



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Wiltshire College

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Wiltshire College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	George Bright
Address of college:	Cocklebury Road Chippenham Wiltshire SN15 3QD
Telephone number:	01249 464 644
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Chair of governors: Geoff Burgess
Unique reference number: 132779
Name of reporting inspector: David Eden HMI
Date of inspection: 3-13 March 2003

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

Wiltshire College was formed in November 2000 by the merger of three colleges: Trowbridge, Chippenham and Lackham. The college serves a large geographical area. For some of its provision, such as land-based programmes, students travel long distances or are based residentially at Lackham or in local lodgings. Both the Chippenham and Trowbridge campuses offer similar courses in most areas of learning. However, construction is only taught at Trowbridge. The Lackham campus specialises in land-based industries. The college also makes use of community-based venues across the county for its further education (FE) and adult and community education provision. It uses a mobile learning classroom to provide information and communications technology (ICT) and other courses. The college's core catchment area for most of its courses is made up of North Wiltshire, West Wiltshire and Kennet. The area is semi-rural, characterised by market towns and villages housing a growing population of approximately 300,000 people. In the area, there are 17 secondary schools and several private schools, most with sixth forms. City of Bath College and Swindon College are within 15 and 20 miles, respectively, of one of the college's main campuses. More students aged 16 and 17 are in full-time education in Wiltshire than nationally. In 2002, the proportion of students aged 16 in Wiltshire achieving 5 or more A* to C grades in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was 57%, compared with 52% in England as a whole. The college offers courses in all 14 areas of learning. In most areas, courses range from entry level to higher education (HE). In 2001/02, there were nearly 31,500 enrolments. Some 75% of students were adults who studied part time. There were 2,300 full-time students aged 16 to 18. 62% of students were female. Minority ethnic groups form 2% of the general population and a similar proportion of the college enrolments. The college is the largest provider of work-based learning for the Swindon and Wiltshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC), as well as being a major provider of work-based learning for the armed forces.

The unemployment rate in Wiltshire is low, at 1%, compared with 2% for the southwest region and 3% nationally. The armed forces are a major employer in the area. There are relatively few other large employers. Around 17% of the workforce are employed in manufacturing, compared with 9% nationally. Local employers report skill shortages in manufacturing, construction, business services and health and social care. The college was designated a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in digital and broadcast media in 2002. Its mission is 'to widen and increase participation in high quality, affordable education and training for the economic and social benefit of the people, communities and industries we serve'.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be outstanding in two of the fourteen curriculum areas inspected, good in eight, satisfactory in three and unsatisfactory in one. The quality of work-based learning was considered to be outstanding in two areas inspected, good in one and satisfactory in two. The college's main strengths and areas that need to be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- good teaching
 - high retention and pass rates on many courses
 - good guidance and support for full-time students
 - strong leadership and management
 - excellent communication across the college and with external partners
 - effective widening of participation
 - outstanding provision in visual, performing arts and media, in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in work-based learning in engineering
 - effective implementation of the quality assurance procedures.

What should be improved

- support for part-time students
 - recruitment to level 1 vocational courses and advanced level general education courses
 - promotion of equal opportunities
 - low space utilisation

- o accuracy of management information data

- o unsatisfactory provision in engineering.

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	Satisfactory. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good; students get constructive feedback on their written work. Pass rates are high in General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and GCE Advanced-level (GCE A-level) environmental science, but low in GCE AS physics, chemistry and biology. Student progression from GCE AS to A-level courses is low. There are few appropriate resources to support students who study on their own.
Agriculture and countryside management	Good. The majority of teaching is good. Pass and retention rates are high on most full-time courses. The farm estate and industrial contacts are used effectively to support learning. There are weaknesses in the management of the curriculum.
Animal care, equine and horticulture	Good. Most teaching is at least satisfactory and it is very good in animal care. Pass rates are high on animal care and equine courses but few apprentices meet all the requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks. Work-based learning for the Royal Armoured Corps is well managed. The quality assurance procedures are poorly implemented at community-based venues.
Construction	Good. The majority of teaching is good. Pass rates are high on most courses but few apprentices meet all the requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks. Students achieve high standards in their practical work. There is insufficient additional learning support for some work-based learners.
Engineering	Unsatisfactory. The substantial work-based learning provision is outstanding. Although most teaching is satisfactory, too many lessons are poorly taught. Pass rates are high on level 1 courses but low on courses at levels 2 and 3. Work-based learners in the Royal Armoured Corps achieve highly. The management of work-based learning is good but curriculum management of college-based provision is

	unsatisfactory.
Business	Good. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good. ICT is used well in teaching and learning. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses but there are low pass rates in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) administration at level 2. Key skills are effectively integrated into vocational subjects.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory and a small proportion is good. Pass and retention rates are high on part-time courses. The extensive community-based provision is well managed. Full-time students are rarely set individual performance targets.
Sport and leisure	Good. The majority of teaching is good. Pass rates are high on most courses. Students have good opportunities to gain additional qualifications. There is a lack of provision at level 1.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory but much is undemanding. Pass and retention rates are high on the majority of courses but few work-based learners achieve their modern apprenticeship frameworks. Students' progress is monitored effectively. There are insufficient clients for students to work on.
Health, social care and childcare	Good. Teaching in most lessons is satisfactory or better, but a few lessons are poorly planned. Pass rates are high on most courses. There are very effective links with employers and external partners. Effective assessment practice helps students make good progress.
Visual, performing arts and media	Outstanding. Most teaching is good or outstanding. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. Students produce work of a very high standard. There are excellent specialist resources.
Psychology, sociology, politics and law	Good. Most teaching is good. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses but students' attendance and punctuality are poor. Access to HE courses are well managed. The declining curriculum offers limited choice to students.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Outstanding. Foundation courses and work-based learning are outstanding. Most teaching is good or very good and none is unsatisfactory. Pass, retention and progression rates are high. Individual students are very well supported across the broad range of provision. Good specialist resources help students to learn.
Literacy and numeracy	Good. Most teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory. Successful collaboration with external agencies widens participation. Learning support is effective in vocational areas. College-based courses are narrowly focused and offer students few opportunities to develop a broader range of skills.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. Operational planning is effective. The principal provides strong leadership and is well supported by a team of effective and experienced senior managers. Standards of teaching and learning are similar to the averages for colleges of the same type. Pass and retention rates are above national averages. The quality assurance procedures are implemented successfully. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. Governors regularly monitor the college's targets and action plans. Communications are excellent within the college and with external partners. Curriculum management is at least satisfactory in most areas. The college provides satisfactory value for money. However, equal opportunities are not well promoted. Centrally held management information on student enrolment, achievements and retention is unreliable.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It provides education and training at venues across the county as well as at its three campuses. The breadth and quality of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very good. The college has very good links with external agencies to support its widening participation strategy. It runs courses at Key Stage 4 for disappplied or disaffected school pupils. The college's campuses are easily accessible for people with restricted mobility and accessibility is being improved at the community-based venues. The college has amended its equal opportunities code of practice to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination (Special Educational Needs) Act and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. A steering group meets regularly to monitor progress against the action plan produced in response to the acts.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support for students is good. The college manages its support services well. Prospective students are given good advice and guidance. Learning support is provided in different ways to suit the needs of individuals. Before enrolment, the additional needs of potential students are identified, where possible, so that effective support can be provided when they start their course. Support for students with specific needs is very good. Students are well informed about the services available to them, including counselling, health care and financial assistance. Tutorial arrangements are good for full-time students but are variable for part-time students. Work-based learners receive good support from the college's training co-ordinators who visit them regularly in the workplace. Careers education and guidance are carefully planned and effective. There are very strong links with the local Connexions service.

Students' views of the college

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

What students like about the college

- friendly, supportive staff
 - knowledgeable teachers and excellent resources
 - good range of courses available
 - good tutorial and pastoral support
 - adult atmosphere and environment
 - good teaching.

What they feel could be improved

- poor ventilation in computer rooms
 - timetables with long gaps between lessons
 - costs in canteen at Trowbridge
 - car parking.

Other information

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and 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	62	30	8
19+ and WBL*	69	27	4
Learning 16-18	61	31	8
19+ and WBL*	71	27	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).

* *work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. Data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised student records (ISR) for 2000 and 2001 were provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2002. Inspectors also used additional data provided by the college to help them make their judgements, particularly in relation to work-based learning. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievements and standards on particular courses.

2. The college offers a wide range of courses, which may be followed by full-time or part-time study, at various levels in all 14 areas of learning as defined by the LSC. In addition to its three main campuses, the college offers courses at nine community-based venues. The inspection sampled provision in 12 areas of learning. The college is the largest provider of work-based learning in the county. There are 385 Wiltshire-based students in 11 areas of learning, with the largest numbers in engineering, construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy and foundation studies.

3. The overall level of attendance in lessons observed during the inspection was 78%. This is similar to the average attendance for college inspections undertaken in 2001/02. Attendance was highest in construction and health, social care and childcare and lowest in literacy and numeracy, where half the students were missing from some lessons.

4. Students achieved satisfactory examination results in all curriculum areas, except engineering, and good or very good results in many. They were generally working at an appropriate level and making good progress. Overall, 87% of students achieved their qualification aim, which puts the college into the top quartile of colleges nationally. In 2000/01, the overall retention rate was 93%

for full-time courses and 92% for part-time courses, putting the college into the top 10% of colleges nationally for retention.

5. In science, students gather and interpret information and data confidently. In animal care, construction and visual and performing arts, students develop their practical skills well. Most skills development in work-based learning is also good, particularly on the programmes run for the Royal Armoured Corps. In engineering, students' written work is good but, in practical lessons, some students do not comply with safe working practices. Students make good use of ICT, particularly in business, sports and leisure, hairdressing and beauty therapy and literacy and numeracy. They develop very good analytical and critical evaluation skills in visual, performing arts and media. In ICT and health, social care and childcare, most acquire appropriate knowledge and skills. Students in psychology, sociology, politics and law take part in discussions in lessons enthusiastically, and many demonstrate good oral and presentation skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop their personal, social and practical skills well.

16 to 18 year olds

6. Pass rates were generally well above the national averages during the period 1999 to 2001. At all levels they were consistently in the top quartile and pass rates were particularly high in level 1 courses. Pass rates for key skills courses are lower than for all other courses, although they exceed national averages. Retention rates are also high, exceeding national averages on all courses and at all levels for the last three years.

7. In psychology, sociology, politics and law, progression from access to HE courses has been very good. In visual, performing arts and media, students achieve excellent results when compared to their prior attainments and against their learning goals. Pass rates on foundation studies courses are high and many students progress to higher level courses. College data show that those receiving learning support achieve better than those who do not take up support. The majority of pass rates for work-based learning are better than national averages. They are particularly good on the engineering provision for the Royal Armoured Corps.

Adult learners

8. Pass and retention rates for adults are high at all levels. Between 1999 and 2002 they have been in the top quartile. Pass rates for level 1 courses have also shown the greatest improvement: from 63% in 1999 to 87% in 2001. In general, pass rates for adult students were slightly higher than for those aged 16 to 18 at the same level. Pass rates on part-time computing courses are particularly high. Retention rates are particularly high on level 1 courses, which have also shown the most improvement over the last three years, from 87% in 1999 to 94% in 2001.

Quality of education and training

9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 293 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 64% of these, satisfactory in 29% and less than satisfactory in 7%. The proportion of teaching that was excellent or very good is similar to the average for the sector for colleges of the same type. The highest proportion of teaching that was good or better was on visual, performing arts and media, psychology, sociology, politics and law, and literacy and numeracy courses. The quality of teaching varies considerably across the curriculum areas. In four areas, teaching was less than satisfactory in over 10% of the lessons observed. The weakest teaching was on engineering courses. Learning was good or better in 64% of lessons, satisfactory in 30% and less than satisfactory in 6%. The highest proportion of good or very good learning was on business, sports and leisure, and visual, performing arts and media courses.

