Bracknell and Wokingham College

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Bracknell and Wokingham
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Bob Lewin
Address of college:	Church Road
	Bracknell
	Berkshire
	RG12 1DJ
Telephone number:	01344 460200
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Chair of governors:	David Wilson
Unique reference number:	130603
Name of reporting inspector:	Bernard McDonald
Dates of inspection:	19-23 May 2003

Part A: Summary

Information about the college
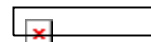
Bracknell and Wokingham College is a small to medium sized general further education (FE) college situated in Berkshire. The college owns six sites in Bracknell Forest and Wokingham and hires accommodation in a large number of schools and community locations. Courses are offered in all of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas of learning, although the provision in some areas is quite small. There were over 10,000 LSC-funded enrolments in 2001/02, over 70% of which were for adults. The college has a relatively small contract for the provision of work-based learning, and it offers a modest range of higher education (HE) courses. It is a significant provider of adult and community learning, and its contracts with the two local unitary authorities account for a further 15,000 enrolments. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) has recently inspected this provision. The college was awarded Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for infrastructure technology in 2002. The college employs 321 full-time staff and in excess of 400 part-time staff. The college's mission is to `provide the education and training that individuals and organisations need to enable them to achieve their full potential'.

The college is situated in a relatively prosperous area of the country, with low levels of unemployment. There is a concentration of large electronics and information technology (IT) companies. There is strong competition to provide post-16 education and training in the area. The college is in negotiation with a local school, with which it shares a site in Bracknell, with the aim of developing a joint centre for students aged 16 to 19.

How effective is the college?
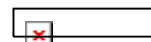
Key strengths

- o good pass rates

- o good teaching and learning

- o good support for individual students

- o effective staff development

- o effective partnerships to widen participation

- o   rigorous self-assessment

- o   good financial management

- o   effective leadership and management across the college.

What should be improved

- o   the retention of adult students on part-time courses

- o   the use of ILT in teaching and learning

- o   target setting and individual learning plans

- o   accommodation in some areas

- o   the breadth of the curriculum in some areas

- o   access for wheelchair users.

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
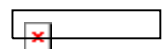
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how

range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

| Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Construction	**Good.** Work based learning is satisfactory**.** Retention and pass rates are high and above the national average, although some retention rates are declining. The quality of teaching and learning is above the national average for this area. Students acquire good practical and theoretical skills, and work-based learners gain useful additional qualifications. There is a wide range of electrical installation qualifications available. For work-based learners, the co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training is poor and progress reviews are ineffective.
Engineering	**Satisfactory.** Most pass rates are good. In work-based learning, satisfactory progress is made. Retention rates on most courses are in line with, or below, the national average. At level 3, retention rates are declining. Though most teaching is at least satisfactory, not enough of it is good. Information and learning technology (ILT) is well used. The quality of resources varies markedly. For work-based learners, the co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training is poor and progress reviews are ineffective.
Business administration, management and professional	**Good.** Pass rates for most courses are good. Teaching is good or better in most lessons, but some students are not sufficiently challenged. Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently promoted in lessons. Students are well supported. Learning opportunities are good, with a wide range of courses and flexible modes of attendance. There are productive external partnerships.
Information and communications technology	**Good.** There is much good teaching and learning and high retention and pass rates. Students make good progress and develop skills with very good support from a highly effective team of staff. Assessment is thorough and rigorous. A narrow range of courses is available to adults and there are weak links with employers. Leadership and management are good, although there is poor target setting.
Leisure, travel and tourism	**Good.** Retention and pass rates are above the national average and students make good progress in relation to prior attainment. There is much good teaching that is well structured and effectively relates theory to practice. Assessment practice is good. The current range of courses is inadequate.
Health and social care	**Good.** Pass rates are high, and, in some cases, outstanding. Retention rates are low on some courses. Teaching and support for individual full-time students are good. New courses have been provided in response to local community needs, although there is no level 1 provision for full-time students. The provision is well managed, and effective teams focus on improving teaching and learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	**Satisfactory.** There are good pass rates on some courses. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. There is effective support for individuals. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory and tutorials at level 3 are poorly planned. Attendance is poor.
Humanities	**Good.** Pass rates are outstanding on the access to HE courses, and very good in sociology. Teaching and learning on these courses are good, with stimulating and lively lessons. Student support, both academic and pastoral, is good. Retention rates are low for General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and Advance level (GCE A-level) psychology.
English and modern foreign languages	**Good.** Pass rates are good for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) English, GCE AS and A-level English language

	and literature and part-time modern foreign language courses. Students acquire good linguistic and literary skills and learn to speak a modern foreign language confidently with a good accent. Most lessons are good, but the use of ILT is underdeveloped and there is insufficient challenge for some students. Students are well supported.
Literacy and numeracy	**Satisfactory.** Retention rates are good. There is poor achievement on some adult literacy and numeracy courses. Key skills teaching is good, but there is too much reliance on worksheets in some literacy teaching. There are high levels of individual support.

## How well is the college led and managed?
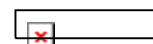
Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors provide clear strategic aims for the college, which are understood and fully supported. The open style of management is appreciated by staff, who work with a sense of common purpose. Teaching and learning are good and completing students achieve well on most courses. Retention rates are too low, especially among part-time adult students. Value added measures are not used sufficiently but, where they are, they show that most students do well. The pastoral support for students is impressive. The college has good relationships with strategic partners across the fields of education, training and business. Staff development is effective and communication within the college is good. The quality assurance processes are good, though they are still inconsistently applied by some. Self-assessment is comprehensive and self-critical. Many achievement targets set for students are poorly defined and do not ensure progress is effectively monitored. There is poor student interest in and awareness of equal opportunities and some parts of the college are not accessible to students with restricted mobility. Governors are committed, knowledgeable and effective. Financial management is good and the college provides at least satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?
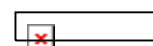
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Staff have a strong commitment to the college's mission statement, with its strong emphasis on social inclusion, and all students are valued equally. The college generally offers a wide range of courses that meet the needs of its students well and there is an appropriate balance between full-time and part-time courses. Recruitment is increasing. The support for students is good. There are strong community links and partnerships, which are well used to widen participation. The college has pioneered a successful project undertaken in partnership with Bracknell Forest local education authority (LEA) that has employed outreach workers to develop literacy and numeracy provision in the community. The college's response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) is satisfactory. A disability statement has been published for staff and students and staff are given training in the implications of the Act. The college has also strengthened its race equality policy in line with requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Across the college, however, equality of opportunity is not as well promoted through teaching and learning as it should be, and there is poor student interest in and awareness of equal opportunities. While considerable efforts are made through sensitive timetabling, some areas are not accessible to students with restricted mobility.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?
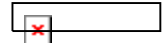
College staff provide good support and guidance to students. Most applicants receive appropriate initial advice and guidance about courses. The admissions process is effective, although the college's links with schools are not well developed. Parents and employers receive good feedback on the progress, attendance and punctuality of students aged 16 to 18. Induction procedures help students to settle into their course quickly. Comprehensive diagnostic tests are given at induction to establish the literacy and numeracy skills of all full-time students, but many part-time students are not assessed. The quality of additional learning support is good. Most students identified as requiring additional help take up their entitlement and benefit from it. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is strong, particularly for those with dyslexia. Tutorials are generally satisfactory, but the college fails to allocate sufficient time for them and tutors often provide this support for students at other times. Target setting with individual students is inadequate and individual learning plans often lack challenging and specific targets. Effective support is available to students who are applying for a course in HE. All students have access to high quality student and welfare services including counselling, careers advice and guidance, housing, financial and health advice.

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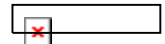
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the college

- o   helpful and approachable staff

- o   good learning resources and library

- o   good teaching

- o   welcoming atmosphere where students are treated like adults

- o   student services provide much help

- o   college location and transport links

o good value for money in canteen.

What they feel could be improved

o car parking

o lifts

o accommodation which is crowded and poor quality

o unpredictable heating in some areas.

Other information
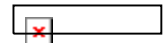
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must 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
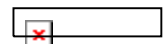
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors
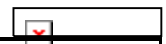
Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %

Teaching 16-18	67	29	4
19+ and WBL*	71	24	5
Learning 16-18	61	34	5
19+ and WBL*	72	25	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
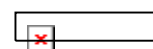
1. Summary data for students' achievements indicate that pass rates for all students were significantly above the most recent national averages for colleges of a similar type in 2001/02. Over the three-year period to 2001/02, pass rates at levels 2 and 3 rose significantly. At level 1, the trend is a downward one. However, pass rates have remained above the national average. Overall, retention rates have improved over the three years. The improvement has been most marked amongst students aged 16 to 18, and their retention rates are now in line with national averages. There has been insufficient improvement in the retention rates of adult students. At levels 1 to 3, the rates were below the national average in 2001/02. Overall attendance in the lessons observed was 79%, very similar to the attendance rate at the last inspection. Attendance was highest in information and communications technology (ICT) and health and social care, at 89%. By comparison, figures below 70% were recorded in humanities, English and modern foreign languages, and visual and performing arts and media.

2. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about students' achievements and standards reached on particular courses.

16 to 18 year olds

3. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 are high when compared with national averages for general FE colleges. For example, at level 2, pass rates have been well above the national average in each of the three years to 2001/02. A downturn in pass rates in 2000/01, in which the level 3 pass rate fell below the national average, was followed by a strong recovery in 2001/02. At level 3, which accounts for the largest group of students, the most recent pass rate of 90% compares very favourably with the national average of 76%. At GCE A level, the pass rate in 2002 was 92%. The GCE AS pass rate has improved to 86%. Pass rates on vocational courses at level 3 are very good, with well over 90% of students completing successfully. At level 2, the pass rates on General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) courses, at 88%, are well above the national average. Achievements in GCSE subjects at grades A* to C were above FE college averages, with a 52% pass rate. However, the proportion of students gaining a pass with high grades in GCSE mathematics in 2001/02 is, at 39%, poor by comparison with the comparable figure for GCSE English, of 73%. At level 1, pass rates rose significantly in 2001/02 to a figure well above the national average. Inspectors noted the high standard of work in ICT, where students complete useful projects for local businesses. GCE AS and A-level students produce a high standard of written work in sociology and history.

4. The extent to which the college makes good use of value added measures varies from one curriculum area to another. Inspectors found that in leisure and tourism and in humanities, there was evidence of added value in some subjects and students gained higher grades than might have been predicted on the basis of their prior level of attainment. The use of value added measurements in

visual and performing arts and media, and in English, is not well developed.

5. There have been improvements in the retention rates of students over the three years to 2001/02. In 1999/2000, retention rates were below the national average at levels 1, 2 and 3. By 2001/02, retention rates were in line with the national average at levels 1 and 2, and above the national average at level 3. On GCSE courses, retention rates have been falling, and, at 56% in 2001/02, are well below the national average. By contrast, retention rates for GNVQ students at this level have improved and, at 85%, are above the national average.

