



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Furness College

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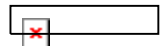
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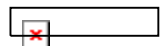
**Basic information about the college**



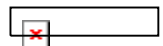
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Name of college:	Furness College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Val Bailey
Address of college:	Channelside Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 2PJ
Telephone number:	01229 825 017
Fax number:	01229 870 964
Chair of governors:	David Rhodes
Unique reference number:	130633
Name of reporting inspector:	Linda Harwood HMI
Dates of inspection:	3-7 February 2003

**Part A: Summary**



**Information about the college**



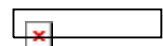
Furness College is a general further education (FE) college situated in the industrial town of Barrow-in-Furness, south Cumbria. It occupies a purpose-built site at Channelside. Within its catchment area there is a sixth form college, also located in Barrow, and two secondary schools with sixth forms. Furness College offers a wide range of mainly vocational provision, with opportunities to progress from level 1 to level 3. The college aims 'to meet the needs of employers and the local community by promoting lifelong learning, by providing excellent vocational education and training and by being flexible in its response to local demand'.

The Furness area has a population of approximately 70,000, and Barrow has experienced marked depopulation, greater than the northwest average. Unemployment, at 5.5%, is higher than the Cumbrian average of 2.9% and the national average of 3.2%, and is characterised by higher levels of male unemployment. Approximately 27% of students are from socially and economically deprived wards. The college recruits fairly even proportions of males and females. Less than 1% of the college population are from minority ethnic communities, compared with only 0.5% of the local population.

The college is active in developing curriculum links with local secondary schools and is a partner in the Furness Area 14-16 Increased Flexibility programme. It provides adult and community education at its main centre and in a number of outreach centres. In addition, Learndirect and open college courses are offered. The college is an Associate College of the University of Central Lancashire through which it is a franchisee of higher education (HE) courses. It also works successfully in partnership with local employers. A joint Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) proposal with BAE SYSTEMS in marine engineering was recently approved and is being developed. The college offers work-based learning in seven occupational areas, primarily in engineering and motor vehicle.

In 2001/02 the college enrolled over 7,000 students, including 563 full-time and 438 part-time students aged 16 to 18. Of the adult students, 768 were full time and over 5,300 were studying part time. Of the 10,381 enrolments in 2001/02, the vast majority were at levels 1 and 2, with over 40% at level 1. Some 143 work-based learners undertake foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training. The majority of learners undertake an advanced modern apprenticeship.

### **How effective is the college?**



The college provides satisfactory or better teaching and learning opportunities for its students. Inspectors judged the provision to be good in engineering, information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality and catering, and health, care, childcare and counselling. The provision was judged to be satisfactory in humanities and English, and literacy and numeracy. Although the college offers some courses in thirteen areas of learning, six were inspected on this occasion. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

#### **Key strengths**

- clear leadership and direction and the effective management of change
- good retention and pass rates at levels 1 and 2

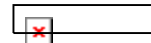
- wide range of courses offering good progression in most curriculum areas
- well-managed work-based learning provision
- good specialist accommodation, resources and equipment in some curriculum areas
- good support for full-time students
- organisation and teaching of key skills
- strong links with local employers and schools.

***What should be improved***

- retention and pass rates on level 3 courses
- proportion of good and excellent teaching which inspires students
- consistency of recording and monitoring of students' progress
- guidance and support for part-time students
- range of provision in basic skills.

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

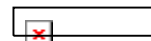
## Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

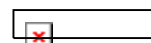
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Engineering	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates on most courses are very good. Students attend well and are punctual, and many progress well, often to HE. Curriculum management is good as is the management of work-based learning. Target setting and review are excellent in work-based learning, but poor in college-based tutorials. There is a wide range of provision in engineering and links with employers are effective.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates on part-time courses have been very good for several years, but poor results from full-time courses over the same period have been poor. Changes in the management of full-time courses, together with a restructuring of the teaching and support arrangements, are having a positive impact during the current academic year. There is much good teaching and the highly motivated staff and good specialist equipment are contributing effectively to students' learning.
Hospitality and catering	<b>Good.</b> Learning programmes are well managed and teaching is good. Students are supported effectively by well-qualified staff with good occupational experience. Learning is enhanced by a range of good learning resources. Retention and pass rates are high on some level 2 programmes, although a minority of courses have low pass rates.
Health, care, childcare and counselling	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high. There is a very good link established between classroom and placement-based components of full-time programmes. Students are well motivated and supported, resulting in high attendance rates and good punctuality. Teaching is generally good, but in some lessons, classroom accommodation restricts the variety of approaches available to teachers.
Humanities and English	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are high on access courses, and high and improving on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) English, though retention rates are low on several courses. Teaching is good and effectively captures the interest and enthusiasm of students. There are substantial weaknesses in guidance and support arrangements for students on humanities part-time programmes.
Literacy and numeracy	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The developing and well-managed programme area is responsive to the individual learning needs of the students. Teaching and learning are good, but progression needs to be firmly managed and developed. There is a community action plan to widen participation but a slow start has been made to community basic skills programmes.

## How well is the college led and managed?



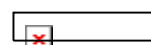
Leadership and management of the college are good. Managers and staff share a clear sense of purpose and take pride in the improvements that have been made since the last inspection. Retention and pass rates are largely at or above national averages. Senior managers are approachable and receptive to ideas from other staff. There have been improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning. Management is satisfactory or better in all of the curriculum areas inspected. Self-assessment processes generally provide a realistic picture of the college's strengths and weaknesses, and have led to improvement in the quality of provision for students. Action plans and targets are carefully monitored. The main issues for the college are the governors' regular monitoring of the educational performance of the college, the continuing weakness of its financial position, and some unsatisfactory achievement on level 3 programmes.

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



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. There is a strong commitment at all levels to widening participation and promoting learning to all who wish to benefit from it. Approximately a quarter of the college's students are recruited from areas experiencing high levels of deprivation. There are clear pathways for students to progress through different levels. Many adults have returned to learning through these pathways. The college is fulfilling its duties under the Special Educational Needs Disability Discrimination Act. The equal opportunities policy has been amended to meet the requirements of the Act and is being implemented effectively. Facilities for learners with restricted mobility are good and staff have received training in the implementation of the Act. The college has produced a race relations policy and action plan to meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, and is effectively fulfilling its obligations under the Act. The college has provided training for staff in order to raise awareness, but slow progress is being made against the action plan. Minority ethnic representation amongst students is double that of the local population, although that itself is very low (0.5%). The college promotes equal opportunities with the aim of rectifying the gender balance on courses in some areas, such as engineering, and health and social care, although this has met with limited success. Effective partnerships with employers and members of the local community help the college to widen participation.

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



Support for students and trainees is good. Students appreciate and value the support they receive from the college and they benefit from a comprehensive induction programme. Most tutorial provision is well planned and effective. Initial advice and guidance is good for full-time students and work-based learners. Some part-time students studying for a substantial number of hours have not received adequate guidance. All full-time and work-based learners complete an initial assessment but the system is underdeveloped for part-time students. In some areas the use of the individual learning plan to set targets and monitor progress is underdeveloped. Students have access to a good range of support services including careers advice and guidance, childcare and financial assistance. Careers education and guidance are good and students are well supported in exploring career and HE options.

### **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***

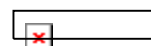
- helpful and approachable teachers and support staff
- mature and pleasant environment where students feel welcome
- efficient response to applications
- prompt return of marked work
- access to computers
- practical work used to support theory
- opportunities to progress through different levels
- childcare support.

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

- more additional qualifications and enrichment activities
- timetable arrangements
- insufficient variety of teaching methods

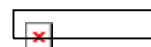
- car parking
- transport to the college from outlying areas.

