



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Swindon College

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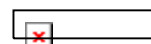
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**Basic information about the college**

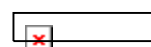
Name of college:	Swindon College
Type of college:	General further education college
Principal:	Michael Hopkins
Address of college:	Regent Circus
	Swindon
	Wiltshire
	SN1 1PT
Telephone number:	01793 491591
Fax number:	01793 641 794
Chair of governors:	Tony Gallagher

Unique reference number:	130849
Name of reporting inspector:	Margaret Swift
Date of inspection:	24 March-4 April 2003

## Part A: Summary



### Information about the college



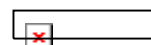
Swindon College is a large general further education (FE) college in north-east Wiltshire. It draws students predominantly from Swindon and the surrounding areas. Up until the time of the inspection, the college operated from three main sites in Swindon. The smallest site was sold and vacated just prior to the inspection. A new building is in the process of being constructed on the North Star Avenue site and it is hoped that this will be fully occupied in July 2004. The college has eight other learning centres in Swindon and in the villages and small towns surrounding Swindon. A wide range of community programmes also takes place in schools and other locations. In 2001/02 there were approximately 2,000 full-time students and just under 18,000 part-time students funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Students come predominantly from Swindon and the surrounding area.

The college offers a broad range of provision in all fourteen areas of learning recognised by the LSC for funding purposes. Courses on offer range from entry level to higher education (HE) including degree courses. The college holds work-based learning contracts in construction, engineering, hair and beauty, and care. There is extensive provision in the community for information and communications technology (ICT) and languages courses. The range of provision has been changed over the last two years to reflect the strategic direction of the college, which is based on providing education of good quality and local participation. There is curriculum provision for students aged 14 to 18, community-based and adult education, HE and training for work.

Unemployment in Swindon is very low, at 1.9%, compared with a national average of 3.4%. Approximately 5% of the college's students come from minority ethnic groups.

In its mission, the college stresses its commitment to widening participation and providing excellence in FE, HE and training.

### How effective is the college?



The college's provision in ICT, hair, beauty and holistic therapies, visual and performing arts and media, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is good. Provision is satisfactory in science and mathematics, construction, engineering, technology and manufacturing, business, professional and management studies, hospitality and catering, health, social care and public services, humanities, English, languages and communication, literacy and numeracy, and for

adult students and satisfactory for students aged 16 to 18. The college's key strengths and areas for improvement are listed below.

***Key strengths***

- student support
- learning and attainment of adult students
- enthusiastic and dedicated staff
- range of courses and progression opportunities
- effective partnerships with employers, schools and the local community
- social and educational inclusion
- successful self-assessment process.

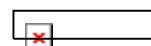
***What should be improved***

- retention and pass rates, particularly on level 1 courses
- key skills
- use of information learning technology (ILT) in teaching
- resources and specialist equipment in some areas
- more challenging targets for students

- quality and systematic use of data.

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

### Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

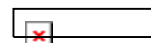


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching is good in science, but less so in mathematics lessons. Across the whole area of science and mathematics, thorough monitoring of students' progress and active use of targets based upon prior attainment have contributed to high pass rates in 2001/02. Retention rates for most General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) subjects were low in 2001/02 and both retention and pass rates have been low for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics.
Construction	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are high on the national certificate in building studies. Students have good levels of practical skills and receive good additional support. There is an effectively managed work-based learning programme with good placements. Insufficient attention is given to the management of health and safety, with some inadequate and overcrowded workshop accommodation.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The quality of teaching is good. Resources are satisfactory, with suitably qualified, experienced staff and equipment fit for purpose. The standard of students' work is satisfactory, as is students' progress. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory.
Business, professional and management studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching is good and students receive effective support. Students' work is of a good standard and good use is made of work experience.
Information and communications technology	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching in the provision results in good pass rates. Technology is well used in lessons. An extensive and successful off-site provision accommodates the needs of a diverse student population. Retention rates are low on some courses and management of the curriculum is not always effective.
Hospitality and catering	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are high pass and retention rates on some courses but they are low for the level 2 food and drink service course. Teaching is satisfactory. Individual learning needs are adequately assessed and there is good support for students. Accommodation and equipment do not reflect industrial standards.

Hair, beauty and holistic therapy	<b>Good.</b> Effective curriculum management is reflected in the good and improving retention rates. Teaching and learning are good, as is the attainment of practical skills. Students make effective use of the learning support, learning resources and specialist rooms provided. Marking and feedback on some students' work are insufficiently thorough.
Health, social care and public services	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The majority of students are working to national standards, many progressing to further study or relevant employment. Students are well supported. Most teaching is satisfactory but some fails to inspire or extend adequately the learning of more able students.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high on many courses. Teaching is effective and students achieve good standards of work, despite the poor management of resources and some inadequate accommodation and equipment.
Humanities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates for GCE Advanced-level (A-level) provision and for GCSEs. The teaching of study skills is particularly effective across all programmes. Key skills are insufficiently developed and there are some poor assessment practices across the programme area.
English, languages and communications	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates on GCSE and GCE A-level courses and good development of students' skills. The provision for modern foreign languages in the community is good, but management of the curriculum is less effective.
English for speakers of other languages	<b>Good.</b> Much teaching is effective in supporting well-motivated students to achieve good language and personal development. Retention rates are high on short courses, where students receive good support. The college is contributing well to local targets through effective partnerships with the community, schools and employers.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Students receive high levels of learning and personal support and have access to good resources. There are low levels of achievement on some programmes. Progression rates to further areas of study and employment are low. There is some ineffective target setting, and monitoring of students' progress.
Literacy and numeracy	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students receive good support for their individual literacy and numeracy needs. Teaching and learning in separate specialist literacy and numeracy lessons are good. There is poor progression from discrete literacy and numeracy programmes and the range and amount of literacy and numeracy provision are insufficient to meet local needs and national targets.

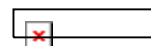
### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college is in the first year of a three-year recovery plan. At the time of the inspection, the college had met and exceeded the financial targets set for this year. Governors and the senior management team have worked closely together to develop a recovery plan whilst maintaining the quality of the curriculum. The future direction of the college builds upon the good local partnerships. The management of the curriculum and work-based

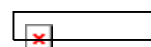
provision and teaching. The college has worked hard to improve the accuracy of its student data. The use of management information reports to improve the quality of provision in a systematic way is still being developed. The college promotes equal opportunities well. The college is operating on a budget reduced by £4 million and was required to pay back £5.5 million to the funding council. The number of staff has been reduced by 150 full-time equivalents and the management structure has been re-organised.

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



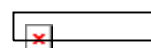
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. There is a broad range of courses from pre-entry level to degree level. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is offered for those aged 16 to 18 and for older students. The students are well supported on separate specialist courses and in mainstream provision. Links with the community are good. The college has provision in over 70 community locations and recruits strongly from under-represented groups. Students from over 40 different countries attend the college. Equal opportunities are promoted well and incorporate race relations. All staff have undertaken equal opportunities training during the last year and further training is planned for July this year. Strategies to widen participation are effective. The college is an inclusive community.

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



The college provides good support for students. Pre-course counselling and guidance enable students to make an informed choice of programme, including work-based learning opportunities. Well-planned induction provides students with an opportunity to review their programme choice whilst identifying any support requirements or learning needs they may have. The majority of teachers actively use the results from diagnostic testing in making individual action plans. However, many plans lack specific targets for improvement. Support for students with additional learning needs is good. The well-planned tutorial system provides good academic and pastoral support and effective monitoring of students' progress. Additional support is available through the college counselling or career advisory service and good links with external agencies provide specialist support. Care is taken to meet the needs of adult students through flexible timetables. Youth workers staff the student centre and co-ordinate additional leisure and sports activities to enrich students' experience at the college. Good links with schools, the other FE colleges in Swindon, employers and HE institutions provide pathways to further study, employment or HE.

### **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***

- teaching and support staff are approachable, helpful, friendly, supportive, receptive, accessible, enthusiastic and dedicated

- personal and academic support
- being treated like adults
- good access to computers
- teaching
- library resources and staff
- college refectory, excellent food and ambience
- regularly set and constructively marked homework
- courses and variety of experiences.

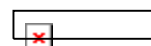
***What they feel could be improved***

- price of food in refectory
- car parking
- provision of new books in the library and quantity of books in some areas
- cover for staff absences



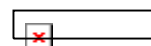
- refectory to meet demand at main break
- more storage lockers.

### Other information

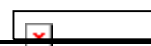


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

### Part B: The college as a whole



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

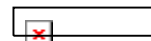


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	61	38	1
19+ and WBL*	68	26	6
Learning 16-18	60	37	3
19+ and WBL*	71	25	4

*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. Swindon College offers a wide range of courses that can be studied full time or part time. All 14 of the LSC areas of learning are covered, as table 2 in part D of the report shows. There are no overall college trends emerging in retention and achievement but each level has its own distinct picture. At level 1, retention and pass rates are below national averages for all students and have been for the three-year period 1999/2000 to 2001/02, except for retention in 2000/01, which matched the national average for students aged 16 to 18. Retention rates have declined for students aged 19 and over, from 69% in 1999/2000, to 55% in 2001/02. At level 2, retention rates are satisfactory for students aged 16 to 18 but poor for students aged 19 and over. The pattern is reversed for pass rates, which are now satisfactory for students aged 19 and over but poor for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates are satisfactory at level 3 for both age groups. The retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 has improved dramatically, from 66% in 1999/2000, to 81% in 2001/02. Overall attendance during the inspection was at 76% and the average number of students in lessons was 9.

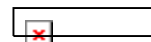
### **16 to 18 year olds**

2. Most students aged 16 to 18 study full time. They take a wide range of vocational and general education qualifications. Students are generally making good progress. Students' attainment was judged to be good in most curriculum areas and low in only one area. Most students make appropriate gains in knowledge and understanding. Students are well motivated, work productively and contribute positively to their learning. In most areas, students are well prepared for progression and employment. For example, in the construction area, students successfully complete work to a standard that meets the requirements of industry. Catering students demonstrate an acceptable standard of technical skills and they are able to plan and organise their work well, but the lack of specialist equipment does not enable them to broaden their skills. In beauty therapy, the students have produced some particularly good work in media make-up and their practical skills are well developed. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not progressing; only small numbers move from pre-entry and entry level courses to higher level courses or supported employment.

### **Adult learners**

3. About 16,000 adults are enrolled on courses. Most study part time, either in college in the day and evening or out in the community centres. In 2002, according to college data, retention rates for adults were below national averages but pass rates at levels 2 and 3 were just above national averages. There is good teaching and very good learning and attainment on adult courses. Students on ESOL and ICT courses benefit from courses being taught in community locations and make good progress in their studies.

## **Quality of education and training**



4. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 247 lessons and tutorials. Teaching was good or better in 64% of lessons, which is broadly in line with the national average for general FE colleges. Some 4% of teaching was less than satisfactory. Teaching and learning were particularly successful in ICT, visual and performing arts and media and ESOL. The proportion of good or better lessons was lowest in construction and hospitality and catering. The grades awarded for learning were similar to those for teaching. The overall attendance rate in lessons observed by inspectors was near to the national average, at 76%.

5. Teaching was most effective on entry level programmes. The lowest proportion of good or better teaching was at level 2, particularly on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 programmes. Much of the teaching in practical lessons is good or better, with most students developing

occupational skills to good professional standards. Students are less well taught in theory lessons.

6. In most curriculum areas, teaching and learning are well planned. Learning objectives are clear and, in most lessons, are shared with students. Students are enthusiastic and enjoy their studies. Most students are highly motivated. This is particularly evident in engineering and construction, where students are able to use their experience of work and relate it to their college studies. In care, childcare and ICT lessons, teachers make good use of students' work placements to relate the teaching of theory to current industrial practices. In successful lessons, students develop a good understanding of key concepts and are able to explain them well. Teachers are skilled at using questions to reinforce and consolidate learning. In business lessons, women returning to education confidently complete book-keeping exercises to examination standards. Entry level students work in kitchens and acquire an understanding of food hygiene, which provides them with skills for working life. Many students whose first language is not English display confidence in using newly developed language skills.

