



Loreto Sixth Form College

CONTENTS

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

How effective is the college?

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

How well is the college led and managed?

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Students' views of the college

Other information

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Achievement and standards

Quality of education and training

Leadership and management

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science

Mathematics

Business studies

Information and communications technology

[Health, social care and childcare](#)

[Visual, performing arts and media](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Sociology and psychology](#)

[English and modern foreign languages](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01](#)

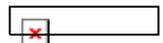
[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

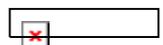
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Name of college:	Loreto Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Ann Clynch
Address of college:	Chichester Road Manchester M15 5PB
Telephone number:	0161 2265156
Fax number:	0161 2279174
Chair of governors:	Mike Sedgwick
Unique reference number:	130503
Name of reporting inspector:	Gill Reay HMI
Dates of inspection:	15-19 April 2002

Part A: Summary



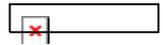
Information about the college



Loreto College is a designated Roman Catholic sixth form college, located in Hulme, just over one mile south of the centre of Manchester. Manchester as a whole, ranks as the third most deprived local authority area in England. The college is situated between the wards of Hulme and Moss Side,

were enrolled at the college, of which 95% were aged 16 to 18. The small proportion of adults were taking advantage of first aid courses and various community-based programmes. The college offers programmes in 9 of the 14 areas of learning defined by OFSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). There is a developing programme of courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some 32% of the college's students are from minority ethnic groups, which mirrors the proportion in Manchester as a whole but exceeds the proportion in the catchment areas of partner schools (Trafford 13.2% and Salford 15.2%). Loreto College is one of an international network of Catholic schools and colleges run by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the college's distinctive Catholic ethos owes much to its connection with the institute. The college's mission is 'to give expression to the core values of freedom, justice, sincerity, truth, and joy and to respond to the educational needs of young people from its partnership high schools and special schools.'

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of education and training provided by the college to be outstanding in two areas of learning, good in six and satisfactory in one. Leadership and management of the college are outstanding, and there is a strong commitment by governors and senior managers to the college's mission and Catholic ethos. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- very good teaching and effective learning
- strong commitment to the college's mission by staff and students
- celebration of difference and diversity by teachers and students
- excellent support for students
- rigorous monitoring of students' progress
- good rates of progression to higher education (HE) and employment
- good enrichment activities

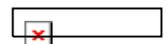
- good learning materials
- excellent promotion of equal opportunities
- strong leadership and effective management.

What should be improved

- recruitment to courses at levels 1 and 2
- pass and retention rates on a small number of courses
- access for students with restricted mobility
- use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching in some areas.

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	Good. There is much well planned and effective teaching. Retention rates on most courses are good. The pass rates on most two-year General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) courses are good. Effective use is made of information technology (IT) to support learning. However the pass rate on the General

	Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) science course is poor and there is no access to the science area for those with restricted mobility.
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is thoroughly planned and promotes effective learning. Insufficient use is made of ICT. Pass rates have improved on GCE A-level courses and are now above national averages. Retention rates have been poor on some courses. There are good learning materials and teachers offer additional help outside the normal timetabled lessons. There is some poor accommodation.
Business studies	Good. Teaching is good and this enables students to make good progress and to achieve good results in examinations. Students' progress is closely monitored. There are good learning materials but too few activities relating to industry or commerce.
ICT	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory. Students are well motivated in practical lessons but some theory teaching is ineffective. Pass rates on GCE A-level computing and vocational courses are consistently above national averages. Teachers draw on relevant commercial experience during lessons. Retention rates on some courses are unsatisfactory.
Health, social care and childcare	Good. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Students are appreciative of the hard work and enthusiasm of staff. Pass rates are excellent on childcare courses. Outreach work in the wider community has been innovative and effective. Childcare students are well supported in their training placements but there is insufficient monitoring of health and social care students' work placements.
Visual, performing arts and media	Good. Most teaching is good but a minority is insufficiently challenging. Pass rates are high. Students are well supported on an individual basis, work effectively on their own and in groups, and produce work of a high standard.
Humanities	Outstanding. Teaching is very good. Pass rates are high in all subjects and the proportion of higher grades is particularly good in geography, economics and politics. Students' written and oral work is of a high standard. The monitoring and assessment of student progress is thorough. Teaching resources are excellent.
Sociology and psychology	Outstanding. Teaching is enthusiastic and effective. Pass rates are high. Leadership and management are dynamic and effective. Quality assurance procedures are successful in raising standards. Students receive good academic and personal support.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Most teaching is good but there is some uninspiring teaching in English. There are high pass rates on GCE A-level courses but the pass rates on GCSE English and Spanish are low. Retention rates have been low but are now improving. Students develop good oral skills. In English, they develop critical thinking and productively explore social and multi-cultural issues.

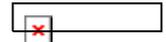
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. The effective management systems are well documented and rigorously applied. There is a strong commitment to the college's Catholic ethos

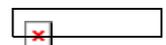
trustees of the college. Despite the inclusion in the strategic plan of objectives relating to adults and low-achieving 16 year olds from partnership high schools, relatively few students are recruited from these groups. Communication within the college is effective and the staff work well as a team. A rigorous and effective quality assurance system has led to improved and very good pass rates at all levels. Retention rates have improved and are now above national averages at levels 1 and 2 and similar to national averages at level 3. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted and monitored. The successes of students and staff are celebrated. Financial management is good.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



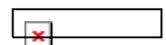
The college's contribution to educational and social inclusion is good. Students are assessed on entry and individual learning targets are agreed. There is comprehensive data on students by minority ethnic background and gender. A mentoring programme to improve the achievement of boys has recently been introduced. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted and monitored. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and topics relating to equal opportunities feature strongly in the tutorial programme. Teaching takes explicit account of students' varied backgrounds and encourages a multi-cultural perspective. The spiritual development of students and the raising of achievement rates are key elements in the college's mission. The development of the whole person is the ultimate goal of all college activities. Staff and students are familiar with the mission statement. Staff have high expectations of students in terms of behaviour and attitude, which are generally realised. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect throughout the college.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Students receive excellent guidance and support throughout their studies. There are well-structured pre-enrolment, guidance and recruitment activities. Relationships with partner high schools are excellent. There is a comprehensive induction process, during which students' learning needs and styles are determined. Pastoral support is effective. Learning support is available for students with general learning difficulties or specific difficulties such as dyslexia. An innovative programme on advanced thinking skills is being developed. The effects of the learning support activities are insufficiently monitored. The tutorial system is successful, effective and highly praised by students and parents. Systems for monitoring attendance are effective. Personal counselling, careers advice and spiritual guidance are available from professional counsellors. Advice on progression opportunities is good. Most students go on to HE or employment. There are very good enrichment opportunities including sport, music and clubs.

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

- extra support given by staff

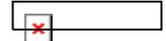
- being treated like an adult and being respected
- good study facilities and plenty of computers
- useful and timely guidance about HE and careers
- friendly atmosphere
- good sports and enrichment activities
- support for students with disabilities
- safety and security on site.

What they feel could be improved

- some older, less attractive accommodation
- social areas
- opportunities for work experience
- key skills components
- price of food

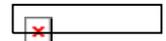
- poor heating.

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



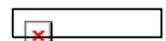
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



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	77	21	2
Learning 16-18	76	22	2

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).

Achievement and standards



1. The vast majority of students are aged 16 to 18. Most of these take advanced level courses. The college was classified in 1999/2000 as having an overall student population with a 'high' level of deprivation. Its full-time students aged 16 to 18 come mainly from postcode areas with a 'very high' level of deprivation. Compared with other colleges with similar levels of deprivation, Loreto's retention rates are above average, and its pass rates are consistently higher than average. Pass rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 were all at or above the national averages for all sixth form colleges over the three years 1997/98 to 1999/2000. College data show that pass rates have continued to rise in 2000/01.