6. Retention rates on key skills courses rose to well above the national average in 2001/02. Although pass rates fell, they did exceed the low national average for these qualifications.

Adult learners

7. A significant majority of students at the college are aged 19 and over and study part time. Pass rates are high at level 3; at 84% in 2001/02, they are well above the latest national average of 69%. At level 2, there has been a continuous improvement in pass rates over the three years to 2001/02. The proportion of students gaining high grades in GCSE mathematics is good, at 80%, in 2001/02. Pass rates at levels 1 to 3 have remained above the national average every year over the last four years. The overall improvement in pass rates in 2001/02 means that rates comfortably exceed the national averages at all levels, including the higher level where the four-year upward trend has been significant. The position with key skills is similar to that for students aged 16 to 18.

8. In ICT, students produce work of a high standard. Students on access to HE courses achieve outstanding results and demonstrate their ability to think critically. Modern foreign languages students acquire good oral skills and demonstrate a good standard of work in lessons. In literacy and numeracy, students make good progress in acquiring reading and numeracy skills, but their writing skills are not so well developed.

9. Retention rates for adult students are unsatisfactory. Retention rates at level 3 are just below the national average, having fallen back after rising to be in line with the national average in 2000/01. At level 2, the retention rate has fluctuated. It fell below the national average in 2001/02. The retention rate at level 1 is poor and it has remained well below the national average for the last four years. Following an established trend of improvement, retention rates on higher level and short courses are now good.

10. There are just over 200 work-based learners at the college, over half of whom are advanced modern apprentices. Work-based learners are recruited in eight areas of learning. Construction and engineering have the largest numbers of modern apprentices. It is too early to judge the achievements of the work-based learners in these two areas, as most have not yet completed their planned programme. The overall retention rate is unsatisfactory at around 50%. Inspectors noted that work-based learners are acquiring good practical skills.

Quality of education and training
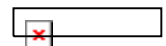
11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 161 sessions. They judged teaching to be good or better in 69% of these, satisfactory in 27% and less than satisfactory in 4%. The profile of grades for learning is very similar. Learning was unsatisfactory in less than 4% of the lessons. The overall standard of teaching was found to be significantly higher than that observed at the time of the last inspection, undertaken by the Further Education Funding Council, in January 1998. The highest proportion of good or better teaching is in ICT, health and social care, and sports, leisure and travel. Too few lessons are good or better in engineering, literacy and numeracy and in

students aged 16 to 18. Eleven lessons were observed in work-based learning; only six of these were judged to be good or better and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in work-based learning was too high. There is a variation in the quality of teaching associated with the level of some courses. Over 70% of the lessons at levels 2 and 3 are good or better, whereas just over 60% of the lessons at level 1 are of this quality. Part-time teachers taught 40% of the lessons observed. Overall, there is little difference in the quality of lessons taught by full-time staff compared with those taught by part-time staff.

12. In the best lessons, teaching is well planned and teachers have appropriate strategies to meet the needs of students of differing abilities. This was evident, for example in the teaching of sociology. In some areas, for example, leisure, travel and tourism, and construction, teachers make good use of their commercial or industrial experience to enliven lessons and to relate theory to practice. Highly effective teaching in the ICT curriculum area is characterised by lessons with a good range of activities that are designed to engage the interest of the age-group being taught. Engineering teachers use ILT to good effect, stimulating students' interest. However, its use is not sufficiently widespread across the college. Teachers and students in humanities and in English and modern foreign languages do not make enough use of ILT.

13. Some of the poorer lessons reflect inadequate lesson planning, for example, in engineering. Teachers of visual and performing arts and media carry out insufficient checks to ensure that learning is taking place. In a minority of lessons, for example, those in business, psychology or in English and modern foreign languages, teachers do not make adequate arrangements to ensure that students of different abilities are appropriately challenged by the lesson.

14. Key skills provision is well organised. A central team is responsible for key skills teaching and for assisting teachers in embedding key skills in their assessments. This team works closely with teachers to ensure that key skills' theory sessions reflect the vocational needs of the students. Key skills are well taught in business administration, visual and performing arts, and health, social care and public services. There is poor attendance at some key skills sessions.

15. Most of the teaching staff are well qualified, appropriately experienced and hold a formal teaching qualification. Effective staff development and training are clearly linked to the college's strategic plan. A wide range of training sessions is held at different times of the week, including weekends. Attendance rates are high and feedback on the usefulness of sessions is good. However, these evaluations are not used systematically to plan future staff development events. Some full-time staff have not had sufficient industrial updating recently.

16. The college owns three sites in Bracknell Forrest and three sites in Wokingham. The current accommodation constrains the expansion of provision in some curriculum areas. The buildings at the four main sites are clean and well maintained. Much of the accommodation at three of the sites is inaccessible to students with restricted mobility. Well-maintained displays in public areas draw attention to the work and achievements of students. There is insufficient social and common room space at the two main sites. Much of the specialist classroom accommodation and resources are satisfactory. However, some classrooms and other practical teaching areas are below acceptable standards, for example, in modern foreign languages, visual and performing arts, construction and engineering. There is overcrowding in some classes and insufficient storage space. Health and safety are given a high priority, and the college has gained a national award for its safety record in each of the last seven years.

17. The learning resource centres and computer suites are well used by students who receive effective support from staff. The range of resources is good. Students have good access to computer workstations and quiet study areas. The centre at Wick Hill is particularly appropriate for adult students and has opened on a number of Saturdays during 2002/03 to support courses running at the weekend. Staff in the learning resource centres liaise with teachers to ensure that resources are up to date, sufficient and available. Students and staff have good access to computers, however, as recognised by the college in its self-assessment report, too few staff use ILT as a teaching aid within the classroom.

18. Assessment procedures are generally sound. The college has general policies covering internal

verification and academic appeals, and uses standardised evaluation forms for assessor observation. Detailed procedures on homework and other assessment issues are agreed at section level and customised to suit the requirements of specific courses. Course handbooks contain helpful information on assessment that students receive during the induction period. Assessment practice meets the requirements of awarding bodies. Teachers of travel, leisure and tourism keep meticulous assessment records. The college uses comprehensive diagnostic tests for assessing the literacy and numeracy skills of all full-time and some part-time students. Computer-based and written assessments are carried out that identify the appropriate level of key skills course for students and highlight whether students have any additional learning needs. Students enrolling late in the academic year are also tested, but most part-time students are not.

19. Students' work is generally marked regularly and fairly across the college. Marked assignments are returned to students promptly, for example, in construction. Detailed feedback is given to students of engineering. Marked work often contains a clear indication of how improvements could be made, even when the standard is already high. Many teachers send homework to students by e-mail and receive the completed work back in this way. There is variation in the extent to which teachers correct the grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes in students' work. Some students of performing arts and media, literacy and numeracy, and GCE A-level psychology, law and history receive inadequate comments on their marked work. Tutors and teachers often monitor the progress of students very conscientiously. However, the quality of individual target setting is often poor. For example, the individual learning plans for literacy and numeracy students, and work-based learners in construction and engineering, often have very general targets and students are unclear what they need to do to improve. Internal verification procedures are detailed and effective. External verification reports are generally positive and many contain favourable comments on the effectiveness and rigour of assessment practices. They are analysed carefully by senior managers, and course teams are required to produce an action plan, which is then monitored rigorously.

20. The college is responsive to local and regional needs and has started a number of new courses to address skills shortages. It offers courses from pre-entry to HE. In some areas, such as business administration, electrical installation and modern foreign languages, full progression routes exist and students make good use of the opportunities. In other areas, there are gaps in the provision at foundation and advanced levels. There is a narrow range of provision in a few areas, for example, leisure, travel and tourism. A wide range of part-time, adult and community learning courses is available, although there is insufficient linking of progression opportunities from the latter into accredited provision. The college is a CoVE in infrastructure technology.

21. Partnership arrangements are particularly effective in widening participation. Collaboration with a number of local schools is providing Key Stage 4 school students with a range of part-time vocational courses in subjects such as motor vehicle studies. A good working relationship with two local education authorities ensures the provision of adult and community learning. Community-based education is also directly provided by the college through a number of partnership arrangements with primary schools, LEAs and other local general FE colleges. At the time of the inspection, the college was involved in more than 15 projects to widen participation for under-represented groups of students in Bracknell and Wokingham. However, the strength of curriculum links with employers is uneven across the college.

22. Students can combine GCE AS and A-level studies with vocational courses. They are given opportunities both for curriculum enrichment and to gain additional qualifications. There are 15 different enrichment activities offered, including football, basketball and drama. Some activities lead to qualifications, such as GCE AS photography and film studies. Approximately 250 students are taking part in the enrichment programme but attendance rates are sometimes unsatisfactory. In some curriculum areas, work experience is well established, for example, in health and social care. In other areas, for example, ICT, this is not the case.

23. The college has a strong ethos of providing support for students. The student services team is well managed to meet the needs of students. All students have access to high-quality support and welfare services including counselling and careers, housing, financial and health advice.

24. Applicants receive effective initial advice and guidance. Promotional material contains

appropriate information. Helpful prospectuses, which make good use of past students' experiences, are produced for international and full-time and part-time students. Promotional literature produced by individual centres has less consistency and clarity. Effective admission procedures take place at the centre in which the course is located. Links with schools are not as well developed, although the college organises careers conferences and other events with schools and other organisations. Induction helps students to settle quickly into their course. Students are well informed about the content of their course and some students participate in team-building activities.

25. Effective additional learning support is provided to those students requiring it. Most students identified as requiring additional help with literacy and numeracy take up their entitlement, although students in construction and engineering often fail to do so and little action is taken by teaching staff. The quality of the support is good and it is highly valued by many students. The college has evaluated the impact of this additional support and demonstrated that students receiving it are more likely to complete their course successfully.

26. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, particularly for students with dyslexia. Around 30 students, who had not been diagnosed previously as dyslexic, are identified annually through specialised testing by two fully trained staff. Staff development has raised awareness of dyslexia and other disabilities among teaching staff and improved their classroom practice.

27. All full-time and many part-time students are allocated a personal tutor. The quality of tutorials is generally satisfactory. However, the college fails to allocate sufficient tutorial time and tutors often have to provide support for students at other times. A tutorial bulletin is circulated regularly to tutors and provides messages and information on special events such as health or drugs awareness week. Tutors carry out individual progress reviews with students and develop an individual learning plan. The quality of many of these plans is poor. Targets set with students are often vague and lack challenging and specific targets. The college recognises this in its self-assessment. Part-time students receive effective support from teachers. They have no specific time set aside for tutorials, however, and the college has no clear guidelines in place to ensure they receive a minimum tutorial entitlement.

28. Staff across the college maintain close liaison with the parents and employers of students aged 16 to 18. Parents with concerns are encouraged to contact tutors directly by telephone. Parents' evenings take place during the year. Staff have a strong commitment to maintaining high levels of students' punctuality and attendance. All absences of students aged 16 to 18 are notified to tutors, who contact parents and employers promptly.