7. In too many lessons, teaching fails to set learning activities that take account of the wide and differing abilities within each group. Teachers and learning support assistants provide good support for students with lower levels of prior attainment or learning difficulties. The more able students, however, are not set sufficiently demanding tasks. In the less successful lessons, teachers fail to engage students' interest. Teaching is sometimes uninspiring and relies too much on a narrow range of teaching methods and learning activities. In some humanities, and mathematics and science lessons, teachers talked for long periods of time and students' concentration wavered. Where key skills teaching is integrated into students' main course of study, as in hospitality and catering, it works well. However, in most other areas, key skills are not integrated and applied, and the development of students' key skills is less successful. In many lessons, learning is not checked often enough and students are not given clear pointers to help them improve their performance.

8. The college is rationalising its accommodation and plans to move to new purpose-built accommodation at the North Star site by September 2004. Provision has been relocated from two sites to the two remaining sites at Regent Circus and North Star. The college has made appropriate adaptations to buildings to meet the needs of those with restricted mobility and access on all sites is satisfactory. There is a well-equipped nursery and financial assistance is available to students who need childcare while they attend college. The refectories provide a good range of food with options that cater for the special dietary requirements of students and staff. Refectories are well used and can become crowded at peak times. There is a peace and prayer room on each site for use by students and staff.

9. Classrooms are clean and well furnished but lack stimulating displays. Some rooms are too small for the number of students in the group and many, especially computer rooms, have poor ventilation. There is a good range of teaching aids, including audio-visual equipment and interactive whiteboards. The well-designed accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and includes facilities to help students acquire independent living skills. Specialist facilities in areas such as construction, engineering, technology and manufacturing, and hair, beauty and holistic therapies provide realistic environments for students to develop their practical skills. Much of the equipment in science laboratories and kitchens is old.

10. The college has made significant investment in ILT. There are sufficient up-to-date computers for students. In lessons, most teachers do not use ILT enough for teaching and learning. The learning centres are well stocked with a good range of learning and teaching material, including support materials for key skills. Some books on the shelves, however, are dated.

11. Staff are generally well qualified. Nearly 70% of permanent teachers have a recognised teaching qualification and most of the remainder are working towards achieving an appropriate qualification. Few teachers take advantage of the work placement scheme to update their industrial knowledge and skills. There are adequate numbers of qualified assessors and internal verifiers. Work-based learners benefit from learning support assistants who visit them in the workplace.

12. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Assessments are appropriate and generally well planned. Clearly written assessment briefs include assessment criteria and dates for submitting

work. Teachers' feedback is generally constructive, enabling students to improve their work. Regular homework is used to monitor students' progress and inform teaching. Assessment of work-based learning is well planned and effective in most areas. Internal verification is effective. Appropriate systems are used in each area to record and monitor students' progress. Reports from internal and external verifiers and resulting action plans are submitted to the governors' quality and standards committee as well as being reviewed at senior management team meetings.

13. Key skills teaching and management across the college are satisfactory. The college has a clear policy for key skills that sets out clearly its approach and model. The main responsibility for the implementation of key skills lies with curriculum managers and their staff. Curriculum areas have different methods of teaching key skills and some are more effective than others. In construction, for example, key skills are generally well integrated with some good key skills results in bricklaying. However, in humanities, key skills are not well developed and achievements are poor.

14. The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses from pre-entry to degree level. Most curriculum areas offer clear progression routes for students, but there are few progression opportunities for discrete basic skills students. Work-based learning provision is very small.

15. The college has particularly good links with local employers. This ranges from the very large local car-making employer to small hairdressing, building and nursery businesses. There are good links with local schools, including links with special schools and regional schools for the deaf, partially sighted and those with severe learning difficulties. The college is also committed to its growing work with the 14 to 16 age-group. In the current year, there are 200 students attending college courses from local schools. The college has a strong commitment to partnership working and has effective links with community organisations. There are over 70 venues for community learning, including eight learning centres directly managed by the college.

16. Most curriculum areas have a good range of curriculum enrichment activities. For example, politics students annually take a trip to the European parliament in Strasbourg and hairdressing students are able to take a good range of additional qualifications. However, apart from football, there is a low take up of the college's general enrichment offer.

17. Students receive good pastoral and academic support. Pre-course guidance is good. Staff from the college attend school and career fairs and the vocational taster days held annually at the college enable Year 11 students to make informed choices about suitable programmes of study. Effective links between curriculum areas and the marketing department ensure accurate information is quickly provided to prospective students.

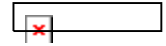
18. Induction suitably prepares students for their courses and college life. During induction, all full-time and many part-time students complete diagnostic tests to identify specific individual learning and support needs. Learning support assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups.

19. Students benefit from well-planned, regular group and individual tutorials. Close liaison between tutors and the support service ensures effective use of individual action plans in most areas. In some areas, though, students are not set sufficiently challenging targets.

20. There are good links with a range of external agencies. For example, the mental health team is used effectively to meet the needs of students with mental health, physical or learning support needs. The governors have a sub-committee, which monitors the provision for those with disabilities. A counselling service is used well by many students.

21. Careers education and guidance are effective. Three career officers provide advice and guidance enabling students to make informed choices about progression into employment or further study. Guidance for some adult students is less effective.

## Leadership and management



22. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has had major financial problems. It is now in the first year of a three-year recovery plan. Approximately two years ago, the college identified that its student data were unreliable and that it had been over-funded for the actual number of students enrolled by the college. It also withdrew from its extensive franchising operation. The college is now having to operate on a budget reduced by £4 million and has to pay back £5.5 million to the funding council. The strategic plan was revised significantly to become a 'turnaround plan'. Efficiency savings have been made with a view to achieving a budget surplus by 2004/05. They included reducing the number of staff by approximately 150 full-time equivalent, the appointment of a new senior and middle management team and a reorganisation of the management structure.

23. There is a clear strategic plan for the next three years. It forms the basis of the college recovery plan. In line with the strategic priorities of the local LSC, there is to be provision for four clearly identified groups: students aged 14 to 18 year olds; adult students; entrants to HE; and those training for work. The plan aims to build upon the good existing local partnerships. A further key aspect is the move to a single site for the college. This will provide new purpose-built accommodation and lead to further efficiency savings. Plans for the move are well advanced.

24. During the last two years, the corporation and the senior management team have concentrated their efforts on ensuring the survival of the college whilst maintaining the quality of the curriculum. The thorough course planning process is part of an annual operating cycle that consists of a number of separate but clearly linked activities. The planning process ensures that courses in the different curriculum areas are aligned to the college's strategic objectives, that they meet defined quality criteria and that they are financially viable. Courses that do not meet the criteria may continue to be offered after a senior manager has reviewed them. Based on the reviews of individual courses, each curriculum area builds up a curriculum plan and an associated business plan for the following year. The overall plan is reviewed closely by the senior management team before it is approved.

25. Communications in the college are good. Staff work well together in teams. Staff are well informed about the college's future direction. A weekly cycle of meetings involves most academic and support staff. Senior managers keep staff informed on key issues, especially issues relating to the recovery plan, and staff are able to contribute their views. The principal holds meetings for all staff throughout the year.

26. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory. The management of hair, beauty and holistic therapies and business, professional and management studies are good and, in ESOL, there has been good management of recent national developments. Some aspects of management are unsatisfactory, such as the management of modern foreign languages and the access to HE programme. There is some poor management of resources in visual and performing arts and media, and of some aspects of health and safety in construction. On engineering and hospitality courses, there are insufficient technicians to support the work of teachers. The effectiveness of key skills teaching varies markedly across the college. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory. New systems and procedures are being implemented successfully.

27. The college has made good use of national benchmarking data to identify key areas for efficiency improvements. A number of these areas form the basis for the college-wide key performance indicators, such as the average class size and required teaching hours for teacher staff and their immediate managers. An associated set of key quality standards has also been developed. Appropriate targets for retention and pass rates are set for each individual course through the course planning process. Success in achieving targets is monitored frequently by middle and senior managers.

28. The college recognised that it had problems with the accuracy of its central student data two

years ago. It has worked hard to improve the accuracy of this data. A new management reporting system has been implemented. The new system is used by managers and is in the process of being made more readily available to all teaching staff. Because of the data problems, the monitoring of key performance indicators has begun only recently. The regular use of reports to improve the quality of the provision in a systematic way is still being developed. Data to monitor the success of cohorts of work-based learners is only available for the last two years. This limits monitoring of the pass rates of the many apprenticeships that continue for more than two years.

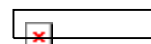
29. The self-assessment process clearly identified a number of key weaknesses in curriculum and support teams, although inspectors identified that some key weaknesses had been missed. Resulting plans to improve the quality of the curriculum and support services have been implemented successfully. A teaching observation scheme has been effective in identifying poorer teachers and improving their performance. The lesson observation profile observed by the college team in 2001/02 was similar to that observed by inspectors. The percentage of unsatisfactory lessons observed in the previous inspection has now been halved. The quality assurance system has been revised for this academic year. It places more responsibility on teams for assuring the quality of their work.

30. All full-time staff, and part-time staff working more than 400 hours a year, should receive an annual appraisal. The principal appraises senior managers, and the chair of governors appraises the principal. The process is documented clearly and enables staff to identify their training needs. The monitoring and implementation of the process are poor. In 2001/02 only 30% of completed appraisal forms were returned to the personal department and in 2002/03 only 7% had been returned by the end of January. The well-developed programme of staff development meets the needs of individual staff, course teams, departments and managers. The staff development plan is linked to appraisal and also to the college's strategic plan and the local LSC's priorities. Teachers who do not hold a teaching qualification are supported well. They have a reduced teaching timetable that allows them to study for an appropriate qualification. All staff development activities are evaluated in terms of effectiveness, both for the individual and the college.

31. The college promotes equal opportunities well. The equal opportunities policy is comprehensive. It incorporates a detailed race relations policy and a harassment and discrimination policy. All staff receive equal opportunities training, either during induction or through the staff development programme. Last year, all staff received training on discrimination awareness. All senior and middle managers have had training on the race relations and disability acts. The college has productive links with the community and has successfully widened participation in some curriculum areas. Courses in ICT, literacy, numeracy, ESOL and English as a foreign language (EFL) are provided in over 70 community locations. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported, both on separate specialist courses and in mainstream provision. The equal opportunities committee closely monitors all aspects of equal opportunities for the college. The committee reports directly to the academic board. It has a broad membership, including college staff and external partners.

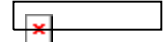
32. Governors have taken an active part in determining the strategic direction of the college and in the production of the recovery plan. In the last two years, they have closely supported the work of senior managers. The information they receive gives them a comprehensive picture of the college's academic and financial performance. Governors on the quality and standards committee receive detailed information relating to all aspects of the performance of students and curriculum areas. They closely monitor the implementation of the development plans resulting from the self-assessment process and the effectiveness of the teaching observation scheme. The financial difficulties faced by the college have not had an adverse impact on the delivery of the curriculum or the quality of the provision.

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



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## Science and mathematics



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

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates on most courses in 2001/02
- good teaching in science subjects
- thorough monitoring of students' progress
- effective target setting for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention on most GCE AS courses in 2001/02
- low retention and pass rates for GCSE mathematics
- insufficient use of ILT in teaching.

### **Scope of provision**

33. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science and mathematics. In addition, there is an access to HE course in science. Biology, physics and mathematics are offered at GCSE. Part-time evening provision includes GCE A-level biology and mathematics and GCSE biology, physics, human physiology and health, and mathematics. At the time of the inspection, there were 258 students aged 16 to 18 and 131 students aged over 19.

### **Achievement and standards**

34. Pass rates have shown considerable variation but in 2001/02 they were high on most courses, with many students gaining high grades. The evening course in GCSE physics is particularly

successful. It is unusual for colleges to be able to attract sufficient students to offer this option but, by drawing people from a wide area, this course has remained viable and its students have been successful. Access to science students have consistently achieved high pass rates. However, retention rates for GCSE mathematics have remained consistently low and pass rates have fallen. Retention rates on the new GCE AS courses have declined to well below national averages in 2001/02 in physics, chemistry and mathematics. The current in-year retention figures show no improvement in chemistry and mathematics but they do indicate an improvement for physics.