10. Adults are better taught than students aged 16 to 18 and they learn more effectively. The

teaching in 69% of lessons for adults was good or better, compared with 62% in lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Compared with students aged 16 to 18, adults were much better taught on construction, business, ICT, and psychology, sociology, politics and law courses. In most curriculum areas, however, classes contain a mix of students aged 16 to 18 and adults. The best teaching and learning were on entry level and level 3 courses and the highest proportions of unsatisfactory teaching and ineffective learning were on level 1 courses.

11. Many lessons are well planned and effective, particularly those in visual, performing arts and media, literacy and numeracy, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In several curriculum areas, the individual learning needs of students are carefully identified and students are set tasks that match their ability. Students can then work at their own pace and at a level which suits them. Some imaginative teaching is used in literacy and numeracy to engage reluctant students. Well-planned and vocationally relevant practical work motivates and interests students, especially on animal care, equine and horticulture and construction courses and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Well-designed project briefs, including those for outside organisations, help students in art and design to produce very good work. In agriculture, teachers make good use of the resources of the farm. Teachers in agriculture and countryside management and construction gave good demonstrations to students of how practical work should be done and the standards they expected them to achieve. Most students are able to use specialist equipment correctly and develop good practical skills. Some practical work is of a high standard. Teachers in sport and leisure and health, social care and childcare clearly relate work done in practical lessons to theory. In many curriculum areas, teachers asked questions effectively to both individuals and the whole group to check students' understanding. Teachers in science, business, and sport and leisure made good use of ICT in theory lessons; students were often encouraged to seek information from the Internet. The quality of learning materials is good on science, equine studies and ICT courses.

12. In some lessons, including those that were less than satisfactory, teachers set tasks that were undemanding and not appropriate for the level or ability of the students. Instead, all the students were expected to complete the same tasks. As a result, some students learnt little. Overall, theory lessons are less effective than practical lessons. In the poorer theory lessons, teachers did not involve all students or ask enough probing questions to check they understood the topic. Instead, they directed questions at the more able students and the others did not participate at all. Some group work was not well planned. Students then became bored and little learning took place. In some cases, schemes of work lacked sufficient information to help teachers teach particular parts of a course. Some lesson plans included little reference as to how students learn or the resources to be used. Small class sizes in sport and leisure reduce the opportunities for students to take part in team games. The shortage of clients in hairdressing and beauty therapy limits the opportunities for students to develop their practical skills.

13. There is variation in the quality of the teaching of key skills. In some curriculum areas, such as animal care, equine and horticulture and business, key skills are successfully integrated into the students' main course of study. However, in other areas, such as agriculture and countryside management and engineering, key skills are not fully integrated into the students' work. Opportunities to link key skills to occupational skills are then missed for both work-based learners and college students. Failure to achieve their key skills means that many modern apprentices do not fulfil all the requirements of their apprenticeship framework.

14. Accommodation on the three campuses and at the community-based venues is of a good standard and is well maintained. There are good reception and student service areas, student common rooms, and sport and social facilities on each campus. The quality of accommodation has improved significantly since the merger in 2000. Priorities for improvement have been identified from the college's strategic plan and operational objectives. Access for people with restricted mobility is good. Most buildings have ramps and lifts. Utilisation of teaching accommodation is below average. This was recognised in the college's self-assessment report and is being addressed through the college's accommodation strategy.

15. The college has excellent and well-managed library and learning facilities. Libraries on the three campuses have a good range of books, journals, CD-ROMs and videos. Students have good access to computers within resource centres. There is good liaison between library and curriculum area staff. Community-based venues provide a good environment for adult learners. Students have electronic access to the libraries on the campuses via the intranet, where books can be ordered on-line and delivered to the appropriate venue for collection.

16. ICT facilities are outstanding. There is a high ratio of workstations to students. In addition, community-based venues use laptop computers for students in remote locations. The network is well managed and reliable, with on-line data on key performance indicators available to help curriculum managers make informed decisions about the deployment of resources. An annual investment of 3,000 hours across the curriculum in ILT development has created an effective on-line learning environment. However, some computer rooms are poorly ventilated.

17. Teachers are well qualified. Some 70% of permanent teachers have a recognised teaching qualification. All new part-time teachers are contracted to obtain a teaching qualification within two years of appointment. To overcome the difficulties of recruiting experienced and qualified teachers, the college has introduced a trainee/lecturer grade with allocated mentors. Some teachers have had insufficient recent industrial updating.

18. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Comprehensive and well-managed procedures include a code of practice, regular programme assessment boards, assessment schedules, marking guidelines and internal verification procedures. These systems have been successfully implemented across the three campuses.

19. Initial assessment is effective for full-time students and work-based learners. It identifies their need for additional learning support and their level of key skills in the application of number and in communication. The results of assessment are generally produced quickly, although in a few curriculum areas they were not provided until late in the first term. Initial assessment for students on foundation programmes has a strong and appropriate focus on personal and social skills. Part-time students on literacy, numeracy and access to HE courses are assessed to determine their individual needs. There is no initial assessment of other part-time students, though they can self-refer or be referred by their tutor for additional learning support during their course.

20. Clear assessment plans are given to students at the beginning of their course to help them plan their work. Most students' work is marked carefully and returned promptly. Most teachers provide written comments that help students to see what they did well and what they can do to improve. However, in a few areas, staff do not give sufficiently detailed written feedback to students. In practical lessons and in some theory lessons, teachers expect students to evaluate the standard of their own work before it is formally assessed. Internal verification is systematic and rigorous. A senior manager monitors all external verifiers' reports and any resulting action plans. They are also monitored by the programme assessment board.

21. The progress of full-time students and work-based learners is effectively monitored. Twice each term, assessment boards meet to discuss the progress of individual students. For students causing concern, an action plan is agreed and progress is monitored through the board. Parents and guardians of students aged under 18 receive reports on their progress twice per year and are invited to at least 2 parents' and guardians' meetings a year. A senior manager monitors the quality of the reports. However, not all employers of part-time students receive regular reports on their employees' progress.

22. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in all areas of learning, from pre-entry level to HE, and it responds well to changing demands. For example, painting and decorating courses are being discontinued because of low recruitment, whilst additional plumbing courses are being introduced to meet increased demand. Where demand for level 1 courses is insufficient to run a course, the students are offered alternatives, including work-based learning.

Recruitment to general education GCSE and GCE AS and A-level courses is low, with many small classes, particularly in the physical sciences.

23. The college provides well-managed work-based learning programmes in 11 occupational areas. It is the largest provider in the Swindon and Wiltshire LSC. There is significant provision in life skills and support for students with additional learning needs, as well as motor vehicle and agricultural engineering, construction, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The college also provides modern apprenticeships in engineering and equine studies for the Royal Armoured Corps.

24. The college has effectively increased and widened participation. In addition to its three campuses, it operates in ten community-based venues. These provide a range of courses, including basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). A mobile learning classroom provides computer training for remote communities in collaboration with the Wiltshire and Swindon Learning Partnership. ICT skills training is offered in 14 remote villages by transporting laptops to community centres. The college works actively to address educational deprivation and social exclusion. It co-operates with local schools to provide pre-vocational courses for 68 disappplied or disaffected pupils. The college also provides education in prisons, drug rehabilitation programmes and family learning projects.

25. The college has productive links with employers and is represented on local economic, learning and Connexions partnerships. Good use is made of labour market information and college data on enrolments. Following the preparation of a skills training programme by the college, a major call centre was located in Trowbridge. Students completing evening short courses are contacted to establish any further training needs.

26. Many students take the opportunity to gain additional qualifications alongside their main course of study. There is an extensive enrichment programme offered to students on Wednesday afternoons on all three campuses. However, the programme is voluntary and the take-up is poor at Trowbridge.

27. Potential students receive a speedy and helpful service from the college. All applicants for full-time courses are invited to an interview where they receive detailed information about their chosen course. Careers guidance staff screen all applications, in order to identify those who may require support. In these cases, learning support staff meet the applicant at interview to discuss their needs. Early identification of students' additional needs enables the college to plan effective deployment of learning support staff. Advice evenings for potential students and their parents are held several times a year. The college's prospectus and course information sheets are well designed. Students are appreciative of the support provided by the college and the college's survey of their views indicates high levels of satisfaction.

28. Students are well informed about the wide range of services, including counselling, health care, financial assistance, careers advice and learning support, which are available to them at the college. At the time of the inspection, 838 students were receiving financial assistance. Learning support staff liaise closely with special schools to help students with specific needs in the transition from school to college. The college has good systems for providing specialist aids for students with physical disabilities or sensory impairments.

29. Arrangements for learning support are good and it is provided in many ways. In directed study periods, students undertake assignment work in the learning resource centre with assistance from their course tutor, a learning support teacher and senior learning resource assistants. In other cases, a team teaching approach enables students to receive support within their normal lessons. One-to-one teaching is also provided where required. The college's analysis of the performance of students receiving learning support shows that their pass rates are slightly higher than those of the student cohort as a whole.

30. Tutorial provision is good for full-time students. The college has clear policies and guidelines

for tutorials, which are managed in each faculty by a senior tutor. All full-time students take part in both group and individual tutorials. The number of individual tutorials varies: from one every few weeks on some courses to only three a year on others, the college's minimum entitlement. Tutorials are generally effective in setting short-term and medium-term targets. Tutors have good access to the information they need about each student's performance and receive good coaching and support from senior tutors, who monitor closely the operation of the tutorial system. Students view the tutorial system as a very worthwhile component of their course. Work-based learners receive good support through regular visits to the workplace by college training co-ordinators. However, tutorial support is not an entitlement for part-time students. Practice varies widely between curriculum areas and, in some cases, part-time students do not receive any tutorials.

31. Students' attendance is monitored carefully. The college has computer-based systems for recording attendance and tutors can retrieve the information easily. Absences are quickly followed up through telephone calls to home, where necessary. The college has carried out research into the factors that put a student at risk of dropping out of their course. It has developed a diagnostic form that helps to identify 'at-risk' students. These students receive increased monitoring and assistance.

32. Careers education and guidance are carefully planned. There are very strong links with the local Connexions service, which provides personal advisers at all three campuses. Careers education is a component of the group tutorials and all students aged between 16 and 18 are offered a careers interview. In 2001/02, college guidance officers conducted 725 individual interviews. Careers information is available at the community-based venues, though for detailed advice students must travel to a campus in most cases. The college is seeking to improve this by providing computers with careers guidance software at the venues.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers successfully managed the merger of Chippenham, Lackham and Trowbridge colleges to form Wiltshire College in November 2000. They have a clear vision for the future direction of the college. Strategic planning is effective. The college provides a good range of learning opportunities within central Wiltshire. The principal provides strong leadership and is well supported by effective and experienced senior managers. Since the merger, the quality of teaching and learning has remained good and most students' achievements are above national averages.

34. The college offers a wide range of courses in all 14 areas of learning areas as defined by the LSC. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory or good in most areas. The provision of work-based learning is a particular strength. The college is the largest provider of work-based learning in the local area and it has recently set up a CoVE in digital and broadcast media. An important part of the college's strategy is to take learning opportunities to the community. It operates a mobile learning classroom, with the Wiltshire and Swindon Lifelong Learning Partnership, to provide learning opportunities in rural areas. It also offers learning in community-based venues across Wiltshire and north Dorset.

35. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The college has a well-organised system of internal inspection and lesson observation and the resulting reports are self-critical and evaluative. However, in some curriculum areas, the grades awarded during internal inspection were higher than those awarded by inspectors. Since the merger, teachers have taken part in additional training on lesson observations, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice to address the variations in the quality of teaching and learning between curriculum areas.

36. Governors are well informed about the college's strengths and weaknesses. They use their wide range of experience effectively in the monitoring of college activities. The board and its six committees each meet at least five times a year. Attendance at all meetings is good. The board carries out its business efficiently and clerking is good. Corporation papers are clearly presented. The standards committee regularly reviews the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and retention and pass rates. The finance and employment committee regularly receives financial reports and presents issues to the full board.