2. In 2001, the overall pass rate on GCE A-level courses was well above the national average for sixth form colleges at 92%. Some 57% of entries achieved higher grade (A-C) passes. In 15 subjects, including media, performance music, human biology, French, German and Spanish, the

pass rate was 100%. There are also high levels of achievement on level 3 vocational courses in art and design, IT, childcare and business. Value added analysis indicates that, on most courses, students are achieving GNVQ or GCE A-level grades which are in line with or higher than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE performance. Pass rates in the new GCE AS examinations in 2001 were generally good. In 20 out of 29 subjects they were above the examination board averages. Overall the pass rate at Loreto College was 89.2% against a national average of 86.6%. In history, 85% of students achieved passes at grades A to C.

3. In 1999/2000, the college's overall retention rate was 89%. College data indicate an overall improvement in the retention rates to 94% in 2000/01. Within this overall improving picture, there are a few examples of low or declining retention rates, for example in GCE A-level English literature, French, mathematics, and visual and performing arts. The college carefully analyses students' reasons for leaving courses and has a well-considered strategy to improve retention, which appears to be working. In line with college policy, students with four A-C grades at GCSE are encouraged to take up a challenging programme. They may subsequently drop a subject at advanced level, and this has an impact on the retention figures. Retention rates on GCSE courses are generally at or above national averages. Pass rates in 2001 are above average in some subjects, such as mathematics and sociology, but below average in others, such as science and Spanish. There are some good pass rates on intermediate GNVQ courses, for example, in health and social care and in leisure and tourism.

4. The college monitors retention and pass rates by gender and ethnicity. In line with national trends it has identified gender differences in achievement rates with 83% of females achieving at least one qualification compared with 76% of males. It has recently appointed a learning mentor who will focus on male underachievement.

5. There are good progression rates for students into FE and HE and into employment. Approximately two thirds of advanced level students progress into HE and two thirds of intermediate level students progress to advanced level study. All the childcare students who completed their courses in 2001 are now in relevant employment.

6. The college is successful in meeting the need of the adults it recruits. The number of adult students is small, but retention and pass rates for such students are generally at or above national averages.

7. The standard of much of the students' work is good. In particular, there is some very good assignment work and some good written and oral work in humanities. Students express themselves with confidence in many lessons. Students acquire good transferable skills which they use well in their studies.

8. At the last inspection in 1999 the overall attendance rate was 77%. This improved to 85% during the current inspection.

Quality of education and training



9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 131 sessions. Some 76% of teaching was judged excellent to good. Only 2% of teaching was judged unsatisfactory. The figures for learning were similar. The highest proportion of good teaching was in humanities, sociology and psychology where 94% of teaching was judged to be good, very good or outstanding, and none of it unsatisfactory.

10. The majority of lessons are well planned. There are comprehensive schemes of work, which indicate clearly the stages of learning, methods of teaching and assessment goals of the learners.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and most teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Most teachers have good relationships with their students, based on mutual trust. In English, modern foreign languages, humanities, sociology and psychology students are encouraged to develop their ability to think critically and succeed in expressing their ideas clearly, both orally and in writing. In science, mathematics, health and social care, childcare, visual and performing arts and media the links between theory and practice were made clear. Some teaching in ICT and English was unimaginative. In a small minority of lessons, teachers failed to set different tasks for students of different abilities.

11. Teachers produce good learning materials, which students value. ICT is used confidently and imaginatively in many lessons, by both teachers and students. In particular, the teaching of modern foreign language, sociology and psychology is enhanced by the imaginative use of new technologies. In many lessons, teachers make good use of illustrative material and examples that draw on and refer to the prior knowledge and everyday experiences of the students. Teachers are adept at seizing opportunities to improve and extend students' vocabulary and communication skills. In childcare, good use is made of students' work placement experiences and in business, students are encouraged to talk about their experiences as part-time workers.

12. Students identified as likely to benefit from additional help are able to attend extra lessons. Those who have taken advantage of this opportunity have made good progress and appreciate the help they have been given. Teachers have responded well to the challenge of implementing Curriculum 2000, and have been helped in this by an effective staff development programme. Parents express satisfaction with the quality of teaching received by their children. Learning is enhanced through a wide range of enrichment activities. There is an extensive programme of visits and visiting speakers.

13. The college campus includes attractive gardens, a well-used chapel, and nine buildings, dating from 1835 to 1972. Many of the buildings are in need of repair and are inaccessible to disabled people. Wherever possible, alternative timetabling arrangements are made to ensure that all students have access to the curriculum. Social areas for students are generally adequate but in need of some refurbishment. The college offers a safe and welcoming environment for students. There have been recent improvements in security arrangements and other measures to ensure safe working throughout the college. In the summer of 2000 the college carried out a survey of the condition of all its buildings and assessed its future accommodation needs. The resulting plans involve the sale of part of the land and a complete rebuilding of the college. Planning permission and financing for this has been agreed. The work is scheduled to start in the summer of 2002 and be completed by the summer of 2004. The planned development will address many of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection.

14. The teaching staff are well qualified. All are graduates and some possess a higher degree. Most have substantial teaching experience and bring a strong sense of commitment and enthusiasm to the job. All except three part-time teachers have teaching qualifications. There is effective technician support particularly in ICT. Staff development and training are well planned. A staff development committee oversees the implementation of the staff development policy and its associated training plan. Priority has been given to ensuring that all staff develop IT skills and keep abreast of curriculum developments, particularly Curriculum 2000. Newly appointed teachers have a good induction programme and are mentored by a more experienced colleague.

15. Most of the teaching accommodation is satisfactory or better. Most rooms are well furnished and many have been redecorated recently. Many rooms have a distinct subject identity, helped by a display of students' work and other materials that promote an interest in the subject. Many contain televisions and video players. Good use is made of multimedia projectors and interactive whiteboards. There is an appropriate range of specialist equipment in most curriculum areas.

16. The college has an adequate number of high specification computers for use by students and staff. The ratio of computers to full-time students is 1:5. There is good access to the Internet, which helps students to develop research skills. Extensive and varied learning materials have been developed and placed on the college Intranet. Many students make good use of computers to enhance the quality of their presentations. Laptop computers are available to students in

mathematics and science.

17. The library is appropriately stocked with up to date and relevant books and other learning materials. In a few curriculum areas there are some obsolete texts. The library is well used, spacious and provides extensive quiet areas for private study. There is a good range of videos and class sets of textbooks.

18. Assessment procedures and practices are rigorous and thorough. Assessment is regular and marking conforms to standards set by exam boards. Moderators' reports confirm the accuracy of the marking and grading of coursework. However, the timing of some assessments is not well planned. For example, in science there is insufficient co-ordination of the assessment schedule. The students' workload is uneven and some fail to complete all the tasks.

19. Students are given minimum target grades based on their qualifications on entry. Teachers and tutors use these systematically and effectively to review progress and to devise action plans with students. Teachers have detailed knowledge of individual students, which they use to good effect. Teachers' comments on course work are very well used by students and help them improve. Formal and informal support is provided for students who need it. For example, in ICT, 'at risk' students are referred to additional lunchtime support sessions and holiday workshops. Monitoring and support systems are effective in raising standards.

20. In most curriculum areas the monitoring of students' academic progress is thorough and effective. Students' written work is accurately marked and constructive feedback is given. Punctuality and attendance are monitored closely and 'at risk' students are identified through subject meetings and the tutorial system. Parents receive regular reports on students' progress. The college has recently appointed a learning mentor whose primary task is to raise boys' pass rates. The college's well considered retention strategy is having an impact. In many curriculum areas there has been improved attendance and retention compared with the previous year.