29. The college provides effective support for students who are applying for HE. Conferences are organised at which staff from universities and other organisations provide advice and guidance. In 2001/02, 86% of applicants successfully gained a place at university. Effective careers advice and guidance are given by college staff and personal advisors from the Connexions service.

30. A chaplaincy service, provided by the industrial chaplain for Bracknell Forest, who is also vice chairman of the corporation, is available to students and staff every Thursday morning. Personal counselling is offered to students at all centres. A wide range of financial assistance is given to students. Evaluation carried out by student services' staff indicates that the large majority of students receiving this financial help would not have been able to continue studying at the college without it.

Leadership and management
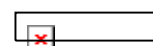
31. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors provide clear strategic

courses, though retention rates are too low among part-time adult students. Value added measures are not yet implemented widely across the college but, where they are, they show that most students make good progress. Since the last inspection, the college has given high priority to improving the quality of teaching, learning and achievement with much success.

32. Governors and senior managers work closely to support the achievement of strategic objectives. These include the expressed priorities to improve the quality of teaching and learning and support for students, to grow by meeting the needs of students in the community and to provide a student-centred curriculum. On most objectives, useful progress has been made. College plans combine actions to achieve strategic objectives with the outcomes of self-assessment. Appropriate actions are identified to effect improvements. The framework for reporting to governors is good. They receive regular and appropriate information on students' achievements, financial reports and progress towards achieving college priorities.

33. Management at course level is either satisfactory or good. There are no areas of unsatisfactory provision. Modern foreign languages managers set high standards and lead by example. In the management and professional studies section, minutes of team meetings are detailed and include agreed action points for completion. In health and social care, schemes of work are of good quality and have been developed to support the introduction of new courses. Course teams meet regularly. They give due priority to improving retention and pass rates. There is scope for more sharing of good management practice across the college.

34. Communication within the college is good. Senior managers work closely with section heads to ensure effective transfer of information between senior managers and course teams. A high proportion of the teaching staff make contributions to one of several cross-college working groups, including equal opportunities, quality assurance and professional development. Bulletins and regular newsletters are published and e-mail is used effectively.

35. Quality assurance and self-assessment procedures are good. Self-assessment is comprehensive and appropriately self-critical; the college has been particularly successful in improving the consistency of its teaching since the last inspection. More work is still needed to improve target setting for students and the writing of individual learning plans. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT in the classroom. Classroom observation of teachers informs staff appraisal, which in turn contributes directly to the identification of development needs. The college's overall assessment of the quality of teaching and learning is very similar to the findings of inspectors. An appropriate proportion of the budget is spent on professional development and the programme is both well regarded and effective.

36. The college has been successful in developing a robust management information system. The college IT network gives staff access to information on student applications, enrolments, attendance and evaluations, retention and pass rates, and equal opportunities monitoring data. The use of these centrally held data to raise standards at course level is not as well developed as it needs to be. Too few teams draw on the wide range of information available to help measure overall improvements in the courses they offer. The self-assessment report identifies the need for further staff training in order to increase the use of information by academic staff and to develop the timeliness of data response.

37. The college teaches an appropriate range of courses in most curriculum areas. It strikes a sensible balance between seeking to widen participation whilst ensuring that it teaches the courses that it offers well. It is greatly helped in being able to do this by good relationships with strategic partners across the fields of education, training and business. For example, the college is working with the LEA and Berkshire LSC to develop a new post-16 centre on a site shared with a local school. There are good links with most local HE providers and with other regional and local organisations. Some curriculum areas maintain productive links with employers' groups.

38. The college's response to SENDA has been satisfactory. A disability statement has been published for staff and students. Each year, the college reviews access for students with restricted mobility. These reviews have not resulted in actions to eliminate the problem and in some parts of the college, despite sensitive timetabling arrangements, some courses are still not accessible to all.

Staff are given training in the implications of the Act for support services and teachers and the college has strengthened its race equality policy in line with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Across the college, equality of opportunity is not as well promoted through teaching and learning as it should be. There is poor student interest in, and awareness of, equality of opportunity, as acknowledged by the college in the self-assessment report.

39. Governors are committed, knowledgeable and hardworking. The board and its sub-committees are appropriately involved in determining the college's strategic direction. Governors have a clear view of the strategic direction of the college and its mission in the local community. They carefully exercise their duty to monitor the college's financial health and they also bring a wide range of valuable experience to the benefit of the college. Governors have recently become linked to curriculum areas more closely and have taken the initiative in ensuring the college improves its course costing procedures, with a view to improving the cost effectiveness of the college. Governors undertake an annual review of their own performance and actions for improvement are implemented.

40. The college is in a strong financial position. It has adopted a careful and prudent approach to financial management. Reserves have been identified for capital development and college managers and governors effectively control budgets for staffing and consumable resources. Students do well on their courses and value for money is at least satisfactory.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas
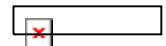
Construction
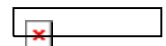
Overall provision in this area is g**ood (grade 2)**

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

Strengths

- o   high pass and retention rates

- o   good acquisition of skills and knowledge of students

- o   good teaching and learning

- o   wide range of electrical engineering provision and additional courses

o effective work placements.

Weaknesses

o poor accommodation for practical learning

o insufficient co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learners

o poor progress reviews in work-based learning.

Scope of provision

41. There are 384 students, of which 117 are aged 16 to 18 and 267 are aged 19 and over. There are 14 full-time students, and 86 work-based learners on foundation and modern apprenticeships. The college provides a range of electrical installation courses. Courses currently running are the City and Guilds 2360 parts 1 and 2 with progression onto the City and Guilds 2360 course C. A full range of short courses are also available, including the City and Guilds 2381 16th edition wiring regulations, City and Guilds 2400 design verification and commissioning, City and Guilds 2391 inspection and testing, and City and Guilds 2377 in-house inspection and testing of electrical equipment. Most courses are running both in the day and during the evening.

Achievement and standards

42. Pass and retention rates are good. Pass rates are all above the national averages for colleges of a similar type. In some cases, the pass rate is significantly above the national average. The pass rate for City and Guilds 2360-08 is 98%, compared to the national average of 46%. Retention rates are also high, although on many courses the national average is also high. On the City and Guilds 2380 course, all of the students have completed the course for the past three years. On some courses, the retention rate, though high, is declining.

43. For work-based learners, 1999/2000 was the first year in which a significant number of advanced modern apprentices started their programme. Of the 61 apprentices who started, one has so far completed the framework and 28 remain in learning. They are due to finish in the summer of 2003. The maximum possible retention rate for this group is only 49%. Retention rates are better for foundation modern apprentices. Of the 6 learners recruited in 2001/02, 5 remain in learning. Work-based learners acquire good practical skills and show good understanding and knowledge of the underlying principles of the theory of electrical engineering. They produce practical work of a high standard and demonstrate very good practical skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 2360-08 electrical installation	2	No. of starts	49	45	50
		% retention	82	98	86

		% pass rate	67	66	98
City and Guilds 2360 pt 1 electrical installation (full time)	2	No. of starts	*	**	39
		% retention	*	100	85
		% pass rate	*	79	***
City and Guilds 2380 16th edition wiring regulations	3	No. of starts	49	59	56
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	86	92	95
City and Guilds 2391 inspection and test	3	No. of starts	77	118	66
		% retention	100	98	97
		% pass rate	74	78	69

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

* course did not run
** fewer than 15 starters enrolled
*** data not available

Quality of education and training

44. There is much good teaching and learning. The standard of teaching is above the national average for this area of learning. Learning in all lessons is satisfactory or better, with over two-thirds of lessons good or very good. Theory lessons are well taught. In these lessons, students relate theoretical aspects to their own practical work. In the electrical workshop, students work on exercises that are well suited to the tasks they undertake at work. Learners are keen to develop their skills in these areas. Teachers provide good advice and assistance to all students. Health and safety precautions were always correctly observed. Most teachers give good practical advice based on their own experiences within the construction industry. Students are acquiring good skills and knowledge and are very satisfied with their progress.

45. Key skills are taught by the college's key skills team. The team consults with the subject teachers to develop ideas for assignments, but there is no integration of key skills within the vocational subjects.

46. There are good work placements for work-based learners, which enable them to develop their knowledge and skills. Employers make a broad range of tasks and learning opportunities available within the workplace to benefit learners. Employers value highly the skills gained by work-based learners. However, there is insufficient co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. Schemes of work have been issued to employers but this information is seldom used by employers to plan work tasks that would complement or consolidate the learning that takes place at college.

47. Teachers are well qualified and have relevant up-to-date occupational knowledge and experience. There is some unsatisfactory accommodation. Resources for theory training are satisfactory, but the space available for practical training is inadequate. These areas are suitable for only about 6 or 7 students, but lessons often have 14 students working in them. A fire exit is the means of entering and leaving the area. Students are required to work outside, and this disrupts classes when the weather is inclement.

48. Work-based learners are supported in the workplace by well-skilled and experienced supervisors, some of whom have gained National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and have a good understanding of the framework although most do not.

49. Assessments of written work are thorough, and good feedback is given to students. Students' progress is well monitored by staff, and students are aware of the progress they are making. NVQ

portfolios are assessed termly. Portfolio assessment is planned in advance and students are aware of when their portfolios are to be submitted. Some portfolio evidence has insufficient details of work carried out, but there is good use of photographic evidence during practical assessments.

50. Progress reviews for work-based learners are poor. They feature three-way discussions involving learner, training advisor and employer, but they are not sufficiently focused on progress being made towards gaining the qualifications. Documentation is weak and reviews do not result in the setting of targets for improvement. In most reviews, there is no reference to the individual learning plan. Learners have a poor awareness of equality of opportunity and their understanding is not always checked during reviews. There is insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace. Some workplaces display inappropriate wall displays and this is not challenged by college staff.

51. There is a wide range of electrical installation courses on offer. There is also a good range of short electrical courses that are essential for both trainee and practising electricians. The college offers the City and Guilds 236 electrical installation part 1 and part 2 course in addition to the City and Guilds 2351 course for students following modern apprenticeships. This course has been added to the curriculum to meet employer needs. The range of courses in electrical installation is valued by employers.

52. Support and guidance are good. There is a timetabled tutorial for full-time students but there are no timetabled tutorial sessions for part-time students. All students have an initial assessment of their learning needs during induction but this does not always lead to effective support. Those students identified as being in need of additional support are offered it, but many do not attend the support sessions and teachers take no action. Employers support and encourage work-based learners to succeed and there is good support from training advisors, including telephone support between review meetings.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are effective. Courses are well managed by course tutors. Formal and informal communications are good. There are regular team meetings. Links with local electrical contracting employers are good. The department has CoVE status for infrastructure technology. It is currently undergoing its end of first-year review. The main objective of the CoVE initiative is to develop a new electrical installation qualification in street lighting. Progress on this project has been slow, as the NVQ is not yet available. Some other aspects of the CoVE initiative, such as updating physical resources, have been partly addressed.