37. The comprehensive quality assurance procedures are well implemented. There is a strong emphasis on quality assurance at faculty and divisional level. The college's annual self-assessment report is detailed and thorough. Inspectors agreed with most of the grades awarded by the college and many of the judgements. Reports from internal inspection at course level are evaluative and thorough. Managers and programme leaders have successfully harmonised the quality and the evaluation of provision on the different campuses. For example, course reviews and divisional self-assessment reports are now produced to a common format. They are evaluative and provide actions for future improvements.

38. Communication within the college is good. Teachers and support staff are well informed of events, policy changes and day-to-day matters. The fortnightly newsletter is distributed widely and the college intranet provides easy access to key documents. Teachers meet regularly in course and divisional teams. Annual planning weeks in December and June allow both full-time and part-time teachers to meet and review the quality of provision.

39. Staff development is effective and staff value the opportunities that are provided. Over 100 teachers, both full time and part time, successfully achieved teaching qualifications in 2001/02. Part-time teachers receive payment for attending annual staff development and self-assessment activities. An effective college-wide induction takes place for all newly appointed staff. New part-time teachers are well supported through a recently developed mentoring scheme. The college has also recently developed a web-based training module on the Disability Discrimination (Special Educational Needs) Act. Over 400 members of staff have successfully completed the module through the college intranet. Staff appraisal has been re-launched, but the first cycle has not yet been fully completed.

40. The college has experienced problems with data management following the merger. In 2001/02, computer records of students' enrolments and withdrawals were not monitored effectively. This has led to an overestimate of the funding units generated. Prior to inspection, the errors in centrally held data on students' achievements were identified and subsequently corrected. A new member of the support staff has been appointed during the last year to improve data and to ensure they are accurate.

41. Insufficient attention is given to the promotion of equality of opportunity. The college's equal opportunity code of practice includes a race equality policy and the implementation plan identifies clear actions, responsibilities and timescales. The plan has not yet been fully implemented. The college collects data on students' ethnicity and gender but the data are not effectively used. Despite some recent staff training, there has not been enough focus on equal opportunity issues in a few curriculum areas. The college has responded well to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination (Special Education Needs) Act.

42. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Governors and senior managers regularly receive detailed financial reports. The college is in a sound financial position. Resources are good and well maintained. Teachers are efficiently deployed. Progression of students to employment and further or HE is good. However, there are small class sizes in some curriculum areas and, in others, there are low attendance rates.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science

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

Strengths

- good teaching
 - effective monitoring of students' progress
 - constructive feedback by teachers on students' written work
 - high pass rates on GCE AS and A-level environment science courses.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS biology, physics and chemistry courses in 2002
 - low rates of student progression from GCE AS to A-level courses
 - insufficient resources for students who study on their own
 - low attendance rates on GCSE courses.

Scope of provision

43. The college offers a narrow range of science courses. At the time of the inspection, 58 students were studying science subjects at GCE AS and 19 were studying at GCE A level. There were 45 students on full-time and part-time courses in GCSE science, human physiology and health. Around 30 students were enrolled on the science components of 3 access to HE courses.

Achievement and standards

44. Retention rates on the majority of courses were high in 2002. Pass rates have been high on access courses for adults in the last three years. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level environmental science courses are well above national averages and, in 2001 and 2002, high proportions of students were awarded high grades. However, pass rates have varied on GCE AS

and A-level courses in the last three years. They were low for GCE AS biology, chemistry and physics in 2002. Pass rates on GCSE human physiology and health were low in 2000 and 2001, but high in 2002.

45. The majority of students work well in lessons and make good progress. They are keen to participate in classroom discussions and are able to answer questions correctly. Most students gather and interpret information and data confidently. They make good use of ICT. Their written work is of the appropriate standard for the level of their course. Students work safely and competently in practical lessons. Progression rates to HE are good from both GCE A-level and access courses. However, less than 50% of students who start GCE AS science courses progress to GCE A-level courses. The attendance rate at lessons observed was low, at 73%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	11	23	22
		% retention	55	70	73
		% pass rate	27	13	63
GCE AS human biology	3	No. of starts	**	13	38
		% retention	**	69	79
		% pass rate	**	100	57
GCE AS environmental science	3	No. of starts	**	13	13
		% retention	**	92	92
		% pass rate	**	83	100
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	12	7	14
		% retention*	75	86	86
		% pass rate	67	100	67

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* Retention rates for GCE-A level 2002 are in-year, not two-year, rates ** current GCE AS qualification did not start until 2001.

Quality of education and training

46. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The best lessons are well planned. Many teachers make good use of ICT in lessons and encourage students to use it. They provide students with good printed learning materials and other resources. In an environmental science lesson, the students used written materials, maps and the Internet to research the production of nuclear power. They were able to discuss its advantages and limitations well. At the end of the lesson, the teacher effectively sought the views of each student and then summarised the findings. In another lesson, students on an access to HE course gathered information on gene therapy from publications and the Internet. They then

presented their detailed findings, using ICT competently. Most teachers are careful to check their students understand the topic. In a lesson on radioactive decay, the teacher constantly reinforced the key concepts by regularly questioning all the students. They gained confidence and answered the increasingly difficult questions correctly.

47. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide students with the individual help they need and all are required to do the same tasks. The more able students then find the work undemanding and become passive. The less able fail to increase their understanding of the topic and make slow progress. Schemes of work often do not contain sufficient information to help individual teachers teach particular parts of the course. They include little reference to how students learn.

48. Teachers are suitably qualified and, through staff development, they keep their subject knowledge up to date. Most laboratories are well maintained and equipped. Safety and the safe storage of potentially hazardous materials are given high priority. However, the layout of some accommodation makes it difficult for teachers to teach small groups or individuals. ICT and paper-based resources are good but there are not enough appropriate learning resources for students to use in small groups or on their own.

49. Homework and tests, including sample questions from past examination papers, are set regularly. Teachers mark their students' work carefully and provide helpful comments on how it can be improved. The work is returned promptly. Teachers regularly monitor the standard of students' work against individually set target grades. If students fail to achieve them, improvement targets are set in tutorials. Students' work is effectively moderated to ensure assessments are valid and accurate.

50. The range of provision in science is narrow. There are no vocational or foundation level courses. Instead, the courses offered aim to meet the needs of those wishing to progress to HE. Recruitment to many GCE AS and A-level courses is very low.

51. Tutorials for groups and individuals are effective. Arrangements for identifying learning support needs work well. The support provided in lessons for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is good. For example, in a GCSE lesson, two support assistants helped students with physical disabilities.

Leadership and management

52. Management of the curriculum area is satisfactory. Students' attendance is carefully monitored and effective action taken to address absence. Self-assessment is good and there has been effective action planning to address identified weaknesses. However, some targets and actions are unclear. There have not been enough lesson observations to support judgements about teaching and learning. There is insufficient sharing of good practice in the development of schemes of work, teaching, learning and the identification of students' learning styles.

53.

Agriculture and countryside management

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most full-time courses
 - good teaching
 - wide range of additional qualifications and enrichment activities for students
 - effective use of the farm estate and industrial contacts to support learning
 - high rates of student progression to employment, FE and training.

Weaknesses

- poorly planned tutorial programme
 - some poor assessment practice not providing consistent support for students
 - limited action to widen participation
 - curriculum management not adequately ensuring improvement.

Scope of provision

54. The college offers a broad range of full-time courses from entry to advanced levels in agriculture, countryside management, farm machinery and agricultural engineering. These include first and national diplomas and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) foundation and intermediate levels. There are few part-time courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 18 first diploma, 12 GNVQ and 116 national diploma students. The majority of students were aged 16 to 18. There were 3 modern apprentices in agriculture and 51 in service engineering.

Achievement and standards

55. Pass rates are high on most full-time courses. For the past two years, most full-time students who completed their courses achieved the qualification. Retention rates on full-time courses and short courses offered as additional qualifications are consistently high. The retention rate on the national diploma in countryside management course was below the national average in 2002 but,

at the time of the inspection, most students who started the course in 2001 were still attending.

56. Most students produce work of a high standard. Their practical skills are well developed and they take time to consider the implications of their actions. They are confident, make good use of use technical language and are able to answer questions correctly. Their written work is of the appropriate standard for the level of the course. A large proportion of students progress from full-time courses to employment or higher level courses. Students regularly feature in a classic tractor journal and in the British limousin publication.

A sample of retention and pass rates in agriculture and countryside management, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National diploma in agriculture	3	No. of starts	29	22	14
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	97	100	100
National diploma in mechanisation)	3	No. of starts	*	*	26
		% pass rate	*	*	100
National diploma in agricultural engineering	3	No. of starts	8	13	11
		% retention	100	54	91
		% pass rate	100	86	100
National diploma in countryside management	3	No. of starts	10	8	13
		% retention	100	88	69
		% pass rate	60	100	100
Certificate in arboriculture	3	No. of starts	13	15	16
		% retention	85	80	100
		% pass rate	64	100	75

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

57. The majority of teaching is good. Inspectors observed no unsatisfactory lessons. At the start of practical lessons, teachers give good demonstrations. They set practical tasks that interest students and help them learn. Students are closely supervised. In a practical welding lesson, students were making good progress because they undertook tasks that matched their ability and experience. Teachers make good use of the farm and estate for both practical and theory

lessons. In an agricultural lesson, the students enthusiastically undertook a habitat survey of the farm and, through regular questioning, the teacher ensured that all the students were able to correctly identify the different species of tree. An agricultural engineering theory lesson was well planned. The teacher used the Internet to demonstrate how a fuel pump worked and the students then worked in small groups to examine the fuel systems of different tractors before discussing their findings with the rest of the class.

58. Some lesson plans are so brief that learning opportunities are missed. In one lesson, students worked in pairs to fill in the gaps in a handout. However, only one student was given the handout and, at the end of the lesson, the other student had no record of the task. In another lesson, students were planning an event. Both the teacher and students were enthusiastic, but the teacher took too active a part and opportunities to develop the students' communication and organisational skills were missed. In a few lessons, where students who are studying different qualifications are taught together, teachers do not give enough individual help. Key skills are not taught as an integral part of a course. A few teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of the subjects they teach.

59. Agricultural workshops are well equipped with farm machinery. The college regularly receives donations of materials and equipment. Students can access a 'virtual' farm, with financial and budgetary information and a commercially produced software programme used to manage it, on the intranet. They receive regular copies of the farm diary by email. The college has recently acquired more land to increase its range of habitats.

60. Students' progress is carefully monitored and recorded. However, there is some poor assessment practice. Teachers produce assessment schedules but not all assignments are internally verified. Feedback on assignments does not always include sufficient information to help students improve their work. Grades awarded for assessed work are sometimes changed through verification but the reasons are not always explained to students.

61. Students can take part in a wide range of enrichment activities, often with good support from their teachers. For example, teachers helped students to organise a 24-hour ploughing marathon and to strip and reassemble a tractor. Countryside management students participate in the millennium volunteer scheme and students on the national diploma in agriculture can undertake a one-year work placement during their course. Short courses, such as pesticides application, chainsaw use and forklift operations, are offered as additional qualifications to individual students as well as to employers. Students have good opportunities to progress from foundation level courses to HE. However, the college has done little to widen participation. It offers few part-time courses and no provision at community-based venues. There are few female students or students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

62. The implementation of the college-wide tutorial programme is not monitored. Not all courses include it. Teachers lack training in basic counselling skills and some are unable to cope with the pastoral needs of individual students. Students are not always advised of their rights and responsibilities. Additional learning support for students on some courses is not well organised.

Leadership and management

63. Management of the area is unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention is given to improving the quality of teaching, learning and tutorial support. Teachers do not make enough use of data or targets in course reviews and self-assessment. The absence of teachers is not well managed. Teachers do not receive enough support to help them teach new subjects. There is little consideration of equality of opportunity issues. The area does not analyse data on recruitment, retention or achievement by gender, age or background.

64.

Animal care, equine and horticulture

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

Strengths

- very good teaching in animal care
 - good pass rates on animal care and equine studies courses
 - well-managed work-based learning for the Royal Armoured Corps
 - wide range of enrichment opportunities
 - good initiatives to widen participation in equine studies
 - well-managed support.

Weaknesses

- poor quality assurance of community-based courses
 - lack of resources in horticulture
 - poor framework achievements on some work-based learning programmes
 - insufficient use of ICT in teaching.