21. The range of level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18 is good. The college provides 35 GCE AS and A-level courses; 5 advanced level vocational courses; 4 intermediate level vocational courses and 4 foundation and entry level courses; there are also entry and pre-entry provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are two courses leading to qualifications in childcare and education. Recruitment on to foundation and GNVQ intermediate level courses is small. The majority of science courses are at level 3. This year, GNVQ intermediate courses in art and design and business did not run due to the lack of enrolments. Pre-GCSE English courses are not being actively marketed.

22. 'Pathways to New Horizons', a course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities accredited by the Open College Network (OCN), is proving successful. The course has 35 enrolments this year and is oversubscribed. The college intends to expand this provision.

23. In addition to accredited courses, there are many opportunities for students to improve their personal and professional skills. There are many enrichment courses and opportunities to take part in sport and music activities. There are short courses in study skills and good arrangements for students to complete key skills portfolios for accreditation. Some students undertake work experience but many are not given such opportunities.

24. There are courses for adults in first aid and child-care. The Weekend College has proved popular with adults: the leisure and vocational courses last three to ten weeks and are free. The college has recently received a Beacon Award for Sustainable Development in the Community in recognition of its provision of childcare courses in Beswick, East Manchester. Parenting courses, courses run at the probation centre, and outreach courses run in association with Liverpool Hope University, are aimed at raising the aspirations of adults in low-income areas. As a result of a needs analysis, the college has recently appointed a head of adult education to develop initiatives within the local community, often in collaboration with other institutions. The number of students on this course was small. However, there are large numbers on the franchised first aid courses, run in collaboration with St. John Ambulance.

25. The college has excellent links with its partnership high schools, resulting in a productive collaboration. Arrangements for ensuring the effectiveness of pre-enrolment information and guidance are very well structured and regularly revised. Information is clear and marketing materials are of a high standard. The prospectus is attractively presented and reflects the diversity of the student group. There are road shows, taster days, information evenings, visits to schools, a new students' day and a conference for parents. Manchester Catholic Educational Partnership days are held every year, allowing subject teachers from schools and the college to meet, share good practice and devise schemes to help pupils make the best choice of subject at the college. The excellence unit for very high ability students organises an excellence challenge for gifted and talented pupils in the partner high schools. This year, 200 pupils and their parents attended a one-day conference at the college.

26. All applicants are interviewed by a senior tutor who subsequently tracks the student through the enrolment process. New students are allocated to a tutor who has knowledge of the subject area in which each student will be working. There is a thorough induction process which students judge to be highly successful. The diagnosis of learning needs and preferred learning styles helps students to draw up realistic individual learning plans. Learning support arrangements are very strong, both for general learning difficulties and for specific difficulties. Good records are kept and shared with tutors and subject teachers, but the benefits arising from learning support are not analysed systematically. The college provides good support to students with dyslexia, those needing help with basic skills and those needing English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). An innovative advanced thinking skills course is proving popular.

27. Study facilities in the college are excellent. The learning support area is a large and well-used facility with 50 computer workstations and 60 study places. It is open during the holidays and until 6pm on weekdays. There is a separate library which is well stocked. Its silent working area does not attract students in large numbers but offers an alternative to the very busy atmosphere of the Mary Ward learning support area.

28. The college has developed an efficient tutorial system that is widely praised by parents and appreciated by students. Tutors monitor and report on students' progress. There are daily registration and tutorial meetings. Absence and lateness are investigated promptly. During the period of inspection, the attendance rate was 85%, which is below the college target but represents an improvement since the last inspection. Tutorial activities are generally interesting and effective. One tutorial with the theme 'Life after Loreto,' raised students' awareness of the issues to be faced when leaving home to enter university or to get a job. It was led by the tutor in a vigorous and interesting way. Surveys show that students are appreciative of their tutors and recognise the value of the tutorial programme. In a few, the tutors talk too much and do not give students sufficient opportunities to express their opinions.

29. Tutors and specialist careers advisors interview students in preparation for their applications to employers or HE. The drop-in careers centre is appropriately sited in the learning support area and is well stocked with up-to-date reference material. Careers talks are given to all students and there are good contacts with admissions tutors in HE institutions. The annual University and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS) conference is well attended by students and parents. A shadowing scheme enables prospective Oxford University applicants to sit in on lectures and spend time with undergraduates in a social setting. The process of application to HE is well managed. In 2001, 63% of the 386 applicants were successful in obtaining a place in HE.

30. The general religious education programme encourages students to discuss religious and ethical issues and to explore aspects of Christian tradition. An enthusiastic team of teachers is led by a qualified head of religious education. Much of the teaching of religious studies is good and some is excellent. There are substantial links with the tutorial programme, which incorporates activities to develop and consolidate the issues covered in the religious education programme. The college's strict anti-bullying policy is thoroughly examined in the tutorial programme. There are high expectations of behaviour and attitude for all within the college community.

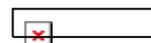
31. The chapel is the focus for prayer and liturgy. There are morning prayers each day. Mass is said regularly by the local parish priest and is well attended. There is a college choir in which students

from all denominations and faiths take part. Their contributions are very accomplished and enhance the services. Students attend assemblies twice each week as part of their tutorial programme. Each tutor group undertakes to prepare an assembly. A welcome service is part of the college induction. The Chaplain, who is a member of the religious order, is available to advise students on personal matters. Two senior tutors have formal qualifications in counselling and a qualified professional counsellor is engaged by the college on a part-time basis.

32. Parents identify the care that students receive and the quality of teaching as major factors in the decision to enrol their children at the college. They particularly like the effective communications between home and college and the frequent opportunities to discuss students' progress and concerns. Parents like the college's culture of work and achievement. Some regard the key skills requirements as an unnecessary burden.

33. There is a high take-up of enrichment activities. Regular sporting fixtures and non-competitive recreational activities include football, cricket, badminton, netball, weight training and trampolining. There are societies for environmental awareness, human rights campaigning and debating. The International Society raises awareness of current affairs and global issues and there are lectures on philosophy. Students become involved through the college in voluntary and charitable work. Some have undertaken a pilgrimage to Lourdes through the Manchester Catholic Education Partnership. Some work experience is arranged but the activity is not well co-ordinated and students are unsure of what is available.

Leadership and management



34. The leadership and management of the college are outstanding. There is very strong leadership by governors and senior managers who work together effectively. They have enormous enthusiasm and a passion for the work. There are clear and appropriate strategic objectives. These include objectives to meet the needs of the local community and underachieving 16-year old students in partner schools. However, the college currently recruits few students at levels 1 and 2 and has few adult students. The annual development plan addresses weaknesses identified in the previous self-assessment report and constitutes the college's annual operating statement. Its implementation is carefully monitored. The development activities across the full range of college work are cross-referenced to strategic objectives. Governors have a well-established committee structure. The standards committee has a major role in monitoring the quality of the provision and the success of the students through a rigorous review and evaluation of each section's self-assessment report.

35. There is a strong commitment to the college's Catholic ethos, and to the mission of the religious order of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary who are the trustees of the college. At enrolment, priority is given to students from nine Catholic partnership high schools. Applications from students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and from those who live in Moss Side and Hulme are accepted irrespective of religious background. However, governors have agreed to maintain a 2:1 ratio between Catholic students and students from other faiths. College managers maintain the distinctive ethos of the college through a general religious education programme and through the many opportunities for prayer and liturgy. The statutory obligation to provide opportunities for collective worship is fulfilled within an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

36. There is a consultative and supportive management style with excellent external partnerships. Lines of responsibility and communication are understood and work well. A new management information system was introduced in September 2001. This, after initial difficulties, has proved to be reliable and gives middle managers trustworthy information. The college has an excellent track record in submitting returns to the FEFC and the LSC. A weekly staff bulletin and newsletters to parents and students are used effectively. Twice yearly bulletins are issued to inform students of the outcomes and actions resulting from surveys of their views using questionnaires and focus groups. Alongside the many formal lines of communication there is a well-established and effective informal

network. There is effective collaboration with a range of external agencies such as the Manchester Catholic Education Partnership, the Manchester Lifelong Learning Partnership, the Moss Side and Hulme Partnership and the Local Education Authority.

