication skills (wordpower)	entry	No. of starts	*	14	12
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
City and Guilds communication skills (wordpower)	1	No. of starts	*	22	16
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	95	100
City and Guilds numeracy skills (numberpower)	1	No. of starts	*	6	4
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100

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

\* course did not run

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

150. The teaching was very good or outstanding in over half the lessons observed during the inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Courses and lessons are planned thoroughly. Teaching methods are appropriate and students learn effectively. In many of the lessons a workshop approach is used, where students spend much of their time working individually on tasks relevant to their particular needs. Most lesson plans identify the tasks that will be undertaken by the different students in the class. All teachers are consistently supportive and encouraging, and, without exception, they have a very good knowledge and understanding of each of their students. Teachers' explanations are clear, and they use good examples to illustrate points. Occasionally, students are asked to undertake tasks that are too difficult or insufficiently structured for at least some of them. Effective use is made of additional staff. Key skills lessons for students on foundation programmes are double-staffed, and many other basic skills lessons have volunteers or other support teachers present to support individuals or the whole group. The content of some key skills lessons does not sufficiently relate to the vocational specialism to motivate the students and sustain their interest.

151. All basic skills students receive an initial assessment and an individual learning plan. Good use is made of the learning plans. Reviews of progress take place regularly. Student work is marked accurately and constructively. Internal verification procedures are thorough, and reports from external verifiers are positive.

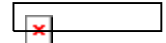
152. Most of the staff teaching basic skills have appropriate qualifications and experience. Key staff teaching on vocational programmes have undertaken basic skills training to enable them to meet the basic skills needs of students in other lessons. Team leaders from the Prince's Trust programmes have undertaken basic skills training to help them give effective support to their students on, for example, key skills, training, drawing up profiles of achievement and developing portfolios. One team leader at any one time has responsibility for giving basic skills support to all the groups.

153. College accommodation for basic skills is very good. The English and mathematics workshop is a large well-resourced room with 19 computer workstations. It is used for additional support on a timetabled or drop-in basis. Other basic skills base rooms are equipped with computers or have them available close by. Resources to support teaching and learning, such as worksheets and workbooks, are plentiful and of good quality.

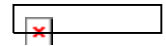
### **Leadership and management**

154. Leadership and management of basic skills provision is effective. The college is committed to developing its basic skills provision. A new basic and key skills section was recently established to support further co-ordination and development. With the exception of the Prince's Trust programmes, all the college's basic and key skills provision is now co-ordinated by the new section, and the arrangement is already proving effective. The Prince's Trust programmes are well organised and very successful. Staff across all the basic skills provision work well together. There is good communication, even where staff are based at different sites. Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended. Both managers and staff are strongly committed to continuing professional development and staff training events take place regularly. College policies and procedures have been fully implemented. Targets are set and monitored at course level and action is taken if problems become apparent. Course reviews are thorough and feed into the self-assessment process. Realistic action and development planning has led to many improvements. The college has good links with schools, community groups and other agencies.

## Part D: College data



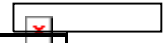
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	25	36
2	17	21
3	39	24
4/5	0	5
Other	19	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in autumn 2001.

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	1,902	1,821	18
Agriculture	7	1	0
Construction	108	231	2
Engineering	994	489	7
Business	585	1,785	11
Hotel and catering	492	302	4
Health and community care	382	765	6
Art and design	610	1,648	11
Humanities	6,023	1,743	37
Basic education	105	794	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,208</b>	<b>9,579</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in autumn 2001.

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000
		<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	842	1,000	1,032	1,207
	Retention rate (%)	85	82	81	78	84	79
	National average (%)	81	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	72	76	83	76	70	78
	National average (%)	59	62	66	62	63	69
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,121	1,295	1,624	1,593	1,458	1,306
	Retention rate (%)	73	79	80	82	84	83
	National average (%)	76	76	77	79	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	79	81	85	75	77	84
	National average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,620	1,497	1,705	1,489	1,089	1,957
	Retention rate (%)	76	74	79	80	85	88
	National average (%)	77	77	77	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	87	80	85	82	77	83
	National average (%)	71	72	73	64	65	69
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	6	0	0	367	337	319
	Retention rate (%)	50	*	*	88	85	89
	National average (%)	83	**	**	84	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	67	*	*	80	77	77
	National average (%)	64	**	**	58	61	60

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

*Sources of information:*

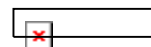
*1. National averages: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*

*2. College rates for 1997/98 - 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 autumn 2001.*



\* *too few students to provide a valid calculation*

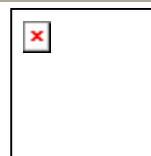


\*\* *data not available*

**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)	89	9	2	144
Level 2 (intermediate)	82	18	0	62
Level 1 (foundation)	95	5	0	21
Other sessions	82	13	5	38
<b>Totals</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>265</b>

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