Scope of provision

65. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels in animal care, equine studies, horticulture and floristry. At the time of the inspection, there were 540 students based at Lackham, of whom nearly 70% attended part time. The majority were aged 16 to 18. Part-time and full-time equine studies courses are also offered at centres in the south of England. The majority of the 100 equine studies students at these centres studied part time and were adults. Work-based learning is provided for 32 students in Wiltshire and 111 in the Royal Armoured Corps at Knightsbridge barracks.

Achievement and standards

66. Pass rates are high on animal care and equine studies courses based at Lackham, and satisfactory elsewhere. Achievement of NVQs by students in the Royal Armoured Corps is satisfactory, and completion rates of their apprenticeship frameworks have increased, from 19% in 1998 to 47% in 2002. However, none of the 43 work-based learners in horticulture, floristry or equine studies at Lackham who have started since 1999 have met all the requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks. Retention rates on most courses are similar to national averages.

67. Students on most courses develop good practical skills and use the resources competently. The standard of work produced by floristry students is particularly high. In all subject areas, students make effective use of well-designed workbooks. Some students, however, are reluctant to participate in lessons and easily lose interest. The attendance rate, at lessons inspected, was high on all animal care and equine courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in animal care, equine and horticulture, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First diploma in animal care	2	No. of starts	35	18	26
		% retention	83	83	85
		% pass rate	83	100	100
NVQ horse care	2	No. of starts	15	26	69
		% retention	87	100	87
		% pass rate	79	100	59
National certificate in horticulture	3	No. of starts	23	36	22
		% retention	94	83	95
		% pass rate	71	100	86
Stage 3 horse knowledge and riding (British Horse Society)	3	No. of starts	*	17	21
		% retention	*	94	81
		% pass rate	*	100	82
National diploma in horse management	3	No. of starts	11	16	17
		% retention	100	94	88
		% pass rate	100	100	100
National diploma in animal care	3	No. of starts	20	29	37
		% retention	95	100	76
		% pass rate	95	100	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

** course not running*

Quality of education and training

68. Most teaching is good or satisfactory. The best teaching is in animal care, where lessons are well planned. Teachers carefully link topics taught in theory lessons to work carried out in practical lessons. In a lesson on animal behaviour, each student selected a different species to observe and recorded the animal's behaviour over time. By observation and their knowledge of the animal gained through their work unit duties, each student was able to suggest how the environment for each animal could be improved. Most teachers choose tasks and activities to interest students and help them progress. Directed study is well organised. Students complete their assignments in the learning resource centre with effective support from their vocational tutor, a learning support tutor and librarians. Key skills are effectively integrated into the vocational subject. In a communication key skills lesson, students were briefed about their forthcoming work experience. The teacher showed them how to give a talk to their class, on their return, about what they had done, using overhead transparencies and powerpoint presentations.

69. In the less effective lessons, the pace is often slow and teachers make little attempt to encourage students to participate fully in the learning tasks. Some lesson plans do not include enough details of the activities to be undertaken by students or the resources to be used. In horticulture, much teaching is undemanding and students lose interest. In the weaker lessons, students' understanding is not regularly checked. Teachers do not make enough use of the practical resources in community-based venues and there is little use of ICT.

70. Specialist resources for equine studies and animal care are satisfactory. There is a good range of animals, although the reptile collection is small. Animal welfare and security are good. Lackham and Knightsbridge have excellent indoor and outdoor riding areas. Lackham has a horse walker, but the demonstration area for stable management is poor. The attractive gardens and extensive plant collection at Lackham provide good practical teaching areas for horticulture but other facilities are not to industry standard. Library resources are good. Most teachers are suitably qualified. Trainers at the Royal Armoured Corps have wide-ranging military and teaching experience but few trainers in community-based venues have teaching qualifications.

71. Assessment and internal verification in animal care are well managed. Assignment briefs include clear grading criteria. Students receive clear guidance on how to improve their work and assignment timetables help them to plan effectively. However, assignment briefs for equine studies and horticulture students are poor. They do not show what students have to produce and to what standard. Internal verification is poor at the community-based venues.

72. The wide range of enrichment activities includes demonstrations by external speakers, visits to trade shows and exhibitions, and participation in competitions. For example, in animal care, there is an annual expedition to locations such as Africa and the Galapagos Islands. Students at Lackham can take a wide range of additional qualifications, such as NVQs and first aid awards, as well as their main qualification. The college has successfully widened participation in equine studies through full-time and part-time courses at 18 centres in the south of England.

73. Students get good personal support from their teachers. Additional learning support is well organised and effective. It is provided to individual students, to small groups or during lessons, as appropriate. Tutorials are well planned.

Leadership and management

74. Overall, management of the area is satisfactory. The self-assessment report included work-based learning and provision in the community. It addressed most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. The Royal Armoured Corps provision is well managed. Training for the NVQ is mapped to each student's military training. Reasons for students not completing their studies are carefully analysed and effective action taken when they are moved to

other locations. To improve the completion of the apprenticeship framework, all work-based learners now begin to study key skills when they start their studies. Staff absence is poorly managed in horticulture and full-time students are often left without a tutor. There is little observation of teaching or monitoring of the implementation of college policies in the community-based provision.

Construction

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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- mostly good teaching
 - high pass rates
 - high standards of students' practical work
 - well-managed and suitably equipped workshops
 - effective monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
 - insufficient additional learning support for some work-based learners
 - unimaginative teaching in theory lessons.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers a broad range of building craft courses, from foundation to advanced levels. These include courses in carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing and electrical installation. At the time of the inspection, there were 303 students, of whom just over half were aged 19 or over. Some 75% of students were on part-time courses. There were also 68 work-based learners, of whom 53 were foundation modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

76. Pass rates on most courses are high. For example, they have been over 90% on level 1 courses for trowel and wood occupations for the last two years. However, few students achieve key skills qualifications. Modern apprentices make slow progress towards meeting all the requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks, although most achieve the NVQ qualification. Most retention rates have remained at the national average over the last three years.

77. Most students undertake practical work enthusiastically and the majority produce work of a high standard. Many progress from foundation to advanced level. Younger students, however, sometimes lack concentration and when the teacher is helping other students they find it difficult to produce work of the required standard. Some students do not wear safety footwear in the workshops. The attendance rate at lessons inspected was high, at 83%. However, in several lessons, students' punctuality was poor.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ trowel occupations	1	No. of starts	14	25	30
		% retention	79	76	73
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ wood occupations	1	No. of starts	37	35	25
		% retention	73	74	80
		% pass rate	20	100	95
NVQ plumbing	2	No. of starts	4	34	55
		% retention	100	35	60
		% pass rate	0	92	90
NVQ painting and decorating	2	No. of starts	6	9	13
		% retention	50	89	62
		% pass rate	67	100	75
NVQ carpentry and joinery	3	No. of starts	17	13	14
		% retention	100	92	93
		% pass rate	71	100	85
NVQ plumbing	3	No. of starts	4	*	14
		% retention	50	*	71
		% pass rate	50	*	10

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

** course not running*

Quality of education and training

78. The majority of teaching is good or better. In the best practical lessons, teachers set students tasks that are realistic, match their abilities and require them to work to industrial standards. They explain carefully what each student has to do. Students are encouraged to develop their employability and communication skills individually and through working in teams. On one course, students are given the opportunity, in turn, to take the role of supervisor and assess the standard of their peers' work, their attitude and general behaviour. The best theory lessons include activities that interest students and help them learn. In one well-planned lesson, students acted as members of an interview panel and as applicants for a job. They successfully identified the questions that might be asked of applicants when applying for jobs in the industry and their possible responses. In some theory lessons, students work at their own pace, using well-produced workbooks.

79. Some teaching in theory lessons is unimaginative, with little variation in activity. Lesson plans do not always clearly identify what learning should take place. Teachers spend too much time with adult students and do not provide enough help to younger students. Some students are then passive for long periods and others do not produce work of the required standard or complete the task set within the time allowed.

80. Workshops are well equipped and well maintained. The effective management of workshops overcomes the occasional restrictions on the space available for practical activities. Teachers have good industrial experience and most have teaching qualifications. The learning resources centre has a wide range of construction-related materials but they are little used by teachers or students.

81. Assessment is well managed. Students' progress is carefully monitored and recorded. Teachers mark their students' assessments thoroughly and provide constructive comments to help them improve the standard of their work. College-devised diaries help students compile evidence of assessments carried out in the workplace.

82. The provision in construction meets the needs of students who wish to study and gain qualifications in the main building crafts. Additional plumbing courses are being introduced to meet increased demand. School pupils have opportunities to learn craft skills. Short courses in gas accreditation are provided to meet the needs of both individual students and employers. There are no opportunities for students to progress to supervisory management.

83. Induction is well organised. All students receive comprehensive information on the wide range of student support services provided by the college and a good introduction to their course. New students are assessed to determine whether they need additional learning support. Some work-based learners who are identified as needing support, however, do not get it. The recently introduced tutorial programme is well planned but is only delivered to full-time students.

Leadership and management

84. Management of the area is good. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and identified the key strengths and weaknesses. Staff and course team meetings are held regularly, with an emphasis on the sharing of good practice in course management. Action plans are produced to address identified weaknesses. Recruitment, retention, pass and attendance rates are monitored well. Links with work-based learning providers are good.

85.

Engineering

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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high pass rates of work-based learners in the Royal Armoured Corps
 - good management of work-based learning
 - high pass rates on level 1 courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in 2002
 - low pass rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 in 2002
 - much poor teaching
 - failure to identify and address poor teaching.

Scope of provision

86. The college offers full-time and part-time craft courses in motor vehicle and mechanical engineering, from foundation to advanced levels, full-time technician courses at advanced level in electronic engineering and general engineering, and part-time courses in computer-aided design and manufacture. Work-based learning is provided for the Royal Armoured Corps in England and Germany and for local employers. At the time of the inspection, there were 494 students, of whom 70% were aged 19 or over. There were 850 modern apprentices with the Royal Armoured Corps and 30 learners on motor vehicle engineering apprenticeships.

Achievement and standards

87. Pass rates on most courses were high in 2001 and, despite declining, remained high on courses at level 1 in 2002. However, pass rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 were well below national averages in 2002. Retention rates were high on most courses in 2001, but were below national averages on the majority of courses in 2002. Pass rates for learners in the Royal Armoured Corps are excellent. Between 1998 and 2000, 75% of the 840 learners were retained and 70% achieved the full apprenticeship framework. Retention rates are also high on work-based learning in motor vehicle engineering. Although few learners achieve the full framework within the planned time, many do so eventually.

88. The quality of students' written work is good. Most assignments are well presented, with good use of ICT. Electronics students use oscilloscopes and other instrumentation confidently. Some students participate well in lessons and display good subject knowledge. For example, in one lesson two students were able to explain clearly the materials used to manufacture bicycles. Many students, however, remain passive. Some do not comply with safe working practices in the motor vehicle workshops.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 2010 basic engineering competences	1	No. of starts	22	20	14
		% retention	82	100	86
		% pass rate	56	95	83
Motor vehicle studies foundation (one and two years)	1	No. of starts	6	19	47
		% retention	50	100	55
		% pass rate	66	100	96
NVQ engineering foundation (one year)	2	No. of starts	67	44	22
		% retention	73	93	86
		% pass rate	71	78	47
City and Guilds 4351-01/02 computer-aided draughting and design	2	No. of starts	64	65	43
		% retention	89	91	77
		% pass rate	81	78	64
GNVQ engineering / AVCE engineering *	3	No. of starts	12	10	16
		% retention	100	50	63
		% pass rate	100	100	67
National certificate in engineering and mechatronics	3	No. of starts	53	24	41
		% retention	94	92	71
		% pass rate	96	96	69

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GNVQ course changed to Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in 2002

Quality of education and training

89. Most teaching is satisfactory, but a small proportion is good or better. In the better lessons, teachers use activities and learning materials that motivate students and help them learn. They frequently check individual students' understanding by asking questions. In a national certificate in electronics lesson, students used equipment confidently to investigate wave rectification. With the encouragement of the lecturer, they solved problems accurately, recorded their results clearly and made good progress. In a well-planned lesson, the teacher used gapped handouts, practical investigation and a short answer written test effectively to check that the students clearly understood steering mechanisms.