### 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 Learning and Skills Council (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 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

### Part B: The college as a whole



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

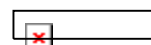


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	80	16	4
19+ and WBL*	60	34	6
Learning 16-18	64	36	0
19+ and WBL*	57	38	4

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

\*work-based learning

### Achievement and standards





1. Furness College is responsive to local need and offers a wide range of mainly vocational provision. Most of the enrolments at the college are on level 1 and 2 qualifications. Reliable data are only available for 2000/01 and 2001/02. Those for earlier years are less secure. In 2001, aggregated retention and pass rates were mostly at or above national averages for similar colleges. Two exceptions were pass rates at level 3 for students aged 16 to 18, which were slightly below the national average and retention rates for adult students at level 1 which was 5% below the national average. Pass rates for these students were 12% above the national average. In 2002 there were marked improvements in retention and pass rates at level 1 for both age groups, and in retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 2. However, retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 and pass rates for adult students at level 3 declined to below average. The overall figures mask some significant variations between subjects and courses. Retention and pass rates are generally good on engineering courses, but pass rates on full-time information technology (IT) courses are low.

2. Good attendance and punctuality were noted by inspectors, despite some severe weather conditions during the week of inspection. The college has appointed an attendance officer to follow up absenteeism and also offers incentives for good attendance and for completing work as part of Cumbria's retention and achievement project. In the current academic year the college is implementing a recently devised value added system to assist in setting target grades for students on vocational courses and for monitoring students' progress. This system is at too early a stage to assess its impact.

3. The standard of students' work is mostly good. Many students enter the college with relatively low levels of prior achievement and often make good progress on their courses. For example, adult students on the access to HE courses in humanities subjects gain in confidence in their study skills and in their intellectual capacity, and are able to demonstrate high-level critical evaluation skills. Their written work is of a high standard. Hospitality and catering students develop good practical skills in the restaurant and the kitchen, and many progress from level 1 to level 2 courses. Students on care programmes have clear aspirations to progress to FE and HE and training in care professions. Basic skills students acquire additional skills such as computer skills and personal and social skills that add value to their learning.

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

4. Retention and pass rates are generally high for students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and level 2 courses. In 2001 the retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 at level 2, at 84%, was in the upper quartile. In 2002 this improved further to 90%. Pass rates on level 2 courses also improved in 2002. In 2000/01 the retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses was at the national average, whilst the pass rate was slightly below average. Both retention and pass rates decreased significantly in 2001/02. Aware that the approach previously adopted towards Curriculum 2000 did not suit many of the students, the college has remodelled much of its level 3 curriculum. For example, it no longer offers General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) science and mathematics, it has reduced Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) provision, and increased the number of Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national qualifications to better meet the needs of students. Attainment of students aged 16 to 18 in key skills is poor.

#### ***Adult learners***

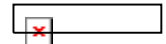
5. The vast majority of enrolments at the college are of adult students, mainly studying part time and largely at levels 1 and 2. Retention rates of adult students are generally at or above national averages for similar colleges. Pass rates are more variable. In 2001 the pass rate of students aged 19 and over at level 2, at 85%, was in the upper quartile. Pass rates are high and improving at level 1, but decreased at levels 2 and 3 in 2001/02. Although retention rates are satisfactory, pass rates on level 3 courses are low overall in 2002. However, there are good pass rates in some curriculum areas, for example in engineering, IT and access courses. Pass rates for short courses, mainly undertaken by adult students, are above the national average for all levels. There are particularly noteworthy success rates on level 1 short courses. In 2000/01, with over 2,000 enrolments, the

college had a retention rate of 94% and a pass rate of 91%, compared with a national average pass rate of 75%. Pass rates on most part-time ICT courses have been consistently above the national average.

### ***Work-based learning***

6. Work-based learning is well managed. A work-based learning co-ordinator ensures that a common set of systems and procedures are used for the delivery and assessment of work-based learning across the occupational areas. A college team of work-based learning tutors visit learners in the workplace on a frequent basis. With the exception of engineering, motor vehicle and hairdressing, the number of learners in each area is low. Achievement on engineering and motor vehicle modern apprenticeships is good. In hairdressing the retention rate for modern apprenticeships at both levels is poor and framework completion is low. For example, only 10% of advanced modern apprentices who started in 2000/01 successfully completed their apprenticeship framework, and only 30% achieved an NVQ level 3.

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



7. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 92 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 70% of these and less than satisfactory in slightly more than 5%. A high proportion of teaching and learning in hospitality and catering and in humanities was good or better. In ICT and hospitality and catering there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Although there was more unsatisfactory teaching in humanities than in other areas, learning and attainment were all satisfactory or better. Overall there is a higher proportion of good or better teaching for students aged 16 to 18 than for adult students, and at level 1, than on courses at other levels.

8. In the better lessons, teaching is well planned to link learning activities to the students' own interests and experiences. Teachers set classroom activities in the context of previous teaching and learning so that students can build effectively on their prior knowledge and make progress. They use their good subject knowledge and vocational expertise to relate theory and practice. This helps to sustain students' interest and motivation. In the best lessons, teachers take account of the differing needs of students in their groups and use a variety of resources which make for interesting and lively sessions.

9. In weaker lessons, teaching is dull and pedestrian. There is insufficient checking of students' understanding. Students' individual needs are not met and they are bored. Teachers rely too heavily on a narrow range of approaches, for example the use of printed handouts or of traditional didactic methods. These fail to interest or challenge students, and opportunities are missed to reinforce or extend students' learning or to develop their independent learning skills.

10. There have been improvements to the organisation and teaching of key skills. All full-time students, irrespective of age, undertake key skills courses. Key skills are usually fully integrated with and taught through the students' main programmes. On most courses they are taught well and students speak positively about their experience. In engineering, the teaching of key skills is very effective, including successful teaching of key skills on employers' premises to work-based learners. The co-ordination of key skills has recently been revised and a college-wide team has been established, drawing teachers from a range of curriculum areas. However, some teachers are not appropriately qualified to teach key skills and a strategy for professional development is in place.

11. Most teachers are well qualified and have up-to-date knowledge of the subjects they teach. Some 85% of full-time and 59% of part-time teachers now possess a teaching qualification. Virtually all other full-time and most part-time lecturers are working towards a teaching qualification. In 2000, there was a 20% reduction in staffing through voluntary redundancies. The absence of any skills analysis in this process resulted in staffing shortfalls in some areas. These have now been

addressed. The college has a strong commitment to professional development, aiming to update subject knowledge and skills, and improve teaching and learning. The personal professional development days provide good opportunities for both full-time and part-time teachers to acquire industrial and commercial experience. Support staff are used effectively.

12. There have been substantial improvements to the college's accommodation with the location to a single purpose-built campus in autumn 2000. Wheelchair access to all areas of the college is good and has been improved with automatic doors to the new building. There are some very good specialist facilities in several curriculum areas. Some small and narrow teaching rooms have a limiting effect on teaching styles. A vigilant approach to health and safety, including staff training, means that the college is a safe environment.

13. Learning resources are good. The learning resource centre, library and ICT suite are based in purpose-built accommodation in the new building. The library is well stocked with a good range of texts and journals, computers have compact disc (CD) and Internet access. A loan scheme with links to HE library resources is a useful facility for students. ILT has been out-sourced as a managed service. Provision is good, with easy access to machines in the resource-based learning area, although computers are not always available when they are needed in teaching rooms for Internet access. Hospitality and catering and hair and beauty are piloting the use of on-line resources. Staff initiatives in using ICT for administrative and curriculum purposes are actively encouraged as the college looks to develop a virtual learning environment.

14. The college offers a wide range of courses, both full time and part time, to meet the needs of young people and adults in its local community. There are a good variety of courses at different levels providing clear progression routes in some areas. In engineering, for example, students can progress from level 1 to Higher National Diploma level. In this area, students are able to take additional qualifications which complement their main engineering qualification. There are, however, gaps in suitable provision in some areas. For example, the provision in business is restricted to courses in administration, and in health and social care, short course provision is limited. New courses in performing arts and sports studies have been developed in response to local needs. The college promotes and markets its provision effectively. A range of attractive and informative prospectuses and course leaflets are circulated to the local community. The college offers full-time students a range of enrichment activities throughout the year, arranged through a calendar of events. Links with local schools are strong. Currently, 380 pupils aged 14 to 16 are participating in a range of courses run by the college in conjunction with local schools. Links with employers are good and many good work experience opportunities benefit students. The college is responsive to the needs of local employers. The engineering department works closely with BAE SYSTEMS, providing courses for their employees. The college is currently developing a CoVE in marine engineering in partnership with BAE SYSTEMS. Other employers are also actively involved with the college, particularly in hospitality and catering. The college also offers work-based learning programmes with a number of employers in surrounding districts.