35. Students are generally well motivated, work productively and contribute positively to their learning. Students' notes are usually clear and demonstrate attainment of learning objectives. For example, with the help of an individual learning plan, mathematics students have taken some responsibility for their learning, doing further suggested work, carefully correcting their mathematical solutions and attending optional tutorials. In many lessons, most students demonstrate a good grasp of topics recently covered. Most show familiarity with appropriate technical terms and some use them fluently in oral answers. For example, students in a GCE A-level biology lesson worked well together in groups to produce posters to summarise key ideas from their previous lesson on factors responsible for the aging process. Students were able to use technical terms accurately and the subsequent presentation of their results to the rest of the group was good. Access students have made an excellent return to learning. They had initially been apprehensive about studying physics but in the lesson on ohmic and non-ohmic conductors they did the practical work with confidence and obtained good sets of experimental results.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics (one year)	2	No. of starts	247	222	190
		% retention	52	64	67
		% pass rate	60	45	33
GSCE physics	2	No. of starts	16	19	11
		% retention	56	74	82
		% pass rate	67	86	67
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	60	54	12
		% retention	38	83	92
		% pass rate	65	36	91
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	18	15
		% retention	*	83	73
		% pass rate	*	67	73
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	56	64
		% retention	*	80	69
		% pass rate	*	53	67
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	45	51
		% retention	*	67	80
		% pass rate	*	63	78
Access to science (one year)	3	No. of starts	13	11	9
		% retention	69	64	67
		% pass rate	89	86	83

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



*\* course did not run*

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

36. Teaching of science is good. Lessons are well planned and all teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. Students participate actively in lessons and most have well-developed oral skills. Skilful questioning by teachers encourages students to develop their ideas more fully. Practical lessons are well organised and are designed to extend students' understanding of the theory. Mathematics lessons are less well planned and involve students less in the development of new ideas. In some mathematics lessons, teachers use only one method of teaching and students do not have the opportunity to develop the skills of working together or of expressing themselves orally using mathematical language.

37. Students' work is usually of a good standard and in science it is marked carefully. Mathematics teachers do less marking of students' work but take advantage of small class sizes to discuss it individually with them. Students are encouraged to attend optional workshops for this purpose and to clarify difficulties met in their studies.

38. There is thorough screening of new students by two learning support staff who are based in the curriculum area. They maintain good communication with tutors and teaching staff so that all are aware of students' needs. There is thorough monitoring of students' progress. It is particularly good in mathematics. The team have devised a system in which they record and process students' marks electronically. Students each have an individual learning plan, which identifies areas of weakness that they then address.

39. Students speak highly of their supportive relationships with tutors and teachers. In addition to all the normal support through personal tutors, the GCE A-level teachers provide academic workshops for their subjects. Teachers are well qualified. One is working towards a teaching qualification and all the others hold teaching qualifications.

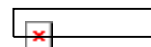
40. All full-time GCE A-level students are set minimum target grades on starting their courses, which are initially determined by analysing their prior attainment at GCSE. Two progress reviews take place each year at which targets can be increased for a student who is progressing faster than expected, or lowered if a student is passing through a time of personal difficulty. This flexibility helps to maintain motivation.

41. The laboratories are well furnished and well lit. The science equipment is adequate for the syllabuses being taught. There is insufficient use of ILT in the lessons observed. For example, in one class, students obtained a small amount of data by plotting a graph and using it to explore gradients. The teacher had data for a range of similar graphs which students did not have time to draw. Consequently, there were insufficient data for students to see an unambiguous pattern in the results. Use of a computer or graphical calculator would have allowed students to quickly produce sufficient data to see the pattern for themselves, rather than to be given the result. General teaching rooms have no computers and the computers in the laboratories are unable to run modern multimedia software. The learning resource centre has very small sections for mathematics and science, and many students do not borrow the books.

### **Leadership and management**

42. The management of the area is good. There is a good team spirit and staff share teaching materials and strategies with each other. Good use is made of management information data by teachers for analysing retention and pass rates. The curriculum managers have recognised problems with retention rates but plans to address them have not come to fruition, owing to staffing difficulties. There is good co-ordination and management of the GCSE and GCE A-level area. However, there are still few opportunities for students to construct their programme from elements of these and vocational programmes, as envisaged under Curriculum 2000. The curriculum and quality manager is designing a cross-college timetable to start in September 2003 to facilitate this.

## Construction



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on national certificate in building studies
- good levels of practical skills
- effectively managed work-based learning
- good additional learning support in practical lessons.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient sharing of good practice
- some inadequate and overcrowded workshop accommodation
- insufficient attention to the management of health and safety in workshops.

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

43. The college offers construction courses on two campuses, but there are plans to relocate all of the provision on to one site in the future. There is provision of craft courses in bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, mechanical engineering services, electrical installation, and technician programmes for building and civil engineering studies. At the time of the inspection, there were 774 students on full-time and part-time courses. Just under half of the students are aged 16 to 18.

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

44. Pass rates are high on the national certificate in building studies and retention rates are good on many programmes. Work-based learning results have improved, with 47% of the students achieving

the framework and a similar figure projected for the coming year.

45. Attainment on most programmes is good, with many students able to demonstrate the development of their practical skills with confidence. For example, in bricklaying, many of the students are able to build walls and chimneys using bricks and blocks and, on the plumbing courses, students are able to bend and join different types of pipe-work and connect a range of components to a standard that meets the requirements of industry.

46. Key skills are an important part of most programmes and are integrated into courses. On bricklaying programmes, there is good achievement of key skills.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
NVQ mechanical engineering services	2	No. of starts	10	5	7
		% retention	70	100	57
		% pass rate	100	25	25
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	24	39	50
		% retention	83	92	90
		% pass rate	75	56	69
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	26	11	5
		% retention	36	55	60
		% pass rate	100	100	33
National certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	18	11	11
		% retention	72	100	45
		% pass rate	100	90	100
National certificate in civil engineering studies	3	No. of starts	4	5	13
		% retention	75	80	85
		% pass rate	100	0	73
NVQ mechanical engineering services	3	No. of starts	3	14	14
		% retention	100	69	100
		% pass rate	100	89	69

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

***Quality of education and training***

47. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. The preparation and organisation of most lessons are good. However, in some theory lessons, uninspiring teaching fails to engage students' attention. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods, demonstrate good knowledge of their subject and make good use of students' experiences at work. In many lessons, the teachers ensure there is a good mixture of theory and practical work. In one practical lesson, students used a training video to confirm their knowledge of processes required in cutting bricks.

48. There is a lack of teamwork and collaboration between staff. Although some good work has resulted from the introduction of the ILT champions, there is little evidence to show that information is being shared across courses. There is very little evidence of team teaching. In bricklaying, two

classes were taught totally separately in the workshop area, which was overcrowded.

49. Assessment opportunities are well planned across all courses. In many practical lessons, the students are actively involved in the process and are given feedback during and at the end of the assessment. Work-based learning assessment and the recording of achievements for NVQs are good.

50. Resources are satisfactory. There are adequate quantities of materials and suitable staff on both campuses. The woodworking practical workshops are of a good size. They are suitably equipped with a range of tools, and most of the machinery had been upgraded to meet the requirements of the new regulations. There is insufficient floor space inside the workshop available for practical activities in bricklaying. Some additional space had been provided for bricklaying, but this is not adequate for the needs of the current students. The painting and decorating provision moved to the North Star campus during the autumn term and further workshop development is required to enable students to have the range of training required.

51. The wood trades workshop contains a small room with ICT equipment. In another workshop, old computers are available but are not connected for use. The ILT champions have been involved with a range of developments. For example, in electrical installation, a self-assessment program has been developed to enable students to access a range of multiple-choice questions. At the time of the inspection, this initiative had not been shared with other courses, despite the inclusion of common subject materials. There is good access to ICT facilities for students but there is insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning.

52. There is insufficient attention to the management of health and safety in workshops. In the machine woodworking workshop, dust levels are high. Some old risk assessments and data sheets are made available but there is little evidence that they have been updated or displayed.

53. In tutorials and work-based learner review sessions, the action plans used with students contain little evidence of being time-driven and there is insufficient revision of the targets set for students.

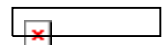
54. All construction students undertake basic skills testing during the induction period. This year, 39 students are receiving additional support. Students who receive additional support make good progress. There is good additional learning support, particularly in practical lessons.

55. There is a good range of programmes that meets local and community needs. Close links have been developed with local schools. 'Taster' events have been put on for pupils from local schools to enable them to sample a range of building crafts. Many of these pupils have progressed to college courses in construction.

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

56. Curriculum and work-based learning managers provide positive leadership, although they have only been in post for a limited period of time and are still establishing systems and procedures. There is effective management of work-based learning. The links between work-based learning and the curriculum area are good and placements are appropriate. Communications in this area are satisfactory, with regular informal meetings that provide some direction for improvement.

### **Engineering, technology and manufacturing**



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

### ***Strengths***

- much good teaching
- effective partnerships with schools and employers
- broad range of courses with good progression opportunities
- good support for students
- good assessment practice in work-based learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient checks on students' learning
- inadequate progress reviews
- low pass rates on many courses
- poor pass rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks.

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

57. The engineering provision comprises three curriculum areas: automotive engineering; mechanical engineering including fabrication and welding; and electrical and electronic engineering. Courses range from foundation to advanced level. Courses are offered on a full-time, part-time day-release, or evening-only basis, though other attendance patterns exist. Qualifications are available at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 together with national certificate, national diploma, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), and other technician and craft courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 436 LSC funded students and a further 325 non-funded students. Most students are on general mechanical programmes. There are 36 learners on work-based programmes. Of these, 14 are advanced modern apprentices, 21 are foundation modern apprentices and 1 is on an NVQ programme. Training in engineering is taught by 36 staff, of whom 10 are part time, overseen by the head of engineering who reports to a head of faculty.

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

58. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory but pass rates on some courses are unsatisfactory. Retention rates are generally close to the national average. Retention rates on the mechanical production course have been above the national average, whilst retention rates on the NVQ engineering foundation course have been below the national average. The pass rates on the national certificate in engineering course, the fabrication and welding course, and the computer-aided draughting course have been below national averages for the last two years. The pass rate on the NVQ in performing operations was poor in 2001/02. The motor vehicle studies foundation course had an excellent pass rate in 2001/02, at 100%. The achievement of modern apprentice frameworks has been poor. At best, pass rates have been 30%.

59. The standards of students' practical skills and technical knowledge are satisfactory. Students on introductory courses are able to carry out routine practical tasks but are often unable to undertake more complex tasks. Students on more advanced courses, including work-based apprentices, demonstrate a range of practical skills and basic knowledge appropriate to the level at which they are studying. For example, a first-year apprentice in a garage was able to remove the front hub of a car to replace a bearing with some help from his supervisor. However, his technical knowledge associated with the operation was narrow. By comparison, a final year apprentice in another garage was able to work unsupervised changing a clutch cable. He demonstrated good technical knowledge relating to the task and made effective use of a nearby computer to check the parts required and the suggested time it should take to complete the task.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Motor vehicle studies foundation (one year)	1	No. of starts	***	39	37
		% retention	***	72	68
		% pass rate	***	79	100
NVQ engineering foundation / performing engineering occupations *	2	No. of starts	21	14	31
		% retention	48	64	68
		% pass rate	100	78	19
City and Guilds 2290 fabrication and welding competencies (two year)	2	No. of starts	****	163	15
		% retention	****	89	53
		% pass rate	****	43	38
City and Guilds 4351-07 computer-aided draughting (one year)	2	No. of starts	***	40	99
		% retention	***	90	86
		% pass rate	***	67	65
National certificate in engineering (two year)	3	No. of starts	****	****	16
		% retention	****	****	81
		% pass rate	****	****	69
GNVQ advanced engineering / national diploma in engineering **	3	No. of starts	****	****	13
		% retention	****	****	62
		% pass rate	****	****	57

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

\* NVQ engineering foundation course changed to performing engineering occupations in 2002

\*\* GNVQ advanced engineering course changed to national diploma in engineering in 2002

\*\*\* course did not run

\*\*\*\* *ISR data not updated*

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

60. Most teaching, learning and attainment are satisfactory or better. Lessons are well planned and linked to past and future work to put them in the context of the programme's scheme of work. Teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for their subjects. The better teaching is seen in theory lessons, where individual and small group practical work is used positively to consolidate students' knowledge of the theory. An example of this was in a materials lesson, where practical tensile testing was undertaken to illustrate destructive testing. There is also some good teaching in practical lessons. In a fabrication and welding lesson, one student was producing a fabricated hopper and another practising vertical butt-welding. Each was enthusiastic and producing work of high quality. There is some poor teaching in some mathematics lessons. Teachers make mistakes on the board and fail to explain new concepts clearly, which undermines student confidence. In some lessons, teachers do not always check the extent to which learning is taking place. The work in students' files is of a satisfactory standard, as are handouts used in lessons. The teaching of key skills is satisfactory.