54. There is no systematic monitoring of the quality of training offered to work-based learners within the college. The construction section is required to provide details of lesson observations completed, but this is not sufficiently monitored or analysed.

55. The self-assessment report for construction is very accurate and clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The findings of the inspection mainly support those strengths and weaknesses, but the college has underestimated the significance of the poor practical training accommodation.

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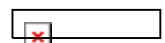
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o good pass rates on most courses

- o effective use of ILT

- o good employer links

- o effective support for students with additional learning needs

- o good acquisition of practical skills and knowledge by work-based learners

- o good work placements for work-based learners.

Weaknesses

- o poor pass rates on motor vehicle courses

- o poor retention rates on most courses

- o inadequate lesson planning

- o poor accommodation

- o insufficient co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training

- o poor progress reviews for work-based learners.

Scope of provision

56. The engineering provision comprises automotive, mechanical and electrical/electronic engineering including multimedia computer-aided design (CAD). Courses range from foundation to advanced level. Full-time courses include the first diploma and progression awards in automotive engineering, a national diploma in electrical/ electronic engineering, together with one that combines multimedia, CAD and IT. Part-time engineering courses are offered in CAD, and electronic and electrical servicing. There are 264 students, of whom 109 are full-time. About 60% of the students are adults. Work-based provision within engineering is small, with only 13 learners all of whom are studying electronic/electrical servicing. In addition to the above provision, some 40 school pupils aged 14 to 16 attend college to take a level 1 programme in performing engineering operations. There are 13 teaching staff supported by 3 technicians.

Achievement and standards

57. Overall, pass rates in 2001/02 were considerably above national averages. Retention rates are in line with or below the national averages. Although pass rates were good in 1999/2000 and 2001/02, there was a significant downturn in the intervening year. Within the overall improvement in pass rates in 2001/02, there are excellent pass rates for full-time courses such as the first and national diplomas in engineering and the level 2 and 3 CAD courses. The retention rates associated with these courses, with the exception of the first diploma, are well below national averages. The remaining full-time programme, the automobile engineering progression award, has a poor and declining pass rate. It is too early to judge the achievement of modern apprentices, as they are not scheduled to complete until the summer of 2003. The retention rate for this group is currently over 60%.

58. The standard of students' practical skills and technical knowledge is satisfactory. Students at all levels are usually able to carry out routine practical tasks without constant supervision, work safely and use the appropriate tools in a competent manner. Those on more advanced courses, particularly work-based apprentices, have gained more complex practical skills and underpinning knowledge that is appropriate to their course level. Though many of the work-based learners have not worked in electronics servicing before joining the programme, they are able to produce good-quality practical work. Employers value these skills. Of special note are the CAD and graphics skills shown in project work within the full-time CAD course, which incorporates IT.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 7261 electronic servicing certificate	1	No. of starts	25	14	14
		% retention	80	100	74
		% pass rate	75	57	89
City and Guilds 4351-07 CAD year one	2	No. of starts	*	45	48
		% retention	46	84	67
		% pass rate	100	71	100
C7G 4351-01 CAD year two	3	No. of starts	20	40	27
		% retention	85	95	67
		% pass rate	88	68	83
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	18	23	17
		% retention	83	70	53
		% pass rate	100	94	100

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

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

59. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, and well over half of the lessons are good or better. Most lessons are suitably linked to previous work and the scheme of work for the year. Lesson plans are inadequate: they are not always in place, and, where they are, they are not reviewed following the lesson. They make no reference to differentiation, even though there is a high proportion of students with additional learning needs. Time management in some lessons is poor, and there is insufficient time for students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Punctuality is good, and the average attendance figure, at 83%, is good when compared with the national average for this area of learning. Some of the better lessons are theory classes where a logical build up of the subject matter is supported by concise notes and clear diagrams. There is good use of ILT in lessons. Electronic whiteboards, computerised presentations and computer networking are all well used by staff. In a science lesson, an electronic whiteboard was used to access the Internet. In CAD and IT lessons, multiple choice questions are networked to students, who complete the questions and e-mail their automatically marked answers back to the tutor. The tutor can then quickly identify students who need help.

60. Work-based learners have are good opportunities to develop knowledge and practical skills that are highly valued by employers. Key skills have been introduced late into the programme and are now vocationally focused. Learners work with a range of experienced supervisors and staff, a few of whom have a good understanding of the apprentice framework, but most are insufficiently aware of the detail. The co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training is poor. Employers are unaware of off-the-job training schedules and are therefore unable to arrange tasks to complement or consolidate college work.

61. Resources in engineering are satisfactory. Staff are suitably qualified, appropriately experienced and possess teaching and assessor qualifications. There is adequate technician support. Much of the equipment in the mechanical and welding/ fabrication workshops, though still fit for purpose, is dated and does not reflect current industrial practice. Recent investment has taken place in the electronics and motor vehicle workshops, and there has been good development of the college intranet for making learning materials readily available. Accommodation is poor, both in classrooms and in some workshops. Classrooms can be cold and unwelcoming, whilst some dual-purpose rooms are too small for the theory or the practical work that takes place. Workshops are small and prone to overcrowding: particularly the welding workshop. There is a lack of storage space.

62. There are good work placements for work-based learners. Employers provide quality, high specification equipment for learning. One employer, who manufactures high precision motor sport transmission components, offers learners the opportunity to gain experience in all aspects of production.

63. Student work is appropriately marked. Assessment is fair, and feedback to students is constructive and sufficiently detailed to assist students to progress. Assessment and verification procedures are in accordance with awarding body requirements. Regular student progress reports are sent to parents and employers. In work-based learning, there is over-reliance on witness testimonies and little assessment by direct observation until late in the programme. Assessments also take place at the college.

64. Progress reviews for work-based learners are poor. They do not focus on the progress needed to gain the qualification, are not linked to individual learning plans and do not guide employers in which tasks to undertake. The reviews do not result in precise targets for the next stage of training. Students do not get a written record of the review. There is little awareness amongst students of equality of opportunity.

65. There are good employer links and employers are very active members of the college's engineering advisory committee. For example, employers have been involved in the choice of optional units for new courses. Communications between course managers and employers are good.

66. Initial diagnostic assessment identifies a significant proportion of students as needing additional learning support. The support provided is of high quality and it has been effective in improving retention and pass rates. Arrangements for additional learning support for work-based learners are less effective, although employers and training officers are very supportive.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are clear plans to make the provision better reflect local employment needs. Links with employers and schools are well developed. All staff were consulted over the self-assessment report and its findings are largely accurate. Quality assurance policies and procedures are in place and staff know their roles and responsibilities. Staff appraisal is linked to staff development, as are lesson observations. In work-based learning, procedures have been introduced recently in order to improve the monitoring and tracking of students' progress using a new management information system. Service level agreements are in place with sub-contracting colleges.

Business administration, management and professional
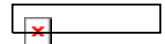
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o good pass rates on most courses

- o good range of learning opportunities

- o robust monitoring of students' progress

- o effective support for students

- o innovative partnerships to develop the provision.

Weaknesses

- o insufficient variety and challenge in a few lessons

- o insufficient promotion of equal opportunities.

Scope of provision

68. There is a wide range of courses in business administration, management and professional studies from foundation to higher levels. Courses operate on a full-time and part-time basis, with flexible modes of attendance. Of the 114 full-time students, 94 are aged 16 to 18. There are over 1,000 part-time students who are predominantly adults. Students attend the college from a wide geographical area. Work experience is offered to all full-time students, for either one or two weeks each year. Courses are based at two main sites in Bracknell. Work-based learning is offered in management and administration, but the number of students is small.

Achievement and standards

69. Pass rates are good on most courses. For example, for the past three years, pass rates on the GNVQ advanced and intermediate courses, the management certificate at level 3, and the NVQ in accounting have been well above the relevant national averages. Pass rates for some subjects rose significantly in 2001/02, for example, GCE A-level business, NVQ administration, audio-transcription, shorthand and English for business. Students taking secretarial subjects develop very good skills. Students taking Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and GNVQ courses demonstrate a good depth of knowledge and understanding and high attainment. Work-based learners' portfolios contain excellent evidence of competence at work. Adult students in marketing, accountancy and management confidently debate current business issues and present work of a very high standard. Students aged 16 to 18 are developing good research skills. Key skills achievements are good. Retention rates on most courses are satisfactory. Action to improve retention rates resulted in slight improvements in 2001/02, and current registers indicate good retention on most courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Text processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	29	37	*
		% retention	62	95	*
		% pass rate	83	54	*
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	18	18	17
		% retention	72	78	82
		% pass rate	85	86	79
AAT foundation	2	No. of starts	32	44	39
		% retention	81	80	51
		% pass rate	50	79	100
GNVQ advanced business (AVCE in 2002)	3	No. of starts	29	36	26
		% retention	48	75	79
		% pass rate	86	93	100
Certificate in management	3	No. of starts	28	19	*
		% retention	82	100	*
		% pass rate	87	100	*
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	20	30	26
		% retention	70	67	85

		% pass rate	79	55	77

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

70. Nearly all of the teaching is at least satisfactory, and the proportion that is good is in line with the national average for the area of learning. The better lessons are well planned. Teachers make good use of question and answer techniques to encourage learning. They also demonstrate very good subject knowledge and introduce an appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods. Quizzes and short checklists engage students' interest and refresh their memory. In marketing and management lessons, good use is made of current affairs to enliven learning. Some lessons fail to challenge students, or activities are not sufficiently varied to sustain students' interest. In some of these lessons, the teacher talks for too long a period and students are not sufficiently involved. In other lessons, there is too little use made of ILT, and some learning materials are not carefully checked for errors prior to distribution. In the least successful lessons, tasks are not sufficiently differentiated to reflect the range of abilities. The more able students who finish their exercises quickly are given additional work that does not stretch their ability. In some cases, the more able students simply sit waiting for other students to finish.

71. Resources are satisfactory. Classrooms are adequate, although some rooms are too small. Some are well equipped with ILT equipment, although it is not frequently used. Students have access to a well-stocked learning resource centre and drop-in IT workshops. There are good opportunities for independent study. Many of the teachers are very well qualified and some possess relevant recent industrial experience. There are good opportunities for staff development. All staff are encouraged to gain a teacher training qualification.

72. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Their work is effectively marked and promptly returned by teachers. Every lesson starts with the return of work or reminders of assignment and homework tasks. Teachers' comments are positive, constructive and help students to improve. There are good systems to enable staff to monitor individual students' achievements and progress. Regular and effective team meetings and course reviews are part of this process. The progress of individual students is discussed and action plans are put in place to address issues such as poor punctuality, attendance or performance. Internal verification and assessment practices for NVQ accountancy and administration courses are robust.

73. There is a good range of learning opportunities and programmes offered to both students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Courses range from NVQ level 1 and GNVQ foundation to the diploma in management studies and the advanced diploma in marketing. The range includes GCE AS and A-level business, basic book-keeping, computerised accounts, certificate in personnel, and numerous secretarial and office technology awards. There are growing opportunities to undertake work-based learning. Timetables are arranged to offer much flexibility in modes of attendance, including some weekend courses.