15. The college has been successful in widening participation. It offers a range of provision at 15 outreach centres, serving local communities in Barrow and as far afield as Ulverston and Askham. Much of this provision has been developed during the past two years as part of the college's widening participation strategy. At present, the courses provided include basic skills, computing, family learning and leisure, and are run at a variety of community centres and schools. A number of courses at Barrow Rugby Club attract students who might not otherwise participate in FE. In some curriculum areas, however, little or no community provision is made, for example in health and social care.

16. Significant improvements have been made in induction and tutorial support with new systems in place for full-time students. These have been developed and are managed by committed and enthusiastic staff. Staff development has supported these changes although there are some inconsistencies in implementation. The college has made good progress in its use of assessment to support students' learning. Practice in the assessment of students' work is good in most areas, with hospitality and catering, humanities and ICT providing detailed and constructive written feedback. However, this is not consistent across all areas, with limited written feedback in care and instances of poor assessment practice in motor vehicle and installation courses within engineering. Internal

verification is generally effective, with external verifiers identifying only minor issues.

17. A formal reporting system has also been introduced this year that generates reports for students as well as group reports for employers. Reports are sent to each student's home address in December, with parents' consultation evenings in January and February. Parental response has been low but there have been some very positive interviews.

18. Prospective students are made aware of the college and the courses it has to offer through open evenings, radio advertisements and posters in the town. The prospectus is attractively presented, providing potential students with clear information about entry criteria and course requirements. Literature is available in Braille and large print and on audiotape. Students can find out more about courses at the college by taking part in a well-designed summer learning and skills programme which operates in partnership with other Cumbrian colleges. The summer school in 2002 was well attended, with 380 participants, and over a third of these young people subsequently enrolled at the college.

19. There is an efficiently organised and well-managed admissions procedure. Students visiting the college to enquire and apply for courses discuss their options with appropriately qualified staff in student services. The area has clear notices expressing the college's commitment to equal opportunities and to the principles of impartial advice and guidance. Students applying to full-time programmes value being kept informed about the progress of their application. However, some part-time students in humanities have not received adequate guidance about the demands of their programme.

20. Full-time and part-time students benefit from a comprehensive induction programme which now precedes enrolment. Induction is effective in better matching students to appropriate courses and also in identifying where additional learning support is needed. Full-time students and work-based trainees receive an initial screening assessment as part of induction, identifying support needs in literacy and numeracy. Support, including key skills support, is arranged promptly. Some part-time students studying a substantial number of hours are not being assessed for numeracy and literacy. Students confirm their programmes of study by completing an individual learning plan towards the end of induction. These documents bring together essential information, including qualifications on entry, the subjects being studied and details of additional support needs. For full-time students the plan includes the outcomes of initial assessment and their target grades based upon their GCSE results on entry. In engineering and hospitality and catering, individual learning plans have not been fully completed and maintained. Individual learning plans are not being systematically completed for part-time students.

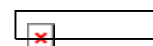
21. Students studying full time at the college have a personal tutor, responsible for providing support in academic and pastoral matters, career and personal development. Students receive effective support through one-to-one tutorials and are very positive about the tutorial system. Two recently appointed staff co-ordinate tutorials, produce regular newsletters for tutors, and arrange staff development and training. Tutors are clear about their roles and responsibilities. In some areas of the college, targets agreed in tutorials lack focus and are not monitored effectively. In work-based training, targets are set, monitored routinely and regularly met by trainees.

22. Careers education and guidance are good. The college has a partnership agreement with the Connexions service. Students know where to contact personal advisers from Connexions who have a well-resourced careers room at the college as their base. Those students over the age of 19 find the adult guidance worker helpful. Students are well supported in exploring career options. Guest speakers from industry and HE, visits and work placements are organised. Key skills lessons are used to develop job-search skills, to write letters of application and to prepare for interviews.

23. Students are clear about the college's attendance policy that requires them to attend all lessons and to arrive punctually. The college's attendance monitor systematically follows up on the reported absences of full-time students, who are rewarded for their attendance, punctuality and timely completion of assignments through a bursary scheme. The scheme effectively reinforces the importance the college places on standards and expectations of young people.

24. The college provides a good range of student support services, including counselling, mental health support, financial advice, support for childcare, and access to the college nursery. A chaplain visits the college regularly. Students are encouraged to identify additional learning support needs when they apply to the college. For those learners who are studying in the college on school links programmes, this information is already available and is reviewed by the college in the light of their proposed programme of study. Additional learning needs are identified promptly. There is an effective system for ensuring tutors are kept informed of progress. For those students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities the college has a range of specialist equipment, such as a voice-activated computer and a Braille embosser, and learning support assistants work in class supporting individuals or groups of learners.

## Leadership and management



25. Leadership and management are good. Over the last two years, senior management has been successful in reducing a serious budget deficit and improving the quality of provision for students. The managers and staff share a clear sense of purpose. The mission and strategic objectives are widely understood and supported. Staff are proud of the progress they have made since the last inspection. There is a common purpose directed at achieving targets for recruitment, retention and achievement. College retention rates are at or above the national averages at levels 1 and 2 for students aged 16 to 18, and at levels 1, 2 and 3 for 19+ students. Pass rates for both students aged 16 to 18 and 19+ students are also at or above national averages. At level 3, pass rates for both age groups declined between 2001 and 2002 to below the national averages. The retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3 is also below the national average.

26. Communications are effective within the college. Senior managers are approachable. They listen and respond. They keep staff well informed and seek to involve them in decision making. The quality of management in the curriculum areas is satisfactory or better. In engineering, health and care, and hospitality it is good. Weaknesses in a minority of cases include infrequent team meetings and lack of the use of data. The strengths lie in strong team work, based on shared goals, clear lines of communication, including with part-time staff, a sharp focus on quality, and the setting and monitoring of targets. Challenging and largely realistic targets are set at college level and in curriculum areas. A plethora of targets and action plans has been pulled together into a single database, which enables a good oversight of progress to be had and ensures that intervention follows if action falls behind schedule or targets are not met. The focus of the staff is firmly on impact on the students' experience. Governors are kept well informed of progress by means of performance monitoring reports.

27. Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They have until recently spent much time and energy on dealing with the college's poor financial performance. They are aware of their duty of oversight of the college's academic performance, but in the period between September 2001 and June 2002, neither the quality committee nor the corporation board received a detailed report allowing it to scrutinise students' achievements for 2000/01. The data were still being checked by the LSC during this period. The corporation board did receive a performance monitoring report in June 2002 and has since been able to examine two further such reports. These reports enable the governors to keep track of progress against action plans. The board's wish to ensure proper scrutiny of all the stages of a student's journey through the college has led it to establish a learner-experience committee from the autumn of 2002. Governors have a strong and clear view of the importance of the college's ability to respond flexibly to the needs of the local community and have ensured that this is reflected in the current strategic plan.

28. The college has a range of policies in place for ensuring equality of opportunity. Students are aware of the existence and importance of college policy through induction, through the notices displayed in classrooms and, in some cases, through work done in their lessons. A new co-ordinator has recently been appointed. The committee that deals with equality of opportunity has been

reconstituted to include both a wide range of interests from within the college and appropriate outside interests, and an equality and diversity implementation plan has been agreed. Some staff training has taken place, but the implementation plan is behind schedule. The new committee has so far met on three occasions. The college, working with another FE partner, has achieved validation for an equality and diversity qualification, which staff will be encouraged to undertake. As the programme has not yet got under way, it is not possible to assess its impact on teaching and learning.