61. Students' work is set regularly, marked and returned. Feedback is constructive and sufficient in depth to enable students to improve their performance. Assessment and verification procedures are fair and carried out in accordance with awarding body requirements. In work-based learning, the assessment process is particularly good. Progress reviews for work-based learners are inadequate. They are insufficiently detailed and do not identify appropriate targets to encourage progress.

62. There is good support for students from engineering staff and other dedicated learning support staff. Guidance on to programmes through the college or careers is satisfactory, according to students' views. Initial assessment is used effectively to diagnose students' learning needs. There are many examples of good individual support. For example, a motor vehicle student is given notes in a particular print font to aid his reading and he has a reader in class. There is a drop-in tutorial for national certificate students, the availability of an additional welding unit for foundation motor vehicle students, and students with reading and writing needs having extended examination time.

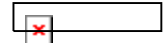
63. Staff are suitably qualified and occupationally experienced. There are work-based assessors and verifiers in each area of engineering. There is a lack of technician support. Overall, the equipment resources are satisfactory, but there is much dated equipment in the department which, although fit for purpose, does not represent current industrial practice. The college has good contacts with two major motor manufacturers and equipment gifted by one is enhancing the college's capability to teach the engineering curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory and computer rooms have been improved as a result of installing air conditioning. Examples of unsafe working practices in the college and work placements were observed, and safety monitoring is not effective.

64. The broad range of programmes on offer meets the needs of employers and the aspirations of students. There are good progression opportunities. Work-based learning is meeting the needs of local garages for vehicle maintenance and repair.

### **Leadership and management**

65. The management of engineering is satisfactory. The management of work-based engineering is much improved. Good use is being made of industry and local school partnerships. The self-assessment process accurately identified a number of key weaknesses and the resulting actions have led to improvements in many of them. Management information is being used effectively to determine the viability of courses. The accuracy of data relating to retention and pass rates is much improved. There are only a few female students on engineering courses. A significant number of older, mature students are on courses aimed at the further development of skills such as computer-aided draughting and the maintenance of modern manufacturing equipment. There is little checking of equal opportunities issues with work-based apprentices.

## Business, professional and management studies



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on NVQ accounting and GNVQ intermediate courses
- good standard of students' work on professional courses
- much good teaching
- effective individual support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- unsatisfactory pass rates on GCE AS and A-level business studies
- insufficient guidance to help full-time students to improve performance
- ineffective progress reviews.

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

66. The college offers a range of business courses from level 1 to level 3 for full-time students. Provision includes GCE AS and A-level courses in business studies and accounting. Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) business studies is offered to full-time and part-time students. At level 2, the college offers full-time courses leading to the GNVQ in business and the NVQ in administration. A full-time level 1 NVQ administration course is available. Provision of part-time professional courses at levels 2, 3 and 4 includes accounting, marketing, personnel and management courses. A basic book-keeping course is offered during the day. Five students are enrolled on modern apprenticeship programmes in accounting. There are 116 students aged 16 to 18 who are mainly enrolled on full-time courses. The 330 students aged over 19 are enrolled on part-time business and professional courses. Some 240 of them are studying book-keeping or accounting.



### **Achievement and standards**

67. Pass rates on some courses are good. In 2002, NVQ accounting courses at levels 2, 3 and 4 all had pass rates well above the national average. The GNVQ intermediate course has improved each year since 2000 and had a 100% pass rate in 2002. Retention and pass rates consistently good on the certificate in personnel practice course. There are some unsatisfactory pass rates on level 3 business courses. The pass rates on GCE AS and A-level business studies and the AVCE course are all below the national average.

68. Students are well motivated and produce a good standard of work. Students on professional courses produce assignments that demonstrate good levels of analysis and excellent presentation skills. AVCE and GNVQ students use their good information technology (IT) skills to produce their assessed work. In lessons, both young and adult students confidently discuss their work and progress. Students in class are mutually supportive and quietly discuss aspects of the work to develop their learning. Attendance and punctuality at some lessons is poor.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in business, management and professional studies 2000 to 2002**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Practical book-keeping	1	No. of starts	48	55	28
		% retention	69	84	86
		% pass rate	82	78	88
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	36	16	11
		% retention	58	88	82
		% pass rate	52	86	100
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	53	59	54
		% retention	81	88	94
		% pass rate	81	67	78
Introductory certificate in management	3	No. of starts	51	43	26
		% retention	96	91	96
		% pass rate	100	90	80
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	46	44	38
		% retention	96	89	95
		% pass rate	80	92	100
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	*	71	28
		% retention	*	86	75
		% pass rate	*	59	62

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

\* course not available

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

69. Much of the teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and managed, with a variety of appropriate learning activities to maintain students' interest. Teachers take account of the differing abilities of the students and in many cases they provide good-quality handouts and reference

materials. Relevant case studies are used to enhance learning for full-time students and effective use is made of the work experience of part-time students. In a personnel development lesson discussing redundancy, the students shared experiences from their own workplaces for the benefit of the group. AVCE students arranged a business conference as part of their assessment and invited all the full-time business students in the college to attend. The two-day conference included a range of speakers from local businesses and the law. The planning and organising of the conference provided the students with an opportunity to gain accreditation for the additional key skill of problem solving, as well as course assessment. It was an excellent learning opportunity for the other business students who attended the conference. Key skills are included in the courses for all full-time students and for work-based trainees in business. Good opportunities are available to gather evidence from coursework. In some lessons, the teaching lacks variety or does not provide sufficient challenge for all students, and teachers do not systematically check that all the students are learning.

70. Tasks set for internal assessment are appropriate and meet the needs of awarding bodies. Regular homework is set and feedback is generally good. However, in some cases, particularly for full-time students, comments are often too brief and do not give students a clear indication of what is needed to achieve a higher grade.

71. Teachers are well qualified, competent in their subject areas and enthusiastic. The good staff development opportunities enable teaching staff to keep up-to-date with professional and course developments. Resources for learning in business are generally good and accommodation is satisfactory. The area is well equipped with computers and students are able to use the excellent college study centre. Some classrooms are equipped with data projectors and interactive whiteboards. In one lesson, the interactive whiteboard was used effectively to record the results of a class discussion, which was then added to the course area on the college intranet for students' reference. Students can retrieve some materials, such as schemes of work, class notes and assignments, from the college's virtual learning environment.

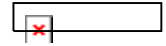
72. Weekly tutorials are arranged for all students. They are timetabled for full-time students and arranged more informally on part-time courses to meet the needs of students. Progress reviews for full-time students are not thorough and do not set clear targets for achievement of learning goals. Work-based learners are regularly monitored in the workplace by the college work-based learning co-ordinator. There are good links between the co-ordinator and the college course tutor. They ensure that any issues raised are dealt with and that the learners are receiving any additional support required to help them to progress. The work experience arranged for the full-time NVQ administration students is good and provides the students with opportunities to gather appropriate evidence of competence.

73. There is effective individual support for students. All students are screened for the identification of literacy, numeracy and other learning needs. Support is provided through attendance at skills development sessions or, in some cases, by providing additional support in lessons. Support for part-time students is good. Flexible attendance arrangements allow for individual students' needs and students are encouraged to contact staff for assistance out of class time. In accounting lessons, much of the work is practical and students receive good individual support from the teachers. There are few direct links with the employers of part-time students and there is no set policy for reporting on the progress of students who are sponsored by their employers.

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

74. Curriculum management is good. Teachers work closely in teams and communication is effective. The college quality assurance process is fully implemented and actions are closely monitored. There is a good system of internal lesson observations, with support provided for under-performing teachers. Targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates are set and monitored. A system to enable students' achievement to be measured against their qualifications on entry is currently being piloted for the AVCE business course.

## Information and communications technology



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

### **Strengths**

- consistently excellent pass rates on GNVQ foundation courses
- good pass rates on European computer driving license (ECDL) and Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma
- comprehensive use of technology to help learning
- much effective teaching
- successful widening of participation.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor pass rates on computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) courses
- insufficient staff training in recent ICT innovations.

### **Scope of provision**

75. The ICT provision offers a wide range of courses. Full-time courses include GNVQ IT at foundation and intermediate level, AVCE single and double award, GCE AS and A-level ICT, BTEC first and national diplomas and access to HE. The adult and community learning provision offers courses in basic IT and ECDL. This broad range of courses attracts 250 students aged 16 to 18 and 900 adults.

### **Achievement and standards**

76. There are excellent pass rates on GNVQ foundation, ECDL and BTEC national diploma courses. Pass rates are poor on the CLAIT course. There are low retention rates on ECDL courses and the BTEC national diploma course. Retention rates on other courses are satisfactory. Project and

assignment work is generally of a good standard. Students are encouraged to use the Internet, intranet, virtual learning environment and local area network to fulfil the requirements of their assignments. This allows them to develop good computing skills. In a national diploma first-year group, students produced three different ways of effectively validating the requirements of a system. A set of good-quality specifications was produced, using truth tables, structured English and a flow chart. In another group, students were able to carry out the required functions in word processing to a good standard and were able to apply those skills to a range of documents. National diploma students were able to load an operating system, identify the complex problems inherent in installing drivers and find appropriate solutions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	13	17	17
		% retention	69	81	81
		% pass rate	100	100	100
CLAIT aggregated (one year, two year and short course)	1	No. of starts	710	375	160
		% retention	62	81	84
		% pass rate	66	58	58
Open College Network computing and word processing for absolute beginners	1	No. of starts	*	363	262
		% retention	*	94	92
		% pass rate	*	77	66
ECDL (one year)	2	No. of starts	197	331	427
		% retention	83	51	68
		% pass rate	92	67	91
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	63	67	51
		% retention	75	85	73
		% pass rate	62	61	62
BTEC national diploma	3	No. of starts	21	25	40
		% retention	60	80	53
		% pass rate	75	42	100

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

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

77. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In lessons, teachers support students individually. Materials used in teaching are available in shared folders that can be downloaded from the local area network. There is much effective teaching in lessons. In the best lessons, there is clear action planning and students at the beginning of the lesson decide their learning objectives. In a national diploma lesson, students constructing a network were able to diagnose and rectify complex faults through group discussion. In a first diploma lesson, a mixed-ability group designed, researched and produced a solution to enable football players to effectively communicate with each other. In the best lessons, teachers use questions effectively to recap previous learning and stimulate thought on current tasks. In a few lessons, an over-reliance on a single teaching method restricts the range of experiences for students. Full-time national diploma students are given the opportunity to broaden

their learning through work experience.

78. Assignment briefs are clear and demanding. Final assessment is based on assignments but formative assessment is not regularly carried out. Homework is generally given back quickly and there is effective formal and informal feedback to students. On the adult and community learning courses, students are enthusiastic and are encouraged by the use of learning maps in identifying their own progress and achievement.

