Warrington Collegiate Institute

CONTENTS

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Warrington Collegiate Institute
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Paul Hafren
Address of college:	Winwick Road
	Warrington
	WA2 8QA
Telephone number:	01925 494 494
Fax number:	01925 418 328
Chair of governors:	Colin Daniels
Unique reference number:	130617
Name of reporting inspector:	Jen Walters
Date of inspection:	31 March-4 April 2003

Part A: Summary
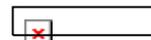
Information about the college
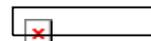
Warrington, with a population of 191,200, is the most highly and densely populated of the seven districts which comprise the Cheshire and Warrington local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) region. In recent years, Warrington has had, and continues to experience, substantial economic growth, and unemployment is below the national and the north-west averages, although there are significant levels of disadvantage. The institute has one main campus at Winwick Road, north of Warrington; a town centre building in Museum Street; and some provision temporarily at the Padgate site. The community liaison work of the institute takes place at five main centres as well as many other community venues. The institute has developed a range of links and partnerships to promote its mission, which is `to provide quality learning opportunities for all'.

How effective is the college?

The quality of teaching and the achievements of students were good in two areas of the eleven curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in nine. The institute's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- o   teaching and learning for adults

- o   improving achievement in some areas

- o   reliability of data

- o   good guidance and support for students

- o   effective partnership arrangements and community links

- o   sharing of good practice across the institute

o good communications.

What should be improved

o retention rates on many courses

o curriculum management in some areas

o target setting for raising standards

o consistency of tutorial provision

o standards of facilities and resources in some areas

o the effectiveness of initial advice and guidance

o the efficient use of resources.

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
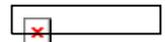
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	**Satisfactory.** Teaching is well planned and effective and practical

|	work is well managed. Pass rates on most General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses are good, but GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) pass rates are unsatisfactory. There are low numbers on most level 3 courses and student retention rates are generally poor. Effective and flexible provision is made for adults.
Construction	**Satisfactory.** Some teaching is of a high standard. Pass rates have improved at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2, but retention and pass rates are below the national average on some courses. The management of the electrical installation course is good. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Poor monitoring of health and safety.
Business, administration, management and professional	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates are good across many courses, but declining on some professional courses. Most teaching is good, but insufficient use is made of the part-time students' own work experience. Support for students is particularly good. There is inadequate development of students' key skills.
Information and communications technology	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates have improved and some are now good, but retention rates remain low for many courses. Teaching is mostly good or better. A wide range of courses successfully promotes good partnership links and social inclusion. Progress reviews and target setting are ineffective in helping students to improve their performance.
Hospitality, leisure and travel	**Good.** Pass rates are high on many courses, but retention and pass rates are low on a few courses. There are effective enrichment activities. Good teaching leads to high standards of student knowledge and skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively integrated with hospitality courses.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	**Satisfactory.** Most teaching is good or better. Pass rates are good on most courses, but retention rates on some courses are poor. Management in hairdressing is not always effective. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Key skills are integrated well across all courses.
Health and social care	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates are high on courses at foundation and level 1 but there is poor retention on level 3 courses. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Course management is effective in minimising disruptions to students' experience caused by the recent high level of staff changes.
Visual arts	**Satisfactory.** There is much good teaching of young people. The diploma in foundation studies has good achievement and progression into higher education (HE). Advanced level courses have poor pass rates. There is an insufficient emphasis on working independently for adult students. Key skills are poorly planned.
Social sciences	**Satisfactory.** There are declining enrolments in psychology and sociology and retention and achievement are poor on some courses. Pass rates on the access to HE courses are outstanding. Access provision is well managed. There is poor course review and evaluation. There is poor attendance in many lessons.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	**Good.** Most teaching is very good and some is excellent, and there are high attendance rates. Pass rates are good on most courses. Assessment of students' learning and support needs is effective. Good partnership links help to meet the range of students' diverse and complex needs. There is poor access to level 1 courses.
Literacy and numeracy	**Satisfactory.** Primary literacy and numeracy provision is well planned

	and there are productive external links. There is good access for a diverse range of students, who make good progress towards the achievement of their personal learning goals. The management of literacy and numeracy provision is not yet well established. There is ineffective support for students in some vocational areas.

## How well is the college led and managed?
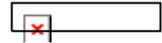
Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the institute. Pass rates on many courses are high. Retention rates are improving, although they are still below the national average on many courses. The standards of curriculum management are broadly satisfactory. Governors know the institute well and monitor its performance effectively. Since the last inspection, the institute has substantially improved its quality assurance arrangements, although some course reviews lack detail. There are well-established procedures to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Procedures for budget allocation and monitoring are clear. The institute provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?
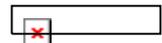
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The institute has worked successfully to widen the participation of students who are traditionally under-represented in education through collaborative working with community education, Connexions, the health service and community groups on a range of projects. The institute offers a socially inclusive and flexible curriculum that reaches a wide population and includes disaffected school pupils, mental health service users, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and carers. Many courses are offered with flexible start and finish times to meet the needs of students. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and basic skills courses are also provided at employer premises. Effective links with local partners, for example, the borough council and the health service, are creating new curriculum developments.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?
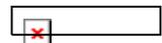
Guidance and support for students are good. There is a wide range of effective specialist support for students' diverse personal, academic and career needs. The learner services centre offers impartial and useful guidance to prospective students. Initial assessment is satisfactory using the institute's own assessment package. Some students who have requested additional learning support have not yet received it. The institute's partnership teaching scheme supports students through team teaching arrangements. There are good childcare arrangements at the institute and two mobile crèches. Tutorial provision is well planned and personal tutors provide good support for students. However, the pre-course information given to students is not uniformly good.

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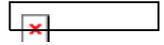
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

What students like about the college

- friendly and supportive staff

- welcoming institute environment

- good teaching

- easy access to computers and the Internet

- helpful learning resource centre staff and a good range of books

- good childcare facilities

- being treated like an adults

- a good range of enrichment activities

- feeling safe and secure

- ample car parking.

What they feel could be improved

- o   suitability and cleanliness of teaching rooms and workshops

- o   sports facilities

- o   price and variety of food

- o   locker space

- o   the number of clients in salons and customers in the shop

- o   the organisation of key skills.

Other information
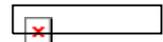
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must 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
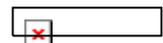
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

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	60	34	6
19+ and WBL*	73	24	3
Learning 16-18	56	38	6
19+ and WBL*	74	23	3

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards
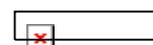
1. During the period 1999 to 2001 overall pass rates were at, or below, the national average for students of all ages. In 2001, the performance of students of all ages improved significantly and was above the national averages at levels 1 and 2, but remained below at level 3. In 2002, achievements across all long courses improved over 2001 and are above the national averages. During 2000/02, achievements across all long courses improved over 1999/2000 and are above national averages. Students' achievement on all courses for those students with difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Overall retention rates for the period 1999 to 2001 were below the national averages. In 2002, retention rates across all levels improved against previous years, but they vary considerably and many remain at, or below, national averages. For example, retention rates on GCSE mathematics decreased from 67% in 2001, to 57% in 2002, but GCSE science improved from 47% in 2001, to 79% in 2002.

2. Work-based students on the modern apprenticeship programmes have made slow progress to achieving the full framework qualifications, but this is improving. Of all current modern apprenticeships, 52% of advanced modern apprentices and 45% of foundation modern apprentices achieved their NVQ at the appropriate level for their main qualification. The numbers achieving high-grade passes fluctuate from year to year, but have been above the national average in mathematics in the last two years. The college does not have readily available data on students' prior attainments as compared with their achievements, which it can analyse to indicate progress made.

3. Average attendance in lessons during the inspection was 73%. However, this overall figure masks unacceptable variations across different curriculum areas. Attendance was good in hospitality, visual arts and for students with difficulties and/or disabilities, but poor in business, psychology and sociology and literacy and numeracy. During the period 1999 to 2001, total enrolment declined. Within this decline, however, there was some growth in some curriculum areas offered by the college. Enrolments in 2002 have seen an increase, particularly for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 2. However, the number of students on many courses remains low.

16 to 18 year olds

4. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ)/Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses in 2002 are high, with the exception of business where pass rates have declined, but remain at the national average. In 2001/02, the pass rate for students who completed level 3 courses was 79%. However, retention rates for these courses vary: on GNVQ/AVCE construction and health and social care it is good, but is poor in information and communication technology (ICT) and both are below national averages. Pass rates for students aged between 16 to 18 on NVQ courses are high in hairdressing at levels 1, but retention rates are at, or, below national averages. In business administration and construction, pass and retention rates are high at level 2 and they are also high at level 3 in beauty therapy and

construction. Pass rates are high in GCSE science and mathematics and above national averages. However, retention rates are poor in GCSE mathematics, but good in GCSE science. Fewer students are enrolling on GCSE psychology and sociology; fewer of those who enrol complete these courses; and those who do remain are often unsuccessful. This decline is particularly marked for students aged 16 to 18 attending the daytime classes. The pass rates for students aged between 16 to 18 improved in 2002, having been close to, or above, national averages for long courses at levels 1 and 2 in the two previous years. Pass rates on level 3 courses have been below the national average for the past two years, but have now improved and are above the national average.

5. Many full-time students aged between 16 to 18 study for key skills qualifications as part of their main course of study. Key skills achievement is satisfactory. Current data for 2002/03 shows that 162 portfolios have been successfully verified. However, the achievement in key skills varies considerably across the curriculum departments. For example, it is good in hairdressing and beauty therapy and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but poor in business, construction and art and design. Key skills development has improved since the institute introduced a strategy linking key skills to the full-time courses with a vocationally relevant approach, but it is not applied consistently.

Adult learners

6. Adult students achieve particularly well on access to HE courses in humanities and on the art national diploma in foundation studies. All students on the access courses have been successful in gaining their qualification over the past two years and securing a place at university. All of the foundation studies students gained their qualification in 2002. Retention rates are high on both courses. The overall pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 for adults improved significantly over the two years 2000/01 and 2001/02 and are well above national averages. In the previous year, they were satisfactory, being at, or above, national averages. Pass rates at level 3 were poor in 2000, but have improved over the past two years and have been well above national averages. For example, pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics, biology and human biology are good and above the national average for adults. Achievement of key skills on work-based learning in construction is poor, but improving in hairdressing. In 2002, about 4,000 adults enrolled on qualifications requiring short periods of study. The pass rates on short courses have improved considerably over the past two years.

Quality of education and training
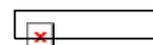
7. In 67% of the 190 lessons observed, the teaching was good or better. It was satisfactory in 29% and less than satisfactory in just 4%. The teaching was excellent in 3% of lessons. These figures are better than those found nationally for colleges of this type and represent a significant improvement since the institute's previous inspection. However, the proportion of good or better teaching was smaller than that identified in the institute's own programme of lesson observations. The teaching of adults was better than that of students aged 16 to 18: 74%, of lessons for the former compared with 60% of lessons for the latter, judged good or better. There was twice as much unsatisfactory teaching of younger students as of adults. The teaching of full-time staff was significantly better than that of part-time staff. Overall, the teaching on courses at levels 2 and 3 was slightly better than that at level 1. The best teaching was in hospitality, leisure and tourism; hairdressing and beauty therapy and business and for students with learning difficulties and/or for disablties. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in most curriculum areas.

8. Most teachers plan their lessons well and make sure that students understand the intended outcomes. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively, and show that they have identified students' strengths, weaknesses and needs. In the best lessons, teachers use an appropriately wide range of methods to motivate students, present complex issues and concepts well, demonstrate new processes clearly, and ensure that students are actively engaged in their learning. For example, the

teacher of a childcare course skilfully led a discussion in the ways in which environmental factors can influence behaviour, using well-chosen case studies to illustrate the main points. In a level 2 hairdressing lesson, the teacher gave a very good demonstration of ways of blending the hairline and texturising hair before students began to practice their newly acquired skills. In a GCSE mathematics lesson on probability, fundamental theories were put to the test in an experiment using dice, cards and beanbags. There were good examples of teachers drawing on their students' recent experiences in the workplace and of showing an awareness of students' preferred learning styles. Classroom support makes a positive contribution in many lessons. Most teachers use questions effectively to check or develop students' understanding, and are adept at summarising new material. Lessons on theoretical and practical aspects of a course are equally effective and in the most successful lessons the two are combined well.