29. Staff at all levels participate in a process of college self-assessment. The self-assessment report clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses and provides supporting evidence. Business support teams participate in the process by examining their performance against the standards set out in their service level agreements. They are keen to play their part in improving the quality of the students' experience and involve themselves enthusiastically in the process. Self-assessment has led to a number of improvements in the quality of the service the college provides to its students. An issue of noise travelling between adjacent areas led to the building of a dividing wall. The noise problem has abated, and the restaurant is now a better working environment for students. Humanities identified poor resources as having a negative impact on the quality of their students' experience. Additional resources have been purchased, and the library in particular is now better able to support those students.

30. Self-assessment is an important element of the college's quality assurance procedures. A quality manual sets out a policy and a set of procedures for achieving continuous improvement, specifying the roles and responsibilities of various individuals and groups. Course teams have a central role in the process. They are required to take account of the curriculum audit process, of improvement targets, of the views of students and staff, and of the outcome of classroom observation. The 2000/01 self-assessment report records that 79% of teaching grades given in internal observation were good or better. Inspectors judged 70% of teaching grades to be good or better. Although lower than the college's internal profile, inspectors' findings show an improvement from the last inspection, when 59% of teaching grades were judged to be good or better. The college has a moderation system in operation for observing teaching, but plans to improve this from spring 2003.

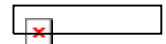
31. The above elements of the process provide teams with the information they need to prepare informed and self-critical self-assessment reports. They do this in stages through course review meetings. There is a standard college-wide agenda for each meeting. The quality of course reviews varies. Some course reviews show evidence of detailed consideration, and of full recording of action necessary, the person responsible and completion date. Others are brief in the extreme and unhelpful as tools for identifying the need for, and routes towards, improvement. The quality assurance scheme at the moment lacks value added information. The college has devised a process, which is being used for the first time in the current academic year. It is too early to judge its effectiveness.

32. An appraisal scheme has been in place for some time. It is an annual scheme, which applies to all staff. Use of teaching observations in the scheme is voluntary. Staff reported that the scheme helps them to understand how well they are performing and what else they may do to improve their service to students. The scheme identifies staff development needs and informs the annual professional development plan. The current plan includes equality and diversity and stress management training, in response both to the appraisal process and the self-assessment process. The college provides a very good range of professional development opportunities, which are taken advantage of by both full-time and part-time staff. Part-time staff are well supported and encouraged to attend.

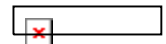
33. Management information data were described in the 2000/01 self-assessment report as being unreliable and untimely. A decision was taken to outsource the management information service to a specialist company. The college has since been able to make individual student record (ISR) returns on time. Staff confidence in college data is greatly enhanced. The reliability of management information has improved. Managers have at their disposal reports that enable them to keep track of, for example, budgets, student enrolments and attendance. The monitoring of room usage informs the accommodation strategy and has enabled the college to identify surplus laboratories that have now been turned into a performing arts area.

34. The college has had a history of budget deficits. Financial control had been lax. The new principal, supported by governors, has taken decisive action to address this issue. New arrangements for the management of the college's finances are now in place. Financial management is now satisfactory. Measures have been taken both to reduce the high level of expenditure on staff and to introduce robust systems of financial control. In 2001/02 the college achieved a budget surplus for the first time in many years. However, underlying weaknesses in the college's financial position remain. The current three-year financial forecast, showing modest surpluses in each of the three years, is based on assumptions that the college will be able to fully maximise its resources. Governors have noted this and plan to keep performance under close scrutiny so that there is no threat to the college's plans to invest further in improving the quality of its service to students. The senior management team routinely monitors enrolment, attendance and retention on a fortnightly basis. Given its careful management of its resources, good student attendance, the high retention and pass rates for both age groups at level 1 and for students aged 16 to 18 at level 2, and improvements in teaching and learning, the college provides good value for money.

### Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



#### Engineering



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

#### **Strengths**

- very good retention rates on most courses
- very good pass rates on most courses
- good student attendance and punctuality
- good student progression
- good curriculum management
- well-managed work-based learning.

## **Weaknesses**

- poor assessment practices on installation and motor vehicle courses
  
- lack of target setting and review in college-based tutorials.

## **Scope of provision**

35. The college provides a broad range of courses in engineering technology. One curriculum area, pipework, also called marine plumbing, is exclusive to the college. Programmes range from foundation to advanced level. Most of the foundation level provision is delivered on a full-time basis, the remainder is undertaken on a part-time day release or evening only basis. Qualifications are available at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3, together with national certificate and other craft and technician programmes. There are a total of 642 students in engineering, the majority of whom study part time; 99 are full-time students and 63 are engaged in work-based learning. Slightly more than 70% of students are aged 16 to 19 and over three-quarters of all engineering students are studying at level 2. Fifty work-based learners are following advanced modern apprentice programmes, 35 of whom are in motor vehicle. The college also provides training for 263 sub-contracted apprentices. A joint CoVE was established in December 2002 for shipbuilding and marine engineering, with BAE SYSTEMS and the college as strategic partners.

36. The school is responsive to the needs of industry. There are some well-chosen additional courses made available for and taken up by students. For example, electrical installation courses are provided for mechanical engineering students at the request of local employers. Consultation with employers is a routine part of course development. Employer input often helps to determine the structure of new or revised courses. For example, employers contributed substantially to the structure of the new syllabus national certificate in electrical engineering by advising on the most appropriate optional units. Staff at all levels have very good informal contacts with employers. A variety of attendance patterns are available to meet the needs of various groups of students.

## **Achievement and standards**

37. Retention rates on most courses are very good. The larger courses in the school have retention rates significantly higher than the national averages, in some cases, as high as 20% above. There are very high pass rates on most courses, with many significantly above the national average. The 1999 cohort of work-based learners has reached the end of its programmes. Framework completion rates for these learners were poor for both advanced modern apprenticeships and foundation modern apprenticeships, at 26% and 19% respectively. Recent changes to the management of work-based learning have impacted positively on the provision. Numbers of early leavers are reducing year on year in later cohorts, but it is too early to make a judgement on retention and achievement. Achievement of NVQ work-based learners is satisfactory at 67%.

38. Student progression within the college is good, some starting at school links level. The general pathway from foundation to advanced level is well used. Some 77% of level 3 electrical students progressed to HE this year. There is also progression across disciplines. The attendance rate of 86% observed during the inspection is good and this, together with excellent punctuality, indicates the high levels of motivation of the students. The standard of written and practical work produced by the students is satisfactory. The standard of practical sheet metalwork observed in fabrication and welding was of a particularly high standard.

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



Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ vehicle maintenance, service replacement	1	No. of starts	32	24	25
		% retention	70	57	75
		% pass rate	86	100	100
City and Guilds 2010 basic engineering competences	1	No. of starts	68	56	64
		% retention	91	96	94
		% pass rate	68	70	86
City and Guilds 2360 02 electrical installation	2	No. of starts	19	25	45
		% retention	89	56	98
		% pass rate	53	71	57
City and Guilds 2290 fabrication and welding competences	2	No. of starts	42	27	39
		% retention	95	100	92
		% pass rate	18	81	38
Foundation NVQ engineering	2	No. of starts	72	86	59
		% retention	93	95	98
		% pass rate	87	90	90
National certificate engineering	3	No. of starts	76	50	20
		% retention	89	88	85
		% pass rate	73	82	94

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

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

39. In almost two-thirds of lessons observed, teaching was good or better. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching or learning. The better lessons catch students' attention early and involve tasks that challenge and motivate them to do well. Teachers provide timely and clear explanations of theory or demonstrations of practice that students can use to enhance their learning. Tasks and subject matter are related to industrial practice. Teachers use their own industrial experience to good effect and focus on meeting the individual needs of the students. For example, one theory lesson required students to prepare competitive tenders to supply fabricated components. Students worked against the clock to deadlines that were set for each stage of the process. The session was very well planned and clear guidance was given on how to prepare the tender. The use of short-term targets in the lesson, together with the realistic scenario, enthused the students and motivated them to learn and achieve.