79. There are sufficient workstations for students across the provision. The college has a four-year replacement policy for equipment and students have a password, network space and Internet access. Good dedicated technical support provides an exemplary service to community centres. Some accommodation on the main site is unsuitable. Computers are poorly positioned and some students have difficulty in seeing the whiteboard. There are crowded working conditions and no air conditioning. Library resources are adequate, but some books are dated and fail to accommodate the wide range of courses on offer. Most staff are well qualified and experienced in their field. The latest innovations in the ICT curriculum, however, are not available, due to the lack of access to network and computing resources and training for the computing staff in recent ICT innovations.

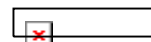
80. The college has effective strategies to recruit adult students through a range of IT part-time courses at its main site and at a large number of community centres. The centres are welcoming and supportive for students who have often been out of education for many years. Formal entry requirements are not necessary for students who start on an IT course for absolute beginners. Days and times of attendance are offered to suit students' personal needs. The broad range of courses provides progression opportunities at all levels.

81. Students' interviews cover course advice, progression routes and destinations. Students receive an initial assessment of their learning needs and appropriate support is provided. All students receive an induction on starting their course and are allocated support tutors. Tutors provide significant support to students. In adult and community learning provision, an effective electronic mechanism is in place to monitor students' attendance and achievements in learning activities. The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities and widening participation. Students with a range of additional learning needs, including dyslexia, language and basic skills needs, are well supported. Adult students can arrange for and are given appropriate specialist tuition on an individual basis by learning support tutors in the community provision.

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

82. The management of ICT provision is satisfactory. A new learning centre is planned as part of a coherent widening participation strategy. This will accommodate the needs of inhabitants of a new residential area. Communications are good between staff and senior managers. Schemes of work and lesson plans do not all adhere to the same standards. Students have complained about the ineffective management of the timetabling of rooms.

### **Hospitality and catering**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking and NVQ level 1 food and drink service courses

- high retention rates on most courses
- good development of students' key skills
- effective learning support.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates NVQ level 2 food and drink service and NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking
- poor accommodation and specialist equipment
- insufficient technician support.

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

83. The college offers full-time and part-time courses leading to NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in food preparation and cooking and food and drink service. Other courses available include food hygiene, cake decorating, wine appreciation and the national licensee's certificate. There are 176 students aged 16 to 18 and 8 adults on full-time courses. On part-time and short courses, there are 296 adults and 26 students aged 16 to 18. Eight students are on work-based learning food preparation and cooking programmes.

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

84. The pass rates on NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking and level 1 food and drink service courses have been consistently above the national average for the last three years. The retention rates on NVQ levels 1 and 2 food preparation and cooking and NVQ level 1 food and drink service are consistently above the national average. The pass rates are low on NVQ level 2 food and drink service and NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking courses. Students' portfolios are well organised and the standard of work is good. There is effective development of students' key skills of number, communication and IT. Students are enthusiastic about their work and attendance at lessons is good. The standards of students' technical skills in kitchens and service techniques in the restaurant are satisfactory. In the production kitchen, students are able to plan and organise their work and produce food for restaurant service within tight timescales. Students work well as a team in the production kitchen and public restaurant. Nearly all students successfully gain a certificate in basic food hygiene and all full-time students work towards key skills qualifications in number, communications and IT at either level 1 or level 2.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering, 2000 to 2002***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	50	33	62
		% retention	74	84	82
		% pass rate	100	46	69
NVQ serving food and drink	1	No. of starts	8	6	29
		% retention	88	83	90
		% pass rate	100	100	92
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	67	32	25
		% retention	59	81	100
		% pass rate	100	92	88
NVQ serving food and drink	2	No. of starts	35	54	22
		% retention	57	77	50
		% pass rate	90	63	64

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

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

85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are effectively planned and managed well. Some teachers use imaginative methods. In a practical lesson on dough, the teacher arranged a display of different types of bread and recipes and had a discussion on taste and cultural differences. In another lesson, the students had a tasting session on exotic fruits, most of which they had never heard of, and this generated a good discussion on taste and the use of fruit in recipes. In the less successful lessons, teachers talked for long periods of time and students' interest was not maintained. Handouts are generally dull and uninspiring and do not encourage students to read them. Insufficient consideration is given to the wide range of abilities within groups. On NVQ programmes, the assessment of students is planned rigidly. This does not allow the more able students to be assessed more quickly and make progress towards their qualification at a faster pace.

86. The teaching of key skills is well planned and integrated with students' main programme of study. Students gather evidence for their key skills qualifications from working in the production kitchen and restaurant. In an application of number lesson, students produced hand-written graphs and tables from data gathered from the restaurant and then transferred the information to spreadsheets during their IT lesson. Most students enjoy key skills lessons and assignments, and students demonstrate good levels of attainment.

87. Learning support for students is good. Support is effective for students who need help with their reading and writing. In one example, handouts were produced on coloured paper to make it easier for students to read. Sensitive support is provided by learning support assistants in lessons where students have behavioural problems.

88. Some specialist accommodation and equipment are poor and there is a shortage of kitchen utensils. The equipment in kitchens does not reflect industrial standards. Students do not have the opportunity to gain experience of using modern and technically advanced equipment to prepare them for work in the catering industry. Kitchen equipment is old and is not maintained well. In one kitchen, three of the seven ovens are not working. In some lessons, there is not enough equipment for the number of students in the group and students' learning is adversely affected. In one kitchen, the deep fat fryer is only large enough to cook one portion of food at a time. This was problematic for students being assessed on dough products as they found it difficult to cook doughnuts in the allocated time.

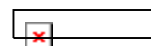
89. Teachers have appropriate vocational qualifications and most have recent experience of work in

the catering industry. There is insufficient technician support on hospitality courses. Consequently, food from the stores does not always arrive on time for cookery lessons and sometimes arrives frozen. In one lesson, foundation students used frozen chicken and prawns to make sandwiches. In another lesson, an assessment was delayed because of the late arrival of food. Insufficient attention is given to the standard of cleaning, especially in kitchens. Female students do not have changing facilities and the male changing area does not have hand-washing facilities.

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

90. Courses are well managed. Staff meet regularly to monitor students' progress and any issues arising are dealt with promptly. Course reviews are thorough. Appropriate action is taken to help improve the quality of the provision. All staff contribute to the self-assessment report and students' views are taken into account. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and includes most of the weaknesses identified by inspectors.

### **Hair, beauty and holistic therapy**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most courses
- much good teaching and learning
- high standards of practical skills
- effective learning support
- good learning resources
- effective curriculum management
- broad range of provision.



### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates on NVQ level 2 hairdressing
- insufficiently thorough marking of students' work.

### **Scope of provision**

91. The hair, beauty and holistic therapy curriculum area offers a broad range of programmes. Courses available include NVQ levels 1 to 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy, the national diploma in media make-up, sports therapy diplomas and many options in holistic therapy. There are 283 full-time students, of whom 189 are aged 16 to 18, and 310 part-time students, of whom 254 are over 19 years of age.

### **Achievement and standards**

92. Pass rates are high on most courses. In 2002, pass rates on NVQ level 2 beauty therapy, body massage, Indian head massage and reflexology were above the national average. On NVQ level 1 hairdressing, all students who completed their course achieved the qualification. However, the pass rate on NVQ level 2 hairdressing has been below the national average for the last three years. The retention rates on most courses are also high. The quality of students' assignments is good. Media make-up students make imaginative use of IT and pictures in their work to differentiate between cultures. Many students have developed good research skills. Students are well motivated and responsive to learning. In hair and beauty salons, students are professional in their approach and their practical skills are good. In 2002, some 83% of media make-up students progressed to higher national diploma courses.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in hair, beauty and holistic therapy, 2000 to 2002**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	1	No. of starts	13	34	30
		% retention	83	88	79
		% pass rate	80	71	100
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	58	43	36
		% retention	75	84	57
		% pass rate	79	58	65
NVQ beauty therapy (two year)	2	No. of starts	112	43	63
		% retention	75	86	71
		% pass rate	77	51	82
Body massage diploma	2	No. of starts	32	37	20
		% retention	72	81	85
		% pass rate	96	83	94
Indian head massage diploma short course	2	No. of starts	47	59	50
		% retention	94	85	94

		% pass rate	98	96	96
Reflexology diploma	3	No. of starts	21	63	37
		% retention	90	84	70
		% pass rate	84	72	96

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

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

93. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students master basic techniques before moving on to more complex skills. In a hairdressing lesson, adult students at an early stage of their course demonstrated high levels of competence in highlighting using weaving and foil techniques. Students benefit from working in the hairdressing salons, which have a sufficient number of external clients to enable students to develop their occupational skills. Good professional standards are achieved. The standard of students' practical skills in reflexology and Indian head massage are particularly good. The college has good links with industry and students' practical skills are further developed by well-planned work experience in local salons. In sports therapy, teachers effectively integrate theory into practical application. Teachers seldom use ICT for teaching and learning.

94. The induction programme is effective and students find it useful. Students receive good levels of learning support, depending on their individual needs. For example, in busy salons, there is often more than one teacher and in theory lessons additional support is provided for students with basic skills needs. Students have a good understanding of the progress that they are making. They receive regular feedback from tutors during tutorial sessions. In addition, students set their own short-term targets and this is helping to improve retention rates.

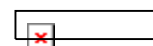
95. The quality of feedback on students' work varies widely. In the best examples, students' work is annotated with encouraging comments and pointers to help them improve. However, on some other assignments, the marking is superficial. Internal verification is satisfactory. The progress that students are making in their practical work is not always documented well. Parents of younger students receive regular progress reports and are invited to parents' evenings at the college.

96. The hairdressing salons provide realistic working environments for students. They have good equipment and good-quality products. The specialist media make-up room is a very good resource, but some of the other beauty salons are in need of refurbishment. Some classrooms are too small for the number of students in the group. The learning centre has a good range of books, magazines and trade journals. Students have easy access to computers, which many use to complete their coursework. Staff hold appropriate qualifications and industrial experience. They regularly update their subject knowledge and skills. Many part-time teachers are employed in industry and effectively use current industrial practices in their teaching.

### **Leadership and management**

97. Management of the provision is good. The manager provides a clear direction for curriculum development. Staff are enthusiastic and committed; they work well as a team and communications across the different sections are good. There are regular team meetings where quality assurance is discussed and appropriate action taken to rectify any problems.

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



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on full-time courses
- good personal and academic support for students
- good progression opportunities for childcare and access to caring professions
- good work experience for full-time students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor achievement on work-based learning programmes
- insufficient application of key skills in the vocational area
- weak internal verification.

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

98. The college offers courses in health care, early years and public services. At the time of the inspection, there were 211 full-time students, most aged 16 to 18, and 293 part-time students. Full-time courses in early years range from the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) foundation certificate in childcare and education through to the diploma in early years at level 3. Currently, there are no students at level 1 or level 2 in care, but there is a full-time AVCE course and full-time and part-time access to caring courses. Public services provision includes BTEC first and national diplomas. Part-time courses include counselling and NVQ early years and NVQ care at levels 2 and 3. There are 18 apprentices on work-based learning programmes. All apprentices are employed in local care or early years settings. Care apprenticeships are offered through consortia arrangements with the Wiltshire Partnership.

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

99. Pass rates are high on full-time courses and satisfactory on part-time courses. Retention rates vary year on year but for most courses the retention rates remain around the national average. Pass rates for NVQs and apprenticeship frameworks are poor.