9. In less successful lessons, teachers rely on a narrow range of methods, repeat work already covered or fail to involve all students. There are examples of teachers asking students to copy notes from overhead transparencies rather than encouraging them to make their own notes. In a few cases, teachers accept too readily brief answers to questions rather than encouraging students to provide a full explanation. In several areas, teachers make little use of ICT to promote learning. Although teachers prepare good handouts and other resources, these are not always sufficiently moderated by course staff and as a result some students find the text difficult to follow.

10. Students' learning was good or better in 67% of lessons and satisfactory in 30%. As with teaching, adults' learning was better than that of younger students. Most students work hard and sustain their interest in lessons. There were good examples of students at all levels acquiring new practical skills, preparing well for examinations and improving their research skills. In tutorials, students learned how to prepare curriculum vitae and improve their communication skills. In the best lessons, students are actively engaged and they readily relate experiences in the workplace to new learning. In some small classes, students lack opportunities for discussion. Where specialist accommodation has significant shortcomings, students are not learning enough about the best commercial or industrial practice.

11. The teaching of key skills varies considerably in its effectiveness. For example, in hairdressing and beauty therapy, lessons successfully integrate elements of key skills with realistic vocational work. Key skills competencies were indicated clearly in the brief for the level 3 brickwork course. In art and design, students understood how key skills were incorporated with their main study goals. However, many teachers fail to recognise and accredit students' achievements in key skills.

12. Staff are well qualified with a good knowledge of their specialist areas and many have suitable industrial experience. Some 85% of full-time staff have teaching qualifications. Arrangements for staff development are good, but some staff have not had an annual appraisal review. Staff development is good and includes relevant research activities. All full-time staff are required to complete 80 hours of staff development each year. They are required to record their professional development activities and industrial updating. A professional development centre has been instrumental in improving standards in teaching and learning. Staff development activities are evaluated and shared with other teachers within departments.

13. Improvements have been made to the accommodation in the Winwick site since the last inspection. The entrances to Winwick and Museum Street sites are welcoming, but some accommodation on both sites is drab and uninspiring and some staff rooms are too small and lack sufficient access to information technology (IT). Catering facilities have been improved and are satisfactory. Student common rooms are adequate, but the shower facilities are poor. There is adequate access to the accommodation for students with restricted mobility. The Padgate site has been transferred to a local HE institution and the institute plans to develop new, purpose-built accommodation at Winwick Road.

14. The use of ICT in construction and performing arts is underdeveloped and there is insufficient ICT equipment for construction students. The institute has well-developed plans to broaden the use of ICT in teaching and learning. The learning resource centre is spacious and has satisfactory stocks of printed material, access to ICT resources and study places.

15. Specialist resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at the institute and at some community centres are good and they are used effectively to develop learning. For example, there is a fully furnished house that has been designed to encourage independent living. Some specialist resources in hairdressing are out of date and students do not have access to adequate storage facilities.

16. Assessment is generally thorough and the criteria for assessment are clear and students know what is required of them. Assessment is good for students in hairdressing, science and mathematics and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Assessment is less effective in health and social care.

17. Teachers use a range of appropriate assessment methods, but there is little accreditation of prior learning or achievement in hospitality, leisure and travel or hairdressing. Most teachers give thorough and timely feedback to students on their work and how it can be improved, particularly in literacy and numeracy, where students' marked work is quickly returned to them. In other areas, assessment feedback is rudimentary with little guidance to students on how they might improve their work. The institute is committed to improving the assessment of students' work to raise standards, but it does not have a comprehensive assessment policy.

18. Work-based assessment is satisfactory in hair and beauty therapy and in construction. Work-based provision is offered in 7 areas of learning and has 231 students. Working environments allow for satisfactory in-house assessment to industrial standards. Assessments of literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory and there is good teaching support for those whose needs are identified. The institute has recently expanded its work-based provision by acquiring an existing contract from another provider.

19. Students' progress is monitored effectively in most areas and is particularly good for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students in hair and beauty therapy, hospitality, leisure and travel, and health and social science. Progress reviews for ICT students are inadequate and do not result in effective individual learning plans. Teachers and personal tutors closely monitor students' performance against targets for attendance and punctuality. Results of assessed work are used to inform students and parents of progress during parents or guardian evenings. Monitoring of work-based learners' progress is satisfactory, but is unsatisfactory for part-time students, whose progress is not regularly reported to their sponsors or employers.

20. The institute offers a good range of courses to higher levels. Most areas of learning offer appropriate full-time and part-time courses for students to progress from level 1 through to level 3 and some level 4 courses. Many full-time adult students progress through part-time study. The curriculum profile in business is narrow, with insufficient courses at levels 2 and 3. There are too few courses at level 1 across the range of provision. There is little provision at the institute on which students with basic skills needs may progress.

21. The institute has strong, active partnerships with other colleges, and many community organisations, schools and businesses. Account is taken of local employer needs and of local and national strategies when determining the curriculum portfolio. Effective collaboration with neighbouring schools and colleges has increased choice for both school and institute students and reduced inefficient duplication of courses. Partnership arrangements have resulted in the provision of vocational `taster' courses for eight general secondary schools and six special schools. Certificated courses for school pupils are provided in construction, engineering, hospitality and beauty therapy. Strong links with Chester College of Higher Education and Warrington Collegiate Institute have created better opportunities for students to progress on to higher-level programmes.

22. The institute's curriculum portfolio is reviewed regularly and has recently undergone a major re-assessment of its provision. Advanced level and AVCE timetables are fully co-ordinated to provide students with increased choice if they wish to study different types of qualifications. Each year, the institute considers the courses offered by taking account of recruitment trends, demand for new courses, employers' needs, community developments and national trends.

23. It is currently working with a number of medium-sized and large businesses and organisations. It is successful in providing basic skills, IT and ESOL for employees in the workplace. Through its involvement with a major community building project, the institute has well-developed curriculum plans for the construction trades to meet skill shortages during the next five years.

24. The institute has been successful in widening participation for those students traditionally under-represented in education, through collaborative working with community education, Connexions, the health service and community groups on a range of projects. The institute offers a socially inclusive and flexible curriculum that reaches a wide population which includes disaffected school pupils, mental health service users, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and carers. Many courses are offered with flexible start and finish times to meet the needs of students. Productive links with local partners such as the borough council and the health service are creating new curriculum developments.

25. The enrichment programme is good and is managed by a central co-ordinator. A wide range of activities includes sports, team activities, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, visits and residential activities. Additional qualifications and activities that add interest and purpose to students' main courses are offered throughout the week.

26. There are insufficient opportunities for students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be integrated on mainstream courses or with mainstream students taking enrichment activities. The institute has recognised this through its recent curriculum review. Students in the community have good access to courses through the high number of community centres, but there is little opportunity for progression on to higher level courses at some centres.

27. Guidance and support for students are good. The learner services centre provides a team of experienced and well-qualified practitioners who provide effective support and guidance for students' diverse personal and academic needs, including welfare support and guidance on debt management. There are effective external links with the emergency services, medical specialists and additional health related agencies where referrals are arranged.

28. The well-structured tutorials system for full-time students is flexible and helps personal tutors to determine the number of group or individual support sessions required against a core tutorial schedule. Learner services staff offer specialist guidance on career progression, health matters and welfare and benefits advice. Clear guidance on rights and responsibilities, expectations and the collegiate charter are central to induction. There are particularly effective relationships between personal tutors and students, who speak highly of the levels of support offered. However, there is less personal support from tutors for adult students and for other students on some courses. Work-based students receive good support from the enterprise and development unit staff through Connexions.

29. Initial assessment, for all full-time students is carried out by the study skills staff using the institute's own assessment measures. All students receive confidential letters advising them of the recommended additional support. Personal tutors receive lists of results in order to plan their teaching appropriately. However, this assessment is not sufficiently diagnostic and fails to identify more specific additional needs. For example, the institutes' pilot project recognised that it has not identified accurately the numbers of students with dyslexia. Teaching support is largely directed at those students who are on courses at levels 1 or 2. Some students have separate specialist support while others are supported in class during their main subject lessons. Several students may be supported through team teaching in this way. Some students who had requested additional support had still not received it and in some sessions partnership support teachers were not using their skills appropriately.

30. Two Connexions advisers and one careers guidance worker provide impartial guidance on careers and progression routes. There is a job shop, which advertises part-time vacancies with local employers who work directly with the centre. There is an agreement that work arrangements will not clash with study times, so that students remain on course.

31. The main site has a large crèche and two mobile crèches at community centres. Additional arrangements are organised for other groups where there are more than six children.

32. The learner services centre offers impartial and useful guidance to prospective students. This guidance includes information packs, an institute website and a variety of fact sheets. Most students are interviewed before they start their course, but some students felt that the information they received was insufficiently clear on course content and that they had been recruited on to an inappropriate course level.

Leadership and management
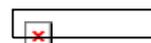
33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The institute has taken successful action to address most of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning and in pass rates for students of all ages. Retention rates for students of all ages have steadily improved, although on many courses they are still below the national average. The institute has worked hard, and successfully, to improve the quality of its management information. Managers now have confidence in the information available. The financial position of the institute has been adversely affected by the failure to achieve its funding targets over a number of years. However, the improved quality of financial information has enabled managers to set more realistic targets for the current year.

34. Governors and managers set a clear strategic direction for the institute. The current strategic plan contains five strategic aims translated into an appropriate range of objectives and related performance indicators. The aims reflect LSC, government and local priorities and are focused on widening participation, partnership, improving the learners' experience, improving performance and developing a self-critical attitude of improvement. Each senior manager is responsible for a particular strategic aim and reports regularly on its progress at senior management and corporation meetings. In developing the strategic plan for 2003 to 2006 senior managers have taken steps to ensure that all staff have an opportunity to contribute to the process through a series of briefings and staff development activities and through dissemination workshops led by middle managers. Communication within the institute is good. Staff appreciate the open, consultative style of the principal and the senior management team. There are good attempts to keep part-time staff informed of all aspects of the institute's work through newsletters, the intranet and e-mail.

35. The standard of curriculum management is broadly satisfactory. Course teams meet regularly and there is generally good course administration. There is particularly well-managed provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students attending access to HE courses. There is, however, some ineffective management. For example, in hairdressing, insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that students are enrolled on the right programme and some aspects of poor professional practice have not been addressed. There are shortcomings in arrangements for managing literacy and numeracy across the institute. Management of work-based learning is satisfactory. There is good communication between the work-based and mainstream areas of the institute and staff assessors on work-based programmes are in regular contact with employers. In hairdressing, there is insufficient co-ordination of on-the-job and-off-the-job training.

36. Demanding, but realistic, targets are set for retention and pass rates across the institute as a whole. The senior management team has adopted a clear performance-monitoring schedule and receives regular updates on funding units, enrolments, retention and pass rates and on outcomes from the institute's lesson observation scheme. Target setting and monitoring of performance at course team level is less effective.

37. Since the last inspection, the institute has substantially improved its quality assurance arrangements. Staff understand their responsibilities for quality assurance and there is good commitment to continuous improvement throughout the institute. A useful digest is issued to all staff

providing a summary of the quality assurance system. Significant emphasis is given to the role of course teams and course reviews as a focus for reviewing and evaluating students' experiences. Good use is also made of student evaluation surveys and focus groups as an aspect of this process. However, some course reviews lack detail and actions for improvement are not always clearly stated or identified.

38. The institute has a thorough self-assessment process involving all staff and governors. The current self-assessment report follows the format of the common inspection framework and clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses. It is well supported by a broad range of evidence, including data on pass and retention rates, lesson observations and students' views. However, the development plans in some curriculum areas do not identify clear strategies or action for improvement.

39. There are well-established and effective procedures to improve the quality of teaching and learning. All full-time and part-time teachers are observed annually by their managers. The results of these observations are used to identify staff whose teaching may be unsatisfactory and to highlight aspects of good practice. A professional development centre, established in 1999, provides a good range of support for teachers. Staff from the centre conduct an audit of grades awarded in lesson observations to ensure consistency of standards and provide programmes of support for teachers who have received unsatisfactory grades. The centre also makes available resource material for teachers, including videos covering the work of teachers from the institute whose practice is seen to be exemplary.