40. Less effective teaching relies on a traditional approach in which students are required to passively absorb information. Many such lessons demonstrate poor questioning techniques. Teachers often ask students whether they understand rather than using questions designed to elicit responses that demonstrate understanding. Opportunities to reinforce or extend learning are missed. For example, in one lesson a number of students produced the wrong answer to a mathematical question due to a lack of understanding of the order of arithmetical operations. The teacher pointed out the error and then continued without giving a detailed explanation of why the students went wrong.

41. Assessment is generally fair, accurate and reliable. However, there are some poor assessment practices on motor vehicle courses. Criteria for assessment are not explained to students sufficiently clearly. The internal verification system has not identified inconsistencies in assessment practice, nor does it contribute substantially to improving the assessment process. Installation courses are

externally examined. In some subjects on these courses, no continuous assessment or homework is set or formally marked to assist students to prepare for the examinations, or to help them assess their progress.

42. Informal guidance and support for students are good. Working relationships between staff and students are good and valued by the students. The structures available across the college for tutorials and individual learning plans are good. However, the college systems are not always implemented effectively in the school. Target setting and review in tutorials are poor. Very few formal targets are set for students. When targets are set they are not specific or clear enough. Completion of formal tutorial records and individual learning plans is unsatisfactory.

43. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are very effective in work-based learning provision and visits by college staff to students in the workplace are frequent and effective. In contrast with the practice in college-based tutorials, clear, measurable targets are set for students. Staff carefully review the targets and provide constructive feedback that helps the students to progress. Students generally meet their targets. Most reviews and individual learning plans are carefully recorded in line with college policies and procedures. Most employers have a good understanding of the qualifications and are involved in the reviews. For example, the concerns of one employer over the progress of his employee triggered an increase in the frequency of monitoring visits for that student. Induction processes are well managed to allow for student starts throughout the year.

44. Resources to support learning are generally satisfactory and some specialist facilities are very good. Access to IT equipment and support in its use is good across all areas in engineering. The mechanical and electrical installation workshops are fit for purpose, clean, tidy and well laid out. The motor vehicle workshop is spacious and in line with current industrial standards. There has been recent investment in engine management and full diagnosis test rigs. However, there is a shortage of current production vehicles to meet the needs of training and assessment.

45. The college has some excellent specialist equipment for mechanical engineering and is an approved Welding Institute centre. The computer-aided design (CAD) facility is well equipped and used frequently by students. A collaborative project with industry has provided some excellent specialist titanium-welding equipment, including programmable gas-shielded welding technology. The college benefits from a well-equipped computer-aided engineering unit, which was equipped as a result of a Centre of Excellence bid in Cumbria.

46. Classrooms are generally satisfactory but some rooms are too small to change layouts for a range of teaching strategies, and others are sometimes used inappropriately. For example, a City and Guilds project class was conducted in an electronics laboratory. Students were unable to lay out their drawings properly because of the size and configuration of the laboratory benches, and reference materials had to be transported to and from the laboratory.

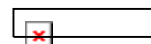
47. Teachers have appropriate industrial experience, occupational qualifications and assessor/verifier qualifications. There is a good staff development programme to ensure that all teaching staff are teacher trained. Two specialist key skills tutors help to deliver key skills, which is well integrated with students' main programmes of study. Good quality learning materials in some areas are used effectively by staff and students. However, some handouts used in motor vehicle lessons are faded and some contain spelling mistakes or use imperial units. The library has a good stock of engineering textbooks, but insufficient journals, magazines or periodicals to support students' learning.

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

48. Overall, the curriculum area is well managed, including the work-based learning provision. Teamwork is good and staff work towards shared goals in line with college strategy. Communications in the department are good, particularly the team briefings. These are concise, clear and well presented, and keep the team well informed on recent developments and issues. Managers and staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through

the self-assessment process. The budget is well managed. The resource allocation is fair, based upon student numbers and curriculum needs. The departmental budget is devolved to the areas within the school. Although there is tight central control, staff are involved in managing resources at course level.

## Information and communication technology



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

### **Strengths**

- very good pass rates on most part-time courses
- well-planned and effective teaching
- good, well used, specialist resources
- highly motivated staff who enthuse the students.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention and pass rates on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18.

### **Scope of provision**

49. Furness College offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in computing at various levels, ranging from basic computer literacy to HE programmes. There are full-time vocational courses leading to the GNVQ in ICT at foundation and intermediate levels, the AVCE in ICT, and modern apprenticeships, which include the NVQ in installing and supporting IT systems and the NVQ in using IT, both at level 2. Part-time programmes include the 'start award for IT', the progression award for IT, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), European computer driving licence (ECDL), Integrated Business Technology (IBT) at levels 2 and 3, the NVQ in using IT at levels 1 and 2, and various short courses validated by the Open College Network (OCN). These courses are available at the main college site and some are also provided as part of the community provision. The number of full-time students stands at 52, 94% of whom are aged 16 to 18. Nearly all the 1,023 part-time students are aged 19 or over.

50. Progression from one course to another at a higher level is satisfactory and improving. For example, progression from the level 3 course to HE was better last year than the previous two years, and accounts for 82% of those students who successfully completed the course.

### **Achievement and standards**

51. In the last three years, pass rates on most part-time courses have been consistently above the national average. Especially notable are the CLAIT, the progression award in IT and the IBT courses at levels 2 and 3, where pass rates have been good for some time, and last year were at least 20% above the national average. Conversely, pass rates on most full-time courses, predominantly for the 16-18 age group, have been low, with the AVCE in IT and the GNVQ intermediate course pass rates considerably below the national averages.

52. Retention rates on part-time courses are satisfactory but the rates for full-time courses are unsatisfactory, with no course reaching the national average during the past few years. However, under new management of the area, procedures have been adopted to improve the retention and pass rates for full-time courses. At the time of the inspection, halfway through the academic year, the retention rate for this year's entire full-time cohort stands at 92%. Attendance currently averages 92%, an improvement of 8.5% over last year, and the attainment level in tests and assignments is now over 77% for GNVQ intermediate students and over 80% for AVCE students.

53. In most classes, students show a good understanding of basic concepts and can use the college computer system with confidence. They are able to work both independently and in groups, and contribute readily to classroom activities. Most coursework is well presented and reaches a standard appropriate to the level of the students' course. Staff and students are highly motivated and carry out their work with enthusiasm.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
CLAIT short	1	No. of starts	*	355	242
		% retention	*	87	93
		% pass rate	*	84	91
Progression award in IT	2	No. of starts	*	70	464
		% retention	*	65	88
		% pass rate	*	98	93
ECDL (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	33	160
		% retention	*	76	78
		% pass rate	*	92	68
GNVQ intermediate IT (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	16	22
		% retention	*	69	73
		% pass rate	*	55	25
IBT III (short)	3	No. of starts	*	95	70
		% retention	*	83	89
		% pass rate	*	83	74
AVCE in IT (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	7	27
		% retention	*	57	72
		% pass rate	*	25	22

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

\*data unreliable

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

54. The teaching in a large proportion of lessons observed was good or better. In the best lessons, tutors plan and implement a range of interesting activities, and display sound vocational knowledge. Students are taught effectively in practical sessions and their progress is carefully monitored. Tutors make sensible use of the data projectors that are available in most computer rooms. Students who are absent for any reason are able to catch up on missed work by accessing the college's network, where course notes and assignment briefs are held for most computer courses. Although effective schemes of work and lesson plans are used throughout, insufficient attention is paid to the formal evaluation of learning materials or teaching methods.

55. Key skills work is being increasingly integrated into full-time courses. During many lessons, students are advised that certain aspects of their work should be taken to key skills lessons. The key skills lessons themselves are used to pull together the various items of coursework from different modules so that a suitable portfolio can be assembled. Links with local employers are good and improving, and computing students are given opportunities to gain industrial experience or to observe the use of ICT in the workplace. Nineteen students are on work placement for one day a week, where they can gain evidence to complete NVQ using IT at level 1 or level 2.