90. However, too much teaching is unsatisfactory. Many lessons are poorly planned. Teachers do not spend enough time checking that students are learning. In some lessons, they rely too much on one type of activity and the teaching is dull and uninspiring. Explanations of technical concepts are sometimes unclear and too little use is made of visual aids to reinforce key points. In a few lessons, there is unnecessary repetition of topics. In others, students work on their own for long periods and do very little productive work. Key skills are not sufficiently integrated into most courses.

91. The equipment for computer-aided design and manufacture is good. Some equipment, for example, in welding and machining, is new. Some equipment needs replacing. For example, much of the car stock is obsolete and some electronic equipment malfunctions regularly. There is a good range of magazines and periodicals. Resources for the royal armoured corps are of a high standard. Classrooms and workshops are poorly decorated. Workshop accommodation for motor vehicle engineering is unsatisfactory. The excessive number of cars and the poor layout make it difficult for teachers to see what students are doing. Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced. Over 200 qualified work-based assessors ensure learners can be assessed whenever necessary.

92. Students' progress is closely monitored. Reviews for work-based learners are thorough but, occasionally, information on progress is not available to the reviewer. Assignment briefs for technician courses are clear and include the grading criteria. Briefs for craft courses give less information and some do not show what is expected of the student. Students do not get enough guidance on how to improve their work. Although some course teams schedule assignments carefully through the year, many others do not. Assessment and internal verification are well managed in work-based learning. Most learners include a wide range of evidence in their portfolios. The co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training for learners in the Royal Armoured Corps is closely monitored. However, the employers of motor vehicle engineering learners do not receive sufficient information about the off-the-job training.

93. The motor vehicle and general engineering courses effectively meet the needs of low-attaining school leavers. Part-time students on technician courses can choose from an extensive range of optional subjects. Accreditation of prior learning is often used by students in the Royal Armoured Corps. Full-time courses rarely include opportunities for work experience. There are few links with schools.

94. Induction arrangements are effective. Tutorial support is satisfactory for full-time students but not for most part-time students. Additional learning support for work-based learners who need it is well organised.

Leadership and management

95. Management of the area is unsatisfactory. The engineering development plan is not clearly linked to the college's strategic objectives. Action plans do not always specify precisely what is to be achieved. The self-assessment report did not address weaknesses in teaching or students' poor achievement in 2002. Few lessons have been observed as part of the college's lesson

observation programme. Programme management files are not always kept up to date. Teachers who take on new subjects or substitute for absent colleagues receive little support. However, the management of work-based learning is good. Assessors, programme managers and the work-based learning team meet regularly. They implement the quality assurance procedures thoroughly. Equality of opportunity is promoted well in work-based learning and equality issues are discussed with learners during induction and at reviews.

96.

Business

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

Strengths

- good teaching
 - effective integration of key skills
 - high pass and retention rates on most courses
 - good additional support for students
 - good use of ICT in classroom teaching and learning
 - constructive feedback on students' written work on administration courses.

Weaknesses

- low recruitment to level 1 administration courses
 - insufficient attention to the needs of students in some lessons
 - low pass rates on the NVQ administration level 2 course.

Scope of provision

97. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in business. These include Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), GCE AS and A-level business studies, and NVQ and Association of Accounting Technician (AAT) accounting courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,243 students, of whom nearly 90% were aged 19 or over. Almost 90% of

students were on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

98. Pass rates on the majority of courses are high. Those on GNVQ and GCE AS business courses have been well above national averages for the last three years. However, pass rates on the one-year NVQ level 2 administration course are low and have been below the national average for the last three years. Retention rates have improved over the last three years and are now high on the majority of courses. On NVQ administration courses at levels 2 and 3, they were over 95% in 2002.

99. A high proportion of full-time students progress from advanced level vocational and general education business courses to HE. Most students are attentive in lessons and interested in what is being taught. Their written work is generally of a high standard. Many make good use of ICT to complete their assignment work. However, some students who progress from intermediate courses find it difficult to cope with the demands of advanced level courses. The attendance rate, at lessons inspected, was good on full-time courses but only satisfactory on part-time courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	22	21	20
		% retention	86	62	90
		% pass rate	74	69	94
AAT accounting	2	No. of starts	60	67	42
		% retention	73	90	81
		% pass rate	75	60	76
NVQ administration (one year)	2	No. of starts	54	85	77
		% retention	67	68	95
		% pass rate	53	56	58
GNVQ advanced business / AVCE business *	3	No. of starts	50	51	40
		% retention	90	86	65
		% pass rate	64	82	58
NVQ administration (one year)	3	No. of starts	19	50	3
		% retention	95	92	100
		% pass rate	89	91	100
AAT accounting	H	No. of starts	121	121	97
		% retention	83	97	87

		% pass rate	71	76	42
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GNVQ advanced course changed to AVCE in 2002

Quality of education and training

100. Teaching is good in many lessons, but in a small proportion it is unsatisfactory. Teachers devise activities that interest students. In a well-planned AVCE lesson on the recruitment and selection of staff, the teacher asked the students to write down what they thought were their individual strengths and weaknesses and, by careful questioning, a list of attributes that might be required of a job applicant was produced. In another lesson, administration students completed individual tasks on a rota basis, the regular change of tasks keeping the students interested in their work. In the best lessons, teachers reinforce students' understanding by linking, where possible, new topics to those covered in previous lessons. Key skills are well taught. They are given a vocational context and integrated into assignments. Teachers make good use of ICT. For example, in a word processing lesson, the teacher used a digital projector to demonstrate how to use some advanced functions. Full-time students on business administration courses benefit from well-planned work experience.

101. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not provide enough help to individual students or check that they are all learning. Instead, all the students are expected to work at the same speed and complete the same tasks. As a result, some students become bored while others are not able to complete their work. In a small number of lessons, teaching is unimaginative. Students then spend too much of their time taking notes and develop little knowledge and understanding of the subject.

102. Full-time teachers are well qualified but some lack recent vocational experience. However, many lessons are taught by part-time teachers who make good use of their up-to-date experience of commerce. Most accommodation is fit for purpose but, in order to access the training area for business administration, students must pass through classrooms, disrupting other lessons. There is a wide range of good business-related material available for students' use. Computers and software are up to date, but the workspace around computers used in classrooms is cramped and desks are often too narrow.

103. Teachers give regular feedback to students about their progress and marked work is returned promptly. The internal verification procedures are thorough. Individual learning plans are used effectively. Students are set target grades and deadlines for the completion of work that is to be assessed. However, assessment plans are not used on all courses.

104. The range of provision is good. Courses for those students returning to study and skills-based courses in community venues successfully attract students who would not otherwise enter FE. On many courses, students can attend at times to suit their individual needs. Students on administration courses can also take additional single subject qualifications. Recruitment to level 1 administration courses is low and students at levels 1 and 2 are taught together in some lessons.

105. Students are well guided and supported. There are weekly group tutorials and much one-to-one pastoral support. Teachers are particularly sensitive to the needs of adults. Individual tutorials are arranged at times to suit those who have personal and work commitments. Some teachers, however, are unaware of what students do in their additional learning support sessions.

Leadership and management

106. Management of the business provision is good. Course files are well organised and include

details of students' enrolments and achievements. These are reviewed frequently. Course team meetings are held regularly and the outcomes carefully noted. Teachers identify students who are at risk of dropping out and course teams agree actions to support them. At the time of the inspection, college data showed significant improvements in retention rates, compared with previous years. The self-assessment report identified accurately many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. However, observations of teaching and learning are carried out infrequently. Despite some promotion of equality of opportunity, all students on full-time administration courses are female.

Information and communications technology

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on part-time courses
 - good specialist resources
 - good support for students with additional needs
 - effective management of community-based provision.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching in a small number of lessons for full-time students
 - insufficient use of individual performance targets for full-time students
 - insufficient provision at foundation level to meet the needs of full-time students.

Scope of provision

107. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses on its campuses and at 26 other centres across the county. Full-time provision includes national diploma, GNVQ, AVCE, and a City and Guilds diploma. Part-time courses include computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), integrated business technology (IBT), and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). At the time of the inspection, there were 300 full-time and 1,600 part-time students at Trowbridge and Chippenham. Over 5,000 students were studying part time in the community. Most full-time students were aged 16 to 18 and most part-time students were aged 19 or over. Almost all full-time students were male. On part-time courses, the gender balance was more equal.

Achievement and standards

108. Pass rates on many part-time courses are high. In particular, pass rates on the ECDL course are about 20% above the national average. Most pass rates on full-time courses are at national averages, although the GNVQ advanced and the AVCE in ICT have had pass rates of over 90% for the last three years. However, pass rates on the national diploma in information technology (IT) have been below national averages for the last three years. Retention rates are high on most part-time courses and at national averages for full-time courses.

109. Many students progress to further courses at the college, but a low proportion enter HE. Students' assignments on GNVQ intermediate and national diploma courses are imaginative and of a high standard. Their web page design is particularly good. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Although advanced level students enter and manipulate data well, they do not always appreciate when spreadsheets might be used effectively. Overall, attendance at lessons observed was satisfactory, but it was poor on the national diploma in IT.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	1672	2022	624
		% retention	99	98	96
		% pass rate	72	93	73
CLAIT (short course)	1	No. of starts	2813	1760	1041
		% retention	94	92	89
		% pass rate	65	62	60
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	81	101	95
		% retention	73	74	76
		% pass rate	66	64	74
IBT (one year)	2	No. of starts	248	561	209
		% retention	98	99	95
		% pass rate	84	72	63
National diploma in IT	3	No. of starts	8	35	55
		% retention	88	97	62
		% pass rate	43	76	74
GNVQ advanced / AVCE ICT *	3	No. of starts	25	24	33

	% retention	88	92	67
	% pass rate	95	91	91

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GNVQ advanced course changed to AVCE in 2002

Quality of education and training

110. Most teaching is satisfactory and a small proportion is good or better. The best teaching is in the community. Teachers provide excellent support for adults who often lack initial confidence in using IT. In most lessons, students can use good quality handouts and workbooks. A feature of some lessons is the use of individual and group tasks to maintain students' interest. In one well-planned lesson, students worked individually using a web site created by the teacher. The teacher gave individual students valuable advice and guidance and by the end of the lesson all the students had developed a good understanding of web programming. In another effective lesson, the teacher carefully explained how a network was constructed. In small groups, the students then used prompt cards to configure their computers. The activity generated a good discussion.

111. In too many lessons, full-time students are set tasks that are undemanding and are inappropriate for their level and ability. Some students then learn little. In other lessons, the pace is slow and students are all set the same tasks, so that they become bored or distracted. Teachers do not always check that students understand what they are doing.

112. Resources for ICT are good. The well-managed network has modern application software, and professional programming and web development tools. Students can access files stored on the college network from home. However, teaching areas are often poorly ventilated and some layouts make whole-class teaching difficult. At Chippenham, older computers are often slow to start up and have difficulty supporting modern graphics packages. The learning resource centres have up-to-date ICT textbooks and journals. Teachers are appropriately qualified, but few take part in industrial updating.

113. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessment schedules help students to plan their work. The majority of teachers mark work thoroughly, providing students with constructive comments to help them to improve their work. Some teachers, however, do not refer to the assessment criteria. There is no common approach to the correction of poor spelling, punctuation and grammar. Outcomes of assessment are rarely used to set full-time students individual targets for performance.

114. The wide range of courses offered in the community and the mobile computer classroom, which visits towns and villages weekly, encourages participation by students who would otherwise not take part in FE. Full-time students have a good choice of courses at levels 2 and 3. However, the lack of a full-time course at level 1 means some students enrol on the GNVQ intermediate course, which does not fully meet their needs.