40. The institute has a strong commitment to staff development. Teachers' contracts of employment require them to undertake 80 hours of professional development annually. A broad range of staff development activities are available for staff to chose from and includes good opportunities for professional updating. Of particular note, is the series of research projects completed by staff as part of this process. The annual staff review links staff performance and development objectives to the institute's strategic aims and objectives. However, in 2002/03, only 65% of full-time and substantive part-time staff completed a full review. The institute has a mentoring scheme to support new teachers. Mentors are drawn from over 40 teachers who have received the institute's Excellence in Teaching Award through the Teachers' Pay Initiative.

41. The institute has effective and committed governors who know the institute well. Governors have provided effective oversight of the strategic decision to divest the institute's HE provision to Chester College. They provide valuable help in the formulation of the institute's strategic plan and monitor its progress regularly. Since the last inspection, a curriculum and standards committee has been established to approve targets and performance indicators and monitor and assess the educational performance of the institute. The committee adopts a rigorous and challenging approach to its work. Governors pay good attention to evaluating their performance through self-assessment and the completion of a `health check'. The corporation currently lacks a student member. Insufficient action has been taken to ensure that corporation membership reflects the gender profile of the institute.

42. The institute has a wide range of equal opportunities policies and procedures. These include a race equality scheme and action plan, procedures for dealing with harassment or bullying and a position statement relating to the institute's responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act. An equal opportunities co-ordinator reports to a member of the senior management team and chairs the institutes equal opportunities committee. The committee meets six times a year and makes recommendations to the senior management team on issues of policy and procedure relating to all aspects of equality. A three-year strategy for equal opportunities has recently been developed. The strategy identifies a number of aspects of institute provision where an improved response to equal opportunities is needed. Some targets in the race equality action plan have yet to be met. The institute has an effective complaints and compliments procedure. Clear records are kept of action taken and senior managers and governors receive regular reports of outcomes.

43. Procedures for budget allocation and monitoring are clear. Managers have good access to financial information. The institute is making increasing use of a business planning process for the allocation of resources for the teaching of the curriculum delivery. However, a combination of small class sizes, high levels of expenditure on part-time teachers and high numbers of teaching hours

allocated to courses means that some aspects of resource deployment are inefficient. Despite these inefficiencies, the overall levels of student achievements and the good quality of much teaching and learning indicates that the institute provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas
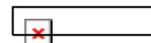
Science and mathematics
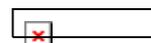
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   well-planned and effective teaching

- o   good pass rates on most GCE A-level and GCSE courses

- o   well-organised and integrated practical work

Weaknesses

- o   poor retention rates on most courses

- o   low pass rates on most GCE AS science courses

- o   low and declining student numbers on level 3 science courses.

Scope of provision

44. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in biology, chemistry, human biology, physics and mathematics. There is good recruitment to the GCSE programmes in mathematics and science. Environmental science and mathematics options are available on an access to HE programme. Biology teaching is provided for vocational subjects within the institute. There is no level 1 provision and no vocational science courses. Vocational science courses are only available in related health

and social care courses where science is studied. Enrolments on most courses are declining. Day and evening courses are offered for GCSE science and mathematics and an evening course is offered for GCE A-level biology two nights a week. These courses recruit students aged 16 to 18 and 19+. Most enrolments are for one-year courses.

Achievement and standards

45. Retention rates on most courses are poor and often fluctuate from year to year. Retention rates on the GCE AS courses were below the national averages in 2002, except in biology. On the GCSE mathematics courses, the retention rate decreased from 67% in 2001, to 57% in 2002. However, the retention rate for the GCSE science course rose from 47% in 2001, to 79% in 2002 and is now above the national average.

46. Pass rates on most of the GCE A-level courses are now above the national average. For example, over the last two years, the pass rate in GCE A-level mathematics was 80% and above and in GCE A-level chemistry was 100% in the last two years. The GSCE mathematics and science courses have pass rates well above the low national average, but in mathematics retention rates have been poor for the past three years. Pass rates on the GCE AS science programmes are generally unsatisfactory. With the exception of human biology, the pass rates on the GCE AS science courses in biology, physics and chemistry declined to below the national averages in 2002. The numbers achieving high-grade passes fluctuate from year to year, but have been above the national average in mathematics in the last two years. There is no readily available data for adult students that enables their progress to be measured by comparing their achievements with their prior attainments.

47. The majority of the GCE AS/A-level science courses have had low recruitment and progression numbers for some years. For instance, there were six or fewer students in all the GCE A-level courses completing in 2002. The majority of the GCE AS and A-level classes observed during the inspection had five or fewer students. The institute is flexible and effective in providing for the needs of adults who were in a majority on most courses. Timetables are adjusted to take account of the needs of adults. For example, GCE AS chemistry modules are offered in the early evening period to accommodate two students who come direct from work at a local pharmacy. Those in employment are able to gain a GCE A-level in human biology by studying for two evenings a week over one year.

48. Students' attainment is satisfactory and in many lessons it was good. Most students are well motivated and work productively. The quality of students' work is good and they demonstrate good academic knowledge and understanding. Students develop a wide range of skills in their practical assignments through research, good planning, critical thinking and sound evaluation. A GCE AS chemistry group had a good understanding of the process of cracking petrol and the subsequent emission of pollutants. In a GCE A-level food science lesson, students undertook a series of food tests using simple practical techniques, then applied this knowledge to new work on the digestive system. A GCE A-level biology group followed closely the teacher's dissection of a rat, made correctly labelled drawings and perceptively made comparisons with human organs. The average attendance in all classes observed was 77%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	130	78	86
		% retention	67	69	57
		% pass rate	46	67	59
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	54	19	28
		% retention	50	47	79
		% pass rate	41	67	64

GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	24	13	5
		% retention	83	54	80
		% pass rate	27	60	75
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	11	11
		% retention	*	55	100
		% pass rate	*	100	45
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	15	10
		% retention	*	53	70
		% pass rate	*	88	57
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	*	12	12
		% retention	*	75	67
		% pass rate	*	67	50
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	26	31
		% retention	*	69	61
		% pass rate	*	39	47
GCE A-level human biology (one year)	3	No. of starts	32	18	13
		% retention	84	83	62
		% pass rate	63	53	63
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	12	21	5
		% retention	25	33	100
		% pass rate	74	86	80

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

49. Teaching in science and mathematics is at least satisfactory and much of it is good. Schemes of work are well planned and structured and have clear learning objectives. Most teachers cover the course content at an appropriate pace and teachers question students skilfully to check their understanding and to promote deeper, reflective thinking. Teachers effectively take into account the particular needs of students' learning difficulties. For example, in a GCE A-level chemistry practical class, the teacher helped a colour-blind student to record the colours of precipitates formed during ligand substitution reactions of metal aqua ions. Teachers make some use of IT in lessons. For example, GCE A-level biology students were encouraged to use the Internet to research the influence of enzymes on microbial fermentation.

50. Practical activities are well organised and teachers make good use of teaching aids, including ICT, to help learning. Risk assessments are undertaken and good attention is given to health and safety considerations. Students pursue practical experiments with care and enthusiasm and enjoy this aspect of their studies. They respond positively, show commitment to their work and concentrate well throughout lessons. Teachers relate theory to practice clearly and effectively. For example, in a GCE A-level biology lesson on the response of animals to stimulus, students measured the rate of movement of wood lice across areas of varying humidity in an enclosed container. They observed that wood lice move faster in dry air and eventually congregated in the more humid environment and were able to note their preference for damp abodes.

51. In mathematics, the teaching is generally good, but in some lessons opportunities are not

provided for students to experience different methods of learning. The best lessons are designed to encourage students' interest, participation and learning. For example, in one GCSE mathematics lesson, each student used a computer to plot various linear graphs using a specialist software package and then used the data to solve equations on inequalities. Another group of GCSE mathematics students explored the topic of probability by undertaking different group activities with dice and playing cards.

52. Assessment practice is generally satisfactory across the area. On most courses, suitable homework is set, students' work is marked thoroughly and teachers provide constructive comments. Teachers often add to, or correct, students' answers and this is much appreciated by students. On occasions, teachers will review homework in class to help to identify how best to answer particular questions. Assignments are well planned and students know what is required of them. There is poor use of IT in assignment work and there is neither a plan nor a schedule for student assignments.

53. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach. There is one modern multi-purpose laboratory which is well-furnished and equipped for use by biology and chemistry classes. Good support is provided by the technician and the laboratory has five computers, two of them networked. However, a significant proportion of the physics teaching is timetabled away from the laboratory and this inhibits the use of demonstrations and some experimental work. In the current year, mathematics teaching is taking place in a variety of classrooms which, with one exception, are not easily accessible. The learning resource centre is stocked with an adequate range of books and multi-media resources, but mathematics lacks a base room.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Science and mathematics provision has recently been transferred to a programme area which includes engineering. It is too early for the new arrangements to have had a significant impact. The courses are organised satisfactorily by individual teachers, but there are only two full-time teachers in science and mathematics. Staff teams meet regularly, but the high proportion of staff on fractional contracts inhibits full attendance. The small group sizes in science result in the inefficient use of resources. Lesson observations are well established and lead to good professional development. However, the number of lessons observed by internal assessors graded good or better was much higher than those awarded during inspection.

55. Courses are reviewed twice annually and teachers are involved in the well-established self-assessment process that identifies points for action. However, the action plans intended to tackle weaknesses lack rigour and do not include year-on-year targets for continuous improvement. Strategies to deal with such issues as falling student recruitment and poor retention rates are not yet effective.

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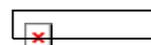
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o good and improving pass rates at NVQ level 2

- o a high standard teaching for adults

o   effective reviews of students

o   well-planned and effective electrical installation programme.

Weaknesses

o   poor monitoring of health and safety

o   lack of work-based evidence on some programmes

o   lack of ICT equipment in many classrooms.

Scope of provision

56. The institute provides full-time and part-time construction courses in painting and decorating, interior design, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, electrical installation and technician studies. These include courses from entry level to level 3. At the time of the inspection, there were 171 students enrolled on full-time and part-time courses in construction. There are 38 students who attend the institute through work-based learning programmes. Of these, 21% are foundation modern apprentices and the remaining students advanced modern apprentices. These programmes are offered in partnership with local industry and the institute's own managing agency. The area also attracts students from five feeder schools who undertake a programme of study designed to give them an insight into a number of trades within construction.

Achievement and standards

57. Pass rates on some courses are high. Pass rates on electrical installation are high. There is a 100% pass rate for NVQ level 2 `Installing electrical systems' and other electrical courses are well above the national average. Overall pass rates on NVQ level 2 programmes have shown improvement over the past three years and are now well above the national average. However, the number of students who start courses across this area has reduced from 161 in 1999/2000 to 39 in 2001/02 and the retention rate has fluctuated year on year. Students on work-based programmes have made slow progress in achieving their full qualifications, but rates are improving and all remaining students are on target to complete their full qualification. NVQ achievements in work-based learning are satisfactory, but key skills achievements are poor. Of the 19 students who started in 1998, 32% have completed all aspects of their programme. Retention rates have improved significantly in the national certificate in building studies and are now well above the national average. Retention and pass rates across most courses fluctuate year on year, but there was a significant increase in the retention rate in 2001/02.

58. The standard of work in students' portfolios is high and they contain evidence of good theory and practical work. The standard of practical work in the brickshop is high. Electrical installation trainees demonstrate practical skills of a good occupational standard, and employers confirm that they are making good progress to becoming qualified electricians. Students are well motivated, progress well

toward their own personal goals and regularly achieve their targets.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ in bricklaying	2	No. of starts	23	12	13
		% retention	57	75	69
		% pass rate	36	78	86
City and Guilds 2391 inspection and testing	2	No. of starts	19	11	12
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	68	82	58
NVQ in carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	24	27	23
		% retention	63	33	86
		% pass rate	71	83	84
National certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	18	10	12
		% retention	50	70	83
		% pass rate	88	57	78
GNVQ/AVCE in the built environment	3	No. of starts	10	11	12
		% retention	60	91	75
		% pass rate	83	60	100
NVQ in carpentry and joinery	3	No. of starts	23	14	13
		% retention	91	79	100
		% pass rate	43	91	69

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

Quality of education and training

59. Some teaching is of a high standard and most teaching for adult students is good or better. The best lessons are well prepared with clear lesson plans and schemes of work and contain detailed information and reference to the key skills that are taught within the lesson. Many schemes of work contain details of the students' ability and experience. This is used effectively to focus the lesson, to use the students' own experiences and to involve all students in class discussions. One teacher had documentation for each of his classes that showed the preferred method of learning for individual students together with their identified ability level. This was used to good effect in the lesson and identified clearly the different support requirements within the group. However, such high standards of teaching are not consistently found across the whole area.