37. Most curriculum areas and support functions are well managed. Staff teams work in a supportive, friendly and effective manner. Meetings have clear agendas and minutes that identify actions, which are followed up routinely. Management activities consistently have the welfare and success of students as their main focus. Priority has been given to teaching methods and support functions and to strategies to raise retention and pass rates. Frequent celebration of the successes of students and staff promotes good working relationships.

38. Equality of opportunity permeates the life of the college. The equal opportunity policy is carefully explained to students during induction and the values within the policy are reinforced through specific activities during tutorials and lessons. A successful equal opportunities week included a competition to find the best-written work, artwork and performance from students. Attendance, retention and achievement in each subject are monitored very carefully and the data are analysed by gender and ethnic background. Any trends are brought to the attention of subject leaders in preparation for action planning. This has become much more effective since the introduction of the more sophisticated management information system that allows this data to be generated routinely. The 2001/02 internal operating statement identifies as a future action the extension of this monitoring to extra curricular activities. Staff and students are aware of their responsibilities. They work hard to ensure that all are treated respectfully and that each is valued equally.

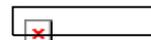
39. The quality assurance framework is well established, effective and understood by staff. Governors have approved a set of standards for each of the college's areas of activity. Performance against these standards is reviewed regularly as part of the self-assessment process. Subject and programme area staff and the senior management team set appropriate targets for attendance, retention, achievement and added value. The achievement of these is effectively reviewed at appropriate times. Members of the governors' standards committee oversee the implementation of the quality assurance procedures. The production of self-assessment reports is at the core of the quality assurance framework. The validation panel consists of governors, staff, parents, an external consultant, heads of partner high schools and a principal from another sixth form college.

40. Lesson observations by line managers are well established. Observers external to the college moderate these to ensure a consistent approach. Even with these checks the college's lesson observation grades are more generous than those awarded by inspectors. For example, 90% of the lessons observed by college staff were considered good or better compared with 76% for lessons in the same subjects observed by inspectors. Nevertheless, the figure of 76% is good compared to other colleges and is an improvement on the previous inspection in 1999.

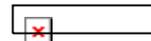
41. Staff development is well organised. It is used effectively to support college-wide strategic objectives as well as those of teams and individuals. There is dissemination of good practice through events linked to themes derived from lesson observations and reviews. Appraisal is used to determine the individual development needs of staff. Each subject and tutor team prioritises their needs, which are aligned to college wide priorities before being fed into the staff development plan for the year. Teachers value the staff development provided. Many of them have undergone extensive training related to the introduction of new syllabuses.

42. The college has a small but well qualified finance team. Clear financial objectives are set and comprehensive reports are provided to governors. There is a substantial financial reserve that is expected to increase dramatically with the sale of some of the college's land. A detailed needs analysis has led to an accommodation strategy that calls for the building of a new college. Current plans are that this should be completed by 2004.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- well-planned and effective teaching
- good and improving retention rates
- good pass rates on level 3 courses in most years
- high progression rates to related HE
- effective use of IT to support learning.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rate on GCSE science course
- no access to science laboratories for people with restricted mobility.

Scope of provision

43. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time. GCE A-level and AS courses are provided in biology, chemistry, environmental science and physics. A one-year GCE A-level programme is aimed at students aged 19 and over. There is a full-time GCSE science course and four GCSE environmental science students study alongside those on the GCE AS course. There are no vocational or part-time programmes. Overall there are 361 enrolments on science courses of which 54% are female, including 23 studying physics.

Achievement and standards

44. The attendance rate in the lessons observed was 85%. The average group size was 15.5. Retention rates on most GCE A-level science courses are above the national average for sixth form colleges. In 2001, the retention rate on the GCSE science course was also above the national average. Currently the overall in-year retention rate for the first two terms across the four GCE AS courses is 96%. Pass rates on most GCE A-level courses, including those completed in one year, are above the national average but the proportion of students achieving the higher A-C grades has been consistently low, except in physics. Value added analysis indicates that students achieve higher grades in physics and chemistry than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Achievements on most GCE AS courses are at or above the national average for sixth form colleges. The pass rate on the GCSE course is poor and not improving. Over 80% of the students who completed GCE A-level programmes in science subjects in 2001 progressed to HE, and about 50% of these chose science-related courses. Students are well motivated, work hard and produce work of an appropriate standard.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	*	24	38
		% retention	*	67	82
		% pass rate	*	31	25
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	17	31	30
		% retention	94	90	63
		% pass rate	71	91	95
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	46	29	39
		% retention	67	72	87
		% pass rate	96	94	71
GCE A-level human biology	3	No. of starts	18	10	7
		% retention	44	80	86
		% pass rate	33	71	100
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	19	11	27
		% retention	63	82	81
		% pass rate	92	78	95

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

45. Most of the teaching is good or better. There are detailed schemes of work and lessons are planned effectively. Teachers allow time for recapping, consolidation and reflection. They produce good learning materials and make good use of audio visual aids. For example, in one physics lesson a video of the Brazilian Grand Prix was used to demonstrate the Doppler effect. Most teachers ask questions to ensure that everyone in the class has understood the topic under discussion, but a few fail to do this and, as a result, a few students get left behind.

46. Teachers make good use of IT to enliven their teaching. For example, in a GCE A-level biology lesson, a computer presentation was used well to illustrate graphically the various changes in hormone and steroid levels during the menstrual cycle. Some students make good use of IT in their

assignment work. Effective use is made of laptop computers, which can be linked to the college network. Practical activities are taught well. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety. Frequent and effective use is made of demonstrations. The computer in the physics laboratory is used effectively for data logging. Students value the chemistry learning materials on the college Intranet. Teachers are approachable, friendly and supportive. Students' progress is monitored rigorously, and their performance relative to their target grades, based on GCSE grades on entry, is discussed with them. Parents and guardians receive regular reports on students' progress. Appropriate account is taken of students' learning difficulties, including dyslexia. Challenging homework is set weekly. Teachers give constructive and helpful written feedback on students' work. Weaker students are given appropriate encouragement and referred to lunchtime sessions in which they are given additional help.

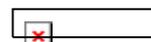
47. The science laboratories are located in two of the older teaching blocks. They are well lit, spacious and brightened by attractive wall displays. A major weakness is the inaccessibility of the science laboratories to people with restricted mobility.

48. The science teachers and technicians are well qualified and enthusiastic. Most specialist resources are good. Textbooks and laboratory manuals are provided at reduced cost. Textbooks relevant to the GCE A-level courses are well used. The library resources for science are adequate but some books are outdated. There is an adequate range of periodicals.

Leadership and management

49. The management of the science curriculum area is effective. Day-to-day management is delegated to three subject leaders with responsibility for biology, earth sciences, and chemistry and physics. Communication between the subject team leaders is good. The marketing of science courses is effective. Team meetings are normally held twice a term. Targets for retention and pass rates are set out in the operational plan. Action plans arising from the well-developed self-assessment process are monitored regularly. However, there is no clear strategy for addressing the consistently poor pass rates on the GCSE science course or the low recruitment to GCSE environmental science.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- good teaching and effective learning
- comprehensive extra mathematics support
- good recent GCE A-level pass rates
- well-designed learning materials.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate on GCE A-level course
- some poor accommodation
- insufficient use of ICT.