100. Students coursework files are well organised and the standard of work is good. Students are encouraged to research widely and some use the Internet effectively to support learning. Most students are articulate and confident and are developing skills for independent learning. There is good progression within the college and to relevant employment on early years courses. The majority of access students progress into social work and physiotherapy. Those progressing to nursing or midwifery are guaranteed a place at Oxford Brooks University.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and public services, 2000 to 2002***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	25	30	38
		% retention	68	60	76
		% pass rate	94	78	100
Further counselling skills	2	No. of starts	26	25	33
		% retention	50	84	91
		% pass rate	100	81	93
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	37	16	18
		% retention	65	94	67
		% pass rate	75	87	100
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	18	12	10
		% retention	56	92	70
		% pass rate	70	91	100
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	17	15	17
		% retention	35	100	71
		% pass rate	83	67	83
Access to caring professions - occupational therapy	3	No. of starts	14	12	17
		% retention	100	92	88
		% pass rate	0	91	67

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

***Quality of education and training***

101. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers draw on their breadth of vocational experience to illustrate lessons and make effective links to students' work experience. In one of the best lessons, students were fully engaged, confident and articulate. They responded well to and drew on the knowledge and experience they had gained in the workplace. An early years lesson on developing curriculum plans was designed to build up students' knowledge and understanding. A series of tasks enabled the students to develop knowledge, skills and confidence in curriculum planning and successfully complete a task they had perceived as difficult. Regular checks were made to confirm individual learning. Some teaching lacks the creativity to challenge and inspire students. In the less effective lessons, teachers fail to engage students adequately or to extend the learning of the more able. Most students attend lessons regularly. A monitoring system to address issues of attendance and punctuality has recently been introduced.

102. Assessment is set at an appropriate level and is vocationally relevant. Assignment briefs give guidance on requirements, including criteria for grading. There has been some inappropriate timing of assignments leading to students' workloads not being well balanced throughout the year. Assessment on the NVQ early years course, including direct assessment in the work place, is

effective. Homework and assignments are vocationally relevant. Constructive feedback from teachers ensures that students are clear about how they can improve their work. Full-time students work towards key skills, including the additional key skill of working with others. This is gained whilst on work experience. Lesson plans identify opportunities for the development of key skills but they are rarely addressed in lessons.

103. There is good personal and academic support for students. Students' progress is monitored through the tutorial system. Individual learning plans are reviewed and updated on a regular basis but lack demanding targets to ensure students reach their full potential. There is good support for students with specific learning needs. Coloured photocopies of handouts are provided in lessons for all students with dyslexia. Learning support assistants work in the classroom with students but they are not always effectively deployed.

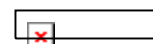
104. All full-time students have a wide range of work placement experiences, including the opportunity to work in the accident and emergency department of a local hospital. A recent review of placement co-ordination has improved communication between college staff and placement supervisors. Students and supervisors find the work experience handbook, which is very detailed, extremely useful.

105. Resources are adequate to meet course requirements but many of the books are dated. A learning resource advisor works effectively with the curriculum staff and students to promote e-learning opportunities. All staff either hold a teaching qualification or are working towards one.

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

106. Management of the area is satisfactory. Curriculum leaders review their courses on a bi-annual basis informing an evaluative and accurate self-assessment report. Curriculum teams meet formally each week and part-time staff are paid to attend the meetings. Management of NVQ programmes is poor. The recent recruitment of an NVQ co-ordinator for childcare is beginning to have a good effect, but the lack of an NVQ co-ordinator for care adversely affects the provision. Inaccurately recorded NVQ data cause problems for the management of this area. The internal verification process across all full-time and NVQ provision is not well established. Verification is inadequately planned, monitored and recorded. Internal verifiers give insufficient feedback to assessors and there is inadequate sharing of good practice and standardisation.

### **Visual and performing arts and media**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on many courses
- good standard of work in dance, drama, fine arts and textiles
- effective teaching

- good range of provision.
- good progression to higher level courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention and pass rates on national diploma in graphic design and GCE AS art and design
- poor management of resources
- inadequate accommodation and equipment.

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

107. The provision in visual and performing arts is housed in three separate buildings. There are 500 full-time students studying visual and performing arts, of whom 375 are aged 16 to 18 and 125 are over 19. There are also 171 part-time students on a range of community courses. The college offers GNVQ foundation and intermediate art and design and GNVQ intermediate media. There is a first diploma in performing arts. The needs of adult returnees are met through the City and Guilds units in interior design. Students from level 2 progress to a wide range of courses at level 3. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in media, drama, dance, and art and design. There are national diplomas in graphic design, performing arts and music, and AVCE courses in media and art. There is a pre-degree art and design foundation studies course and an access course. The college offers a dance foundation course at level 2/3. This is a specialist course run in conjunction with the Swindon dance agency in the Town Hall studios.

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

108. There are good pass and retention rates on many courses. The GNVQ intermediate courses in art and design and media had pass and retention rates well above the national average in 2002. At level 3, there have been consistently high retention and pass rates on the pre-degree foundation studies courses, the access courses, and the GNVQ and AVCE courses in art and design. The pass rate on the GCE A-level media and communication course and GCE AS and A-level drama courses are also high. There are poor pass and retention rates on the national diploma in design course and the GCE AS fine art course.

109. Students are developing good practical skills in dance and performance skills in drama. In ballet, jazz and contemporary dance, students' spatial awareness and level of skill is impressive. In art and design, the work of pre-degree foundation and access students in the fine art and textiles area is of a high standard. They are developing in a personal direction in their work, and they research media and imagery in an ambitious and professional manner. Art and design students make appropriate references to contemporary artists and are confident in talking about their work. Students in media and music produce well-presented and thorough work. The drawing skills of level

2 and AVCE art and design students are weak, with too much reliance on work from ready-made images.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	16	16	23
		% retention	69	81	96
		% pass rate	82	77	86
Pre-degree foundation studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	88	68	70
		% retention	90	94	91
		% pass rate	100	97	98
GNVQ advanced art and design / AVCE art and design *	3	No. of starts	**	37	33
		% retention	**	97	78
		% pass rate	**	86	96
NDD design	3	No. of starts	**	**	26
		% retention	**	**	54
		% pass rate	**	**	86
Access art, design and media	3	No. of starts	42	34	26
		% retention	61	97	92
		% pass rate	100	76	100
GCE AS drama	3	No. of starts	***	32	18
		% retention	***	100	83
		% pass rate	***	81	100

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

\* GNVQ advanced art and design course changed to AVCE art and design in 2002

\*\* ISR data not updated

\*\*\* course not available

***Quality of education and training***

110. Much teaching in this area is good. Teaching is particularly good in performing arts, where lessons are well planned and delivered. In one drama lesson, first-year students were working on a variety of well-chosen texts. The more experienced second-year students acted as directors. All 30 students were focused on the task and the directors gave thoughtful advice that enabled younger students to improve their performances and acquire new skills. The best teaching sets a disciplined standard and encourages independent learning. Students across the provision benefit from tutorial action planning. This is the main form of teaching for art and design students, where one-to-one tutorials and portfolio reviews ensure that students are very clear about the direction of their work. Courses for part-time adult students are tailored to their individual needs, including the provision of additional support. There is effective use of learning support teachers in lessons to assist students with additional needs.

111. Students on performing arts courses are given clear, informative briefs that make explicit what they must do to achieve a pass. Students on the first diploma in performing arts are given a clear summative statement on their progress at the end of each term. There are regular group critiques in art and design that inform students and allow them to develop their own critical awareness.

However, some briefs in art and design could be more explicit in describing the assessment criteria. In media, the written feedback on students' work is detailed and positive and makes good suggestions for improvement.

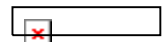
112. Resources in this area are inadequate and the management of them is poor. There is insufficient technician support and little administrative support. This places additional stress on teachers and restricts their time with students. Much of the accommodation is poor. The general classrooms used for art and design are small for the size of classes and many of the rooms are very hot. There is no storage for students' work or equipment. Tools and equipment are brought in for each lesson by staff. Art and design studios are on the sixth floor while specialist workshops in print and ceramics and sculpture are in separate buildings on the ground floor. Students need to move between these spaces as their work develops. The time and distance involved is disruptive, making it difficult for teachers to supervise the students' work. There are good facilities for dance and drama at the Town Hall site, a facility rented by the college. These provide professional standard dance studios and a theatre. There are poor and dated specialist facilities for media. For photography, facilities are few and there are insufficient enlargers. Printmaking equipment is very dated and the etching process cannot be used due to health and safety concerns. Staff are well qualified and many have industrial experience which they use in their teaching.

113. Many dance students progress to leading dance schools. Mature students on the access course work alongside foundation students. The college has been flexible in agreeing individual timetables for many students taking account of their personal circumstances. There is good progression to HE. The majority of students from the foundation and access art and design courses gained places on degree courses, many staying within the college. The number of students on GCE AS and A2 courses has been declining.

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

114. Individual courses and programmes in this area are well managed. Course teams are supportive of each other and work well together. Staff development and appraisal are effective. The quality assurance systems in this area are not well established and the programme area development plan lacks specific targets. Course reviews are insufficiently detailed and in some cases incomplete. Data on students' achievements are not reliable.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- high pass rates on GCSE psychology and sociology courses in 2001/02
- effective teaching of study skills



- good use of target setting to improve students' performance.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on GCSE courses
- insufficient development of key skills
- poor assessment practice
- poor management of the access to HE course.

### **Scope of provision**

115. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 and adults at levels 2 and 3. The majority of courses are at level 3 and include GCE AS and A2 history, psychology, geography, sociology, law, government and politics, philosophy, and critical thinking. It also offers accelerated GCE A-level courses, according to demand. An access to humanities course is offered which includes literary studies, history, philosophy, psychology and sociology. At level 2, the college now offers GCSE sociology, psychology and archaeology courses. Most of the provision is offered on the college's main site. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 255 students enrolled on courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

116. Overall retention and pass rates are satisfactory. Pass rates are high on most GCE A-level courses. In the year ending 2002, there were very high pass rates for GCSE psychology and sociology. Retention rates are low for GCSE subjects. The pass rate on the access to humanities course is declining and poor.

117. The standard of students' work is satisfactory, with students working at, or above, the expected standard. Students' engagement in lessons often demonstrates a good understanding of the topic studied. For example, in a politics lesson, a quiz on the US and UK systems of government was both enjoyable and showed that students had a good grasp of the subject. In a sociology lesson, students gave good explanations of the term 'existentialism'. A GCE AS law lesson covering the doctrine of judicial precedent ended with students devising their own questions to pose to others; the responses from students demonstrated a clear understanding of the subject matter. Attendance is good across most of the provision but markedly lower on GCSE courses.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2000 to 2002**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology (one	2	No. of starts	75	24	36

year)		% retention	54	75	44
		% pass rate	83	61	100
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	30	35	17
		% retention	63	74	53
		% pass rate	68	42	78
GCE A-level law (one year)	3	No. of starts	35	14	22
		% retention	54	79	77
		% pass rate	68	73	71
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	*	18	27
		% retention	*	78	96
		% pass rate	*	100	81
GCE A2 government and politics	3	No. of starts	*	*	17
		% retention	*	*	88
		% pass rate	*	*	87
Access to humanities	3	No. of starts	15	18	16
		% retention	64	44	56
		% pass rate	100	63	56

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

\* course not available

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

118. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. One feature of the courses in humanities is the emphasis placed on study skills. Teachers effectively integrate examination skills and techniques into the lessons. In one sociology lesson, students were discussing a topic with a view to putting the key points on to a postcard-sized paper for revision.

119. In the better lessons, learning is made enjoyable and students are actively engaged and encouraged to respond to ideas. There is little use of ILT in lessons but, when it is used, it is used imaginatively. In one GCE A-level geography lesson, students were invited to identify features of limestone scenery and type them on to the screen. Similarly, an interactive whiteboard was used effectively to forge links between the teacher's notes, contemporary photographs and primary source documents in a GCE A-level history lesson.

120. In some less effective lessons, teachers rely mainly upon one method of teaching, using the board to record information and asking the students questions on the topic. This gives students little opportunity to think for themselves and take up time on work that could be undertaken outside of the lesson.

121. There is an effective system of student progress review and target setting. Comparative analysis of data on students' previous attainment and achievements at two key stages of the year enable their progress to be assessed and targets to be set. Two days, one in October and one in March, are dedicated to formal review meetings with teachers. Feedback and assessment of performance are discussed with students and individual action plans are developed. Both students and staff comment positively on the motivational benefits of the monitoring of progress.

122. Key skills are underdeveloped. No reference is made to key skills in lesson plans or schemes of

work. A key skills IT workshop was very poorly attended.