56. Extremely useful informal assessment record sheets are being used on full-time courses to track individual students' progress at each stage of the learning process. Although the tutor holds these, simplified versions are displayed on the walls of the computer rooms to keep the students up to date with their progress. The sheets are colour coded so that students can see at a glance how much work they still have to do to complete a module. Individual learning plans are used throughout to hold formal assessment details and other information where a student is giving cause for concern, either academically or for personal reasons. External verifiers have commented on the comprehensive, varied assessment plans now in use, and there is a thorough and well-documented internal verification process in place. Assignments are carefully marked and quickly returned to the students with helpful comments.

57. Support for students is generally good. Regular group and individual tutorials are held for all full-time students, who have indicated that the individual tutorials in particular are very useful. Some part-time students have time allocated at the start or end of their lessons for tutorials. These are less structured than those provided for full-time students, but they nevertheless provide a safety net for part-time students who may be experiencing problems. All full-time students take an initial assessment on entry to the college, when key skills requirements and additional learning support needs are identified. Students are not formally enrolled on a course until after induction. This allows better matching of student to course. During induction, part-time students are also offered additional learning support, although the take-up is low.

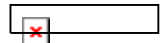
58. The individual needs of students are taken into account where possible. For example, one work-based foundation modern apprentice has not only nearly completed her NVQ using IT at level 2, specialising in graphic design, but also comes into college for two half-days a week to take a 6-unit AVCE in IT. In another example, a local bus service bringing students to the college from a rural location regularly arrived at college after the timetabled start of the lesson. Consequently, the lesson time was changed to start slightly later.

59. Teachers are well qualified and experienced, and display sound vocational knowledge. Specialist resources are good. Most dedicated computer rooms are equipped with good quality computers with industrial standard software and Internet facilities. Computer rooms used for multimedia units also have facilities for the storage of large graphic and sound files. All full-time and part-time students on the main college site are given network accounts, where they have ample storage space for their data. A small but capable team of technicians satisfactorily maintains the entire network. Computing equipment at one outreach centre is rather old and slow, and is in need of replacement. Library resources are satisfactory, with multiple copies of important textbooks and reference copies of more expensive books. Students use these facilities often for research purposes. Some course booklets produced in-house are of exceptionally high quality and the excellent work produced by students using these texts reflects their value.

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

60. Management restructuring took place in this curriculum area in September 2002 in order to address the poor results on full-time courses. Course management changed and staff responsibilities and teaching commitments have been reorganised. This has resulted in a surge of enthusiasm and productivity within the staff and the levels of retention, attendance and attainment on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 have improved dramatically this year. Students have also commented on the changes. They feel that they are being treated more like adults than previously, and their views about improvements are often sought and acted upon.

### **Hospitality and catering**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good teaching and well-managed learning
- high pass rate in level 2 food preparation
- high retention rate on pastry cooks and patissiers programme
- good resources in practical food preparation areas.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rate on pastry cooks and patissiers programme
- low client numbers in restaurant
- underdeveloped use of individual learning plans.

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

61. Although the department is quite small, it offers a good range of both full-time and part-time

programmes in catering and hospitality. In the past two years the area has changed its curriculum offer. NVQ programmes are available in food preparation and cooking at levels 1, 2 and 3, preparing and serving food at level 1, and bar service at level 2. Level 3 programmes in both kitchen and restaurant supervision are also provided. The introduction of the intermediate pastry cooks and patissiers course has widened the provision to both full-time and part-time students. Courses in Indian cookery, food hygiene and customer service are also offered. At the time of inspection, there were 32 students aged 16 to 18 and 5 adults on full-time programmes. On part-time programmes, there were 18 students aged 16 to 18 and 6 adults. Of the learners recruited to work-based programmes, which are operated in conjunction with the Cumbria Tourist Board, there were five advanced modern apprentices, nine foundation modern apprentices and five on other work-based training programmes. Good links exist with local schools whose pupils attend college to gain practical experience and some of whom will work towards units of achievement.

### **Achievement and standards**

62. Achievements for 2002 were variable. Compared with the previous year, retention and pass rates on level 2 food preparation showed good improvements and were above the national average for colleges of the same type. For level 2 food service, retention rates remained good but there has been a decline in the pass rate. However, several students who joined during the year have not yet completed their course. The basic pastry cooks and patissiers programme has shown good improvement in the retention rate but the pass rate remains low. Unsatisfactory retention and pass rates were recognised within the self-assessment report.

63. Students achieve the basic food hygiene certificate and control of substances hazardous to health regulations (COSHH) training during their induction period when they join college. Many also achieve additional units to their programme, which broadens their knowledge and understanding. Students demonstrate good standards of technical skills in food preparation and food service. They also develop good social skills when dealing with customers in the college restaurant. Two students recently reached the regional finals of the North West Young Chef of the Year contest. Progression between levels 1 and 2 is good, although only a small number of students continue to level 3. Most gain employment within the hospitality industry when they complete their studies.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
NVQ catering and hospitality food preparation (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	33	30
		% retention	*	59	86
		% pass rate	*	68	86
NVQ catering and hospitality serving food and drink (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	9	12
		% retention	*	89	83
		% pass rate	*	75	50
Pastry cooks and patissiers basic (one year)	2	No. of starts	*	23	12
		% retention	*	57	92
		% pass rate	*	31	55

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

\*data unreliable

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

64. Teaching is of a good standard and the learning is well managed. Schemes of work are well planned and comprehensive, allowing students to achieve good levels of skill. Practical lessons

allow students to manage the total food production and service operation. This is linked to a well-designed key skills assignment. Students plan, order and manage the production of a lunch or dinner service. The project provides a range of evidence to support the achievement of key skills. During this project, students make good use of the Internet and develop a high level of IT skills. During practical classes, tutors make effective use of their own experiences of industry to illustrate the relevance of the teaching. This is enhanced through teachers undertaking recent industrial updating through their professional development activities. In some practical classes, students make good use of computers to gather information from either the college intranet or the Internet to support their learning. During a few sessions the learning outcomes were not clearly defined and some teaching failed to challenge the student.

65. Students can join courses at different times throughout the year, although most are still recruited at the start of the academic year. There is a thorough induction period when students are made fully aware of the expectations of their course. Students recognise the high level of support they receive from all college staff for both academic work and pastoral welfare. Those students with additional learning needs are well integrated into mainstream programmes. An effective system for monitoring the progress of students ensures that they are aware of what they have achieved and what they still need to complete. Student portfolios are well organised and are often illustrated with photographs of work they have produced. Assessments are thorough; they involve the student in the planning process and there is good use of witness testimony.

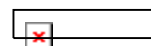
66. The college has recently introduced the use of individual learning plans to monitor and track students' progress in their studies. The use of these is as yet under-developed. Course content is not recorded sufficiently. There is a failure to also record the key skills and level being studied or the additional units which many students take alongside their main programme. Targets for students to achieve are not clear or specific, and the timescales for their achievement are often missing.

67. Teachers are well qualified and have good experience of the hospitality industry. They display good working practices and often work together as a team. The resources for practical food preparation are good. There is a range of equipment allowing students to practise the necessary skills. The kitchens serve food to the restaurant, which is open to staff, students and members of the public. The numbers of customers using the restaurant is often insufficient for the number of students working in either the kitchen or restaurant. These low numbers impact on the assessment opportunities and the skills that should be practised. There is a wide range of learning resources available for students to use and they have good access to computers. Good links exist with industry both locally and nationally. Many students undertake periods of work placement that allow them both to gain good industrial experience and to collect evidence towards their qualification. These periods within industry often result in employment opportunities.