60. All full-time and work-based students are assessed for communication and number ability during induction and most are assessed for IT ability. The results of the tests are used to identify individual students' additional learning support requirements. All students have an individual learning plan which is reviewed at regular one-to-one tutorials or in the workplace for modern apprenticeships. At these meetings, targets for progress and achievement are agreed and recorded. Some targets for work-based students do not include those for progression to higher levels of study, but cover all other aspects of the programme. Individual learning plans for work-based students are comprehensive, are regularly updated and based on a comprehensive initial assessment. Students' work is closely monitored and their individual progress records are accurate. Most students are on target to achieve their full qualification.

61. On-site assessments for electrical installation are regularly carried out, and are thorough. There are good links with employers, who play a full role in supporting the students. Students achieve good occupational competence, and employers confirm their satisfaction with the standards attained. In other trades, there is a lack of importance placed upon the collection of work-based evidence needed for successful completion of the NVQ qualification and there are many missed opportunities for incorporating on-site evidence into assessment schemes. For example, some students who have been enrolled will be unable to achieve their goal due to lack of access to building sites to generate assessment evidence. This information was not made clear to the students at the time of enrolment. There are insufficient visits to work-based students and insufficient activities aimed at gathering evidence on-site evidence for assessment purposes. For example, some work-based students have been on site for six months without evidence recording documentation and have missed many assessment opportunities which has affected their progress.

62. There is a lack of ICT equipment in most classrooms. This significantly restricts the opportunity for the students to develop their IT skills in a vocationally relevant context. For example, one teacher identified the benefits of using a spreadsheet for the computation of a complex mathematical equation, but the students were unable to develop this due to the lack of IT equipment. Some work-based students are not clear about how they will achieve the IT aspect of their key skills qualification.

Leadership and management

63. Electrical installation courses and work-based training are well managed. The resources for electrical installation courses are good, but more varied on other courses. There is poor monitoring of health and safety on construction sites where students are employed. Staff who are responsible for monitoring health and safety on construction sites are not sufficiently skilled to do so. There are inadequate arrangements for identifying sites where students require closer monitoring. On one site, there were considerable hazards that had not been identified. There were some lapses in health and safety in the use of personal protective equipment such as boots and goggles. Courses are reviewed three times a year. Teachers are not actively involved in the self-assessment process. The action plans to address weaknesses lack rigour and do not include annual targets for continuous improvement.

Business, administration, management and professional
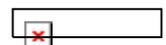
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   good pass rates on some courses

- o   much good teaching

- o   particularly good informal support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- o poor achievement on some professional courses

- o poor target setting for students on full-time courses

- o insufficient use of students' work experience on part-time courses

- o inadequate development of key skills on full-time business courses.

Scope of provision

64. The institute provides predominantly for adult students on part-time management and professional courses. Only 13% of enrolments are full time, most of whom are aged 16 to 18 and studying business or administration courses at level 3. All the courses are located at the Winwick Road campus. There are 20 students undertaking modern apprenticeships in administration. Of the part-time professional courses, 109 adults are studying Association Accounting Technicians (AAT) courses, 42 are working towards Chartered Institute of Management Association (CIMA) qualifications, 41 students are on the Certificate in Personnel Practice (CIPP) course and 51 follow the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) Professional Development scheme. The largest single full-time course is the GCE AS business studies with 11 students. The existing curriculum offer is narrow and this is recognised by the institute. There are well-developed plans to expand provision into new areas such as retail and e-commerce to reflect local business needs. There is currently no level 1 or level 2 provision in business because of the failure to recruit sufficient students.

Achievement and standards

65. Pass rates are good on the NVQ level 2 in administration, GCE AS business studies and the introductory certificate in management. The CIPP has a pass rate of 90%, which is at the high national average. However, there are poor and declining pass rates on GNVQ/AVCE business and on NVQ accounting at levels 2 and 3. Retention rates are good on NVQ accounting courses and CIPP. The retention rate has declined and is below the national average on GCE AS business studies and the CIMA intermediate course.

66. Students work well in lessons. They are attentive, and contribute well to discussions and group activities. Students' written work is generally good. Students on professional and management courses, and approaching their examinations were able to demonstrate an appropriate level of achievement in their subjects. Administration students demonstrate good development of skills. However, students were not punctual in some of the lessons and attendance was poor, at 58%, although this was below the recent levels of attendance. Demanding targets are not set for students on full-time business courses. Targets which are set are not specifically aimed at achieving higher grades.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ in accounting	2	No. of starts	27	28	44

		% retention	74	96	80
		% pass rate	90	63	20
NVQ in administration	2	No. of starts	42	66	17
		% retention	86	70	71
		% pass rate	64	98	90
GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	*	16	21
		% retention	*	69	62
		% pass rate	*	73	92
GNVQ/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	18	29	26
		% retention	72	83	73
		% pass rate	85	63	53
CIPP	3	No. of starts	44	40	41
		% retention	93	93	98
		% pass rate	98	97	90
NVQ in accounting	4	No. of starts	48	43	36
		% retention	85	93	97
		% pass rate	34	15	49

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

67. In most lessons, teaching is carefully planned and well managed. Teachers link learning activities together effectively to help build students' knowledge and understanding. For example, in an NVQ level 2 accounting lesson, students were enthusiastic in undertaking a short business game in groups with the purpose of developing skills in preparing accounts and working in teams. The needs of the less experienced or confident students were met by placing them with more experienced students. More advanced work was available, if required. In a CIPD management lesson, students were given tasks to relate aspects of motivation theory to the circumstances in their own workplace. This provided many good examples to illustrate the theory. However, in most lessons for part-time students, opportunities are not taken to draw on their own work experiences. In some lessons, insufficient attention is paid to identifying and supporting the needs of individual students.

68. Communication and numeracy key skills are planned to be integrated with full-time administration and business courses, except for an additional input for IT. This happens for administration courses, but is less effective on business courses. Teachers do not prioritise key skills for business students and as a consequence students do not fully understand their significance or what they have to do to achieve them.

69. Most teachers are well qualified, have relevant vocational experience and take advantage of opportunities for staff development and commercial updating. Access to IT resources for academic and vocational work is generally good. Most lessons take place in rooms that are well equipped with good quality teaching aids.

70. Assessment is used effectively to provide a record of students' progress. Homework is set regularly and often discussed in lessons to consolidate students' learning. When assignments are marked, a feedback sheet is completed thoroughly by the teacher which helps students to identify what they can do to improve their work. However, on a few assignments, there is little or no marking

of the script or constructive feedback to identify areas for improvement. Concerns about students' progress are well recorded and the student and course leader meet regularly to monitor work and agree new targets for improvement.

71. Students value the approachability and accessibility of staff and the way in which they respond to requests for assistance. Staff are willing to give time to students outside normal lessons, and one course leader of a part-time course visits students in their place of work to discuss difficulties if the student is unable to get to the institute. There is a schedule of regular individual tutorials for full-time students and group tutorials each term. Tutorials are used effectively to identify and address individual learning or personal needs. Course teams receive detailed guidance on the core list of recommended topics to be covered, together with a suggested list of potential subjects. On part-time courses, this is not implemented systematically and practice varies widely between courses. On some, such as NVQ accounting, there is a schedule of regular tutorials. On others, the provision is much less structured.

72. Full-time students benefit from a range of enrichment activities organised at course level, for example, educational visits and participation in business and enterprise competitions. A team of students from the AVCE business course recently won a local enterprise competition for students aged 16 to 18 from educational establishments in the north-west region.

Leadership and management

73. Communication across all courses is good. Course leaders are effective in the administration of their work. There is a schedule of formal meetings at course and section level which are recorded with action points. Progress on action points is monitored at subsequent meetings.

74. There are good quality assurance systems that follow the institute's quality assurance framework and these help course teams when they conduct course reviews and compile the self-assessment report. Course teams are provided with student data from the institutes' management information system (MIS) to assist them. This year that information is being presented pictorially which teams find helpful. The completion of some course files lacks detail, particularly in the recording and monitoring of pass and retention rate targets.

Information and communications technology
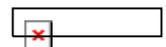
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o improving pass rates on part-time courses

- o good teaching of adults

- o good resources in industry-based centres

- o good support for students with disabilities

- o effective widening participation

- o effective staff development, including sharing of good teaching practice.

Weaknesses

- o poor retention rates

- o poor pass rates in intermediate GNVQ in ICT

- o inappropriate furniture in some community centres

- o some poor attendance by young people

- o poor use of progress reviews for full-time students.

Scope of provision

75. The institute offers an extensive range of courses from entry level to level 3. Courses are accessible at the main institute site, at two flexible learning centres also at the main site and in the town centre, at six community venues and eleven libraries across the town and surrounding area. Full-time provision includes GNVQ intermediate and the AVCE in ICT, GCE AS and A-level courses, and certificates and diplomas. There are 102 students in full-time education. Part-time courses available include those leading to the CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA) qualification, programming, Internet technology and computer applications and networks. There are 1,813 part-time students. Most courses are at levels 1 or 2 and are taught in traditional classes. A smaller number of courses are provided through self-paced open learning workshops where students are supported well by teachers. There are good opportunities for progression to level 3 at the main site and in the flexible learning centres, for all students entering lower-level programmes and for students aged 16 to 18. Young people represent 48% of full-time students and 1% of part-time students.

Achievement and standards

76. Pass rates are high and improving on the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course at 84%, and other computer application courses. Retention rates on many courses are poor.

They are poor on GNVQ courses, where few students achieve high grades. Pass rates are good for those students who remain on the GNVQ advanced course. Pass rates on the IT key skills programme are low at 14% and 5% for levels 1 and 2, respectively. Retention rates on the City and Guilds courses are low at levels 1 and 2, but at the national average for level 3. Retention rates are high on GCE AS and A-level IT courses.

77. Most students show interest and enthusiasm for their subjects. Students develop good individual learning skills and good practical IT skills, which improve their value as current and prospective employees. Adult students use their new skills at work, and take part in courses organised with their employer. Students on the AVCE course are able to manipulate and enhance digital photographs, while level 1 students can produce pie charts and graphs from spreadsheets. Some students progress rapidly. For example, some are able to program effectively with high-level software after two terms. However, some students are insufficiently aware of the wider range of ICT other than the use of personal computers, and know little of commercial practices in maintaining computer systems. Attendance for adults is good, but for young people it is poor, at 70% in the lessons observed. There are good procedures to contact absentee students, but these are applied inconsistently and some young people develop unacceptable attendance patterns without being effectively challenged. Arrangements to help students catch up after time away from lessons are unsatisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 7261 computer applications certificate (short)	1	No. of starts	*	40	36
		% retention	*	85	86
		% pass rate	*	97	68
CLAIT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	940	898	565
		% retention	78	78	73
		% pass rate	54	75	84
Internet technologies (short)	1	No. of starts	191	159	65
		% retention	79	75	80
		% pass rate	45	71	35
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	19	28	29
		% retention	68	82	69
		% pass rate	62	78	55
NVQ in using IT	2	No. of starts	31	12	*
		% retention	71	67	*
		% pass rate	64	63	*
Integrated Business Technology (IBT) 2 (1 year)	2	No. of starts	293	243	187
		% retention	74	78	61
		% pass rate	53	54	76
City and Guilds 7261 computer applications (advanced diploma short)	3	No. of starts	*	51	17
		% retention	*	80	100
		% pass rate	*	59	82
GNVQ advanced ICT (AVCE 2001-02)	3	No. of starts	23	53	33
		% retention	52	64	48

	% pass rate	55	96	94

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

78. Most teaching is good or better for adults, but in other lessons a small proportion is unsatisfactory. The best lessons are well planned. Teachers start by explaining the objectives of the lesson and the skills that the students should develop. Students value having clear explicit objectives. Teachers develop good rapport with students, who feel well supported. Many adult students use good-quality materials in the computer workshops to develop effective individual learning skills. This enables teachers to spend more time with students who prefer to be taught more directly. A feature of some lessons is the skilful use of individual and group tasks that take into account individual differences to maintain students' interest. For example, in one AVCE lesson, young students took notes during the teacher's presentation on different wireless communications technologies. They then used the Internet and technical magazines to research individual technologies, before working as a group to use their new knowledge to create their own presentation.