74. Students are well supported. Many have significant additional learning needs. For students aged 16 to 18, these needs are accurately identified through diagnostic tests on entry. Students can opt to attend specialist study support workshops, meet individually with tutors or attend drop-in sessions. Most students take up their entitlement and make significant improvements. Some teachers have attended specialist training to enable them to better meet the needs of individual students. Initial assessment for work-based learners is thorough and conducted by suitably qualified staff. Tutorials are well planned and effective. Although there is no formal tutorial for part-time students, many tutors make time for informal tutorials.

Leadership and management

75. Curriculum management is good. The three managers lead the teams effectively. Roles and responsibilities are clear, with all members of staff aware of their responsibilities in relation to students' achievement and the quality of the learning experience. Managers encourage individual staff to take responsibility for specific projects and to pilot innovative ventures. There are major collaborative partnerships with international and national organisations, the NHS, local government services and other specialist organisations. There are strong links with employers through the business advisory panel. These partnerships have led to the development of many courses, including full-cost provision. For example, management courses have been designed to meet the needs of the local community and have gained a good reputation. The system for internal observation of teaching and learning is underdeveloped. Although it is in operation, there is no formal procedure for correcting poor performance.

76. Equality of opportunity does not have a high profile. In all areas, there is a lack of positive promotion of equal opportunities. In lessons, students' awareness and appreciation of issues to do with inclusion and diversity is rarely extended. There is insufficient staff development in this area and equality of opportunity is not a standard agenda item at team meetings. There is no clear strategy to address gender imbalances in recruitment to office technology courses. Equal opportunities information is collated, but it is not used effectively to address issues.

Information and communications technology
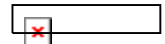
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o   good teaching and learning on all courses

- o   high retention and pass rates on most courses

- o   good progress and skills development of students

- o   very good support for students

- o   thorough and rigorous assessment practice

- o   highly effective staff teamworking.

Weaknesses

- o   narrow range of courses available to adults

- o   weak links with IT employers

- o   imprecise action planning and recording procedures.

Scope of provision

77. ICT provision is divided between two departments. Computing, located at the main college site, is responsible for 120 students aged 16 to 18 on courses from GNVQ foundation to national diploma. The IT applications department, based at the Wick Hill site, runs full-time and part-time courses for adults, there and at the Woodley Hill House site. There are 601 adult students. Many study full time for City and Guilds diploma level 2 and part-time courses are provided at levels 1 and 2. A new European computer driving licence (ECDL) level 3 course is running this year.

Achievement and standards

78. Retention and pass rates are high. Students progress well, develop good ICT skills, and produce a high standard of work. Many students with low expectations, associated with poor experiences in prior learning, achieve high grades. The pace of learning is good. One group of full-time students on the City and Guilds diploma course passed all their tests a month early and have started level 3 work. All students use a wide range of tools and techniques to produce a high standard of work. Young people are encouraged to evaluate and plan their work carefully and there is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Students develop enthusiasm for learning and self-confidence resulting from the acquisition of new skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation ICT	1	No. of starts	16	*	17
		% retention	88	*	88
		% pass rate	64	*	87
Computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT)	1	No. of starts	54	60	151
		% retention	87	95	89
		% pass rate	96	86	87
City and Guilds 7261	2	No. of starts	*	111	110
		% retention	*	92	88
		% pass rate	*	90	93
ECDL	2	No. of starts	213	42	77
		% retention	79	98	92
		% pass rate	46	90	100
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	43	43	52

		% retention	84	77	91
		% pass rate	72	61	83
National diploma in computer studies	3	No. of starts	46	39	42
		% retention	57	74	43
		% pass rate	100	86	94

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

79. There is very good teaching and learning. A high proportion of lessons are good or better. All sessions for students aged 16 to 18 are good or better. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and attendance rates are high. Teachers give clear and concise explanations. There are a good variety of teaching methods for young people. Teachers make good use of everyday objects and imagery to explain complex concepts. They use well-focused question and answer sessions to extend and reinforce learning and test understanding. Lively discussions in classes show that students can clearly recall and apply their learning from previous lessons. Teachers give effective one-to-one coaching in class, and outside lesson times, using high-quality manuals and handouts. Students are challenged to stretch their technical knowledge. Within a few weeks of commencing a part-time CLAIT course, one student without previous computer experience had mastered the basics of word processing and was commencing instruction in spreadsheets. However, some technical content for the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national course, though rigorous and well taught, is rather out of date.

80. Resources are satisfactory. There is adequate accommodation but no lift at the Wick Hill site. Computers and software are adequate, with a good range of accessories. Good learning materials, including up-to-date handouts, are available to students on the intranet and by remote access from home. Students have good access to computers outside lessons. Some whiteboards are badly sited. Data projectors are rarely used. Tutor demonstrations are frequently projected from their screens on to student monitors using an integrated networked system. Though this is a valuable teaching aid, it may mean that some students are staring too long at screens, and this may constitute a health and safety hazard.

81. Assessment and internal verification are rigorous and thorough. Students are given clear guidance about criteria for success, and marked work shows exactly why grades were awarded. Feedback to students gives clear pointers for improvement. Initial assessment varies in quality. All full-time students have an effective literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment. An extended induction for students aged 16 to 18 lasts for three weeks. This results in an effective assessment of IT competence. Students are placed on the most appropriate course. They are motivated to achieve Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) Internet technology accreditation before starting their main course and are introduced early to the department's work ethos. This has resulted in much higher retention rates on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18. However, the initial assessment for adults does not adequately assess their IT ability and some find the pace too slow at the start of courses.

82. The range of courses for adults is narrow. There is little level 3 provision. The few hardware and maintenance courses are mostly run as full-cost programmes, and this might exclude some students. There is good progression between programmes. There are some good links with the local community. Students undertaking projects for the national diploma course solve real problems for organisations such as the emergency services, a local hairdresser and the toy department of a shop. Employment agency staff visit full-time adult classes. However, local ICT employers have been badly affected by economic recession and links with the college's ICT departments have declined. There are now fewer students leaving the college to enter employment. There is no effective ICT employer advisory group. External IT speakers do not routinely visit. There are no industrial

secondment arrangements for staff to update and extend expertise, and there are insufficient suitable ICT work placements for students.

83. Individual support for students is good. Staff provide effective academic support. On Wednesday afternoons, staff volunteers run catch-up workshops for mixed groups of young students. Adults on part-time courses often arrive early to ask questions, and greatly appreciate the help they receive. College crèches and readily available access to car parking encourage young parents to join courses. Free taster keyboard courses help beginners to access learning. ICT staff have undertaken training to address dyslexia and other learning difficulties that students might have. Flexible help is targeted to need. For example, a helper accompanied a student with restricted mobility for a month until he became independent enough to manage on his own. Students value drop-in access to numeracy and literacy support. Maths workshops form an integral part of GNVQ programmes. ICT staff also provide sensitive but firm personal support to students, and many are encouraged to succeed when they might otherwise have dropped out of college. Equality of opportunity issues are stressed during induction. All young people complete an assignment on equality. One group of students visited a special school where they saw young people using adaptive technology to overcome their disabilities.

Leadership and management

84. Staff work effectively as a team. Good practice is shared formally and informally. Many sessions are team taught, and this greatly benefits the students, especially when staff have particular skills that complement each other, such as programming and systems analysis. Staff are encouraged to develop both occupational and teaching skills. New short courses make use of technical updating received by staff.

85. Plans and records lack precision. Individual learning plans provide little detail or precise short-term goal setting. Lesson plans are based on tasks and do not focus on student outcomes. There is insufficient emphasis when planning lessons on differentiation to meet the individual needs of students or evaluation of lessons. The minuting of meetings is haphazard and often produces vague, unassigned action points with few deadlines.

Leisure, travel and tourism
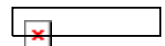
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o good retention and pass rates

- o much good teaching

- o good assessment practice

- o wide range of enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- o narrow range of courses

- o inadequate classroom support for students with particular learning needs.

Scope of provision

86. The college offers full-time provision for 56 students. There are 17 part-time adult students taking the Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC) course. Full-time courses include the AVCE travel and tourism, the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and the GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism. There are additional qualifications available to full-time and part-time students including the ABTAC primary certificate, the community sports leadership award, job seeking qualification, first aid, air ticketing, welcome host, Internet technology and the Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Achievement and standards

87. Retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses are above the national average and they are significantly above for level 3 courses. The retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course is above the national average and the pass rate is significantly above it. On the AVCE travel and tourism course, pass rates are significantly above those predicted on the basis of previous attainments. Pass rates on additional courses are either at or above the national average. For example, the ABTAC primary qualification pass rate is 78%. Students on the leisure and tourism courses develop a particularly good awareness of marketing and European tourism. They also improve ICT skills, for example, by searching and collating evidence from the Internet. Those on the advanced travel and tourism course have a good understanding of both United Kingdom and worldwide travel destinations. They also develop useful skills related to customer services, such as managing complaints. Key skills related to employment requirements are also evident. Students are able to make calculations related to travel costs. GNVQ intermediate students are able to create appropriate promotional material for a healthy life style using ICT.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	29	24	20
		% retention	90	75	85
		% pass rate	88	94	94
GNVQ leisure and tourism (AVCE in 2002)	3	No. of starts	29	27	*
		% retention	61	70	*
		% pass rate	100	94	*

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

88. There is good teaching and effective learning. Lessons have a clear structure and include a good variety of learning stimuli, which cater for differing learning styles, whilst allowing for the progressive development of skills and knowledge. For example, lessons involve high-quality handouts, poster and presentation work, practical demonstrations and role play. There were no lessons observed that were outstanding but the majority of lessons were good or better. The best lessons are characterised by activities that encourage students to participate actively in learning. For example, students learned about sports leadership skills by working with children from a local primary school. Students feel that they know exactly what are the requirements of their courses. In the less successful lessons, there is poor management of students' discussion, resulting in a minority of vocal students dominating the proceedings. Poor punctuality by a minority of students disrupts the start of some lessons.

89. Teachers possess appropriate and vocationally relevant qualifications. Those who are external examiners make good use of their experience to develop students' examination answering techniques. For example, in revision sessions, they give clear guidance in the form of summary points as well as checklists for students to self-evaluate. Those students who have specific learning difficulties are diagnosed and referred for help. There is insufficient help in lessons to students who have particular learning needs. Information is passed to teachers about students who have diagnosed learning needs, but teachers provide little direct help for such students, for example, by producing appropriately adapted written material. Learning resources are inadequate outside lessons, with too few computers available and few convenient areas for students to study independently.

90. Assessment is rigorous and well planned. Meticulous records are kept which help inform individual students about their progress. Target setting is being introduced and has been well received by students, who say it has motivated them to achieve. Detailed written feedback is given to students when assignments and tasks are returned with clear and helpful action points that help them to improve. There are very effective and thorough internal verification systems. The AVCE awarding body has exempted the department from the need to have external moderation.