115. Students receive good advice and guidance before they join their courses. Tutorial support for full-time students is effective. They take an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs. At Trowbridge, the support for students with additional needs is effective. For example, three students with Asperger's syndrome receive excellent in-class support from learning assistants. However, in-class support is not provided on some full-time courses at Chippenham. There is little initial assessment and learning support at the community-based venues. Arrangements for reviewing the progress of part-time students vary between courses.

Leadership and management

116. Management of ICT is satisfactory. Communication between staff is good. There are regular meetings of staff from the different sites. The adult short course provision is well co-ordinated. Part-time teachers in the different centres share teaching and learning materials. Teachers were fully involved in the production of the self-assessment report. However, action plans to address identified weaknesses are not effectively monitored. There is insufficient focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Some full-time teachers have not been appraised for over two years.

Sport and leisure

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

Strengths

- much good teaching
 - high pass rates on most courses
 - effective use of ICT by students and teachers
 - good additional learning opportunities to improve employability
 - effective systems for the monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- a few unsatisfactory lessons
 - low recruitment, restricting learning opportunities
 - lack of provision at level 1.

Scope of provision

117. The college offers a narrow range of courses in sports and leisure. These include first and national diplomas, GNVQ intermediate, AVCE, and coaching awards with the local leisure services department. Part-time provision includes the teachers certificate for the Keep Fit Association and the Royal Yacht Association day skipper award. At the time of inspection, there were 163 students. Most were aged 16 to 18 and on full-time courses. There were 16 part-time students aged 19 or over. Most students were male.

Achievement and standards

118. Pass rates are high on most courses. For example, those on the GNVQ intermediate course and NVQ levels 1 and 2 sport, recreation and allied occupations have been consistently above national averages for the past three years. The pass rate on the AVCE was excellent in 2002. However, pass rates on the community sports leader award, which is taken by full-time students as an additional qualification, are well below the national average. Retention rates are at the national average on most courses. In 2002, they were high on NVQs in sport and recreation and on the community sports leader award, but low on the AVCE.

119. In many lessons, students produced work to a higher standard than that required for the level of their course. Most students are enthusiastic about their studies and are keen to take part in group discussions. They make very good use of ICT. Students on sports-related courses effectively develop their social skills through teamworking. They are confident and well motivated. Students' punctuality was poor in half of the lessons observed, partly because timetables did not give them enough time between lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport and leisure, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate travel and tourism	2	No. of starts	20	39	24
		% retention	55	79	79
		% pass rate	82	77	84
Community sports leader award	2	No. of starts	20	*	13
		% retention	75	*	85
		% pass rate	67	*	73
AVCE double award in leisure and recreation	3	No. of starts	*	*	13
		% retention	*	*	62
		% pass rate	*	*	88

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course not running

Quality of education and training

120. The majority of teaching is good. However, a few unsatisfactory lessons were observed. In practical lessons, teachers carefully link topics to work undertaken in theory lessons. For example, at the start of an indoor sports lesson, the teacher questioned students on the technical and tactical aspects of the team sports they were to play and at the end of the lesson asked what they thought they had done well and badly. During lessons, teachers regularly check students' progress and provide helpful individual guidance, where necessary. In practical lessons, students are encouraged to observe and assess each other's performance in team sports and fitness testing and give feedback. Teachers encourage students to make use of ICT and other learning materials and give them lists of resources and web sites that might be useful. Some teaching is imaginative. For example, in a leisure and tourism lesson, students investigated direct marketing

techniques, public relations and personal selling. They studied brochures and leaflets and watched promotional videos. The teacher used the overhead projector to display advertisements. In groups, the students then produced advertising posters using ICT and presented their analysis of which methods they thought were the most effective.

121. In the less effective lessons, teachers set students work that is undemanding or repetitive and students become disinterested and disruptive. In some lessons, the small class size affects the quality of the learning experience. For example, in some practical games lessons, there were not enough students to form teams with the correct number of players. This was the case in rugby, volleyball and soccer.

122. Sports facilities on all three campuses are very good. They include sports halls and multi-gym facilities at Trowbridge and Chippenham. However, there are not enough shower facilities in the male changing rooms. Specialist resources such as games and fitness testing equipment are readily available, but storage space is restricted. The learning resource centres have a good range of books, journals and magazines, and students have easy access to computing equipment. All full-time teachers have or are working towards recognised teaching qualifications. Many hold coaching and other qualifications.

123. Assessment is carried out well. Teachers closely monitor their students' progress. Students receive useful verbal and written feedback from teachers to help them improve their performance. Academic review action plans are used effectively to identify and support students who are falling behind in their work.

124. Many full-time students work towards additional qualifications, such as the national pool lifeguard award and the gym instructors teaching certificate, to improve their chances of gaining employment or entering HE. Recruitment to the newly introduced first and national diploma courses in sports studies has exceeded targets. Because of low student enrolment, there are no courses at level 1.

125. Advice and guidance for prospective students are good. Induction and tutorials for full-time students are well organised. Initial assessment is used effectively to ensure that those who need additional learning support receive it. Students who enrol on sports-related courses are asked about their health, in terms of suitability for the courses they undertake but there is insufficient formal assessment of their readiness for exercise.

Leadership and management

126. Curriculum management is good. There is close co-operation between staff on different sites. Teachers share assignments, schemes of work for tutorials and vocational units, and lesson plans. Action plans to address weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report are comprehensive. All teachers are regularly appraised but none have taken part in the lesson observation scheme since the last inspection. There is insufficient focus on widening participation or promoting equality of opportunity.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on the majority of courses

- effective monitoring of progress to improve students' achievements
- well-equipped hairdressing salons
- high progression rates to further training or employment.

Weaknesses

- undemanding teaching in many lessons
- few students complete modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient internal verification of beauty therapy and work-based assessors
- insufficient clients for practice in some lessons.

Scope of provision

127. The college offers provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy at Trowbridge and Chippenham and in the community. Full-time and part-time courses include NVQs in hairdressing and in beauty therapy. Part-time courses are also available in holistic therapies, body massage, manicure and pedicure. At the time of the inspection, there were 127 students on hairdressing courses, 211 on beauty therapy courses and 88 on holistic therapies courses. The majority were studying part time. There were 57 modern apprentices in hairdressing. On beauty therapy courses, most students were aged 19 or over, but on hairdressing courses the numbers of adult students and those aged 16 to 18 were similar.

Achievement and standards

128. Retention and pass rates are high on the majority of hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Pass rates on NVQ level 1 hairdressing have been significantly above national averages for the past 3 years. On NVQ level 2 hairdressing, pass rates were significantly above national averages from 1999 to 2001, but below in 2002. Retention and pass rates on the NVQ level 2 beauty therapy course have been above national averages for the past three years. However, in 2002, only 7 students out of the 21 who started NVQ level 3 beauty therapy achieved the qualification. On holistic therapies and massage courses, retention and pass rates have been at, or above, national averages for the past three years. The retention rate on modern apprenticeship programmes is improving but few modern apprentices achieve the framework.

129. Many students progress to further courses at the college, and most who complete their studies obtain jobs in the industry. Standards of students' practical work are satisfactory in most areas. Students on the NVQ level 1 hairdressing course make good use of ICT to present their portfolios and produce written work of a high standard. However, other portfolios do not always include client records or information about the products used. During the inspection, students' attendance at lessons was low, at 62%, and punctuality was poor.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	1	No. of starts	28	26	41
		% retention	75	81	68
		% pass rate	100	95	86
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	2	No. of starts	17	23	20
		% retention	76	100	85
		% pass rate	100	100	59
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	39	34	44
		% retention	84	100	89
		% pass rate	91	82	82
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	38	50	9
		% retention	92	94	78
		% pass rate	92	85	86
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	41	36	40
		% retention	92	81	80
		% pass rate	92	100	91
Indian head massage (short course)	3	No. of starts	49	50	59
		% retention	88	86	92
		% pass rate	95	100	91

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

Quality of education and training

130. Most teaching is satisfactory and a small proportion is good or better. In the best lessons, teachers use a mixture of theory and practical activities to motivate students and maintain their interest. They regularly check students' learning by effective questioning. In a lesson for first year students, the teacher demonstrated the basic techniques for cutting a layered haircut. At various stages of the demonstration, the students were asked to discuss how well the hair was cut and what else the teacher should do and they replied confidently and correctly. Some teaching is imaginative. For example, in an advanced level hairdressing lesson, the teacher recorded the students' work on a digital camera and computer. At the end of the lesson, the students looked at the recording and keenly shared ideas on how each other's work could be improved. In a few

beauty therapy lessons, clients are asked by the teacher to give students feedback. This helps them to learn.

131. However, much teaching is undemanding. Teachers do not always involve all students or ask enough probing questions to reinforce students' understanding. Too often, questions are directed at the more able students and the other students do not participate. Sometimes, teachers do not explain to students exactly what they want them to do and, in some lessons, the teachers' expectations of the students are not high enough. In many lessons, there were not enough clients for students to work on for practice or assessment purposes. In beauty therapy lessons, clients are often introduced too late in the teaching programme. In these lessons, there were often few learning materials, such as textbooks, for students to use.

132. The hairdressing salons are well equipped. A salon in the centre of Chippenham enables students to be taught and assessed in a commercial environment. The modern beauty salons at Trowbridge are small, lack displays of commercial products and do not have industrial standard equipment. The beauty salon at Chippenham is well equipped, but suffers from excessive noise from the adjacent sports hall and rain on the poorly insulated roof. The learning resource centres have few ethnic hair and beauty magazines.

133. Students' progress is monitored closely. Progress reviews for work-based learners involve the employer and the learner. Assessment practices are satisfactory. There is good contact between staff in the college and staff in the workplace, and work-based learners are assessed in both environments. Internal verification of the work of students in beauty therapy is inadequate. About one-third of workplaces have a work-based assessor but few are observed. Work-based assessors do not fully understand the assessment procedures and few attend meetings to share good practice.

134. More adults enrol on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. In hairdressing, they have individually designed timetables to suit their particular needs. There are close links with local employers and work experience for full-time students is well managed. Full-time hairdressing students work in commercial salons one day a week, and beauty therapy students take part in a one-week placement each year. There are no specific courses for male students, and few male students enrol on hairdressing, massage or holistic courses. There are no level 1 courses in beauty therapy.

135. Support for students is good. Most students who are identified through initial assessment as needing additional learning support receive it. Careers guidance is well organised and often involves talks by employers. Tutorials help students understand equality and diversity issues.

Leadership and management

136. Management of the area is satisfactory. Targets for individual students are regularly set and monitored. Course teams meet regularly, but the outcomes are not always formally minuted. The self-assessment report did not address weaknesses in teaching or the low numbers of clients for students to work on.

Health, social care and childcare

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
 - good teaching
 - excellent support for students
 - very effective links with employers and external partners
 - effective assessment and internal verification procedures
 - good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- a few poorly planned lessons
 - low retention and pass rates on the CACHE diploma
 - underdeveloped short course provision.

Scope of provision

137. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in health, social care and childcare. Students study at Trowbridge and Chippenham and at community-based venues across the county. Courses include those leading to NVQ, AVCE, first and national diplomas and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) qualifications. At the time of the inspection, there were 216 full-time and 1,796 part-time students.

Achievement and standards

138. Pass rates on most courses are high. For example, they have been above national averages on the first diploma in caring, the CACHE certificate in childcare and education and the certificate in counselling skills for the past three years. However, pass rates on the CACHE diploma in childcare and education have been significantly below national averages for the past two years. Retention rates on the majority of courses are above national averages. For example, since 1999, retention rates have been high on the first diploma in caring and the GNVQ advanced and AVCE.

However, in 2002, retention rates on the national diploma in early years and the CACHE diploma in childcare and education were below the national average.