79. Poorer lessons are associated with poor planning and vague objectives. In some lessons, teachers fail to assess what has been learned. Other lessons for example are dull, because they consist of long lectures and presentations and lack opportunities for students to be involved in the work. In a few lessons, there is insufficient material to keep students busy, and they become bored and restless. In too many lessons, teachers fail to give the more able students extra or more complex work.

80. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and a satisfactory number have relevant vocational qualifications, but there are too few teachers with recent commercial or industrial experience. However, staff development is good and all staff regularly update their ICT skills. Most attend the institute's professional development centre to share good practice. Some investigate interesting and relevant topics, such as the use of computer networks to support learning, or addressing the educational needs of prison inmates. Reports on courses, research and other educational topics are stored on the computer network. Many teachers use these when seeking ways of improving their teaching. For example, one teacher looking for a new way to present database normalisation came upon the idea of turning it into a card game. Not only was the resulting learning successful, but students enjoyed this novel and innovative approach.

81. Good use is made of a set of laptop computers that are transported around several community venues. There are good resources at some community centres and although one school also has good resources, most have inappropriate furniture and workstations that present risks to students and do not conform to current health and safety guidelines. Technical support is unsatisfactory in a few schools where computers are configured poorly for adult students. In one class, only one computer had the required program, and the whole class had to share it. Lecturers in the main centre use screen projection facilities effectively. There is an optical fibre link between the two main sites that ensures good access to the institute's IT infrastructure. A virtual learning environment has been established, but it is currently underused. Individual students have good access to computer hardware.

82. Students receive clear written feedback on the standard of their work to help them improve their performance. They are clear about the criteria for grading. Their progress is monitored, but there is no regularity in the methods used or consistency in their application which compare students' prior attainments with their achievement. There is no use of measures to assess their progress. The assessment policy is unclear, and students still have an onerous workload at important times of the year.

83. Students receive effective advice and guidance at entry and as a result most choose suitable courses. The system for reviewing the progress of full-time students is currently inadequate.

Reviews are infrequent and insufficiently detailed, lacking clear action plans and targets. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans. Initial assessment identifies full-time students' need for extra support well. Students at levels 1 and 2 receive this support in the classroom. Level 3 students have the opportunity to attend extra sessions, but teachers do not promote these sufficiently and too few students benefit. There are good procedures to contact absent students and their parents, but these are inconsistently applied. Some students develop unacceptable attendance patterns without being challenged effectively. There is good support for students with disabilities. A curriculum specialist provides expert advice as required. One student with impaired mobility is provided with a wheelchair and a helper to enable her to attend lessons. There is a good range of resources for the visually impaired. There is poor access for people with restricted mobility at two of the outreach centres. Student services provide good access to pastoral support and careers advice in institute. However, promotion of these services to distance students, and those learning in the community, is inadequate.

Leadership and management

84. Management of ICT is satisfactory. There have been some improvements in pass and retention rates, but many are still poor. There is good communication. Courses are reviewed regularly, but in two cases staff over estimated the strength of their students' achievements. Course targets are set, but they are often undemanding. Quality assurance lacks rigour. There is good use of feedback from students in improving provision. The MIS is comprehensive, but there is insufficient use of it for management decisions. The self-assessment report was comprehensive, but it did not identify all key strengths and weaknesses. Data are not used effectively to monitor the performance of the curriculum area. There are good and effective partnerships with outside bodies and curriculum development is responsive to local initiatives. The community programme is successful in promoting social inclusion.

Hospitality, leisure and travel
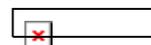
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o high pass rates on food preparation NVQ level 1 and AVCE travel and tourism

- o good teaching

- o very high standard of students practical skills in hospitality

- o effective integration of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- o wide range of enrichment opportunities

      o   effective involvement of students in course development.

Weaknesses

      o   low retention rates on food preparation NVQ level 2 and travel agents advanced certificate

      o   low pass rates on a few short courses

      o   poor target setting in hospitality.

Scope of provision

85. The institute provides full-time and part-time provision catering, leisure and tourism and travel from foundation to level 3. These include NVQs in food preparation and cooking at levels 1, 2 and 3, serving food and drink at level 2, hospitality supervision level 3 and an AVCE in travel and tourism. The institute recognises the low numbers on these courses and plans are at an advanced stage to attract more students. Part-time courses include a travel agents advanced certificate, a resort representatives, an air cabin crew certificate, and the national licensees' certificate. Many hospitality NVQ students progress from level 2 to level 3 and some AVCE travel and tourism students progress to degree courses. There are currently 89 students aged 16 to 18 and 16 adults on full-time courses and 80 students aged 16 to 18 and 165 adults, on part-time courses. Induction and tutorials programmes include introductions to health and safety and food hygiene.

Achievement and standards

86. Pass rates for the food preparation and cooking levels 2 and the AVCE travel and tourism are high, with 100% achievement in 2002. The pass rates on the national licencees certificate and the travel agents advanced certificate short courses are low, but the retention rate on the licencees certificate is high, at 100%. The retention rates for NVQ level 1 courses are good as they are for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are well integrated with full-time courses. The pass rates of students aged 16 to 18 are similar to those of adult students. The majority of students gain awards in addition to their main qualifications that are useful to their future employment. All catering students achieve basic level food safety and food hygiene certificates. Many travel and tourism students gain welcome host and other travel qualifications.

87. Hospitality students demonstrate very high standards of technical skills in the kitchen, which are often above the level expected at this stage of the course. For example, many demonstrate excellent knife skills and use these well across a wide range of preparation methods and techniques. In the introduction to cake decoration, students produce cakes to a high standard of texture, colour, flavour and decoration. Students work well together as a team and display excellent social skills when dealing with customers in the restaurant. They demonstrate good manners, appropriate humour and patience when dealing with difficult situations. These students are confident, well motivated and feel excited and proud to be part of a team which produces high-quality dining experiences for customers. The standards of service skills in the restaurant are good and the food produced in the training kitchens is well presented and served proficiently.

88. Most students go on to gain relevant employment in industry or continue on to higher-level qualifications.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Food preparation and cooking NVQ (2 year)	2	No. of starts	94	35	22
		% retention	46	69	59
		% pass rate	34	75	77
National licenses certificate (short)	3	No. of starts	*	27	32
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	48	56
Travel agents certificate advanced (short)	3	No. of starts	*	*	33
		% retention	*	*	55
		% pass rate	*	*	28
AVCE travel and tourism double award (2 year)	3	No. of starts	*	*	30
		% retention	*	*	67
		% pass rate	*	*	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

89. Teaching in practical and theory lessons is good or better. Lessons are well structured and take into account individual learning needs. Teachers explain the lesson objectives clearly and students know what they have to complete within the time available. Teachers and students have an excellent working relationship in the training kitchen and restaurant. Teachers constantly remind students of the high standards of food preparation and service they are required to provide. Teachers and students provide effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students are integrated with the mainstream hospitality programmes and work well in the kitchens and the restaurant with good support from teachers, technicians and other students. Students undertake a wide range of roles and responsibilities in the kitchen and restaurant, which helps them to reach levels of knowledge and understanding often above that expected of them on the course. In theory lessons, teachers use a good range of learning materials and teaching aids that include computer-generated handouts and presentations. Teachers link theory lessons to practical activities and use their industrial knowledge well to explain topics. Some teachers make good use of practical demonstrations to help students learn. Most teachers effectively use questions to check learning, directing most of them to individuals to ensure that all students are involved in learning.

90. Students in catering and travel and tourism apply their own work experiences well in the theory and practical lessons. They are motivated to learn by their teachers and keen to succeed. For example, in a lesson on promotional techniques in marketing, the teacher indicated how the tasks in class could be applied to the students' workplaces. The following discussion helped students to understand the general public's different responses and interpretations to promotional material. The practical skills of hospitality students in the kitchen and the restaurant are of a high standard. In practical lessons, all students are allocated specific responsibilities to make sure they complete all the qualification criteria and many achieve standards above those expected at this time of their course.

91. Additional learning support is available for students with an identified need. For example, some students have individual support with their basic skills such as communication. This particularly

helps the students with the development of their portfolios. All students' progress is monitored through an individual tutorial programme. Realistic action plans are set at tutorial reviews. The group tutorial programme for travel and tourism students focuses mainly on portfolio building and personal action planning. There are few opportunities for groups of students to develop their understanding of issues such as drugs awareness, applying for jobs and European awareness.

92. Teachers provide constructive feedback to students and work is accurately marked. The recording of most NVQ assessments and the subsequent verification is good. Portfolios are of a good standard and include a range of practical and theory evidence. The standard of written work produced by travel and tourism students is good. Most students complete assignments within the timescale allocated.

93. A wide range of enrichment activities, including sports activities, additional courses, good work placements in high-quality local hotels and restaurants and overseas visits, helps students to build on their current skills in new situations and to gain further qualifications and experiences. Students have the opportunity and are encouraged by their teachers to work on major events such as at the Lords Cricket Ground and Silverstone. Hospitality students have benefited from an exchange programme in France. This programme has led to 12 students being offered work placements in France this year. Travel and tourism students benefit from good work placements at Manchester Airport. Students use the outcomes and products from these experiences well to enhance their portfolios. Good employer links have resulted in additional work placement opportunities. For example, one major airline has agreed to provide students with a 13-week placement programme.

94. Most staff have recent experience of industry. The institute encourages industrial secondments. For example, one teacher has recently spent a week working in a restaurant kitchen and is planning to work in a bakery in the near future. Staff regularly attend industry-specific conferences. All staff work well as teams and newly appointed staff are effectively mentored. The hospitality facilities are well maintained, but a few do not reflect good industrial standards. The learning resource centre book and journals stock is appropriate. Students have easy access to computers and the Internet to assist their learning.

Leadership and management

95. Leadership and management are good. Two different programme leaders manage the leisure, travel and tourism programmes, and the hospitality programmes. A clear direction is set for each programme area. The leisure, travel and tourism teams set effective targets for retention and pass rates. However, the targets set for hospitality programmes do not take sufficient account of the aim to increase the present low student numbers on courses. Staff appraisals and reviews are effective. Staff and course meetings are held regularly and appropriate action is taken to remedy issues. Student representation on course teams is effective in influencing the teaching and assessment methods. Lesson observations take place regularly and form part of staff appraisal. Course reviews are effective and are used in the self-assessment report for the curriculum area. All staff are involved in the preparation of the self-assessment report and receive a draft for comment prior to its publication.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

Strengths

- o high pass rates on most courses

- o good integration of key skills

- o wide range of provision

- o effective monitoring of student progress.

Weaknesses

- o poor retention rates on NVQ level 2 hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes

- o weak management of some aspects of hairdressing

- o very slow progress for many full-time hairdressing students.

Scope of provision

96. The institute provides a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and other related therapies at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3. There are 84 students aged 16 to 18 and 113 adults on hairdressing and sports therapy courses. In beauty therapy and other related therapy courses, there are 58 students aged 16 to 18 and 297 adults. Related therapy courses include the Sports massage certificate, the Reiki practitioners' diploma and certificate and diplomas in aromatherapy, reflexology and holistic therapies. There are currently 21 students on hairdressing modern apprenticeship programmes. Fifteen are foundation modern apprentices and six are advanced modern apprentices. The institute has links with 17 hairdressing employers who provide work placements for students. There are two work-based assessors in these workplaces. Two curriculum managers share the management of the learning area, taking responsibility for the different vocational specialisms. The broad range of courses provides prospective students with a wide choice of skills they aspire to develop. There are good progression opportunities to develop specific skills at the same level and also to progress to higher-level courses within the same specialist area.

Achievement and standards

97. Pass rates for most students are good on institute-based programmes matching or exceeding national averages. Retention rates on NVQ level 1 hairdressing and NVQ level 2 beauty therapy courses have varied across three years and remain below the national average. Retention rates on NVQ level 2 programmes are declining and are below national averages. Most work-based learners make satisfactory progress and are on target to complete their full qualification. Where there are concerns about a student's progress, new targets are agreed between the tutor and student and are reviewed regularly. They receive a copy of their progress review to help them monitor improvement in their work.