123. Students in law and history are assessed regularly. Teachers mark students' work constructively and detailed comments enable students to improve their performance. However, some of the assessment practice is poor. For instance, there is some poor marking of students' work in sociology and psychology. On some essays, there are no comments in the body of the text and only a brief explanation of the grade at the end. Little guidance is given to students about how they might improve their work. There is no moderation of assessment practice and quality of assessment. There is little consistency in assignment schedules and marking schemes.

124. Teaching staff are well qualified in their subject area. Subject base rooms are of a satisfactory standard and are equipped with visual teaching aids. There is a well-resourced open access facility in the college study centre. Library book stock for the area is satisfactory, with multiple copies of course textbooks available. Key skills *skill builder* materials are available to help students develop their key skills. Good study support materials are produced for some subjects. The sociology handbook is detailed, well written and used both in the classroom and for students' independent study.

125. Enrichment activities for some subjects are good. For instance, politics and history students have a regular trip to Europe and geography students undertake a field trip annually. Timetabling for GCSE and GCE AS and A-level provision is satisfactory, but some pathways in the access provision restrict students' choices.

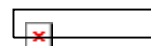
126. A good system of learning support operates in this area. All students have an initial assessment, which diagnoses any specific learning needs. Some students benefit from specialist equipment provided by the college. In one psychology class, a student with dyslexia had a computer to help him take notes. Another student with dyslexia had access to a learning assistant to help with writing. All students in the programme area have a timetabled hour a week for tutorials. Each subject has a course booklet, which contains details of the subjects, students' entitlements and the course requirements. Students speak well of the support they receive in applying for university from both their personal tutor and the college careers service.

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

127. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. The area has undergone a major re-organisation recently. There is a clear vision of the future development of the area but this is not yet fully understood and shared by all staff. The access programme is poorly co-ordinated. The college has recently changed the moderation system for access to HE courses. The monitoring of students' progress is not yet effective in the new system. Some of the marking of assignments is poor. Some students are unclear about the progress they are making towards achieving the course objectives against the course outcomes.

128. Staff and students have a good understanding of equal opportunities, and access for students with physical disabilities is good.

### **English, languages and communications**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- some high pass rates on GCSE and GCE AS and A-level courses

- good range of community education programmes in modern foreign languages
- good development of students' analytical skills in English and communication studies.

### ***Weaknesses***

- excessive use of English in some community modern foreign language lessons
- insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning
- ineffective curriculum management of modern foreign languages.

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

129. The college offers courses in English, modern foreign languages and EFL. Classes are offered on a full-time and part-time basis, as day or evening classes. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in English literature, English language and communication studies, and a GCSE English course. The college's access to HE programme includes an option in English literature. EFL accreditation and conversation classes are offered at three different levels on a part-time basis.

130. The provision in modern foreign languages includes GCE AS and A-level French and German, GCE AS Spanish, and GCSE French, German and Spanish courses. There is a final diploma programme in French and introductory conversation classes in German, Spanish and Greek. A broad community learning programme currently offers courses in eight languages, including Japanese, at 13 venues in the community as well as at the main college sites.

131. At the time of the inspection, there were 977 students on courses. On English and communication studies courses there are 321 students, of whom 180 are full time, predominantly aged 16 to 18. There are 75 part-time EFL students. Of the 103 students on modern foreign language GCSE and GCE A-level courses, 20 are full time. There are 465 part-time students following community-based language courses.

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

132. Examination performance over recent years has generally been good. There has been a consistently high pass rate for GCSE English. In 2002, there was a 100% pass rate for GCE A-level English language and GCE A-level English literature. In 2001 and 2002, pass rates on GCE AS German and French courses were well above national averages. Retention rates, however, have often been significantly below national averages, a trend now showing signs of improvement. Numbers of students on GCE A-level and AS modern foreign languages programmes are low.

133. Students achieve well on many courses. On English and communication studies courses they demonstrate good skills in close reading and formulating original responses to texts. Students can

develop and sustain arguments, taking appropriate account of the views of others. They show a good understanding of the cultural context of the works being studied. Overall, the standard of written work is good for GCE A level and satisfactory for GCSE. In most foreign language lessons, including EFL, students speak with confidence and a good measure of fluency. In others, however, particularly lessons in the community-based modern languages provision, students' use of the foreign language is more hesitant, with laboured sentence construction and poor pronunciation.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communications, 2000 to 2002***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Practical languages preliminary	1-2	No. of starts	**	**	511
		% retention	**	**	64
		% pass rate	**	**	68
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	110	147	108
		% retention	51	53	69
		% pass rate	95	87	92
GCE AS communication studies	3	No. of starts	**	9	15
		% retention	**	89	73
		% pass rate	**	100	91
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	**	17	21
		% retention	**	81	76
		% pass rate	**	77	88
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	36	45	21
		% retention	83	70	90*
		% pass rate	83	52	100*
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	38	32	19
		% retention	58	94	95*
		% pass rate	90	73	100*

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

\* one year course

\*\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

134. Teaching and learning in most lessons are satisfactory or better. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan well, set clear objectives for students and skilfully direct classroom discussions to facilitate students' progress. Students explore challenging concepts, such as the socially constructed nature of language, censorship or, in a French lesson, capital punishment. In a lesson from the EFL programme, students discussed less complex topics, such as places they liked, but still used a good range of appropriate vocabulary and variety of sentence structures. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not ensure that students are fully engaged in class activities. Key learning points are not given sufficient emphasis and group work is not managed to ensure the momentum of learning is maintained. In most foreign languages lessons taught as part of the community provision, teachers generally select appropriately demanding and interesting topics. These include everyday conversational topics but here, too, abstract ideas, such as preferences, are usefully included. Teaching in some lessons on the community-based languages provision is unsatisfactory. Teachers

use too much English in some lessons and students spend too much time learning about the language rather than speaking it. Students do not attain the fluency appropriate to their experience or aspirations. Where teachers routinely use the foreign language being learned as the main medium of communication, students speak with more confidence and fluency, attaining more authentic pronunciation, accents and intonation.

135. Most teachers have appropriate professional qualifications. Their expertise is well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Many teachers of foreign languages are native speakers of the language they teach. All rooms used are fit for purpose and are often enlivened by visual displays. A foreign languages room is equipped with satellite television, enabling students to watch programmes in a variety of languages. Rooms used on the community programme vary considerably in their attractiveness and suitability. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT in class for the presentation of information, learning activities and conducting research.

136. Students' work is generally subject to rigorous assessment. Written feedback is effective in informing students of the progress they have made and, often, in advising them on how to improve their performance. Close attention is paid to technical accuracy in the use of English. Assessment practice is less effective on community programmes and students less readily understand the process of assessment. Opportunities for the assessment of key skills are identified in some, but not all, lesson plans. However, teachers make little reference to these assessment opportunities in lessons.

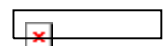
137. There are thorough procedures for monitoring students' progress. Student reviews lead to the completion of action plans. In some cases, the action points are insufficiently detailed and in others they lack timescales for their completion. All full-time students are given an initial diagnostic test and there is specialist support available for those identified with additional learning needs. Test results are effectively used by some subject teachers to help students. Tutors provide good support and respond with sensitivity to individual needs.

138. There is a broad range of community provision in modern languages. Classes are held at a good range of accessible venues in the community. Classes on the main campus are timetabled to accommodate students' domestic and work commitments.

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

139. Management of the area is satisfactory. The programme area is newly constituted following a recent restructuring of the management of academic programmes. It has yet to develop a clear sense of direction. English and communication studies staff meet regularly and are effective in sharing good practice; individual courses are well managed. Staff have a good understanding of target setting and make good use of performance data in the course review processes. The curriculum management of modern foreign languages is less effective. In some cases, students following similar courses, but attending different classes, have markedly different experiences. The sharing of good practice is too reliant on informal arrangements. Internal lesson observations do not give feedback relating to specific comment on language teaching and they are not sufficiently developmental. There have been recent staffing changes to strengthen the management of the community provision, and this has begun to have an effect on the organisation of the provision.

### **English for speakers of other languages**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good development of students' language and personal skills
- high retention rates on short courses
- effective teaching on ESOL programmes
- good links with the community and employers
- effective individual support for students
- good management of recent national developments.

### ***Weaknesses***

- little use of ILT for teaching and learning
- insufficient learning materials for language development
- poor individual learning plans.

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

140. The college offers full-time and part-time courses at all levels from pre-entry to level 2. Courses vary in length, from assessment sessions of three guided learning hours to full-time one-year courses, and part-time courses at two hours a week over 10 to 20 weeks. The majority of ESOL students attend two to four hours per week. Courses attract adults from 38 different countries. Students are migrant workers, immigrants who have settled in the UK, refugees or asylum seekers. Many have degrees and professional qualifications. There are 42 courses on the two college sites. Other courses are run in local community centres for Asian women and asylum seekers, in the local hospital for nurses, doctors and surgeons under the sponsorship of their employer, and in the link learning centre and the family centre. Courses on the main college sites include one office administration NVQ course, three IT courses for beginners and one business communication course.

141. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 300 students on courses and 45 students with ESOL needs receiving learner support on their vocational courses across a wide range

of curriculum areas.

142. Full-time ESOL curriculum staff are responsible for course planning and development, staff recruitment, and budget management. A total of 13 full-time, fractional or part-time teachers share the teaching. Most staff have a specific qualification in teaching ESOL or EFL.

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

143. Data supplied by the college relating to ESOL students' achievement contain both accredited and non-accredited achievement assessed against individual learning goals, as identified in initial assessments. However, the manner by which data are collected does not allow the production of a summary table of students' achievements that would clearly indicate both accredited and non-accredited achievements.

144. Most students' work shows evidence of good language and literacy attainment. Students' level of fluency is good; they develop good comprehension skills and are able to communicate appropriately in both formal and informal contexts. Students have a good understanding of language functions and idioms and welcome opportunities to improve pronunciation and intonation. They make good progress towards achieving challenging goals during lessons, and are able to use their new skills in their everyday life. For example, in one entry level 1 lesson, students used modals to make requests accurately and consistently and, in an entry level 2 lesson, students were able to discriminate accurately between present perfect and simple past tenses when recalling recent activities.

145. Students respond well to teachers' sympathetic prompting. They are eager to answer questions and do not fear making mistakes. They show interest and take pride in their work, apply time and effort to acquire new skills, develop new ideas and increase their understanding of language structures. Students are good at self-assessing their progress. They understand well what they need to do to improve and are highly motivated. They develop confidence and self-esteem and gain good communication and organisational skills. Enhanced attitudes and skills enable them to work independently and collaboratively.

146. The retention rates of 88% to 93% on basic and elementary short courses, where students receive additional support, are high and above national averages. Students are punctual but attendance on some courses is erratic. Rates of progression within the ESOL programmes are high and students are keen to prepare for both spoken and written examinations moving from one level to the next.

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

147. Most teaching and learning are good or better. Teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge. Well-planned lessons ensure effective practice of new language structures. Teachers give clear instructions, inspire and challenge students and use humour to stimulate interest. Students receive continuous feedback on progress. Teachers are good at checking students' understanding, invite responses to confirm that learning is taking place, and offer constructive advice when needed. Teaching methods are consistent with students' personal objectives and preferred learning styles. Most teachers are effective managers of groups with mixed levels, needs, backgrounds and aspirations. They promote respect for all, good working relationships and ensure that students support each other well. In some lessons, a workshop approach is used wherein some students are supported by assistants while others are guided by their teachers through tasks that are specifically relevant to their needs. Homework is set regularly and good marking provides constructive feedback for students to act upon.

148. The materials available for ESOL learning do not take into account the diversity of needs, cultural backgrounds and learning styles of students. There are very few audio-visual aids to promote the practice of speaking and listening skills. The readers used are dated and books are often Euro-centric.



149. There is little use of ILT in ESOL lessons. IT classes are limited to three different two-hour lessons per week, where students can develop both literacy skills and learn the basics of word processing and computing. Much effort has been invested in developing a valuable self-study ESOL program, accessible through the college ESOL web site in the college learning centre.