139. Students' assessed work is well presented and of an appropriate level for their qualification. Students enjoy their studies. They work conscientiously on their own and in group work. Many demonstrate good practical caring skills. Most full-time students also gain additional qualifications, such as first aid and food hygiene certificates. Many students demonstrate good practical caring skills. A high proportion of students progress to further courses in the college, employment or HE. In 2002, over 70% of full-time students went on to HE. Students' attendance at lessons inspected was high, at 84%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and childcare, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First diploma in caring	2	No. of starts	13	21	22
		% retention	77	90	82
		% pass rate	100	100	83
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	13	14	16
		% retention	77	93	75
		% pass rate	100	100	83
Certificate in counselling skills	2	No. of starts	53	51	62
		% retention	79	86	89
		% pass rate	100	100	100
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	23	32	49
		% retention	100	100	57
		% pass rate	91	45	75
GNVQ advanced / AVCE health and social care *	3	No. of starts	9	13	12
		% retention	89	100	83
		% pass rate	100	92	70
National diploma health studies	3	No. of starts	**	**	17
		% retention	**	**	82
		% pass rate	**	**	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GNVQ advanced course changed to AVCE in 2002 ** course not running

Quality of education and training

140. The majority of teaching is good. The aims and objectives of lessons are usually shared with students and some receive copies of schemes of work. In the best lessons, teachers use their professional experience to link theory to practice effectively. In a health studies lesson, each student presented the results of their research into the role of psychology in chronic and terminal illness. After each presentation, the teacher skilfully encouraged the class to discuss the sensitive issues raised. In another well-planned lesson, the teacher linked effectively the development of writing skills to the experiences of students in work placement. Outside speakers, employers and agencies are well used to demonstrate good practice and relate practical skills taught at college to those needed in the workplace. In one childcare lesson, students worked in pairs to research the role of voluntary agencies in supporting families, using information specially prepared by the agencies. Equality of opportunity is well embedded into the curriculum and students with special needs are well supported by the teachers. Students' practical skills are developed effectively.

141. The less effective lessons are poorly planned and managed. Lack of sufficient guidance for work in small groups causes students to become bored or distracted, and little learning takes place. Some learning activities are narrow in scope and opportunities to extend students' understanding are missed. In a few lessons, there was not enough work to keep all students occupied.

142. Teachers have appropriate professional and teaching qualifications. Most undertake regular professional development. Good learning materials are readily available for students to use on their own and they have good access to computing equipment in classrooms. Accommodation is satisfactory.

143. Assessment is rigorous. Written and verbal feedback from teachers is thorough and helps students to see how they can improve their work. Assessment boards meet six times a year, monitor students' progress carefully and agree action plans with course teams. Curriculum managers carefully monitor the implementation of action plans.

144. Students can gain additional qualifications in, for example, first aid at work, food hygiene and health and safety, alongside their vocational courses. The college offered courses at level 1 in 2002, but it did not recruit any students. Teachers in health and social care, however, teach on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are few short courses in care to meet the needs of employers or employees.

145. Pre-course advice and guidance are good. Most students take an initial assessment to identify their additional learning support needs, which are met effectively. Tutorial support is also strong and career advice and guidance are very good.

Leadership and management

146. Management of the curriculum area is good. Managers provide excellent support to staff. The college's quality assurance procedures are consistently implemented on all courses. Course teams meet regularly to monitor course performance against agreed targets for recruitment, retention and achievement. Data on students' progression and destinations are monitored closely. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and it focuses strongly on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

147.

Visual, performing arts and media

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

Strengths

- outstanding teaching in art and design
 - high pass and retention rates
 - excellent feedback on students' work
 - very good specialist resources
 - high standard of students' work
 - excellent support for students
 - productive use of industrial contacts and links with schools
 - well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate on the national diploma in popular music course in 2002
 - little provision at level 2.

Scope of provision

148. The college offers a broad range of courses in visual, performing arts and media. Full-time courses include national diplomas in media, design and performing arts, and the diploma in foundation art and design. Part-time courses at levels 2 and 3 are also offered in the community. The college was awarded funding for a CoVE in digital and broadcast media in September 2002. At the time of the inspection, there were 398 full-time and 269 part-time students. Over 80% of full-time students were aged 16 to 18. Almost all part-time students are aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

149. Most courses have high pass and retention rates. Those on the national diploma in performing arts and the diploma in foundation art and design are consistently above national

averages. In 2002, however, the pass rate on the national diploma in media and the retention rate on the national diploma in popular music were both below the national average.

150. The standards of students' work are high in all areas and outstanding in art and design. Students on the national diploma in design produce excellent drawings. Their sketchbooks demonstrate careful research. Students on the national diploma in media use industry standard digital cameras, computers and software competently. Many students develop very good analytical and critical evaluation skills. In 2002, a high proportion of students progressed to HE. During the inspection, students' attendance at lessons was high, at 83%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual, performing arts and media, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	63	64	89
		% retention	90	88	70
		% pass rate	91	86	89
National diploma in media	3	No. of starts	26	18	38
		% retention	96	100	71
		% pass rate	92	100	81
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	24	32	26
		% retention	96	100	77
		% pass rate	100	97	95
National diploma in popular music	3	No. of starts	11	23	18
		% retention	82	85	56
		% pass rate	100	73	90
Diploma in foundation art and design	3	No. of starts	*	72	73
		% retention	*	96	93
		% pass rate	*	97	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course not running

Quality of education and training

151. Most teaching is good, and some is outstanding in art and design. Course teams work well together to ensure students can see the links between individual subjects. Teachers vary their teaching approaches to meet the needs and interests of individual students. They encourage students to develop their analytical skills and to evaluate their own work continually. Students are expected to work individually and in groups with minimum supervision. For example, in one lesson, they used a range of media technology, including digital equipment and software, on self-

initiated project briefs. Teachers and technical staff were on hand to provide advice and support when required and the students produced work of a professional standard. Live projects and design briefs for local and national clients motivate students. For example, students on the foundation art and design course designed and installed large-scale paintings in a local shopping centre and multimedia students produced animated graphics for a nationally based media company. Many lessons are enlivened by the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and well-prepared visual aids. In a fashion lesson, the teacher made excellent use of ICT to present examples of fashion promotions, skilfully guiding the discussions around the students' own experiences and views. Teachers give their students excellent support when they prepare their interview portfolios and audition pieces.

152. In a few lessons, teachers do not give enough support to individual students who are slow to respond to particular tasks that other students can cope with. Some teachers phrase their questions to students in a way that limits further discussion or direct their questions to the more able students so that others are then not engaged.

153. There are excellent specialist workshops, studio resources and equipment for art and design at Trowbridge. Accommodation for media and performing arts is good, with a well-equipped performance space, music and media classrooms and suites for IT, audio and video. The well-maintained and up-to-date technical equipment includes computers with industry-standard music sequencing and media software, and video editing facilities. There are well-equipped drama halls and studios. The ARC theatre, a public venue located on the Trowbridge campus, provides students with professional facilities. There are excellent specialist learning materials. Teachers are well qualified, have recent industrial experience and regularly take part in professional development.

154. Comprehensive policies for assessment are thoroughly implemented. Assessment criteria are shared with students at the start of their course. Course teams regularly discuss students' progress and achievement. Written feedback to students by teachers is exemplary in the performing arts and art and design. Students receive excellent advice and guidance to improve their work.

155. Most students take part in a comprehensive enrichment programme of theatre and gallery trips, visits from touring theatre companies and performance. As part of the implementation of a CoVE, a new interactive media centre has been established at the Corsham media park. A purpose-built media centre at Chippenham, with television studios, newsroom, recording studios and IT suites, will open at the end of 2003. These facilities will give students excellent opportunities to work with leading-edge companies. However, there are few courses at level 2.

156. Individual support for students is highly effective. Teachers provide students with excellent help for both course-related and personal issues. Additional learning support is provided for those students who need it. For example, on the national diploma in design, it is co-ordinated through the contextual studies lecturer who assists students during their lessons. Students get good advice on which HE courses are most suitable for them.

Leadership and management

157. Management of the area is outstanding. There is an emphasis on continuous improvement and sharing of best practice. Teachers work closely together to produce year plans and assignment briefs. Managers make good use of staff appraisal and lesson observation to plan staff development for new teachers. Self-assessment has been used effectively to improve the quality of the provision since the last round of inspections. Students and staff, however, demonstrate little awareness of equality of opportunity issues.

158.

Psychology, sociology, politics and law

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

Strengths

- much good teaching
 - high pass and retention rates on most courses in 2002
 - rigorous monitoring of students' progress
 - good assessment and verification procedures
 - well-managed access to HE courses
 - excellent course handbooks in sociology.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped schemes of work
 - low attendance rates and poor punctuality
 - declining curriculum offer limiting students' choices.

Scope of provision

159. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in psychology, sociology, politics and law, and one-year and two-year access courses. Psychology, law and sociology are offered at GCE AS and A level and politics at GCE AS. Psychology can also be studied at GCSE. The college offers GCE AS and A-level sociology at a local school. At the time of the inspection, approximately half of the 220 students were studying part time.

Achievement and standards

160. Most courses have high pass and retention rates. On GCE A-level law, sociology and psychology and GCE AS sociology, they were well above national averages in 2001 and 2002. Since 2000, pass rates on GCE AS law have declined and for the last two years have been below national averages. Pass rates on access courses are excellent.

161. Most students are keen to take part in group discussions, and many develop good oral and presentation skills. Adults on access to HE courses develop their self-confidence and study skills and generally fulfil their potential. For example, student progression rates from access courses to HE are excellent. However, the attendance rate at lessons inspected was low, at 70%, and students' punctuality was poor in some lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology, sociology, politics and law, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	49	40	42
		% retention	61	85	67
		% pass rate	63	26	75
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	14	26	27
		% retention	57	85	93
		% pass rate	88	64	60
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	**	63	84
		% retention	**	68	77
		% pass rate	**	77	71
GCE A-level sociology *	3	No. of starts	38	43	12
		% retention	71	86	100
		% pass rate	74	84	100
GCE A-level psychology *	3	No. of starts	50	41	17
		% retention	74	90	100
		% pass rate	86	76	82
Access to humanities (one year and two year)	3	No. of starts	37	29	59
		% retention	89	83	78
		% pass rate	100	100	91

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GCE A levels: combined one-year and two-year groups for 2000 and 2001; data for 2002 refers to GCE A2. ** course not running

Quality of education and training

162. Most teaching is good. A feature of the better lessons is the involvement of all students through skilful questioning. In sociology, the use of well-designed group and paired work helps students to learn. As part of a well-planned lesson, each group presented their research findings to the whole class while the other students recorded them on tables prepared by the teacher. This helped the students to develop their communication skills. In such exercises, teachers ensure that students remain clearly focused on the task. Where classes are small, teachers use other techniques to stimulate students. For example, in a law lesson, students successfully identified criminal liabilities through case studies. Teachers cope well with classes that contain students of widely different abilities. In one politics class, for example, the teacher introduced the relationship between Government departments and executive agencies and then referred students to Internet sites that had information on quangos. Teachers effectively help students on access courses to develop their self-confidence and study skills.

163. In less successful lessons, teachers place too much reliance on revision packs and textbooks. Some teachers merely read aloud what is printed and students become passive and bored, often failing to recall what they have previously learnt. Teachers do not always check that students understand the work being covered and, in a few lessons, students make no contribution whatsoever. Many lessons lack detailed schemes of work and lesson plans.

164. Resources are adequate. Teachers are well qualified, with up-to-date knowledge of their subjects. Textbooks are issued freely to students and there are sufficient stocks of texts, videos and periodicals in the library, although few books are borrowed. The opening hours of the learning resource centres do not cater adequately for students on evening courses. Most subjects are allocated their own classrooms but some are poorly decorated. Few display examples of students' work.

165. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are effective. Tutors meet with students regularly to review their progress and all teachers attend assessment board meetings to assess the progress of every student. 'At risk' students are identified and individual action plans produced. Teachers regularly set students homework, which is carefully marked with constructive comments to help students improve their work. Minimum target grades are set for each student but they are not subject-specific and carry little credence with students.

166. Because of poor recruitment of students aged 16 to 18 to full-time courses, the range of subjects has been reduced. GCE A-level politics has been recently discontinued, and only one GCSE course, in psychology, is now offered. Class sizes are often small. Recruitment to GCE AS courses has increased but a low proportion of students progress to GCE A level.