98. Good standards of work are displayed in most practical lessons. Beauty therapy students' skills are well developed in advanced nail techniques, facial electrical treatments and holistic therapies. Level 1 hairdressers demonstrated advanced foil highlight techniques and colour correction application. All students make good progress with their key skills. They understand the requirements of key skills and work enthusiastically in lessons. Key skills lessons are linked well to their course. For example, in an IT lesson, students were keen to develop new skills using clipboard images and a variety of styles and fonts to design a logo to promote a hairdressing salon. Attendance is unsatisfactory, at 71%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	1	No. of starts	61	37	47
		% retention	71	65	70
		% pass rate	93	92	94
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	63	67	73
		% retention	67	52	66
		% pass rate	86	86	81
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	2	No. of starts	44	47	59
		% retention	84	72	64
		% pass rate	73	80	74
Indian head massage (short)	2	No. of starts	74	96	116
		% retention	82	92	84
		% pass rate	39	94	90
Diploma in sports therapies (1 year)	3	No. of starts	*	13	9
		% retention	*	92	78
		% pass rate	*	67	83
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	22	34	27
		% retention	82	88	93
		% pass rate	100	100	96
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	3	No. of starts	19	11	12
		% retention	63	45	100
		% pass rate	100	60	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

99. There is much good teaching of both theory and practical work. Schemes of work are well structured and students understand the objectives they should achieve at the end of a lesson. Teachers are enthusiastic and encourage students to reach high levels of skills in practical lessons. They use their knowledge and experience well to help demonstrate the problems that may occur through incorrect industry practices. Theoretical aspects are linked well to practical activities, which are then applied in the lesson. Students are highly motivated and there is a good relationship between them and their teachers. Questionnaires are used with all students to establish their preferred learning styles. Teaching styles and lesson plans are adapted to meet the particular profile

of the group. Key skills are linked well to the core subjects across the course. Lesson plans, schemes of work and assignments identify opportunities to develop students key skills within the vocational curriculum. In most lessons, well-planned teaching take account of the learning styles of students. Examples of imaginative methods include interactive quizzes, work in mixed ability pairs and use of the institute's virtual learning environment.

100. Teachers are well qualified, but there are too few qualified assessors in the workplace and insufficient work-based assessment slows student progress. Staff have benefited from continuing professional development. The specialist accommodation is dated and is in a poor state of décor. Salons are unkempt, cluttered and generally dirty. There is insufficient storage for resources, students' belongings and clients' clothing. The reception area does not match the standards of a realistic work environment and provides little opportunity for students to carry out reception duties effectively.

101. Students have individual progress reviews, which are carried out through the tutorial process and are used to draft action plans, set targets and plan for assessment. Students' achievement of individual units of the course is carefully recorded and details are logged in portfolios and reviewed regularly. Parents' evenings are held twice a year and regular contact is maintained between tutors and parents. There is an effective process for monitoring the progress of work-based students. Employers are well informed of on-the-job and-off-the-job training. A recently established advisory group represents local employers in this area of the institute's work.

102. Courses have been timetabled with insufficient regard to the needs of the mature students and most sessions begin too early. Initial assessment of hairdressing students takes place during their interviews, but too many students are inappropriately guided towards the NVQ level 1 in hairdressing, which is offered as a one-year full-time programme. Whilst on this course of study, students develop skills closely related to NVQ level 2, but they can only gain unit accreditation at NVQ level 1. Enrichment is good and students undertake a variety of additional qualifications such as Indian head massage alongside their main qualification.

103. Tutorial sessions are well planned and include scheduled one-to-one individual tutorials. Students are happy with their course and feel well supported. Assignment and portfolio building sessions provide further opportunities for additional individual support.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but more effective in beauty therapy than hairdressing, where too many students enrol on the NVQ level 1 rather than the more usual level 2. Across all courses, insufficient action is being taken to improve poor retention rates. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Course leaders produce with their teams the annual course review that is used for the self-assessment report for this area. The draft report is circulated to course teams for comment before the final document is produced. There is a well-established and effective programme of lesson observations and staff appraisal procedures are good.

Health and social care
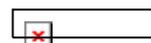
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   high pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2

- good links with work placement practice in many lessons

- effective management of change through staff development.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on many courses, especially at level 3

- unsatisfactory pass rates on a few level 3 courses

- insufficiently demanding teaching in a few lessons.

Scope of provision

105. The institute provides a range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to level 3 in this area of learning. Most provision is at levels 2 and 3. The majority of provision is located in the service industries centre, focusing on courses in childcare, health and social care and counselling. Full-time courses include GNVQ foundation level in health and social care, first diploma in caring, national diploma in health studies and national diploma in caring, certificate and diploma in childcare and education and the national diploma in early years. The centre also offers NVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3 in childcare and education and in care, the NVQ level 3 in dental nursing and a variety of short courses. The business centre offers full-time courses in public services at first diploma and national diploma and GCE A levels. Provision at level 4 and foundation degree level is planned. Many students progress successfully from level 2 to level 3 courses. There are 648 students in total, of whom 177 are full time. Failure to recruit students to some courses has led to changes in the provision and further rationalisation is planned.

Achievement and standards

106. Pass rates are high on foundation and level 2 courses, where they are well above the national average. In 2001 and 2002, the GNVQ foundation level course in health and social care had pass rates of 100% and the certificate in childcare and education course had pass rates of 93% and 92%, respectively. On a few level 3 courses, pass rates have been unsatisfactory. In each of the past three years, both the national diploma in childhood studies, predecessor to the national diploma in early years, and the NVQ in childcare and education had pass rates below the national average. Those on the former have declined from 86% in 2000, to 67% in 2002; well below the national average of 89%. On the NVQ programme, they were 59%, 67% and 64%, respectively, just below the national average. An exception to this pattern is the national diploma in health studies. In the past two years, pass rates were at 80% and 100%, respectively, and at or above the national average.

107. Retention rates are poor on many courses, and especially on level 3 courses. In both 2001 and 2002, only 38% of students who started on the national diploma in public services completed the course. In 2000 and 2001, retention rates on the diploma in childcare and education were 66% and 69%, respectively, but dropped to 42% in 2002, significantly below the national average. Other level

3 courses, such as the national diploma in health studies and NVQ in childcare and education, had retention rates consistently below the national average in each of the past three years. A similar pattern occurs on some level 2 courses, for example, the first diploma in caring and the certificate in childcare and education.

108. The majority of students' assignment work is satisfactory and appropriate to the level of their course. Some of it is good and reveals students' ability to relate theoretical concepts to their practice in work placements. In several lessons, students made acute observations and asked penetrating questions to clarify their understanding of the topic under discussion. For example, students on the national diploma in public services course had a good understanding of the reasons for, and practical implications of, police powers of arrest and detention, stop and search, and detainees' rights. On a counselling course, students learned about congruence and then consolidated their knowledge in practical work with clients.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation in health and social care	1	No. of starts	14	*	13
		% retention	71	*	85
		% pass rate	90	*	82
GNVQ intermediate in health and social care	2	No. of starts	21	9	10
		% retention	90	67	70
		% pass rate	74	67	86
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	*	12	15
		% retention	*	100	87
		% pass rate	*	92	92
Certificate in basic counselling skills	2	No. of starts	26	12	14
		% retention	92	100	100
		% pass rate	96	100	86
AVCE in health and social care	3	No. of starts	20	18	19
		% retention	85	61	74
		% pass rate	88	90	93
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	9	27	12
		% retention	100	65	92
		% pass rate	78	100	100
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	13	17	15
		% retention	69	59	60
		% pass rate	100	90	67
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	18	16	13
		% retention	78	100	77
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

109. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. In the best lessons, teachers use questions and answer techniques effectively to check students' learning and to increase their depth of understanding of the

subject matter. Teachers often help students to relate the theory being taught to practice in their placement settings. Some use imaginative methods to sustain students' interest and develop their learning more quickly. For example, in one lesson, students were each given 20 cards with the name of different types of people and asked to divide them into two piles containing in one the people they personally considered to be positive role models and in the other negative role models. Students explained the reasons for their choice clearly and made perceptive observations based on the social learning theory they were exploring in the lesson. The teacher skilfully helped students to explore their understanding of the theory, using questions to individuals to ensure the contribution of all. The class then moved on to consider the implications of social learning theory to their work with children in their work placements. In a few lessons, the teaching is insufficiently demanding of students and they make slow progress in learning. They lose concentration and become distracted. When groups report back on the results of their discussions, the teacher does not question students' thinking.

110. Recent staff changes have led to some disruption to students' programmes. Most staff have been in post only since September 2002 or January 2003 and are relatively new to teaching these courses. However, they are appropriately qualified and vocationally experienced. Most teaching rooms are fit for purpose and have attractive displays of students' work. Some rooms are too small for the size of group and the mobile classrooms provide an unsuitable environment. The learning resource centre is satisfactory and students have easy access to computers.

111. Assessment is usually fair and accurate. Comments on students' written work are helpful and constructive, and usually contain guidance on how to improve their grades. However, there has been delay in the return of some marked assignments and ineffective planning of assessment has slowed the progress of some NVQ students. Students' progress is monitored regularly in individual tutorials, progress reviews and course team meetings.

112. Links with relevant agencies and organisations in the community are productive. They enhance the learning experience of students by the provision of work placements and team building activities and through the use of external speakers with current professional practice in the vocational area. These links have also led to the establishment of new courses to meet the needs of the community such as that for classroom assistants.

113. The pastoral support of students is good. Students value highly the accessibility of staff and their willingness to help. The tutorial programme effectively meets the needs of students on the wide range of courses. Staff systematically monitor students' progress, attendance and punctuality through regular individual tutorials and progress reviews.

Leadership and management

114. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication is good and staff support each other well. The substantial changes to staffing have been managed well. For example, two teachers were allocated to the course most affected and new appointments to the public service course have made a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors agreed with most judgements in the self-assessment report, although they considered that insufficient weighting was sometimes given to weaknesses. Actions to remedy weaknesses are reasonably specific and progress is monitored. Equality of opportunity is promoted actively in the curriculum and in lessons.

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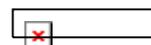
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   consistently good achievement on diploma in foundation studies

- o   much good teaching at 16 to 18

- o   a good standard of practical work.

Weaknesses

- o   poor pass rates on advanced level programmes

- o   insufficient independent learning for adults

- o   poor identification of key skills on assignment briefs.

Scope of provision

115. The institute has a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes in art and design at levels 1, 2 and 3. There is provision on all three of the institute sites and a large programme of art and craft in centres around the community. Provision is highly responsive and flexible and has been designed to meet local needs. There are 109 full-time and 56 part-time students aged 16 to 19 and 50 full-time and 419 part-time students aged 19+. Courses are available at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels during the day and evening. There are courses for the AVCE, GCE AS and A-level, City and Guilds qualifications and the National Open College Network (NOCN).

Achievement and standards

116. Achievement and progression into HE are good on the diploma in foundation studies. Overall pass rates for adults across all subjects at level 1 on the community provision are good and exceed national averages. There are poor pass rates, below national averages, on GCE AS, GCE A-level and AVCE courses.

117. On completion of their studies, most full-time students reach their full potential and some exceed expectations. There is some progression within the community arts courses and on to mainstream provision. For example, the manager of the community provision was an adult student, who began her art career in the institute before completing her degree and teaching qualification.

118. Practical work is good and students' portfolios contain good examples of investigative and accurate observation drawing, imaginative collage and painting. There is particularly lively and expressive work in textiles, embroidery and fashion and some skilful ceramic modelling. Many students have well-developed sketchbooks showing strong development of visual ideas. In one GCE A-level watercolour painting lesson at a community centre, students' work was of an exceptionally high standard. There was a strong emphasis on first hand research. Students had taken their own photographs and drawn from life, and in external locations. From this visual research, students

created paintings that were personal and original. Some students were progressing to GCE AS courses.

119. Students have a particularly mature approach to their studies. They are enthusiastic, committed and motivated. Students are punctual and attendance is good. Students always arrive ready for work; they are excited by the prospect of learning and many quickly demonstrate increased knowledge and confidence. One mature student, who had never undertaken any formal study in art and design before, had enrolled on the community arts calligraphy course. As she approached the end of the course, she was able to hand write letters effectively with a very apparent sense of achievement and increased confidence.