Scope of provision

50. There is a satisfactory range of courses in mathematics. The college provides a GCE A-level mathematics course for students with a GCSE in mathematics at grade C or better. Those students with lower prior attainments in mathematics can opt for a more applied "Use of Mathematics" A-level course. A GCE A-level further mathematics course is also provided, and there are nine students on this option in the first year and five in the second. Students at the college perceive mathematics as a difficult subject, and the number of enrolments to the GCE A-level mathematics programme as a whole is less than would be expected for a sixth form college of this size. Each year some mathematics GCE A-level students transfer to other subjects soon after starting the course. Last year 23 students did so. Students who have not already obtained at least a grade C pass at GCSE can retake the subject or take a course leading to an alternative accredited qualification.

Achievement and standards

51. Achievements at GCE A-level have improved and the most recent results are good. The pass rate has risen from well below national average in 1999 to well above in 2001. Value added scores have also improved. These measures suggest that, whereas in previous years GCE A-level students did only slightly better than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results, the first group of GCE AS students did substantially better. The retention rate on the new GCE AS course has also improved to 82%.

52. During mathematics lessons, students produced work of an appropriate standard on paper but many struggled to articulate their understanding of mathematical concepts in words. The attendance rate in the lessons observed was high, at 88%. The rate of progression to HE is high, and a substantial proportion go on to degree programmes with a strong mathematical content.

53.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	95	109	137
		% retention	77	66	82
		% pass rate	33	57	47
GCE A-level	3	No. of starts	55	39	31

mathematics	% retention	75	77	65
	% pass rate	74	90	95

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

Quality of education and training

54. Most teaching is good or very good. Staff working together as a team have designed a well structured package of informative handouts and assignments. Homework is set regularly and marked promptly and thoroughly. Teachers provide clear, accurate and energetic exposition of mathematical theory. Students make effective use of graphical calculators to explore the behaviour of mathematical functions. They undertake investigations and work well in groups. In all the lessons seen there was an excellent working relationship between staff and students.

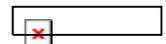
55. There is detailed and effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress. Each student is given a target achievement grade based on their entry qualifications and their work is assessed regularly to check their progress towards the target. Students not making as much progress are enrolled for supplementary lessons where their work is closely monitored until their performance improves. Attendance at these additional lessons is good. There are also drop-in sessions to any student seeking help with a particular topic.

56. The teaching accommodation is drab. Many of the rooms are inappropriate for teaching mathematics and there are access routes through some of them. There is no access for wheelchair users. There is only one overhead projector available in the subject area. Computers are not readily available and are rarely used to enrich work in the mathematics classrooms. Staff are well qualified and work effectively together. There are ample stocks of textbooks and other learning materials.

Leadership and management

57. The management of the curriculum area is satisfactory. There are regular minuted staff meetings. Appropriate attention is paid to the development of teaching methods, learning materials and procedures for the monitoring the process of individual learners. More could be done to develop overall performance measures for the different courses and groups of students and to seek out information about best practice in mathematics teaching at other institutions.

Business studies



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

Strengths

- good pass rates

- good teaching

- effective monitoring and support to improve academic performance

- good learning materials.

Weaknesses

- insufficient guidance on how to improve in some written feedback
- poor retention rate on GCE A-level course in 2000/01
- insufficient activities relating to industry or commerce.

Scope of provision

58. The college offers GCE AS, A-level and AVCE courses in business, although the AVCE course did not recruit sufficient students to run in September 2001. Most of the students on business courses are studying full time and are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

59. Pass rates are good. Between 1998 and 2001, GCE A-level pass rates improved from 87% to 97%, which is well above the national average. The majority of students achieved better grades than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores. The percentage of higher grades A to C also improved from 54% to 65%. The retention rate was poor in 2001, with only 66% of students completing their course. Strategies introduced in 2001/02 have been effective in raising retention rates to 100% on the second year of GCE A-level. The first group to sit the new GCE AS examination in 2001 achieved a 94% pass rate. GNVQ advanced business students achieved a significantly improved pass rate of 89% in 2001.

60. The rate of progression to HE or employment is high. Some 71% of advanced level students progressed to university in 2001 and a further 13% moved into employment.

61. The standard of work by current students is good. Teachers keep careful records of minimum target grades, based on GCSE point scores on entry, predicted grades and modular assessment results. They have high expectations of their students, many of whom achieve better grades than those predicted. Students use appropriate business terminology and can explain theoretical concepts. They are able to make links between areas of work covered by different teachers or in different modules. In one lesson students demonstrated a clear understanding of business theory when discussing issues related to the proposed merger of two local universities. They worked in small groups and agreed what the possible impact would be on the city and on future students. Another group related the theory of the business cycle to the impact of the budget measures announced by the government the previous day.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
---------------	-------	------------------	------	------	------

GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	41	33	50
		% retention	76	79	66
		% pass rate	87	95	97
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	21	14	14
		% retention	76	64	79
		% pass rate	80	75	89

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

Quality of education and training

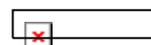
62. In 70% of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or better. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and are often focused on what is required to perform well in the next modular assessment. Theory is very clearly explained and there is effective use of questioning to check students' understanding. Most teachers plan their lessons carefully, vary the pace and style of teaching, and ensure that learning is monitored. In some lessons, students are given insufficient opportunities to debate and explore issues in small groups. Teachers use topical material from publications to illustrate theory. Students are encouraged to engage in independent research using the college ICT facilities. They are encouraged to relate experiences gained in part-time employment to various aspects of the course, but are given insufficient opportunities to engage in work experience, industrial or commercial visits or enterprise projects.

63. Students' written work is of a high standard. Assessment is rigorous, and is used effectively to monitor students' academic progress. Students are aware of their current level of performance relative to the examination standards and can compare it with their minimum target grade based on previous GCSE scores. If they are under-performing they are given additional help and their work is closely monitored. Written feedback on assessed work, whilst generally comprehensive, does not always provide effective guidance on how to improve. Teachers hold appropriate qualifications, but in some cases their commercial experience is dated. Newly refurbished accommodation provides a pleasant learning environment. The library contains an adequate stock of books and periodicals, but students prefer to use the Internet for research and the college intranet to access learning materials. The business team has produced an excellent range of handouts designed to cover the new syllabus. These are well designed, highly regarded and very effective in focusing attention on the main learning objectives.

Leadership and management

64. The curriculum area is managed efficiently. The teaching team has high aspirations and a joint commitment to the maintenance of high standards. They share good practice and their knowledge and experience of examination assessment. Team meetings are held regularly and are used to monitor students' performance. Data are collected and used effectively to monitor the impact of various strategies for generating continuous improvement. Resources are well deployed. The appraisal of teachers results in the identification of staff development needs. Quality assurance processes are implemented rigorously and lead to action to remedy any weaknesses. Common schemes of work are produced by the team, in order to ensure consistency, and are shared with students.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level computing and vocational courses
- good progression rate to related HE and employment
- relevant commercial experience of staff.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS and A-level ICT courses
- low retention rates on GCE A-level computing and national diploma IT courses
- some ineffective teaching of theory.

Scope of provision

65. There are full-time GCE AS and A-level courses in computing and ICT, and national and first diploma courses in IT. The internal progression rate from the first to the national diploma is good but diploma students do not get sufficient work experience.

Achievement and standards

66. Retention rates on the first diploma in IT course are satisfactory. Retention rates on the GCE A level in computing and the national diploma courses have been consistently below national averages. Preliminary data for 2001/02 indicate some improvement in retention rates.

67. Pass rates on the GCE A-level computing course and the vocational courses have been consistently above the national averages for sixth form colleges over the past three years. The pass rate on the GCE A-level ICT course has been consistently below average. The pass rate on the GCE AS course in ICT was poor in 2001. On GCE A-level courses, a low proportion of students achieve high grades. The attendance rate during the inspection was 79%.