91. The range of level 1, 2 and 3 courses is narrow and staff have recognised the need to provide a wider choice of courses. The number of students has steadily declined on all courses over the last three years. There are plans to introduce the BTEC national sports course at levels 2 and 3. There is a wide range of additional qualifications undertaken by existing students. These give good opportunities for students to apply theory to practice. For example, on the ABTAC primary course, there are opportunities for students to apply their knowledge of foreign currency to make their own exchange transactions. Work experience is arranged for all students annually. This provides valuable vocational experience and enables assignments to be written by students who have experienced the vocational context. Overseas visits are arranged, which are available for all students in the area of learning. These visits help to develop students' understanding and a recent visit to Barcelona was frequently referred to in a lesson dealing with currency value.

92. There is good personal support for students in tutorials, with tutors advising on personal issues that have formed barriers during the students' prior learning. Tutorials include one to one interviews that are used effectively to review and set targets that are specific, realistic and achievable. Students are all fully involved in the process and recognise the value of target setting and reviewing their own performance.

Leadership and management

93. Leadership and management are good. At course level, managers are effective and there is good participation by teachers in decision making, which contributes to good teamwork. Course reviews involve all team members and points for action are recorded and acted upon. There is a lack of formal curriculum planning with measurable outcomes to counter the effects of falling numbers of enrolments. The development plan includes action related to curriculum development. It does not involve targets that have measurable outcomes, for example, retention and pass rate targets.

Health and social care
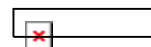
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o   high pass rates for many subjects

- o   good teaching

- o   courses responsive to community needs

- o   good individual support for full-time students

- o   well-managed area of learning.

Weaknesses

- o   unsatisfactory retention rates on some courses

- o   slow achievement on NVQ early years care and education courses

- o   lack of level 1 provision for full-time students.

Scope of provision

94. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care, early years and public services. Full-time courses are available at levels 2 and 3. There are 69 students aged 16 to 18, and 22 adult students are following access to HE courses in nursing, and in social work. NVQs in care and early years are offered at levels 2 to 4. Some 589 part-time adult students are enrolled for care and 65 for early years courses. Smaller numbers of part-time adult students are taking NVQs in advice and guidance, playwork, and promoting independence. There are 21 work-based learners under the age of 21. Counselling courses at introductory or intermediate level have

enrolled 59 students and 72 students are studying courses in pre-school practice, childminding or playwork. There is a range of specialist part-time courses including dental nurse, oral hygiene, and the certificate in mental health care. Some 922 students are enrolled for first aid, mostly first aid at work, with some refresher courses and paediatric first aid. Much of the first aid is franchised and delivered by other training providers. Full-time students are offered additional qualifications, such as GCSE mathematics and English, Makaton, community sports leaders award and the Duke of Edinburgh award.

Achievement and standards

95. There are high pass rates on many courses. Courses that have pass rates above the national average include the first and national diplomas in public services, both access to HE courses, the GNVQ advanced health and social care and its successor AVCE, the diploma in nursery nursing and its successor the diploma in child care and education, the introduction to pre-school practice and developing childminding practice. The certificate in childcare and education has high retention and outstanding pass rates with good internal progression for students. On some courses the rate of retention is unsatisfactory. These courses include the first diploma in public services, the diploma in nursery nursing, and the NVQ in care level 3. The college has introduced new measures to monitor students' attendance and, on most courses, on-course retention rates are now satisfactory. There have been slow rates of achievement on NVQs in early years courses. In the past, the college set unrealistic timescales for achieving these qualifications. There have also been delays in assessment and the college has now appointed a team of assessors. A significant number of students are still working towards gaining a qualification after the end of their planned programme.

96. The standards of attainment observed in lessons and in students' work and portfolios are satisfactory or better. Many students develop good collaborative and co-operative skills, particularly in group work. They take responsibility for allocating and managing tasks effectively. Many of them are confident when making presentations. A group of modern apprentices had investigated the cost and safety aspects of new equipment for their nursery, based on identified needs. They then reported to their fellow students in a simulated staff meeting, supporting their conclusions with well-researched material. The discussions of adult students reflect their respect for the dignity and needs of the client groups. Students on counselling courses quickly acquire new skills. All full-time students in care and early years undertake work placement and the majority receive good reports from placement supervisors. Students are increasingly confident in the use of ICT and use it to good effect in their assignments.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First aid at work	1	No. of starts	1,530	1,578	1,507
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	94	91	94
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	16	20	39
		% retention	88	80	85
		% pass rate	93	94	91
Introduction to pre-school practice	2	No. of starts	33	44	26
		% retention	100	98	96
		% pass rate	100	98	100
Diploma in nursery nursing/childcare and education	3	No. of starts	18	21	18
		% retention	56	67	78
		% pass rate	100	93	100
NVQ care	3	No. of starts	*	49	114

		% retention	*	78	66
		% pass rate	*	73	98

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

97. Teaching is good and is based on sound lesson planning. Most teachers use varied methods that are appropriate. Good working relationships between staff and students are established quickly, promoting students' confidence in becoming active students. Staff and students usually make effective links between learning and the vocational setting. Many tasks are structured to ensure that students draw upon occupational settings. In the best lessons, teachers in early years and counselling provided good role models of appropriate professional skills and practices. There is some good key skills teaching on public services courses. In a small number of lessons, group work is less effectively managed, lacking pace or sufficient variety to retain students' interests.

98. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good elements such as virtual babies. The stock of books and periodicals is good. There are no books for counselling held on the site where most counselling courses take place, although they can be ordered and delivered. The teaching staff value the effective links with the library staff, who attend curriculum team meetings and are responsive to requests for additional books. Staff are well qualified and occupationally experienced. Staff development is good for both full-time and part-time staff and there are sufficient opportunities for occupational updating.

99. There are robust systems for internal verification and moderation. Work is set regularly, returned speedily and marked to awarding body specifications. Some teachers correct grammar, spelling and punctuation whilst others do not. In written feedback, some teachers do not give sufficient guidance as to how students might improve. However, the thorough system of reviewing progress and action planning with full-time students ensures that they are guided well. For modern apprentices, most assessment is timely and frequent. Work experience for full-time care and early years students is well organised.

100. The college has responded well to community and partnership needs. For example, a local need for more qualified childminders and play workers led to an expansion in course provision. The programme areas are actively involved in a range of local partnerships and staff have access to the professional development offered by other partners. Many of the staff are also engaged in voluntary or community activities. Full-time students in early years and care benefit from an interesting programme of visiting speakers and external visits. Students in public services develop team-building skills and growth in confidence through a wide variety of outside activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh award. There is no level 1 course for full-time students, which restricts progression opportunities. However, the college plans to offer one next year.

101. Support for full-time students and modern apprentices is good. Students value the personal support and subject guidance which teachers and assessors readily provide. Full-time students know how they are progressing against clear targets, and they receive individual subject support when required. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their students and their individual needs. Subject workshops are provided. Learning support is offered to all students and the attendance at learning support is carefully monitored for full-time students and modern apprentices. On many part-time courses, there is good support for students but it is sometimes less structured.

Leadership and management

102. The area is well managed with supportive teams who work collaboratively to effect improvements in teaching and learning. Staff are aware of targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates and monitor progress against them. Student representatives attend the course reviews, which

are thorough. Observations of teachers and assessors help to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is strong quality assurance of the franchised work, with regular, unannounced visits to carry out observations. Equal opportunities are actively promoted in this curriculum area, partly through the range of specialist speakers and visits in addition to the normal curriculum content.

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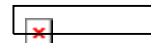
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o good pass rates on GNVQ intermediate art and design, and GNVQ advanced and AVCE media courses

- o good teaching of photography

- o well-supported staff development for part-time staff

- o good support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- o poor attendance

- o poor accommodation in art, design and media

- o inadequate written feedback on many full-time courses

- o ineffective use of tutorial time.

Scope of provision

103. The curriculum area has nearly 200 students aged 16 to 18 and over 600 students aged 19 and

over. The range of full-time courses includes GNVQ intermediate, AVCEs in art and design, media communications and performing arts, and access to HE in art and design. There is no full-time provision at level 1, GNVQ foundation or post-GCE art foundation diploma. Part-time courses include a range of short courses in photography, soft furnishings and art. Full-time courses are based at the main site in Bracknell. Part-time courses are held at a range of community centres.

Achievement and standards

104. Pass rates are good and exceed national averages on the GNVQ courses in intermediate art and design and advanced media communications. Pass rates have increased on most other courses in the last 2 years, so that they are now in line with national averages. Pass rates on the short City and Guilds photography course also exceed national averages, although these are low nationally. Retention rates on most art and design and media courses exceed national averages, but they have declined over the last three years. Retention rates on short City and Guilds photography courses have risen over the last three years and exceed the national average.

105. The development of skills and the standard of work produced are adequate in most cases. In the access to HE in art and design course, adult students were challenged and inspired by an imaginative team project to plan and publicise an end-of-year exhibition. Many students have low qualifications on entry and they have additional learning needs. They attain satisfactory standards and make good progress.

106. There are opportunities to progress from intermediate to advanced levels. There are examples of students joining the college with low previous attainment who have progressed through GVNQ intermediate and AVCE programmes to HE. Students are encouraged to undertake additional qualifications.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 9231 photography (short)	1	No. of starts	128	21	17
		% retention	75	86	94
		% pass rate	59	28	50
GCE AS art / fine art	3	No. of starts	*	31	23
		% retention	*	94	87
		% pass rate	*	55	80
GNVQ art and design	3	No. of starts	16	21	19
		% retention	44	95	63
		% pass rate	86	58	92
GNVQ media	3	No. of starts	17	15	**
		% retention	82	93	**
		% pass rate	93	86	**

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

* course did not run
** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

107. Teaching is mainly satisfactory with some good and very good lessons. The teaching of

photography is good. Students learn about black and white contrast control and produce high-quality images enhanced by visual skills learned on a previous course.

108. In a GCE A-level media lesson, inspirational teaching and well-managed discussion helped students develop their analysis of German expressionism in the cinema. In a performing arts rehearsal, GNVQ intermediate students were effectively challenged and supported by the lecturer in order to develop their understanding of Shakespearean text.

109. The better lessons in art and design are well planned and utilise well-thought-out assignments. Students are encouraged to experiment with materials and different techniques. In a GNVQ intermediate art and design lesson, the teacher skilfully and effectively involved all students in discussion to analyse and understand historical images.

110. The less successful lessons are poorly planned. Students are not well motivated nor are they challenged sufficiently by the teacher and they become bored. Learning is poorly managed and teachers fail to ensure that more able students are fully stretched. There is little checking that learning is taking place. Theoretical studies, critical review and evaluation are underdeveloped and are not effectively related to practical activities. In art and design, there is little observational drawing and too much reliance on secondary images and magazine cuttings.