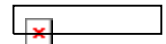
150. All ESOL students receive an initial interview where induction takes place and the assessment of prior knowledge, preferred learning styles and additional learning needs is carried out. However, individual learning plans are not used effectively as individual learning needs are not specific and are not placed in the context of the students' experiences. The assessment and recording of non-accredited unexpected outcomes are not thorough. Milestones are not set and reviews of work do not provide effective action planning with specific targets and timescales.

151. Students receive good personal support. A dedicated ESOL adviser works closely with learning support staff across the college curriculum areas and ensures that support with grammar, comprehension and study skills is available for all students. A good multi-faith approach, with a local chaplain accessible on the two college sites, provides support for ESOL students who are suffering from traumas and anxieties. Crèche facilities and home tuition are being planned to support ESOL students on courses in community venues during the summer months.

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

152. There has been good leadership and management of recent national developments. Staff all attended national core curriculum training last year and are now preparing for diagnostic assessment training. Some staff have undertaken dyslexia awareness training. They are now starting to share good practice more effectively. There are good partnership arrangements with the community, schools and employers that contribute to local targets and widening participation. Full-time staff members represent ESOL on the college equal opportunities team. Management has recently re-organised the budget to provide audio-visual aids and IT equipment in ESOL dedicated rooms.

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



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high retention rates on full-time courses
- stimulating teaching to effectively engage students
- good links with special schools and external agencies
- good accommodation and learning resources

- effective learning and personal support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low progression rates
- low pass rates on full-time courses
- inadequate individual action plans
- weak monitoring of students' progress.

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

153. There is full-time and part-time provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most provision is at the North Star site. There are 23 students on the vocational skills programme, which aims to integrate students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with mainstream vocational provision. Some 24 students are enrolled on the entry level skills for working life course and 28 students on the pre-entry level towards independence course. The college has developed provision at the Wyvern education centre in Marlborough for students with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, with a special emphasis on students with visual impairment. At the time of the inspection there were five students. There are 157 part-time students following pre-entry and entry-level courses at the North Star site and 34 pre-entry part-time students at the Marlborough centre. The majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and the majority of part-time students are aged over 19.

154. However, progression rates are low. A small number of students progress from the pre-entry level and entry level courses to higher levels of learning or supported employment. Students on full-time courses make slow progress and their level of achievement is low. Students complete few accredited units. Students with moderate learning difficulties make good progress in developing learning skills and gain in confidence. Students with profound and complex learning difficulties achieve appropriate objectives. Attendance on both full-time and part-time courses is good and students are punctual for most lessons. Where lateness occurs, however, teachers do not always deal with it effectively.

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

155. Teaching is good or better on most courses. Schemes of work are detailed and lessons are carefully planned. In most lessons, teachers effectively take account of the different learning needs of each student. In the most effective lessons, teaching is stimulating and effectively engages students in interesting activities. In a lesson on food hygiene procedures, the development of students' numerical skills was effectively integrated with a practical cooking activity and students took great pride in their achievements. Teachers use a good variety of teaching methods to involve students and maintain their interest. There is appropriate variation of learning activities and learning

materials are well designed and of good quality. In some lessons, students make good use of computers in their learning and demonstrate good ICT skills.

156. Target setting and action planning are ineffective, particularly on full-time courses. Students' individual learning plans are inadequate. Action plans lack sufficient detail and, in some instances, are set too late in the academic year. Targets set for students are too long-term and do not provide realistic and manageable short-term goals against which students can measure their progress. Some students' action plans do not indicate timescales. The gap between the preparation of action plans and their first review is too long and there is often no recording of interim achievement. Monitoring of students' progress is weak. The reviews of students' progress are not frequent enough and some are not completed by the due date. When reviews are carried out, tutors' comments often lack sufficient detail to help students improve their work.

157. Accommodation and learning resources are good. Teaching accommodation at the North Star site is light, airy, well furnished and provides students with a good learning environment. The well-equipped independent living skills suite is used effectively by pre-entry and entry level students. Teaching accommodation at the Wyvern Centre is also good. Most classrooms have computers and students are encouraged to use them during lessons. All teaching rooms are accessible to wheelchair users. Teachers are appropriately qualified and those without a teaching qualification receive good support to enable them to achieve one. There is a good level of professional development, through college staff development activities and attendance at external events.

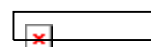
158. The college is responsive to the needs of the local community. Well-established links exist with special schools and regional schools for the deaf, blind and partially sighted. College staff are active in organising link courses for school pupils and visiting schools to promote the college to prospective students. There is close liaison with community organisations and external agencies such as a work placement agency for adults with learning difficulties, the local social services department, the NHS learning disability service and the NHS psychiatric team. There are also good working relationships with local private care homes.

159. Learning and personal support for students is effective. In lessons for students with severe learning difficulties, up to three support workers are often present during practical activities. One-to-one support for students is provided where appropriate. Learning support is carefully planned and support staff are deployed effectively. Teachers and support staff work effectively together. They are fully aware of the individual needs of students and their personal circumstances and provide support sensitively. Students' absence is followed-up promptly.

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

160. The curriculum area is managed effectively. Responsibility for the management of this area is divided between the curriculum managers for hospitality, hair and beauty, human services and creative studies. Communication between the managers is good. The curriculum manager with responsibility for entry and pre-entry courses holds regular weekly meetings with course leaders and the meetings are a valuable forum for discussing and taking action on issues. Equality of opportunity is promoted actively throughout the provision. Course review procedures are satisfactory. The self-assessment report was evaluative and self-critical, but failed to identify some significant weaknesses.

### **Literacy and numeracy**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good teaching and learning on adult literacy and numeracy courses
- effective use of individual learning plans
- good personal and learning support
- good links between learning support and curriculum staff.

### ***Weaknesses***

- narrow extent and range of separate specialist literacy and numeracy programmes
- insufficient use of data to assess students' performance
- poor progression from adult literacy and numeracy courses
- little use of ILT in teaching and learning.

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

161. The college offers literacy and numeracy courses for adults, in-class literacy and numeracy support for students on vocational and academic programmes within college, and additional individual or small group support.

162. The college provides literacy and numeracy for adults in separate specialist classes both on the main sites and in community venues. This year, the college has enrolled 253 part-time students on literacy courses and 133 on numeracy courses. The college offers literacy and numeracy support to students aged 16 to 18 and adults as additional learning support on vocational or academic courses. So far this year, learning support has supported 1,216 students. All full-time and most part-time students take an initial assessment and those requiring support receive a confidential interview to assess their needs and negotiate their support. Students aged 16 to 18 can choose to take a full-time vocational 'taster' course with literacy and numeracy. This is managed within the programme area for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

163. Learning and attainment in basic skills are good. Work in most lessons and in students' files is of a high standard in relation to students' assessed level. For example, a student assessed at entry

level 1-2 was able to grasp the concept of negative numbers in the topic of temperature. Students were able to explain processes such as measurement or sentence construction. Students assessed at entry level 3 at the beginning of the year had just taken national literacy tests at level 1. High attaining students use reference books, such as a thesaurus or dictionary, to check and extend their existing knowledge. Students' computer skills are poor; several students did not know how to operate computers and were nervous of them.

164. Opportunities for students to take externally accredited courses are improving. In previous years, few students took external accreditation, making a comparison with national pass rates difficult. This year, the number has increased, from 58 in the whole of 2001/02, to 67 in the first two terms of 2002/03. Students' progression from basic skills is poor. Last year, only 13% moved on from literacy and numeracy to other education or training.

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

165. Teaching and learning are good on the separate specialist literacy and numeracy courses. In the better lessons, teachers provide a good mix of group and individual work, develop study skills and integrate theory with practical work. Teachers encourage students to work at their own level and to link literacy and numeracy to their lives and interests. For example, one student was writing a series of stories for her children; another was researching the history of bowls. However, there is insufficient use of ILT in lessons and teachers do not help students to develop independent study skills, such as using the library or study centre. In good learning support lessons, teachers maintain students' interest by teaching literacy and numeracy in the context of their main subject.

166. Initial screening for literacy and numeracy identifies the additional literacy and numeracy needs of all full-time and most part-time students. Teachers pay close attention to individual needs. They use information from the initial assessment to draw up individual learning plans with each student, to plan lessons and to monitor progress. In literacy and numeracy lessons, planning and review are linked to the national curriculum. Some teachers carry out further diagnostic assessment to assess very specific literacy and numeracy needs and negotiate clear, short-term targets. However, this does not happen systematically. Consequently, some students have vague targets and their specific literacy or numeracy needs are not diagnosed.

167. Some classrooms do not have up-to-date computers, nor do students have access to a wide range of books or resources for independent study. This means that students do not learn to work independently and prepare for progression to further study.

168. The range and number of adult basic skills courses on offer are small. On college sites, the only choice is mixed level, roll-on roll-off provision, with no courses leading to progression out of literacy or numeracy. The college has good community links, resulting in a range of community provision such as family learning, work in a day centre for adults with disabilities and the probation service, but the number of available places is small. The college is planning to introduce short intensive courses leading to the new national tests next year.

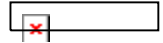
169. Students with a wide range of learning needs, including learning difficulties and disabilities, receive good individual support. Support is available on both separate specialist literacy and numeracy courses and on courses across the college. For example, on a basic literacy course, a student who is learning to use language again after a stroke was working on a powerpoint presentation about local canals, an area of personal interest. The student had downloaded photos from the Internet and scanned in others from books to add interest to the presentation, and was being helped to produce the oral part of the presentation. In a learning support lesson, a student with dyslexia was given very structured support to organise an essay for GCSE coursework.

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

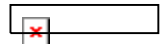
170. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Good links between learning support and curriculum teachers ensure that students with literacy and numeracy needs are identified and referred quickly. Learning support teachers monitor progress and keep curriculum staff informed. Managers make

insufficient use of data to assess students' performance. For example, managers do not compare achievements of students receiving support with those who have declined it, or the effectiveness of numeracy compared with language support. On separate specialist courses, managers do not have sufficiently rigorous verification systems for assuring achievement on non-accredited courses. Good attention is paid to equal opportunities in literacy and numeracy. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and integrated into the classes in lessons.

#### Part D: College data



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



Level	16-18	19+
1	23	24
2	50	21
3	20	9
4/5	1	2
Other	6	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*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	1,160	995	7
Land-based provision	6	112	0
Construction	335	439	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	299	719	3
Business administration, management and professional	306	3,984	13
Information and communications technology	1,269	5,454	21
Retailing, customer service and transportation	43	415	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	412	709	4

Hairdressing and beauty therapy	480	428	3
Health, social care and public services	929	2,189	10
Visual and performing arts and media	546	2,613	10
Humanities	755	625	4
English, languages and communication	1,528	1,427	9
Foundation programmes	1,947	1,766	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,015</b>	<b>21,875</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in spring 2003

\* results have been rounded and as such may not total 100%

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
		<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,251	630	583	3,283
	Retention rate (%)	75	59	76	78	66	*
	National average (%)	80	80	79	78	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	52	53	56	53	67	59
	National average (%)	59	65	68	60	66	68
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,746	2,181	1,648	2,666	3,039	2,481
	Retention rate (%)	75	*	81	81	67	74
	National average (%)	76	76	76	79	79	78
	Pass rate (%)	60	*	*	50	73	59
	National average (%)	65	66	69	62	65	69
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,370	2,864	1,994	1,792	2,077	1,387
	Retention rate (%)	76	*	*	82	72	*
	National average (%)	75	76	77	78	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	72	*	*	57	67	63
	National average (%)	72	74	76	62	66	69
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	15	44	5	909	532	222
	Retention rate (%)	87	*	**	90	*	*
	National average (%)	83	79	82	84	81	84
	Pass rate (%)	92	*	**	65	*	*

	National average (%)	64	66	55	56	56	53
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Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

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

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

\* ISR data not up to date

\*\* data unavailable

**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)	66	31	3	110
Level 2 (intermediate)	52	46	2	67
Level 1 (foundation)	62	24	14	21
Other sessions	73	25	4	49
<b>Totals</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>247</b>

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