68. Achievement during lessons was adequate. There were some good individual student projects. For example, one GCE A-level student demonstrated an electronic ambulance booking system which demonstrated exceptional programming skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
First diploma in IT	2	No. of starts	31	25	29
		% retention	81	80	86
		% pass rate	86	68	83
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	38	34	50
		% retention	63	76	72
		% pass rate	87	75	76
National diploma in IT	3	No. of starts	31	30	49
		% retention	74	63	69
		% pass rate	82	94	94
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	10	*	17
		% retention	50	*	65
		% pass rate	100	*	90

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons plans are adequate but do not provide details of a range of tasks to suit learners of different abilities. In many lessons, teachers worked effectively with individuals at computers and students worked collaboratively and in groups. In practical sessions, many teachers make use of detailed handouts. Practical guidance worksheets are available on the computer network. Guidelines and timescales for the completion of GCE AS and A-level ICT projects have recently been improved. Little of the theory teaching is innovative or inspirational and some is ineffective. Some of the work set was not sufficiently demanding for the more able students. Some teachers make good use of their up-to-date commercial knowledge. For example, in one national diploma lesson, the teacher made very good use of a range of commercial user-guides to develop students' ability to analyse the features of good design in documents.

70. Teachers are appropriately qualified. Staff turnover and an expansion in the GCE AS ICT course has led to the recent appointment of a number of new teachers. Computer resources for ICT students are adequate. Students have access to a range of appropriate applications software and programming languages. Internet access is very good and is well used by students. Most of the accommodation used by ICT students has been improved recently. Most computer rooms have projectors and interactive whiteboards. The use of the college intranet as a learning resource is developing.

71. The arrangements for the monitoring and review of students' progress have recently been revised and are now adequate. Achievements in classwork, homework and assignments are recorded, and give course leaders an accurate picture of each student's progress. Some students who do not yet recognise the value of this system often set themselves unchallenging targets for improvement. Coursework and assignments for the diploma courses are well designed and meet the awarding body's requirements. Homework and assignments for the GCE AS and A-level courses are less well developed. Teachers mark assignments and homework carefully and give helpful comments to enable students to improve their performance. There are appropriate strategies to develop students' key skills as an integral part of the vocational courses.

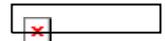
72. Support for students with individual learning needs is very good. For example, in one lesson a student with significant learning difficulties was motivated to complete a project assignment by a

support tutor. Students speak highly of the support they receive. Effective guidance is given to students applying to HE or employment. For example, in one lesson students used a variety of Internet sites and search engines to consider the relative merits of various institutions and courses.

Leadership and management

73. There is effective strategic management of the curriculum area and its quality assurance processes. Staff have recently implemented a range of strategies to improve the content and documentation of GCE AS and A-level projects. These strategies are improving the levels of attainment in practical work. However, there is inadequate specialist leadership on the development of teaching methods, particularly in relation to theory teaching. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between teachers on vocational and academic courses.

Health, social care and childcare



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

Strengths

- excellent support for students
- innovative provision for adults in the community
- good teaching by well qualified and vocationally experienced staff
- excellent pass rates on childcare courses.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ICT
- insufficient monitoring of health and social care students on work placements
- poor pass rate in GNVQ advanced health and social care in 2001.

Scope of provision

74. The college provides a wide range of programmes at levels one to three that meet the needs of full-time students aged 16 to 18 well. The programmes provide opportunities for progression between levels one and three and into HE and employment. Courses aimed at widening participation of adult learners are innovative and exciting. A programme aimed at developing parents' confidence in managing children's behaviour has recently achieved a Beacon Award. This programme targeted adult learners in a disadvantaged area of east Manchester. Some of the participants went on to achieve NVQs in childcare and education. A similar programme for people on community rehabilitation orders is being run in conjunction with the probation service and Manchester Social Services. Good course materials have been produced by college staff in collaboration with a local university.

Achievement and standards

75. Pass rates on the diploma and certificate courses in childcare and education are excellent. Retention rates on GNVQ health and social care courses at levels 1 and 2 have been consistently good, and those at level 3 have improved and are now above the national average. Pass rates at levels 1 and 2 are also good but in 2001 only 7 of the 14 level 3 students achieved the qualification within the two-year term of their learner agreement. Staff are confident that most of these student will eventually achieve their learning goal with support from the tutorial team. All but one is awaiting entry to HE or is in relevant employment. Large numbers of students achieve first aid qualifications through the successful franchise arrangement between the college and St. John Ambulance Brigade.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	9	12	5
		% retention	89	75	80
		% pass rate	100	44	75
First aid at work	1	No. of starts	908	993	1108
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	99	99
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	10	13	*
		% retention	80	92	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	13	22	21
		% retention	85	82	84
		% pass rate	90	71	81
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	7	17	19
		% retention	57	63	83
		% pass rate	100	80	50
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	17	15	10
		% retention	59	93	70
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

76. Most teaching is very good and some is excellent. Teachers are enthusiastic and dedicated. They have high but realistic expectations of learners, and motivate them to succeed. Teachers make clear the links between theory and practice. Their teaching is always vocationally relevant. Learners understand the importance of equality of opportunity and its impact on themselves and various client groups. Childcare students are supported well in their work placements where practice is exemplary. In contrast, there is insufficient monitoring of health and social care students in the workplace. There are opportunities for learners to progress within the college especially in health and social care. All students who completed the diploma in childcare and education in 2001 found relevant employment. The rate of progression into HE for those achieving the GNVQ in health and social care at advanced level is high.

77. Teaching staff are well qualified and many have recent and relevant vocational experience, which they use effectively to enrich their teaching. Staff improve their knowledge and experience through staff development activities and through their work as verifiers and assessors of NVQs. Teaching rooms are comfortable and well equipped. There is open access to these rooms, which encourages students to work on their own. Learners take responsibility for displays that make the environment attractive as well as providing an important teaching resource. Teachers do not have ready access to ICT resources in classrooms. Learners make good use of the library and study centre to conduct personal research, often making good use of ICT.

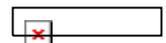
78. Assignments are well planned to ensure that they reflect course aims. They are broken down into manageable tasks which help learners to succeed. Feedback on assessed work is timely and helpful, showing learners how they might improve the standard of their work.

79. Students receive excellent guidance and support and have effective working relationships with their tutors who know them well. Teachers have high expectations of students which are generally justified. Tutorials are well organised. Students are particularly appreciative of the careers guidance and the help they receive in completing applications to university.

Leadership and management

80. The well-led team of teachers work collaboratively in the best interests of all learners. Currently the programme leader for childcare is acting as leader for health and social care and the high standards established on childcare programmes are also evident on health and social care programmes. Course teams meet regularly to monitor and review their own practice. Both full-time and part-time teachers take part in the good staff development programme. The lack of time allocated to staff for the organisation, supervision and monitoring of health and social care placements means that some students are not visited sufficiently frequently.

Visual, performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- very good pass rates
- effective support for individual students
- good learning resources in performing arts and music
- high standards of work produced by students
- particularly effective teaching in performing arts.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- insufficient use of IT in media studies
- some insufficiently challenging teaching.

Scope of provision

81. Most of the courses currently provided are at level 3. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in fine art, textiles, three-dimensional design, media, music and performing arts. There is also an AVCE in art and design. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time.

82. There are currently 108 students enrolled on art and design courses, 111 on media and 86 on performing arts and music courses. All students on art and performing arts courses also undertake a ten-week course in the use of specialist computer software.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates have been very good on all courses in this curriculum area for the last three years. In GCE A-level media, the pass rate has been 100% over this period. Pass rates in the new GCE AS examinations in 2001 were excellent: in theatre studies, performance studies, music and design technology the rate was 100%. The percentage of passes at the higher grades in fine art and textiles was high, at 81% and 71% respectively. In art and design, students are achieving higher grades than would be predicted on the basis of their previous achievements.