111. Some staff and students give insufficient priority to the development of key skills. These lessons are insufficiently related to specialist study or they lack challenge for students. They tend to be poorly attended. However, teachers are making progress towards integrating key skills into main courses of study.

112. Some assessment practice is unsatisfactory. Written feedback is poor. It does not help students to identify what exactly they need to do to improve. In media, some students find the feedback confusing and do not always understand what they have to do to meet the criteria to pass the course.

113. Accommodation for art and design and media is poor. Some art and design studios are too small with inadequate storage facilities. This restricts large-scale work. There is a good theatre, but video and sound production facilities are poorly planned with inadequate production areas and computer-based video-editing equipment. There is a range of specialist accommodation at the main site. Computer rooms are well equipped. There is a well-equipped photographic facility at the Woodley Hill House site.

114. There is good support for new and part-time teachers. New teaching staff are observed within six weeks of starting teaching to identify any development needs. Peer observation of teaching is used to share good practice and there is an annual week of staff development activities. Teachers are well qualified. Some teachers are practising artists, designers, writers and journalists, and students benefit from their experience. Full-time staff lack recent awareness of the creative industries and there is no strategy for industrial updating.

115. Every effort is made to allow students to use the facilities beyond usual lesson times. There are good links with a local pharmaceutical company, which has commissioned adult students to provide creative photographic images. The college works in partnership with a local school, providing pupils with access to specialist facilities for GCE A-level media. However, knowledge of local employer needs is inadequate.

116. Time for tutorials is not well used. This is partly due to poor planning of tutorials, but it also reflects the low priority given by some staff to aspects of the tutorial programme. In all subjects, the focus of tutors is on getting through the tutorial rather than making good use of the opportunities offered. There is regular monitoring of students' progress on all courses.

117. There is good support for individual students and effective vocational and personal support for students in the classroom. Vocational tutors are also personal tutors and know their students well. Initial advice and guidance is easily accessible, impartial and good. All students have an initial

assessment. Students of all abilities use the drop-in study support centre. This helps students to develop their writing skills and is effective in raising achievement. There has been good staff development to enable teaching staff to support students with dyslexia, dyspraxia and Aspergers syndrome.

Leadership and management

118. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good support for part-time staff, who are paid to attend course review meetings and staff development events. Management information on attendance is collected daily and is available on-line to course tutors. However, attendance is poor at some lessons but there are no established procedures to address this problem. Frequent absence by students inhibits teamwork on major assignments.

119. Course team meetings are infrequent and the minutes do not always record action points or identified responsibilities.

120. The area succeeds in providing an inclusive curriculum with successful strategies for widening participation.

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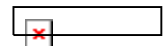
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o very good pass rates and value added measurements in sociology

- o outstanding pass rates on access to HE courses

- o much good teaching and learning on sociology and access to HE courses

- o good academic and pastoral support for students.

Weaknesses

- o low retention rates on psychology courses

- o insufficient use of ILT in lessons.

Scope of provision

121. The college offers humanities courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18 at GCE AS and A level, with GCSE psychology offered as a part-time evening course for adult students. The subjects on offer at GCE AS and A level are sociology, psychology, law, politics and history. In addition, there are two access to HE courses: access to humanities, social science and teacher training; and access to psychology. For 2002/03, there are 310 enrolments in total, with the access to HE courses having enrolled 59 students. Sociology and psychology enrolments at GCE AS and A level total 170 and therefore make up the majority of the 16 to 18 provision within humanities.

Achievement and standards

122. On the majority of courses, pass rates are in line with national averages or are higher. There are very good pass rates for sociology and outstanding pass rates for the access to HE provision. Over the last four years, all of the students who completed the access to HE course have passed. Their work is of a high standard. Students can write well-structured and evaluative essays and give effective presentations. They also demonstrate skills of interpretation and critical analysis. The skills needed for lifelong learning are fostered through the encouragement of independent learning. For example, students identify their own learning style and plan appropriate revision strategies accordingly.

123. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on the GCE AS and A-level sociology courses are very good and increasing. In 2002, the pass rate for GCE AS psychology was 92% and all of the students passed the GCE A level. On GCE AS and A-level sociology and history courses, students aged 16 to 18 show high levels of achievement in relation to their previous GCSE grades. In 2002, 43% of the grades in GCE AS sociology were high grades. Sociology students can evaluate and compare sociological perspectives and analyse data.

124. Retention rates for GCE A-level psychology were low and significantly below the national average in both 2000 and 2001. Retention rates rose in 2002, but there were fewer students. Pass rates for GCE A-level psychology have been in line with national averages; they increased significantly in 2002. The pass rate for GCE AS psychology was well below the national average in 2001, but it also rose significantly in 2002. Student numbers are low in the other three humanities subjects, history, politics and law. There are good retention rates for GCE AS and A-level history and, although pass rates have been outstanding in two of the last three years, in 2001, the rate was significantly below the national average. Pass rates for GCE AS and A-level law are good overall. Pass rates for politics have improved and were outstanding in 2002.

125. Attendance rates for students aged 16 to 18 are mainly in line with the national average for humanities.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	21	15	*
		% retention	57	60	*
		% pass rate	67	89	*
GCE A-level sociology (two year)	3	No. of starts	27	34	17
		% retention	70	71	82
		% pass rate	74	88	100
GCE A-level sociology (one year)	3	No. of starts	23	27	*
		% retention	78	70	*

		% pass rate	83	68	*
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	*	19	50
		% retention	*	89	74
		% pass rate	*	88	92
GCE A-level psychology (two year)	3	No. of starts	41	24	**
		% retention	49	42	**
		% pass rate	80	78	**
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	38	53
		% retention	*	68	72
		% pass rate	*	58	92

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

* course did not run
** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

126. The overall standards of teaching and learning are good. Students make good progress and some of those on GCE AS and A-level courses show high levels of achievement in relation to their previous GCSE grades.

127. Teaching on the access to HE and sociology provision is good. It inspires and challenges students. Courses and lessons are planned effectively. Well-chosen teaching and learning methods enable students to develop skills of evaluation and analysis. They also meet the needs of different students. Students in a GCE A-level sociology lesson participated in a role play exercise which developed their understanding of the way in which deaths come to be classified as suicide and the effect of this on official statistics. During one access to HE lesson, students took part in a lively and insightful discussion on how we define health and illness in our society.

128. The low number of students on some courses restricts the range of learning and teaching opportunities available. This weakness is recognised by the college. In the weaker lessons, there is insufficient planning, an over-reliance on one or two teaching methods and limited support for the less able students. Across the subjects, there are insufficient opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills. For example, the use of software for data analysis and the web as a research tool is not sufficiently well developed.

129. Students' written work is regularly assessed. Teachers give helpful and encouraging feedback with written advice on how to improve.

130. Support for students is good on the access to HE programmes. The progress and attendance of students aged 16 to 18 are monitored regularly and actions are taken to support students who are causing concern. Staff work hard to give support, and students speak warmly of the help they receive both inside and outside the classroom. Specialist support for students experiencing difficulties is available and valued by both staff and students.

131. Staff teaching in the humanities area are well-qualified and very experienced practitioners and there is college support for professional development. The accommodation is suitable at both of the sites with some stimulating displays, although the classrooms lack ICT facilities.

132. The humanities provision is responsive to local need and meets the interests and needs of students. The access to HE provision contributes to widening participation for adults, enabling students to progress to universities. Some students, whose previous school experience has been

less successful, value the opportunities available.

Leadership and management

133. Leadership and management are good. Staff value the support they receive and appreciate the accessibility of their managers. There is sharing of good practice in teaching strategies and staff are encouraged to participate in staff development activities. The self-assessment process is thorough and rigorous, and it takes account of the views of students. The self-critical approach leads to effective development planning. Equality of opportunity is promoted through the discussion of a range of related issues within the humanities subjects.

English and modern foreign languages
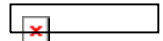
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o good pass rates on English language and literature and part-time courses in modern foreign languages

- o effective use of the target language in modern foreign languages

- o effective and responsive staff development

- o good individual support for students

- o effective leadership and management in modern foreign languages.

Weaknesses

- o poor retention rates on some courses

- o insufficient challenge to meet the needs of the most able

- o underdeveloped use of ICT in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

134. The college offers courses in GCSE English, GCE AS and A-level English language and literature, GCE AS and A-level Spanish and GCE AS French. Currently, there are 49 full-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on GCE AS and A-level English language and literature courses. There are 33 students, including 6 adults, enrolled for GCSE English language and literature, and 28 adult students are enrolled on GCE AS and A-level French and Spanish courses. Courses are also available in French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Russian at levels 1 and 2, and French, German and Spanish at level 3 and above. The college currently offers Open College Network (OCN) courses at levels 1 and 2 and is piloting the OCN level 3 qualification. There are 840 adult students enrolled on day and evening part-time modern foreign language courses at 7 sites.

Achievement and standards

135. Pass rates are good on GCSE and GCE AS and A-level English language and literature, and they have been consistently above national averages for the level 1 awards in German, French, Spanish and Italian. The proportion of high grades achieved in GCE English language and literature was above the national average in 2002. Retention rates are good for GCE AS and A-level English language and literature but poor for GCSE English language. This has improved in the current year and is now at 82%. Retention rates were also poor on some part-time language courses. Restructuring these courses from one-year to two-year courses has had an adverse affect on completion rates. These courses have now been discontinued and replaced with OCN courses, which allow annual accreditation. The current retention rate of 86%, for part time modern foreign language courses, is good.

136. The standard of students' written and oral work in lessons is generally good. Marked coursework and written work in students' files show that they are achieving the linguistic and literary skills appropriate to the level of course being followed. Modern foreign language students are acquiring good communication skills and can speak with authentic intonation and accent.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GOALS award in Spanish	1	No. of starts	27	103	81
		% retention	88	31	22
		% pass rate	100	97	94
GOALS award in German	1	No. of starts	26	39	30
		% retention	69	22	38
		% pass rate	94	75	80
GOALS award in Italian	1	No. of starts	19	69	66
		% retention	79	19	38
		% pass rate	100	100	94
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	63	44	44
		% retention	60	52	43
		% pass rate	79	96	74
GCE A-level English language and literature (two year)	3	No. of starts	30	41	18
		% retention	62	83	83
		% pass rate	89	94	100

GCE AS English language and literature (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	36	42
		% retention	*	91	98
		% pass rate	*	66	95

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

137. Teaching is generally good or better. This leads to effective learning in English and modern foreign languages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good linguistic competence. They enable students to develop the appropriate knowledge and skills through interesting and stimulating lessons. Modern foreign language teachers make effective use of the target language for teaching and learning. As a result, students acquire good oral skills. They develop authentic accents and speak confidently. Lessons are generally lively. They include a wide range of activities including games and quizzes.