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

68. Staff and students within the area are well managed. Teachers have roles and responsibilities that are clearly understood. Communication between teachers and with senior managers of the college is good. Regular team meetings are used to monitor the progress of students and to review the content and structure of programmes. This results in clear actions to be taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are involved in the setting of targets for the retention and achievement of students. These are analysed by the senior managers in the college during the curriculum audit reviews three times a year. Annual staff appraisal is clearly linked to staff development, which has enabled some staff to take part in industrial updating. The self-assessment process involves both teaching and support staff, and has accurately identified the main strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

### **Health, care, childcare and counselling**





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

### ***Strengths***

- very good pass rates
- good teaching
- well-motivated students
- comprehensive tutorial support effectively linking college and work placements in full-time programmes.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some poor classroom accommodation which restricts variety in teaching methods
- limited range of provision.

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

69. Most of the programmes available in care and childcare are at levels 2 and 3. The school has recently replaced AVCE and GNVQ intermediate qualifications with BTEC national and first diplomas. There is a college-based level 3 NVQ in early years care and education, and in addition, a large number of students in employment are enrolled on full-cost NVQ care programmes operated by the business training centre. In 2002 there were 85 full-time and 85 part-time enrolments at the college. In addition, a substantial number of students take the first aid at work certificate annually. The range of provision is restricted to daytime programmes on the main site, apart from NVQ early years care and education, and counselling skills which are available in the evening. Currently, there is some mental health short-course provision in the community and there are steps under way to develop short courses and to offer a fuller community-based programme. This is yet to be established, and the needs of many potential students are not met, particularly those from traditionally under-represented groups.

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

70. There are good pass rates in most courses. In 2001/02, the certificate in childcare and education pass rate was outstanding at 100%, and it has consistently been above national average over the past three years. Pass rates on intermediate GNVQ health and social care were 100% in 2000/01 and substantially above the national average in 2001/02. The part-time counselling skills level 2 programme has been at or above the national average for all colleges for the past three years. Level 3 health and social care GNVQ/AVCE has been below average and this qualification has now been

replaced by the BTEC national in care in an attempt to offer a more appropriate provision. Retention rates have been generally at or above national average, although some programmes have experienced a higher than usual drop-out rate in the early part of the current year.

71. Students' class work is appropriate to programme level, and meets awarding body requirements for the recording of evidence. Portfolios are well organised and cross-referenced. Work placements are seen as a valuable teaching resource and links are effectively established between college-based and workplace-based components of the programme. Counselling students are confident in group activities and are sensitive to the needs of individuals during role plays. Attendance and punctuality are very good, reflecting a high level of motivation to succeed. Student progression is good. Many students are keen to move into HE, and the college's planned foundation degree in early years already has a number of potential students.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First aid at work certificate	1	No. of starts	409	469	396
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	98	97	99
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	*	16	10
		% retention	*	69	90
		% pass rate	*	100	89
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	16	18	15
		% retention	81	72	73
		% pass rate	92	92	100
Counselling skills intermediate (and precursor)	2	No. of starts	17	17	22
		% retention	100	100	77
		% pass rate	88	94	88
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	35	13	15
		% retention	62	100	100
		% pass rate	90	100	100

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

\* data not available

***Quality of education and training***

72. The quality of teaching was good or better in most of the lessons observed. Where teaching is very good or excellent, the teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and make effective use of work placements and students' life experiences, as well as their own vocational knowledge. All classes have brief schemes of work supported by comprehensive lesson plans identifying individual learning needs and appropriate teaching and learning strategies. In a foundation childcare group, students created a set of "snap" cards for use with children. While this craft activity was taking place, the teacher questioned individuals about the skills the cards could develop, suitable age range and potential extension activities. The students themselves identified a health and safety issue with the laminated cards and were careful to smooth off sharp edges. Students in a BTEC first lesson labelled a life-size skeleton to identify bones, and took diagrams away to use as a revision aid. There are some very small groups, with an average of ten in observed lessons. However, small group sessions are lively and stimulating, and teachers are careful to maximise learning

opportunities.

73. Some lessons lack variety, with a significant amount of teaching from the front and rather monotonous use of overhead transparencies. These lessons are usually in narrow classrooms located in the main teaching block, with furniture laid out in rows. These rooms are not conducive to group work or flexible furniture arrangements to support more effective teaching and learning strategies. The frequency of direct questioning of students to determine outcomes of the teaching and learning process is variable. Key skills are taught centrally and by a member of the vocational staff team. They are identified in all lesson plans, but direct reference to key skills opportunities in lessons is rare. The lack of ICT resources in most general classrooms restricts the opportunity to immediately access web-based resources when they are cited during teaching, and thus reinforce ICT skills development. Most handouts prepared by teachers are of good quality.

74. Assessment is well planned and students appreciate the prompt return of their work and the level of verbal feedback. However, teachers do not always provide sufficient written feedback on assignments, and do not inform students clearly enough how they can improve their grades. There is a comprehensive internal verification system sampling across all units and students.

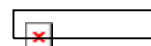
75. Students receive comprehensive and effective support from their tutors. A bursary scheme is available to support improved attendance amongst students aged 16 to 18, and this has proved popular. Work placement opportunities are available for all full-time students as well as the part-time counselling students. For care and childcare students, placements are organised and they are visited by their personal tutor, who acts as an effective bridge between the college and the workplace. Progress is closely monitored during regular visits and in one-to-one tutorial reviews. Reviews of students' progress are carefully documented, although there is a lack of detail in some action plans. Individual learning needs are identified and well supported. In one group a student with dyslexia reads best from green paper. The teacher begins each class with a recapitulation question sheet, which is always on green paper. This is promoted as helping students locate the question sheets in their portfolio, but in practice it avoids isolating the individual with the specific need. In a part-time childcare session, the needs of a student with hearing loss are supported as the teacher makes sure all material is available on handouts, and faces the students when speaking.

76. The small teaching team of four full-time plus seven part-timer staff work together effectively, and are well qualified in their vocational subjects. There is an identified programme co-ordinator for each of care, childcare and counselling skills. Access to personal professional development time has enabled them to maintain links with current practice.

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

77. The curriculum area and the courses within it are well led and managed. There has been a significant change in structure and approach over the last 18 months, and this is commented upon positively by the teaching team. Staff consider there is a clear sense of direction across the college and that their views are welcomed. A curriculum audit system reviews courses against targets for recruitment, retention and achievement on a regular basis, and action plans are formulated. There is a strong focus on quality improvement. Some staff feel unsure of the recent changes to the self-assessment process and of their role within it.

### **Humanities and English**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on access courses and high and improving pass rates on GCSE English
- good teaching well pitched to capture the enthusiasm of the students
- rigorous assessment processes
- good and improving specialist resources
- access programme designed flexibly to meet the needs of students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on many courses
- inadequate systems for monitoring student progress
- insufficient pre-course and on-course guidance and support
- no formal assessment for learning support for part-time students.

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

78. The humanities and English provision consists of GCSEs and OCN access to HE courses. The curriculum offer has been reviewed and substantially changed during the past two years, with a movement away from GCSE and GCE AS/A-level programmes towards access programmes for mature students. The access programmes are fully modular and can be studied over one or two years as full-time or part-time courses. Courses are offered at level 2, or level A, and level 3, or level B. Students may study at a single level or in combination, and to achieve a full certificate students must achieve three level A and two level B units.

79. There are currently 98 students on the level B access programme, 20 of whom are following a structured programme to achieve the full access certificate. A further 73 students are registered on level A courses. Humanities modules are offered in English, creative writing, criminology, psychology and sociology. Some of the access modules run for the full academic year, but most are 17 weeks in duration with starting points in September and January. The college also provides progression to its

Bachelor of Arts (BA) combined honours course.

80. The GCSE programme is offered on a part-time basis to students who are following OCN and other full-time courses in the college. Thirty-five students are currently on the GCSE English programme. Of these, 12 students are on a flexible teaching programme which is offered in GCSE mathematics and English for students who work shifts or have health or mobility problems. GCSE psychology currently has 13 students on course. Students on access programmes are largely part time and therefore do not have the opportunity to gain accreditation for key skills. Full-time students from other courses taking GCSE courses are provided with key skills opportunities from within their main programme.