120. The art and design briefs clearly identify the components of the course, but there is no reference to key skills. Key skills are a natural part of the work, but because they are not identified at the start they have to be searched for in the finished work. Students have to be reminded which piece of work relates to a particular key skill. There has been little support for key skills development at the Padgate site. Several students on the foundation and AVCE courses have been identified as needing additional support and this is provided effectively by a partnership teacher who is timetabled to work with designated students in their lessons. These teachers work with a wider range of students and frequently help to develop their key skills on an informal basis.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Art and craft studies	1	No. of starts	*	*	226
		% retention	*	*	84
		% pass rate	*	*	95
City and Guilds 7819 introduction to home interior design	2	No. of starts	29	19	15
		% retention	69	68	67
		% pass rate	70	69	90
GCE AS art fine art studies	3	No. of starts	*	33	43
		% retention	*	70	79
		% pass rate	*	87	56
GCE A2 art and design	3	No. of starts	*	*	12
		% retention	*	*	92
		% pass rate	*	*	64
Business Technology and Education Council diploma in foundation studies	3	No. of starts	56	53	50
		% retention	91	89	90
		% pass rate	92	91	100
GNVQ/AVCE advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	10	12	2
		% retention	60	100	50
		% pass rate	100	50	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

121. There is much good teaching, particularly for the 16 to 18 age group, and lessons are thoroughly planned and prepared. Teachers introduce their lessons well, making the aims explicit and ensuring that students understand the learning objectives. In a few lessons, teachers' expectations are particularly high and the students produce work better than that often found at that

level and stage of the course. In the textiles and fashion option on the diploma in foundation studies, students are taught within the specialism for three days, usually on a long project that lasts for three weeks. Each morning, the teacher holds a class meeting and sets out the objectives for the day. Similarly, at the end of each day, she checks on what the group has achieved. The students respond positively to the teacher's high expectations; they are clear on what they need to do to improve and can evaluate their progress. In the most successful lessons, teachers give effective demonstrations of techniques such as ceramic modelling. There is an emphasis on investigative drawing based on primary sources, and on observation drawing. Students learn how to analyse and use other artists' work as sources of inspiration. There is thorough exploration of a variety of two-and three-dimensional media, including use of colour and texture, collage, ceramics, printmaking, woven textiles and embroidery, paper and felt making.

122. In some lessons where there are predominantly students aged 19+, the teacher- directed approach restricts learning because there is an insufficient emphasis on the development of students' capacity to work independently. As a result, students produce work which is frequently identical or repetitive. Students are not encouraged to make analytical studies from primary sources and there is an over reliance on using copied images of teachers' work or photocopies from books and magazines to develop design ideas. The design process is underdeveloped; students do not fully explore a range of ideas and media before embarking on their finished work. In some of these lessons, students aim for a finished piece before all mistakes have been corrected. Most teachers use a standard scheme of work and lesson plan, but the function of these documents is unclear and their use inconsistent.

123. All full-time art and design students have a base room with their own work areas. In order to provide the considerable space required for large-scale work, the foundation students are allocated two studios, but are frequently left to study on their own and with insufficient guidance, especially in the early stages of the course. High-quality displays of students' work and other artefacts help to create a stimulating environment on all three sites. Such displays demonstrate effectively the standard of work students should seek to match. There is a small and old IT resource at Padgate. Museum Street is well used because it is centrally located and consequently popular, but as a result it is crowded. A stair-lift has been provided to enable access to all floors and there is a small lift from the car park.

124. Students benefit from good teaching by well-qualified staff. The majority are still practitioners in their specialist fields and have higher-level qualifications. Staff development activities for full-time and part-time teachers are well supported. Many teachers on the community provision join short course themselves to expand their skills and knowledge.

125. Assessment of assignments is thorough and accurate and there is regular monitoring of students' progress in lessons. Teachers provide students with constructive feedback on their levels of achievement and areas for improvement. Students are required to evaluate their own work and do so well.

126. Guidance and support for students are extensive, especially for those hoping to continue their studies in HE. Across all provision, there are particularly good relationships between staff and students. Students speak highly of their teachers and the opportunities the courses have provided. They frequently mention their increased confidence and skills. One community course in crafts has 17 adult students, 4 with special needs, and these students are producing work of a standard comparable with other students. Some opportunities for progression are available in the community provision.

Leadership and management

127. Leadership and management are good. Teaching and learning at the design centre and on community programmes are well managed. Staff and students at community centres are given effective support and the course team for the foundation course share good practice. The course leader makes effective use of a computer-based system to plan courses for the following year. Because courses in this area are taught on all three sites, it has been difficult to maintain a coherent approach to provision. However, whenever possible, staff teach a range of courses on all three sites

and there have been some benefits to students who in this way experience a variety of teaching styles and expertise.

128. Quality assurance has improved since the previous inspection. Most course reviews are thorough, and retention rates are being monitored against targets. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report, but considered that some of the resulting action plans lacked sufficient detail. The institutes' lesson observations in this area have led to some over-generous grading, but examples of unsatisfactory teaching have been identified and appropriate action taken.

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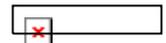
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   good teaching support for forthcoming examinations

- o   outstanding progression to HE from the access programme

- o   good retention and pass rates on GCE AS and A-level sociology and psychology

- o   good management of the access provision.

Weaknesses

- o   declining enrolments on GCE AS and GCSE programmes

- o   poor retention and pass rates in GCSE and GCE AS psychology

- o   poor attendance

- o   poor course review and evaluation

    o   little involvement by part-time teachers in course management.

Scope of provision

129. Psychology and sociology are provided at GCE AS/A-level and GCSE. Nearly a quarter of the full-time GCE A-level students at the institute take sociology and/or psychology. There are 134 students, of whom 21 are full time and 47 are taking GCSE courses. Recruitment is declining; GCSE sociology failed to recruit at all for evening classes last year and this year is running with a very small group. Most of the part-time students are agedover 19. The access provision, which offers mature students an alternative entry qualification for HE, operates full-time at the Padgate site and part-time at three community centres. There were 60 full-time students and 39 part time.

Achievement and standards

130. Students on the access to HE course are successful, achieving the qualification and a university place. All students finishing both the full-time and the part-time routes were successful for the last two years; they secured university places for subjects, including archaeology, media, nursing and business. Students report that their greatest gain was increased confidence. Most prepared for lessons thoroughly and many made effective use of often recently-acquired IT skills in their portfolios and assignments. There were examples of students planning and making good presentations to their fellow students.

131. Students on GCE AS and A-level courses in sociology are successful: in 2002, all students passed their courses. The GCE A-level psychology course had a 100% pass rate, but retention and pass rates on the GCE AS programme are substantially below national averages. Students on the GCE A-level programmes reach good standards in their written work and skilfully relate personal experience to theory, as in lessons on gender and education, and on anorexia and bulimia, where students carefully distinguished between well-researched knowledge and the myths often found in the media.

132. Fewer students are enrolling on GCSE psychology and sociology, fewer of those who enrol complete these courses, and those who do remain are often unsuccessful. This decline is particularly marked for students aged 16 to 18 attending the daytime classes. Examination results are less than satisfactory. In 2002, only 20% of students were successful in GCSE psychology. Most students were gaining a sound knowledge on essential concepts and in one lesson students demonstrated good analytical skills in using data tables to show patterns of voting. In a few cases, students lacked the basic understanding necessary for them to make satisfactory progress. Attendance is poor at 61 %. Personal tutors refer those students with poor attendance to administrators who then monitor the student's progress.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	33	31	22
		% retention	79	35	45
		% pass rate	50	91	20
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	*	18	4
		% retention	*	56	50
		% pass rate	*	60	50
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	*	13	28
		% retention	*	92	61

				83	100
		% pass rate	*	83	100
GCE A2 sociology	3	No. of starts	*	*	9
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	100
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	47	51	54
		% retention	68	86	81
		% pass rate	75	100	100
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	32	44
		% retention	*	59	61
		% pass rate	*	74	56

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

133. Generally, the teaching and learning in this area are good. Teachers use methods that take account of the needs of students with different learning styles. Students appreciate the variety of teaching methods used that engage their interest and help them to learn complex concepts. In one sociology lesson, students were put into teams to sort cards into true and false statements; this generated discussion and helped them to understand the implications behind different theories. Visual aids were used well in an access class where students handled models of hearts and blood vessels. Teachers know their students thoroughly and use their experiences to illustrate theory. In psychology, students completed a questionnaire on states of depression; the teacher handled this potentially risky topic sensitively, and reassured students about their own mental states. Teachers produce useful handouts and the best examples include exercises for the students to practise their learning. When appropriate, they are produced in large type to meet the needs of students with visual impairment or dyslexia. Much of the teaching is helpfully geared to the forthcoming examinations and includes revision of previous topics. In the weaker lessons, teachers fail to vary their methods or the pace of work sufficiently. They often work from textbooks and used unhelpful exercises and some of the materials used to stimulate students are not up to date.

134. Some staff have research experience which they use effectively when teaching psychology students how to apply research methods. Some of the part-time staff are new to teaching and need support to fulfil their potential.

135. Students receive helpful reports on how they have achieved their marks. They understand their progress and what they have to do to improve. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly and attend moderation meetings, which ensure that they are all marking consistently.

136. The access programme successfully widens participation and prepares students who have not previously contemplated taking part in education for higher study. It is offered both full time and part time to accommodate the family and work commitments of mature students. Sites for the part-time provision are chosen so that students can study close to their homes. The classes are based in friendly environments, which are less daunting to students who are returning to learning after some time. The walls in these community rooms are decorated with attractive pictures celebrating the achievement of the access students.

137. Teachers support their students strongly. Students appreciate the individual attention and support they receive. Access students are helped with their applications to university and attribute much of their success to encouragement from teachers. Full-time access and GCE A-level students are tested when they begin at the institute to see what extra help they need to undertake their course of study. Students with additional needs are referred to specialist help, based in the study centre at the institute's main site and those students who attend there, make further improvements. One student was diagnosed with dyslexia; the additional support he has received has substantially

improved his grades. Access students in the community do not have direct help at hand, but study skills are built into the central core of their programme of learning.

Leadership and management

138. Management of the access programme is good. Helpful management information is presented to the course leader, from which courses are costed and decisions made on the best use of resources and staff. Successful bids to community funds and to the local LSC support an additional part-time course, which is offered this year at a town centre site for a disadvantaged group of students.

139. Teachers have confidence in the MIS. Courses that are underperforming are identified and strategies put into place to improve them. Questionnaires survey students' views and the results of the surveys are graphically represented and displayed on classroom and corridor walls.

140. Management of the GCE A-level courses is dispersed between institute centres. There is a lack of leadership of this provision, which the new structure will address. Psychology and sociology currently lack a subject co-ordinator. Part-time teachers, who lead all of the evening provision, are unable to attend course team meetings. Course reviews and evaluations are not thorough; there are no clear actions or dates for completion and it is not clear how they are monitored. Course teams complete a self-assessment, but actions identified are not carried forward into course reviews. Teachers and managers are aware of the problem of the declining number of students enrolling on the GCE A-level programme. A review has been completed which recommends a re-organisation of GCE A levels into groupings leading to specific employment and career pathways. This will be implemented in September 2003.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
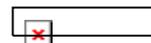
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o very good retention and pass rates on many programmes

- o good range of provision well matched to students' needs.

- o highly effective use of individual learning plans

- o much good and some excellent teaching

- o very good resources used effectively.

   o very good links with community partners.

Weaknesses

   o insufficient access to mainstream provision.

Scope of provision

141. Provision is extensive, and meets the needs of people with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include severe and moderate learning difficulties, students with profound and multiple learning disabilities, physical and sensory disabilities and mental health difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were 216 full-time students, 621 part-time students on community programmes and 532 students enrolled on mental health programmes. Full-time and part-time provision is mostly at pre-entry and entry level with some level 1 provision in hospitality and catering and retail. Teaching takes place at the Winwick Road campus, the Padgate campus and 23 community sites in partnership with a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations. Students with mental health difficulties study mainly part time in the institute with most in community venues and the local hospital. There are separate specialist level 1 courses in catering and retail, and a foundation level horticulture course. The Access to Community Employment (ACE) and Supporting People Achieving Real Choice (SPARC) uses placement officers and job coaches to help students to progress into supported work placements. SPARC has staff and offices on the institute site to improve access for students.