84. Retention rates in GCE A-level fine art and performing arts have declined over the last three years, and in 2001 were below the national averages. However, the introduction of strategies for improvement during the past year have resulted in improvements in retention rates on all courses. Attendance rates during the inspection were 87%. The rate of progression to HE is high.

85. Students work well on their own and in groups, and produce work of a high standard. Music students perform confidently in public. The repertoire includes both solo and ensemble work, well-known pieces and original compositions. Drama students research contemporary issues in preparation for their improvisations. Media students make accomplished use of critical language in presenting their analyses of media texts. Much of the work in art and design is good but some is unambitious in terms of scale and variety of approach, and shows evidence of underdeveloped three-dimensional skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level fine art	3	No. of starts	19	23	21
		% retention	79	74	71
		% pass rate	93	100	87
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	16	19	45
		% retention	63	79	62
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level design and technology	3	No. of starts	13	9	10
		% retention	54	67	70
		% pass rate	83	100	71
GCE A-level performing arts	3	No. of starts	15	21	32
		% retention	73	67	59
		% pass rate	100	100	95
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	11	8	16
		% retention	55	100	75
		% pass rate	100	100	92

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

Quality of education and training

86. The quality of teaching in all subjects is satisfactory or better. Teachers plan their lessons well. In both theory teaching and practical work, they make appropriate use of specialist vocabulary and encourage students to explore expressive and imaginative ways of working. Lessons are conducted in a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere. Some teaching is insufficiently challenging. In some lessons teachers make insufficient checks on students' understanding, and do not ensure that they all contribute to discussions.

87. The support provided for individual students is effective, and is valued by students. The system of minimum target grades gives students a framework within which they are able to monitor their own progress. Feedback from teachers following assessments is generally helpful, and is particularly comprehensive in performing arts.

88. In much of their work, students explore contemporary issues. They contribute regularly to local

community events. In keeping with the college ethos, art students have produced a series of colourful panels based on the life and teachings of Mary Ward.

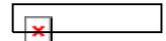
89. Some teachers and students do not take full advantage of the college's IT resources. For example, media students make insufficient use of IT in the presentation of their work. On the other hand, performing arts students make good use of computers and video to enhance their assignment work. Little use is made of the college intranet for teaching and learning.

90. There is a well-equipped drama theatre with a sprung floor and a range of ancillary rooms. The performance space for music is large and has good acoustics. However, these specialist facilities are located in different buildings, which reduces the possibility of co-operative work amongst students on different courses. Art rooms are adequate, but the accommodation and equipment for three-dimensional design and media are poor.

Leadership and management

91. Staff teams meet regularly but there is insufficient liaison between the teachers of media studies and other teachers in the curriculum area. Staff implement the college quality assurance procedures effectively. Course files and schemes of work are comprehensive and clear. Teachers are well qualified. Adequate staff development is provided in most topics, but more is needed on the skills associated with media production.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- lively and effective teaching
- good pass rates on all courses
- thorough monitoring and assessment of students' progress
- very good use of resources, including ICT
- wide range of enrichment activities
- high standard of students' written and oral work

- good leadership and effective management of courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on history and government and politics courses.

Scope of provision

92. The college provides GCE AS and A-level courses in a range of humanities subjects. There are 31 students taking economics courses, 44 taking geography, 98 in history, 46 in government and politics and 59 in religious studies. The inspection covered all these subjects.

Achievement and standards

93. GCE A-level pass rates in the humanities are good. They are at or above the national averages for sixth form colleges. The proportions of passes at the higher A-C grades in economics, geography and government and politics are well above the national averages. In all subjects, students achieve higher grades than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Pass rates on the new GCE AS courses are also good, except in geography. Retention rates are at or above national averages in economics, geography and religious studies, but below average in history and government and politics. Retention rates have improved in the current year as a result of a college initiative. The attendance rate during the inspection was 86%. Punctuality at lessons was good.

94. Standards of attainment were good or better in 88% of the lessons observed. Students are able to analyse complex concepts, and express their own views clearly. Religious studies students make good use of the Internet when conducting research in preparation for an essay on morality, free will and evil. History students had a firm grasp of broad underlying concepts such as cause and effect, and continuity and change. In government and politics, there was a wide-ranging debate on the need for, and relevance of, the House of Lords: the students demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the parliamentary and democratic processes. Economics students revising transition economics, manipulated graphs and analysed statistics with confidence. Students produce written work of a high standard. Two students were awarded prizes by the examination board in 2001 for achieving the highest marks in the government and politics examination.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	13	17	9
		% retention	77	76	89
		% pass rate	90	82	100
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	18	20	24
		% retention	72	85	83
		% pass rate	91	93	95
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	41	53	55

		% retention	85	75	75
		% pass rate	85	95	93
GCE A-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	14	25	17
		% retention	79	68	59
		% pass rate	91	100	90
GCE A-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	8	7	14
		% retention	75	100	79
		% pass rate	100	100	91

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

Quality of education and training

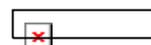
95. All the teaching observed was good or better and 75% was judged to be very good or excellent. Teachers produce attractive teaching materials, which are tailored to fit the needs of individual groups. They present ideas and concepts in interesting and imaginative ways. For example, a religious studies lesson required students to design a set of rules for a community on a desert island. This successful strategy for demonstrating shared moral values was cleverly linked to the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas. Lessons are conducted at a lively pace, which occasionally leaves a few students behind, but effective informal and formal support is readily available for students who find the work difficult.

96. The monitoring and assessment of students' work is thorough. Minimum target grades are determined for each student at the start of their course and their progress against these targets is monitored regularly. Students' work is carefully and accurately assessed. A wide range of enrichment activities is available to students, including trips to conferences and lectures and talks by visiting speakers. Trips are arranged to historically significant places, most recently to Auschwitz. The college has recently received an award from the United States Embassy for the quality of courses in American history and politics.

Leadership and management

97. The curriculum area is well led. Courses are well organised and effectively managed. Staff teams work well together, communicate effectively, develop excellent course materials and share good practice. They review their courses regularly and thoroughly and operate on effective teaching observation programme. Staff appraisal is well established and leads to relevant staff development.

Sociology and psychology



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

Strengths

- good pass rates
- enthusiastic and effective teaching

- rigorous assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- good learning resources
- dynamic leadership and management
- excellent incorporation of college values in the curriculum.

Weaknesses

- some retention rates below national averages.

Scope of provision

98. The college provides GCE AS/A-level and GCSE courses in psychology and sociology. Currently there are 248 enrolments on GCE AS and A-level courses in psychology and 160 in sociology. There are 21 students taking GCSE psychology, which was introduced this year, and 21 taking GCSE sociology. Most students are in the 16-19 age range and studying full time.

Achievement and standards

99. Pass rates on all courses have been consistently at or above the national averages for sixth form colleges. In GCE A-level psychology and sociology, students achieve significantly higher grades than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. A consistently high proportion of students achieve passes at the higher A-C grades in sociology. In 2001, there was a significant improvement in the retention rate on the GCSE sociology course to well above the national average. The retention rate on the GCE A-level courses fell, however, to slightly below the national average. Results indicate that Curriculum 2000 has been successfully implemented. In GCE AS psychology, the pass rate was 83% and in sociology it was 94%. Attendance rates at lessons are high.

100. Standards achieved during lessons, in students' files and in their marked work are generally good or better. Students are well motivated and the majority participate fully in learning activities. The most able students can apply an appropriate psychological or sociological perspective to the analysis of data and other source material.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	31	15	18

		% retention	71	73	94
		% pass rate	59	55	65
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	75	63	55
		% retention	72	73	71
		% pass rate	98	89	89
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	73	94	80
		% retention	68	82	73
		% pass rate	98	91	93

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

Quality of education and training

101. Teaching was very good to good in 87% of the lessons observed. Teachers have an enthusiasm for their subjects which they communicate to their students. Lessons are well planned and engage the interest of the students. Learning is facilitated by high quality handouts which contain source material and case studies directly related to the syllabus. Detailed schemes of work identify assessment opportunities and the resources needed to achieve effective learning. Students' individual needs are met through additional learning support and one-to-one sessions to consolidate and extend learning. Effective use has been made of Standards Fund money allocated for the dissemination of good practice in this and other colleges. Conferences and workshops run by the teachers received very positive feedback from participants.