167. Student guidance and support are good. The well-organised induction helps students to choose the most appropriate subjects. The course handbook in sociology provides excellent advice on generic and subject-related study skills. The tutorial programme includes excellent guidance on careers and HE. Access students get good pastoral support. For example, one student secured a monthly advance on her petrol allowance from the benefits agency through help from her tutor. Another student with chronic fatigue syndrome is able to continue studying by submitting work by e-mail.

Leadership and management

168. Management of the area is satisfactory. The comprehensive quality assurance procedures are well implemented. Targets are set for all courses and carefully monitored. Communication across the area is good. The mentoring and appraisal system supports new and part-time teachers well. The lesson observation scheme gives teachers opportunities to see others teach. It does not, however, address the need to share best practice in the teaching of individual subjects. Although course teams meet regularly, teachers who are based in other areas of the college

cannot always attend. College data do not adequately differentiate individual classes, which makes the tracking of attendance and retention and pass rates difficult. Students' absences are rigorously monitored but poor punctuality is not always challenged.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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

Strengths

- high retention, pass and progression rates
 - mostly good or very good teaching
 - effective use of specialist resources
 - broad range of provision
 - very good support for individual students
 - effective review of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

169. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at entry level and pre-entry level for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are full-time courses for students with moderate, mild and severe learning difficulties and for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The 'moving on' programme supports young people from special schools who wish to enter FE. On the 'next step' programme, for those with low academic achievement and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties, students experience vocational areas and improve their key skills and independent learning skills. The full-time 'towards independence' course, for adults with learning difficulties, helps them develop the skills they need to live independently. Part-time courses for adults with learning difficulties, sensory impairments and physical disabilities cover a wide range of skills, including good grooming, health, fitness and skills for independent living. Work-based learning offers life skills and work preparation training for learners who are not ready to enter courses leading to NVQ qualifications. At the time of inspection, there were 152 full-time and 178 part-time students. There were 95 trainees on work-based learning.

Achievement and standards

170. Retention and pass rates on externally accredited courses have been well above national averages for the last three years. For example, in 2002, on the Edexcel vocational skills award, retention was 10% above the national average and the pass rate was 20% above. Most students on foundation studies also achieve their individual learning goals. Retention rates on work-based learning are good.

171. Students make good progress in developing their personal, social and practical skills. They enjoy making practical items. Their work is often of a high standard and they are enthusiastic when describing their achievements. Students are attentive in lessons, confident in group discussions and keen to help each other. They make good use of the opportunities for work placement. Many students progress to training or other courses at the college. Progression from preparatory training to the college's foundation modern apprenticeship scheme is also good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 3795 skillpower (two year)	Entry	No. of starts	*	20	10
		% retention	*	85	80
		% pass rate	*	88	75
Edexcel entry vocational skills award (one year)	Entry	No. of starts	*	178	191
		% retention	*	95	93
		% pass rate	*	100	85

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course not running

Quality of education and training

172. Most teaching is good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers help students to develop their individual skills. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties have detailed individual learning plans for each lesson. Teachers regularly check and reinforce learning through effective questioning and written or practical tasks. Whole class discussions and small group and paired work maintain students' interest. Teachers use practical activities to develop their students' number and communication skills, to help them work with others and to develop their practical skills. In many lessons, students could clearly describe the progress they were making. For example, in a well-managed lesson, students worked hard making items such as a bench, wooden games and scenery for a local drama production. One student evaluated the quality of a bird table he had made and explained what he would do next time to improve the quality. In a lesson in a multi-skills workshop, students worked enthusiastically in small groups to produce marketing materials for the products they had made. They were able to identify the most important features of an advertisement and how they could improve their work. Work placements are chosen to meet the interests of individual students, who receive good on-the-job training in the workplace and encouragement from employers and the college's training co-ordinators. In a small number of lessons, staff were too ready to help students, limiting the development of independent learning skills.

173. There are good specialist resources. Students benefit from using the college theatre, practical skills workshops, cooking facilities and ICT rooms, as well as specialist facilities, such as a sensory room. The industrial training workshop provides excellent opportunities for work-based learners to develop their workplace skills before they undertake industrial placements. Teachers are well qualified, having additional qualifications for specific disabilities or learning difficulties.

174. A three-day introductory course includes an initial assessment of each prospective student's personal and social skills. The assessment and the student's self-evaluation are used effectively to plan each student's programme. Most individual learning plans include targets to help students know what they need to do to make progress but, in a few cases, the targets are too general. Teachers give students regular feedback on their progress and the standards they are achieving. Students are also asked to evaluate their work and the progress they are making. Training co-ordinators regularly visit work-based learners to carry out reviews of their progress with workplace supervisors. The reviews are thorough and well documented and short-term action plans are produced for learners. However, although some workplace supervisors are qualified assessors, they are not involved in assessing learners' competence.

175. There are excellent learning opportunities for a wide range of students. Students can also take other qualifications, such as the Edexcel entry vocational skills award. Courses are held at Chippenham, Trowbridge, community-based venues and a hostel for people with physical disabilities. The college has strong and effective links with external partners and agencies. Pupils from local special schools can sample the college's provision on link courses. However, in a few vocational areas, there are no progression routes at foundation level.

176. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported. Specialists from external agencies and partners are used when appropriate, including staff from a local residential sixth form college for students with Asperger's syndrome and educational psychologists. Learning support in lessons is well organised. Training co-ordinators provide effective pastoral support to work-based learners who experience personal difficulties.

Leadership and management

177. Management of the area is good. Staff on the different sites communicate well with each other. Part-time teachers are active members of course teams, which meet regularly. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and accurate. The action plan is carefully monitored by managers and has led to improvements in the quality of the provision. Work-based learning staff, however, were not fully involved in the production of the self-assessment report.

Literacy and numeracy

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

Strengths

- good teaching
 - effective use of ICT to improve learning in literacy
 - successful collaboration with external agencies to widen participation
 - effective literacy and numeracy support within vocational areas.

Weaknesses

- few opportunities for students to develop a broader range of literacy and numeracy skills
 - lack of systematic referral for specialist diagnostic assessment for basic skills students
 - low attendance rates.

Scope of provision

178. The college offers part-time literacy and numeracy courses at its campuses, in workplaces and at community-based venues. In addition, students on other courses are given help with literacy and numeracy. At the time of the inspection, over 700 part-time students were studying on literacy and numeracy courses. Over 500 students on general education and vocational courses were receiving learning support from basic skills teachers to help them achieve their primary learning goal, either during their lessons, in directed study sessions or through one-to-one support.

Achievement and standards

179. The majority of courses have high pass and retention rates. College data show that students who receive literacy and numeracy support while studying on vocational courses achieve better and are more likely to complete their studies than those who do not take up support. A large proportion of students who attend literacy and numeracy courses progress to courses in other areas of the college.

180. Some students make good use of ICT in literacy to research and present their work. Many students willingly participate in discussions, but some lack concentration and become easily bored. During the inspection, students' attendance at some lessons was poor. The attendance

rate was less than 50% in five lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy and numeracy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Adult basic education modules English	Entry	No. of starts	172	208	169
		% retention	67	72	86
		% pass rate	86	97	92
Adult basic education modules mathematics	Entry	No. of starts	40	49	92
		% retention	78	69	86
		% pass rate	65	100	81
City and Guilds 3793 wordpower (one year)	1	No. of starts	163	63	151
		% retention	74	76	88
		% pass rate	65	52	51
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	159	*	271
		% retention	74	*	82
		% pass rate	86	*	50

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

181. Most teaching is good and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teachers generally plan their lessons well and try to include both group and individual work. In a well-planned literacy evening lesson, the teacher had prepared cut-up pictures and sounds to develop the students' phonic skills. The students worked in pairs effectively and made good progress. At end of the lesson, they discussed what had been most helpful in dealing with sounds. In the best lessons, teachers use imaginative approaches to engage reluctant students. In an effective family learning lesson in a community-based venue, the teacher and parents wrote recipes and made pancakes with the children. The teacher read the children stories about Pancake Tuesday to demonstrate story-telling skills to the parents. The children finally wrote enthusiastically about pancakes, while the teacher and parents discussed what they wanted to do in the next lesson. Teachers cope well when their students have different learning needs and they effectively support independent learning. In a numeracy lesson on areas and perimeters, the teacher had prepared handouts with examples from entry level to level 2. Some aspects were taught to the whole group, but students could complete their individual work if the topic was not on their plan. In a literacy class, the teacher led a group discussion on arguments followed by each student working to complete a handout designed to suit their ability. Specialist teachers effectively liaise with vocational areas to plan vocationally related support.

182. Group work is not always well planned. Some activities are not sufficiently demanding for all students, who then become bored and distracted. There is not always enough use of individual learning plans. For example, in one lesson, all students were expected to work through the same examples on adjectives and their use, despite their wide range of abilities. In some instances, teachers place too much reliance on students completing worksheets. In others, teachers and volunteers give too much one-to-one support to students, allowing them insufficient time to solve problems themselves.

183. Teachers are appropriately qualified and the majority have completed recent training in the literacy and numeracy core curriculum and in the use of ICT. The standard of accommodation used for literacy and numeracy is good at all centres. Teaching rooms are well decorated and equipped, containing computers and paper-based learning materials.

184. Individual learning plans are used effectively in many discrete literacy and numeracy lessons. In the best plans, realistic but challenging targets are set using the results of the initial assessment. Progress towards these targets is recorded and frequently reviewed. New targets are set as necessary. However, some additional learning support tutors do not make enough use of the results of initial assessment to set students targets to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

185. The college works closely with other organisations, such as the army and a centre for the homeless, to offer literacy and numeracy courses for students who would not normally enter FE. A family learning centre is run with the local education authority. Training is provided for employees in the workplace to help them improve their basic skills. New basic skills qualifications are being introduced. However, college-based courses have a narrow focus and give students few opportunities to develop a broader range of literacy and numeracy skills.

186. The college-devised computer-based initial assessment programme is mapped to levels of key skills. Results of the assessments are stored on-line and are readily available to tutors. Students on vocational courses who have dyslexia receive good specialist support. However, support for those on discrete literacy and numeracy courses is not always well organised.

Leadership and management

187. Management of literacy and numeracy provision is good. Course and area meetings are held regularly and most part-time teachers attend. Since the merger, there has been effective action to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development is well managed. A recent training day for full-time and part-time teachers concentrated on the use of individual learning plans.

Part D: College data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2001/02

Level	16-18	19+
1	21	22
2	32	15
3	31	10
4/5	1	2
Other	15	51
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in Spring 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2001/02

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	992	4,457	17
Land-based provision	623	609	4
Construction	192	386	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	455	309	2
Business administration, management and professional	873	2,250	10
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	550	3,270	12
Health, social care and public services	1,380	2,809	13

Visual and performing arts and media	501	3,744	14
Humanities	1,428	3,252	15
Foundation programmes	281	3,097	11
Total	7,275	24,183	100

Source: Provided by the college in Spring 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,480	1,945	1,130	3,111	4,327	4,723
	Retention rate (%)	88	84	86	87	90	94
	National average (%)	80	80	79	78	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	65	67	79	63	85	88
	National average (%)	59	65	68	60	66	68
2	Starters excluding transfers	2,396	1,725	1,771	2,514	2,446	2,136
	Retention rate (%)	83	78	82	85	82	87
	National average (%)	76	76	76	79	79	78
	Pass rate (%)	66	82	65	69	84	81
	National average (%)	65	66	69	62	65	69
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,013	1,055	1,271	1,986	2,176	1,481
	Retention rate (%)	86	92	88	85	88	85
	National average (%)	75	76	77	78	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	72	85	79	69	91	81
	National average (%)	72	74	76	62	66	69

4/5	Starters excluding transfers	42	20	19	768	290	374
	Retention rate (%)	95	95	100	92	79	95
	National average (%)	83	79	82	84	81	84
	Pass rate (%)	54	32	89	57	75	77
	National average (%)	64	66	55	56	56	53

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 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1999 to 2001: College ISR.

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)	64	28	8	153
Level 2 (intermediate)	63	31	6	89
Level 1 (foundation)	56	35	9	23
Other sessions	75	25	0	28
Totals	64	29	7	293

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