142. Link courses are provided in co-operation with local schools. Supported employment opportunities are available in partnership with Warrington Supported Employment Service and a local charity. Most full-time courses are accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Towards Independence and Workright qualification. Level 1 provision is accredited by NVQ. Most short courses in the community and for students with mental health needs are accredited by the institutes' own certificates.

Achievement and standards

143. There are very high pass rates on many programmes, with 100% on NVQ 1 retail and ASDAN towards independence where the retention rate is also high, at 94%. Most students complete their course and achieve the goals set on their individual learning plans. Following initial assessment, realistic learning targets are set. The best individual learning plans state clear targets, take account of students' previous work and attainment and cover personal skills, including working with others. Students' progress is reviewed regularly. Students' files and tutors' records confirm that students' learning is matched to their communication level. In 2000/02, nine students moved into supported employment.

144. There is good photographic evidence supported by feedback from students of the effective development of students' essential skills. These include skills needed for work, such as the ability to discuss topics in a group, be assertive, work as part of a team, and good knowledge of personal hygiene and health and safety issues at work.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Towards independence	entry	No. of starts	42	88	90

1 year		% retention	100	99	94
		% pass rate	86	100	100
Vocational access certificate	entry	No. of starts	31	25	28
		% retention	90	76	86
		% pass rate	86	95	83
Independent living 1 year	entry	No. of starts	*	20	22
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Workright award	entry	No. of starts	*	8	11
		% retention	*	100	91
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Art and craft short	entry	No. of starts	*	40	21
		% retention	*	98	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
NVQ retail (distributive operations)	1	No. of starts	9	13	11
		% retention	100	62	73
		% pass rate	78	63	100
Vocational foundation certificate - horticulture	1	No. of starts	*	55	59
		% retention	*	84	92
		% pass rate	*	100	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* course did not run

Quality of education and training

145. There is much good and excellent teaching and effective learning. The best lessons are well planned and have a clear sense of purpose. Students work on individualised tasks in small classes and have effective additional support. Students are given learning activities that interest and motivate them as they appeal to their age group. For example, watching a health and safety video produced in the style of the rap music genre, preparing orders, serving customers and handling money for the morning snack service to support their aspirations to go to work. Teachers reinforce learning by frequent references to what has been previously taught. Students are reminded of their own individual goals and the group objectives when working as a team. Progress is regularly checked and discussed with the students. They are able to speak about themselves confidently, both in group activities and during tutorial sessions. A video diary was used to help one student evaluate her own communication skills. Other students were able to communicate using their preferred style, listen to others and respond as a result of questioning and group management by the teacher.

146. Individual learning plans are used in a highly effective way to manage the long-term and short-term planning for students. There is thorough initial assessment which is used to set individual learning targets and these are linked to the national adult core curriculum for literacy, language and number. Good information on the student is gathered at their transition from school to the institute, during induction and for a period of up to six weeks so as to ensure that the targets which have been set meet the student's needs. Institute staff make effective use of specialist tools, such as the individual educational programme and resources geared to the needs of students at the pre-entry stage in literacy, language and number. Careful monitoring of students' progress provides opportunities to change targets in negotiation with the student, as appropriate. There is good tutorial support for individual students.

147. Staff make very good use of a wide range of resources. There is good access to, and effective use, of IT in many lessons. Laptops are used along with head switch and appropriate software programs to meet individual students' needs. Teachers make good use of adapted language and symbols to provide additional methods of communication for non-readers. There are good specialist facilities for teaching independent living, office skills, retail, catering and horticulture. Staff are experienced and can communicate with students who have speech difficulties effectively. Staff provide appropriate levels of intervention and support to promote students' independent activity.

148. There are very good links with community partners. Institute staff and managers work closely with staff from local special schools, local social services, mental health units and voluntary and charitable organisations to plan and develop the courses. Institute certificated courses are designed as a result of this partnership. For students who have aspirations to be independent and enter employment, there are good multi-agency links that help transition from school to institute and then to supported employment or real employment. For example, one student with moderate learning difficulties had gained employment in a large national supermarket and was expected by institute staff to maintain this position.

Leadership and management

149. The provision is well managed with good communication within and between teams in the institute and with external partners to plan and develop the courses. Staff are encouraged to identify training and to disseminate good practice.

150. There is insufficient access for many students to mainstream programmes. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not have appropriate access to the institute enrichment activities. They feel comfortable using the canteen at lunch and break and they make good use of the learning resource centre, mostly for access to computers, but there is an inadequate range of reading and talking books. There are opportunities for students to do NVQ level 1 in some vocational areas, such as catering and retail as a separate group, with one exception of catering where three students' learning plans are not yet complete and they are not fully integrated with the group.

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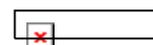
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o well-planned provision to meet a wide range of student needs in primary literacy and numeracy programmes

- o good achievement of individual learning goals in primary basic skills

- o successful collaborative partnerships

- o some inspired teaching in the community

o   good teaching for adult students.

Weaknesses

o   lack of an established management structure for basic skills

o   ineffective use of support workers

o   few opportunities for progression.

Scope of provision

151. The institute provides a range of literacy and numeracy courses for adults and young people at entry level, level 1 and level 2. Provision is both general in its scope and some is specifically targeted towards groups of students with particular needs. The partnership tutor programme provides individual learning support for students with literacy and numeracy needs on vocational courses. The provision is well distributed across the wider Warrington area allowing good access in the town centre, hospitals, workplace, hostels, social services premises, schools, and other community centres. Provision is available at varied times through the day and the evening.

152. A number of shorter courses offer young people, usually those who have not completed school, an opportunity to return to learning with financial assistance and support from the institute which is negotiated through the Connexions partnership. There are over 1,000 adult students currently on courses across this area of learning. The institute, through its effective partnerships with a number of local organisations, has successfully attracted those students traditionally under-represented in education.

Achievement and standards

153. Retention and pass rates show that students make good progress towards the achievement of personal learning goals. The institute acknowledges that achievement of national accreditation is low and it is currently moving rapidly towards offering the students externally accredited qualifications. This will result this year in a significant number of students undertaking the national tests at levels 1 and 2 and OCN accreditation. Students' assessment records show good levels of achievement of their learning goals.

154. In lessons, all students participate well in a range of appropriate activities. They maintain their attention, make constructive suggestions, confidently ask for further explanations, respond well and keep good notes. For example, students in a numeracy lesson used the Skillswise web site to consolidate work done on pie charts, and other students on a literacy course used the same web site to revise apostrophe work. They are conscientious about informing teachers about their lateness, but attendance is poor at 65%. Students are well motivated, enjoy their learning and work industriously. Students are developing confidence to use the new skills they have acquired when they are in work and every day lives. There are insufficient structured and substantive routes from separate specialist provision to other suitable courses within the institute.

Quality of education and training

155. Teaching is generally satisfactory and it is particularly good for adult students. In the most effective primary basic skills lessons, teachers use their imagination and experience to inspire and involve students from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. For example, work at a local hostel for the homeless included the construction of ceramic tiles to reflect the life story of students developing their literacy skills. In another lesson, students were organising a creative writing weekend and were identifying their health and social needs. The students were supported effectively and produced work of outstanding quality. The teacher kept students on track by giving each student individual attention, and students' ideas were skilfully extended through the use of good questioning techniques which encouraged them in developing their plan. Photographs, recordings, writings and posters were used to help students understand their health and social needs for the weekend. Recovered memory lessons enabled older students to maintain and develop their literacy skills. Students developed their IT literacy skills well, but IT numeracy classes were less effective. In the better IT lessons, students input data from the Internet and the teacher encouraged them to discuss issues and experiment with different computer applications through extension work. The pace of work was well planned and closely observed by the teacher. In IT numeracy classes, many students were not clear about the task they were to complete. There was a lack of planning for the different levels of student abilities and there was a lack of support for students to help them understand the objectives of the lesson. Some staff lack the specialist skills to teach literacy and numeracy through IT. The institute has identified this and staff development plans are well advanced to tackle this.

156. There was a good mixture of group and individual work in most lessons. Students are attentive and responsive working at their own pace, but are encouraged to develop independent study skills. The quality of assessment feedback in primary literacy and numeracy provision is good with constructive comments that help students to improve their performance. Students understand the review arrangements for monitoring their progress and reviews are completed effectively. Younger students have regular individual and group tutorials in which they review their progress towards the completion of their learning goals. Older students have formal reviews on a termly basis.

157. The institute has developed its own procedures for the initial assessment of all students. This assessment helps to determine the individual levels of literacy and numeracy and for those students who may require additional support the type and amount of support needed. The diagnostic assessment reports are well recorded, but there is no coherent system to ensure that action is taken on the records of those students identified as needing additional support are actioned. Subsequently, some students are still waiting to be informed of their support arrangements. Most teachers and partnership tutors do not meet to discuss the lesson plan or how the partnership tutor can effectively meet the individual support needs of students. Students with dyslexia needs do receive appropriate diagnostic assessment and support, but some level 3 students who have been identified as in need of additional learning support do not receive any and this absence of support is affecting their progress.

158. Students speak highly of the good level of support and guidance from a wide range of institute services and of how it helps them to achieve their learning goals. The institute has organised crèche facilities to enable students with young children to study. Some students did not know about the enrichment programme or of their entitlement to access the courses on offer.

159. There is some poor accommodation. In a main town centre venue, students are working in rooms that have no separated ceilings and where the noise from other classes is inhibiting the learning. This is recognised as a weakness by the institute. Some other classrooms are too small and do not allow an appropriate variety of activities to take place, while in others the acoustics are poor which makes it difficult for students to hear properly.

Leadership and management

160. Leadership and management are satisfactory. An institute basic skills strategy group has recently been established to devise a basic skills plan and to promote good practice. The institute is using the basic skills quality initiative to guide developments and an action plan has been written. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report, but considered that some of the resulting action

plans lacked sufficient detail. Where unsatisfactory teaching has been identified, the institute has taken appropriate action. The self-assessment report does not draw systematically on elements from literacy and numeracy across the institute. For example, it does not include lesson observations of basic skills additional support. There is no development plan to tackle the issues, which have been identified during the reviews of students' progress. There is a lack of target setting across the courses in this area.
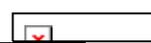
Part D: College data
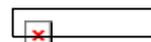
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age
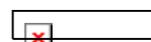
Level	16-18	19+
1	15	27
2	26	15
3	35	16
4/5	0	3
Other	24	39
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments
Science and mathematics	130	134	2
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	138	141	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	124	130	2
Business administration, management and professional	217	1,235	12
Information and communication technology	404	2,901	28
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	25	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	310	341	5

Hairdressing and beauty therapy	200	563	6
Health, social care and public services	343	1,043	11
Visual and performing arts and media	180	512	6
Humanities	151	151	2
English, languages and communication	119	745	7
Foundation programmes	170	1,802	17
Total	**2,486**	**9,723**	**100**

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	395	456	344	2,165	2,558	2,371
	Retention rate	76	67	71	75	79	80
	National average	80	80	79	78	78	78
	Pass rate	75	58	77	73	62	81
	National average	59	65	68	60	66	68
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,103	893	611	2,339	1,783	1,346
	Retention rate	75	70	58	79	76	76
	National average	76	76	76	79	79	78
	Pass rate	68	64	71	78	63	76
	National average	65	66	69	62	65	69
3	Starters excluding transfers	633	804	809	1,649	1,738	1,382
	Retention rate	68	62	61	76	76	75
	National average	75	76	77	78	78	78
	Pass rate	70	55	71	60	61	76
	National average	72	74	76	62	66	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	10	24	2	456	581	273
	Retention rate	80	96	*	81	85	89

National average	83	79	82	84	81	84
Pass rate	88	82	*	58	48	43
National average	64	66	55	56	56	53

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 1999 to 2002: College ISR.

* too few students to provide a valid calculation

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	29	5	74
Level 2 (intermediate)	65	33	2	40
Level 1 (foundation)	61	36	3	28
Other sessions	73	23	4	48
Totals	**67**	**29**	**4**	**190**