102. The majority of students are making very good progress and are developing the higher level skills of analysis and evaluation. Students can critically interrogate source material, draw conclusions and support their judgements with evidence from texts. They contribute keenly to discussions. In a sociology lesson, students were articulate in their discussion of the decline in the popularity of marriage and presented reasoned arguments for such changes in society. Psychology students demonstrated their ability to form hypotheses and predict outcomes in their analysis of the effects of privation and deprivation, using examples from twin studies and case studies on Romanian orphans.

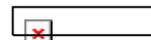
103. There is a good range of book and other learning resources including ICT. Effective use is made of the good teaching and learning materials on the college intranet. Teachers are well qualified and keep up to date in their subjects. Many have experience as examiners.

104. Students speak highly of their courses and the help given by their teachers. They receive good pre-course guidance which enables them to make informed choices. Effective induction is followed by a coherent system of formal and informal guidance and support. Teachers identify the learning needs of their students and set them realistic but challenging targets. Progress towards these targets is carefully monitored.

Leadership and management

105. There is strong and effective leadership and management in both psychology and sociology. There are rigorous quality assurance procedures to monitor teaching and learning. Lesson observation and the sharing of good practice lead to effective teaching. The departments engage in effective self-assessment which has identified strengths and areas for development. Equal opportunities are effectively promoted. The college's core values underpin the content and management of courses and are clearly evident in the teaching.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- confident and lively oral work
- development of critical thinking and fluent expression in English
- productive exploration of social and multi-cultural issues in English
- outstanding use of ICT in modern foreign languages
- effective academic and personal support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- poor English and Spanish GCSE pass rates
- a minority of poor teaching in English.

Scope of provision

106. There are currently 376 enrolments on English courses. The college provides GCE A-level courses in English language and English literature and a GCSE English language course. In modern foreign languages, the college provides GCE A-level courses in French, German, Spanish and Italian and a GCSE course in Spanish. Currently there are 67 full-time enrolments on modern languages courses.

Achievement and standards

107. There are good pass rates on GCE A-level courses in English literature and English language. In 2001, pass rates on the GCE AS courses in both subjects were high at 94% and 95% respectively. There was a significant fall in the retention rates on the GCE A-level English literature and French courses in 2001, to well below the national averages. Action was taken and the trend appears to have been reversed in 2002. The pass rate on GCE A-level modern foreign language courses was 100% in 2001. GCSE pass rates have been low in some years. In 2002 they fell to 43%, in English which is significantly below the national average and in Spanish the pass rate was 42%, which is 27% below the national average. Pass rates on GCE AS courses in 2001 were high in French at 92% and German and Italian, at 100% but lower in Spanish, at 71%.

108. In English, much of the students' coursework is of a good standard. Most students develop appropriate critical awareness in both language and literature. They are generally uninhibited and confident in participating in discussions. In modern foreign languages, students have highly developed oral skills and can speak confidently and fluently in the foreign language. Their understanding of the spoken and written language is good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
			No. of starts	13	13
GCSE Spanish	2	% retention	54	85	80
		% pass rate	67	36	42
		No. of starts	139	125	127
GCSE English language	2	% retention	76	72	76
		% pass rate	41	50	43
		No. of starts	39	75	39
GCE A-level English literature	3	% retention	92	83	62
		% pass rate	100	97	96
		No. of starts	12	19	11
GCE A-level French	3	% retention	75	74	64
		% pass rate	100	100	100
		No. of starts	82	43	62
GCE A-level English language	3	% retention	74	79	77
		% pass rate	86	100	87

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

Quality of education and training

109. Most of the teaching is good or better. Schemes of work are comprehensive and lesson plans are appropriately detailed. In English, there is some very good teaching which encourages students to think critically and express their ideas effectively both orally and in writing. Good use is made of video recordings, and well-produced handouts. The well-produced learning materials on topical subjects engage and interest students. Social and multi-cultural issues are well integrated into many English lessons and the students frequently identify with the issues raised. Cultural diversity is celebrated and valued and is often used to enrich the students' learning experience. However, there are also some uninspiring lessons during which the teacher talks too much and relies too heavily on

a narrow range of teaching approaches. Insufficient use is made of IT in the English courses. As examination time approaches, teachers help students to revise and give sound advice on examination techniques.

110. In modern foreign languages, teachers generally use the foreign language as the main means of communication and check regularly that the students have understood. Students model their accents on that of the teacher and speak fluently and confidently in the language. In the one instance where teaching was unsatisfactory, students were given insufficient opportunities to listen to and practice the foreign language. There is a wide range of appropriate learning resources. The provision and use of ICT is outstanding. Good use is made of interactive multi-media packages. Students submit coursework by e-mail and have acquired good IT skills.

111. In English the marking of students' work is careful and effective. Teachers indicate to students how they might improve. Internal moderation of coursework is thorough and accurate. Progress reviews are generally effective although some teachers do not make full use of the target grades agreed with each student at the start of their course. Assessment in modern foreign language is rigorous and thorough. Students are provided with helpful feedback which enables them to improve the standard of their work.

112. Academic and personal support is very good, both during and outside lessons. Staff give generously of their time to provide personal as well as academic support to students. Students applying to HE Are given valuable help and advice.

Leadership and management

113. In English, new members of staff are given a careful and welcoming induction into the team. Schemes of work are reviewed and revised regularly. Team meetings are held regularly, but the discussion tends to focus on examination requirements and individual students' progress rather than on identification and sharing of good practice in teaching. Appropriate action is taken to address any weaknesses identified through self-assessment. Action has been taken to improve retention rates and there is evidence of improvement. Modern foreign languages is a small but highly cohesive department. It is well led and effectively managed. Subject specialists organise the teaching of individual languages but the group work well as a team. Quality assurance procedures are rigorously implemented to monitor teaching and learning and to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Part D: College data

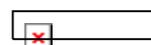
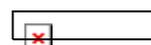


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	5	2
2	16	0
3	56	3
4/5	0	0
Other	23	94

Total	100	100
--------------	------------	------------

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001

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

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	1,539	118	19
Agriculture	7	34	*
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	0	0	0
Business	167	69	3
Hotel and catering	62	0	1
Health and community care	155	1,654	20
Art and design	323	307	7
Humanities	4,016	166	47
Basic skills	16	236	3
Total	6,285	2,584	100

Source: Provided by the college in Spring 2001

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
1	Starters excluding transfers	199	264	284	11	15	13
	Retention rate (%)	81	85	69	91	80	77
	National average (%)	78	81	82	73	70	74
	Pass rate (%)	71	90	81	100	88	71
	National average (%)	70	70	77	68	75	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	487	729	517	18	15	15
	Retention rate (%)	82	76	70	78	47	67

	National average (%)	79	79	82	70	71	75
	Pass rate (%)	91	94	92	73	100	100
	National average (%)	83	85	82	77	78	78
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,622	1,253	1,659	61	60	42
	Retention rate (%)	76	75	72	79	83	83
	National average (%)	78	78	80	63	65	69
	Pass rate (%)	90	84	90	71	89	91
	National average (%)	86	85	85	70	72	74

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

Sources of information:

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

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

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

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	76	21	3	117
Level 2 (intermediate)	85	15	0	12
Level 1 (foundation)	50	50	0	2
Totals	76	22	2	131

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2002. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

School inspection reports are available on the OFSTED website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).