138. Students in a GCE A-level German lesson successfully answered questions from a video recording of the German version of the television programme *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and then simulated the game in class. Beginners practised their vocabulary for clothes and food in Spanish through a competitive team game of noughts and crosses. Adult students bring an additional dimension of maturity and experience to modern foreign language lessons, which enriches the learning experience for all. Students studying English are mostly in the 16 to 18 age range. They are developing the ability to carry out linguistic and literary analyses of a range of texts. GCE A-level students were able to describe, in their own words, the linguistic and theatrical devices used to create the emotional impact of the final scene in *Othello*. GCSE students identified some key features of language used in a poem in the `texts from other cultures and traditions' section of the course. They put forward some imaginative interpretations of the imagery used. One student made the connection between the situation of the non-white people described in the poem with the conditions described by Martin Luther King. He even recited the opening lines of King's *I have a dream* speech. In the best lessons, teachers create an enabling environment. They raise the confidence of students through well-planned and competently taught lessons. They raise the self-esteem of their students through praise and positive feedback.

139. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not make provision for the needs of students of varying abilities in the class. Teaching materials and tasks are the same for all students. There is insufficient challenge for the most able. Some students in GCSE English do not participate fully and appear to lack motivation.

140. Resources are adequate in respect of textbook provision. The library stock in English requires further development to fully meet the demands of advanced level study. Access to television and video is available only in certain locations. This affects the frequency of use in both English and modern foreign languages lessons. ICT is underdeveloped in teaching and learning. There are too few computers available in learning areas within the seven different sites. Only about half of the computers in the learning resource centre have Internet access. This restricts the development of independent study skills.

141. Assessment procedures and practices are sound. Work is carefully marked according to examination board criteria. Students are given guidance on ways to improve the standard of their written and oral work. Guidance is most effective when it identifies skills in terms of reading, writing, listening or speaking. In some lessons, written work is not sufficiently monitored.

142. The college provides summer school taster sessions for prospective students in modern foreign language. There are good progression routes and many part-time modern foreign language students have been studying for several years, often with the same teacher, progressing from beginners to advanced level courses. There is a good partnership arrangement with a local specialist language

school which enables staff to share good practice and enhance their IT skills. It also provides a venue with high quality IT facilities for part-time students.

143. Support and guidance for individual students are good. Tutors know their students well and give freely of their time to help them raise the standard of their work. This is valued by students. There is early identification of additional learning needs. Students receive effective additional learning support. This helps them deal with specific short-term needs, as well as providing ongoing support over an extended period of time. For example, effective in-class support was provided in Spanish lessons for an adult student who has visual and hearing impairment. Individual learning plans, however, lack detailed learning objectives and target setting.

Leadership and management

144. Modern foreign languages are well managed and effectively led. Management at course level in English is satisfactory. The restructuring of modern foreign language provision has resulted in a significant increase in the number of students continuing with the part-time study of a language and this has helped to widen participation. Strategies to improve retention rates for GCSE English have also been successful. Managers in modern foreign languages are addressing weakness identified in a recent inspection of adult and community learning by the ALI and actions are already having a positive impact on provision. Effective strategies for raising achievement at the highest levels in modern foreign language remain a priority. Quality assurance procedures and practices are effective in English and modern foreign languages. They are focused on raising the standard of teaching and learning. However, the use of data for target setting and planning provision is underdeveloped.

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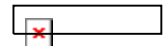
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   high retention rates

- o   good teaching of key skills

- o   high levels of individual support for students

- o   effective partnerships to widen participation.

Weaknesses

- o   unsatisfactory achievement on some adult literacy and numeracy courses

  o unsatisfactory individual learning plans

  o narrow range of teaching strategies for some literacy teaching.

Scope of provision

145. The inspection covered literacy and numeracy courses, the provision of the key skills of communication and application of number at levels 1 or 2, and additional learning support. Full-time students aged 16 to 18 are offered key skills units. Over 400 are studying application of number and some 350 are studying communication. There are 139 students on literacy and numeracy courses working towards external accreditation or college certificates. There are 79 students on a new work-based programme. Courses are provided on all of the college sites, venues in the community and on employers' premises.

146. In addition, the inspection covered cross-college literacy and numeracy support provided by the study support team. Some 230 students are receiving regular weekly support and a further 570 students have made use of the drop-in support sessions in literacy and numeracy this year, which are located in the learning resource centres.

Achievement and standards

147. Retention rates on adult literacy study support and key skills are good. There are unsatisfactory pass rates on some adult literacy and numeracy courses. Numeracy and wordpower courses are being phased out in favour of the basic literacy course, which has recorded higher pass rates in the college. The portfolios of students on current programmes indicate improvements in attainment in the current year. This progress is particularly marked for those students who attend lessons regularly.

148. Key skills pass rates are above national averages. On level 1 courses, pass rates are rising, whilst for level 2 they are falling. This was recognised by curriculum managers and the systems for placing students on the appropriate level of course have been changed. Pass rates have improved this year. There are satisfactory standards of students' work. Students make good progress in reading and numeracy skills but writing skills are not so well developed.

149. There is good progression from community-based provision to college courses and also good internal progression from adult literacy and numeracy to higher level college courses. One former numeracy student is now studying accounting and several literacy students are studying IT. Attendance was satisfactory in most sessions during the inspection and was 75% overall, which is just above the national average for this type of provision.

A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy and numeracy, 2001 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002
Communication skills wordpower	1	No. of starts	22	*
		% retention	68	*
		% pass rate	100	*
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	102	132
		% retention	83	88

		% pass rate	47	55
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	135	119
		% retention	79	87
		% pass rate	46	49
City and Guilds 3750 numeracy	2	No. of starts	51	*
		% retention	71	*
		% pass rate	100	*
Key skills application of number	2	No. of starts	364	222
		% retention	84	95
		% pass rate	48	33
Key skills communication	2	No. of starts	300	198
		% retention	84	97
		% pass rate	65	45

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

150. Teaching of key skills is good. It is well planned to meet students' needs. There is good use of questioning to check on learning. There is effective use of specialist software that allows students to work on the skills that they need and at appropriate levels.

151. In the most effective lessons, teaching is designed to meet students' needs and interests. All schemes of work and lesson plans are mapped against the new core curricula for literacy and numeracy. Teaching in study support is closely linked to the underpinning skills that students need to acquire in order to complete their course successfully. For example, in one session, students discussed the different ways to plan an essay and their individual preferences. In some literacy lessons, teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods. There is an over-reliance on worksheets and teacher exposition involving use of the whiteboard. Skills such as punctuation are not developed in contexts relevant to the student; they are not given the opportunity to apply skills in an appropriate context.

152. Most staff in this area have a specialist teaching qualification and have attended training for the new core curriculum in literacy and numeracy. For those who have not, there are plans in place for them to attend the curriculum training and to achieve the appropriate qualification. Most classrooms provide an appropriate environment for learning, but some are too small for the size of the group using them. Study support generally takes place in the learning resource centres, where there is access to an adequate range of learning resources. There is no wheelchair access to the study support area at the main site. Computers with literacy and numeracy software have been installed in the literacy and numeracy workshop, but this not available to those students in other classrooms. Some work-based learners use computers for their lessons on their employers' premises.

153. Individual learning plans are unsatisfactory. Some plans have general aims, such as to improve spelling. They do not identify specific skills that students need to develop nor what they need to do to acquire those skills. All students on full-time and substantial part-time courses undertake a computer-based initial assessment that informs course placement and identifies those who may need study support. If students need study support they are given diagnostic assessments to identify the nature of their need. Students on adult literacy and numeracy courses take an initial assessment but this is not always used to inform the wider learning plan. The quality of written feedback is variable. In the best cases, there are helpful comments on the quality of students' work and

suggestions as to how it could be improved. In other cases, marking is no more than a tick at the bottom of the page and does not help students to improve.

154. There are strong community and partnership links, which are instrumental in widening participation. Family learning is provided in a variety of forms, in conjunction with local schools. There is a successful project with the LEA that has employed outreach workers to develop literacy and numeracy provision in the workplace and to target students who have not previously had educational success.

155. There are high levels of personal support. Study support is closely linked to the needs of students and is delivered in contexts related to their main course of study. Support is provided flexibly to meet the needs of students. For example, there has been an increase in the amount of in-class support in response to requests for such support. There has been training for subject tutors to enable them to support dyslexic students. Effective use is made of volunteers in adult literacy classes. Signers and classroom assistants are available to help students to succeed. The level of support given helps students to improve their skills and confidence.

Leadership and management

156. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are well supported by their managers. The adult literacy and numeracy study support and key skills teams meet regularly, but some part-time teachers find it difficult to attend these meetings, although they are paid if they do attend. There is good sharing of practice between the key skills and study support teams, but little between these two teams and staff teaching on adult literacy and numeracy courses. The self-assessment report was accurate in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Clear action has been taken this year to improve achievement in key skills and adult literacy and numeracy. Weaknesses relating to individual learning plans had been identified in the self-assessment report and some actions, including staff training, have been put into place to improve target setting.
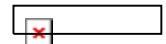
Part D: College data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age
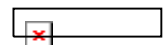
Level	16-18	19+
1	22	21
2	42	30
3	30	20
4/5	0	6
Other	5	22
Total *	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %*
Science and mathematics	512	160	7
Land-based provision	3	125	1
Construction	27	52	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	105	324	4
Business administration, management and professional	276	1,338	16
Information and communication technology	450	601	10
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	72	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	148	126	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	212	1,723	19
Visual and performing arts and media	194	633	8
Humanities	208	770	10
English, languages and communication	425	322	7
Foundation programmes	253	430	7
Unknown area of learning	173	493	7
Total	**2,986**	**7,196**	**100**

Source: provided by the college in 2003

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	119	154	278	797	1,108	1,279

	Retention rate (%)	72	77	80	73	65	65
	National average (%)	80	79	*	78	78	*
	Pass rate (%)	82	69	80	83	74	76
	National average (%)	65	68	*	66	68	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	433	442	434	1,055	1,250	1,378
	Retention rate (%)	74	78	76	71	79	74
	National average (%)	76	76	*	79	78	*
	Pass rate (%)	81	76	90	71	77	81
	National average (%)	66	69	*	65	69	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	447	749	673	1,013	889	973
	Retention rate (%)	68	78	81	69	78	76
	National average (%)	76	77	*	78	78	*
	Pass rate (%)	82	73	90	74	75	84
	National average (%)	74	76	*	66	69	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	25	*	22	369	303	282
	Retention rate (%)	64	*	82	73	86	88
	National average (%)	79	*	**	81	84	**
	Pass rate (%)	75	*	61	53	61	67
	National average (%)	66	*	**	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 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000

2. College rates for 2000/01 to 2001/02: Benchmarking Data 2000/01 to 2001/02: Retention and Achievement Rates. Learning and Skills Council, September 2002

3. College rates for 2001/02: provided by the college in spring 2003.

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled
** data unavailable

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

Courses	**Teaching judged to be:**				**No of**

	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	sessions observed
Level 3 (advanced)	71	27	2	66
Level 2 (intermediate)	74	21	5	61
Level 1 (foundation)	61	33	6	18
Other sessions	50	38	12	16
Totals	**69**	**27**	**4**	**161**