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

81. Pass rates on access courses are consistently high, standing at 90% on level 3 and 91% on level 2 courses in 2002. GCSE English has a good and rising pass rate. Retention rates are low on many courses and rates are declining on GCSE psychology and on the level 3 access courses. A lack of formal entry requirements for level 2 programmes and the flexible approach taken to entry at level 3 may impact on retention rates. Evidence provided by the college indicates that retention strategies introduced this year have produced improvement. Most courses have retention rates of over 80% to date, with two courses showing 100% retention rates. Retention rates on units studied from September 2002 to January 2003 were 82%.

82. Students on the OCN level 3 courses demonstrate highly developed critical evaluation skills and good command of terminology. The quality of discussion observed in one English session would have been appropriate to first-year undergraduate study. Written work, particularly on the OCN courses, is also produced to a very high standard. Moderator reports express appreciation of the quality of coursework assessments. Notable on all courses is the extent to which students report an increase in confidence in their study skills and intellectual capacity. A significant number have developed aspirations to study for HE as a result.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Progression award social science	2	No. of starts	*	*	11
		% retention	*	*	73
		% pass rate	*	*	100
Progression award humanities	2	No. of starts	*	77	73
		% retention	*	58	64
		% pass rate	*	100	91
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	51	45	42
		% retention	78	67	48
		% pass rate	38	70	80
Progression award humanities	3	No. of starts	*	82	89
		% retention	*	67	57
		% pass rate	*	95	90

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

\* data not available

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

83. A large proportion of the teaching observed was good or better, enabling students to learn effectively and to progress well. Effective planning, employing a well-selected range of teaching methods, ensured that in most lessons, students were suitably challenged. Some teaching on access courses was inspiring. Especially notable was a discussion of a set text in an English lesson, where the standard of analysis extended well beyond the level required, and the students' enthusiasm was almost tangible in the pace and vigour of discussion. A role play in psychology to demonstrate the effect of body language entertained students to such a degree that learning was effortless. Instances of dull and pedestrian teaching in social science sessions offered a marked contrast to the quality of teaching as a whole.

84. Student learning was clearly apparent in their reports of growing confidence with knowledge and study skills. High levels of enthusiasm and motivation were also apparent in the liveliness of discussion, and generally good levels of attendance and work. One student went to the lengths of finding childcare for a sick child and making a journey of nine miles in hazardous weather to avoid a second week of absence in her English class.

85. Written assessment practice is good. Assignment titles are challenging and coursework titles are well negotiated to develop and build upon the emerging interests of the students. Assignments are rigorously marked and offer extensive guidance in feedback. At subject or module level, standards of assessment and monitoring of students' progress are generally high. However, students on humanities programmes receive inadequate guidance and support, both before and during their courses at the college. The absence of formal entry requirements for level 2 programmes combined with the lack of systematic screening for learning support together with the absence of personal tutorial support across all their subjects, means that systems for monitoring students' progress are inadequate. Steps have been taken to introduce improved monitoring arrangements and to ensure an even standard across the provision. Plans to introduce screening for additional learning support, to ensure guidance to all applicants and establish coherent curriculum pathways with improved pastoral support, are contained in the 2002/03 curriculum area action plan.

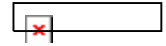
86. Staff are well qualified and many also teach on HE courses to which access students may progress. However, not all part-time staff have received professional updating appropriate to the level at which they are teaching. The library is well stocked for humanities and English, and resources have recently been significantly extended through the establishment of inter-library loans with the local university. Specialist resources are also being improved in the stock held within the curriculum area, most recently in the establishment of a video library. Students are able to access ICT facilities in the learning resource centre. Wall displays in classrooms are generally uninspiring and some rooms are narrow and cramped.

87. The access programmes provide valuable entry points to education in a region with a history of industrial decline and high unemployment. The courses offer coherent pathways to HE and professional training for students who are typically under-represented in FE and HE. Students are able to progress from level 2 to graduate status on social studies courses through HE courses run at Furness College in partnership with The University of Central Lancashire. The access provision offers good progression routes to both internal FE and HE courses, and those offered at The University of Central Lancashire. Of students on courses in 2001 and 2002 on both level A and B programmes, 77% progressed to FE or HE.

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

88. Management arrangements for the English and humanities curriculum are in a period of transition. In response to recognised weaknesses, a new deputy head of school was appointed in September 2002, with a specific brief to review and improve the humanities curriculum. Most of the weaknesses identified above are already recognised by the management team and steps have already been taken to improve curriculum development, guidance, monitoring and resources. For the first time in autumn 2002, level 3 students all received a post enrolment interview to identify, recruit and support those students for whom a course leading to full access certification was appropriate.

## Literacy and numeracy



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

### **Strengths**

- good initial assessment which informs lesson planning in discrete provision
- good teaching which promotes effective learning
- most students achieve their identified learning goals
- well-considered planning for improvement and change.

### **Weaknesses**

- literacy and numeracy support needs of students on vocational courses not consistently addressed
- insufficient basic skills provision in the community
- insufficient provision above entry level.

### **Scope of provision**

89. The basic skills programme includes discrete basic skills in literacy and numeracy, basic skills learning support and key skills. Provision is available on the main college site and in community locations. There are currently 161 students in discrete provision, 24 of whom are accessing basic skills in their local community. Additional support is currently being provided to 103 students individually or in small groups.

90. The college is strengthening links in the community and many initiatives are at the development stage. Workplace projects are in place to widen participation. These include working with employees in a local firm and with the TUC. The outreach programme as it stands, though limited, is responding to local need. Inspectors saw examples of innovative work which places the learning in the heart of the local community. There are links to family learning projects and there are several ICT

programmes which have basic skills embedded within them.

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

91. Retention rates are improving and are at or above national averages. There is successful achievement of identified learning goals for most students and 100% achievement of external Open College certification. It is not possible to identify trends in achievement because of changes in accreditation over the last three years, and the changes made by the college to the way achievement is recorded. This issue will be addressed through the national accreditation framework, the Open College framework and the new curriculum and standards. Systems are currently in place through the individual learning plan for the measuring and recording of students' personal progress and their achievements. Most students achieve their learning goals and gain in knowledge and understanding. Students acquire additional skills, including computer skills and a range of personal skills, that add value to their learning. However, this is not sufficiently well recorded or monitored.

92. Achievement in key skills to date has been weak across all levels and areas, although structures have been put in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to support improved achievement.

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

93. Teaching and learning are on the whole effective. The learning activities in the better sessions are closely linked to the students' own experiences, helping to keep their interest. In one outstanding session a tutor taught across a wide ability range of adult returners and successfully addressed each student's needs in turn. The students were highly motivated, largely due to the fact that the work was closely linked with everyday life experiences. All students were fully engaged and took an active part in the learning process, including the planning of their work. In another session a student, recently returned from holiday, informed the tutor that he would have liked to send postcards to family and friends but writing in a small space and managing the content prevented him from attempting it. The tutor skilfully responded to this need and changed the focus of the session. The student told inspectors how this simple thing was going to have a real impact on his life. Tutors use a number of teaching methods to successfully address the basic skills needs of the students and sustain their interest. The preferred learning style of students is taken into account and a variety of resources, including the Internet, appropriate computer software and 'real-life' materials are used to make for interesting and lively sessions.

94. In weaker sessions the teaching is dull and uninspiring. Tutors fail to link activities with real-life situations and miss the opportunity to develop learning strategies with the student. Students are not encouraged to access materials for themselves. In some sessions the materials are inappropriate and do not match the learning needs of the student. There is also an over reliance on printed worksheets. In some learning support activities, tutors are failing to meet the longer term literacy and numeracy needs of students. Although they are successful in meeting the immediate needs as identified in assignment tasks, they are not fully addressing the students' underpinning basic skills needs.

95. Key skills is seen as central to the college's strategy for improving basic skills. Teaching in key skills sessions is effective, and tutors are flexible and responsive in their approach to the students and their learning needs. In one session the three key skills were taught separately but the learning activity was integrated throughout. 'Mind-maps' were used which both challenged students and gave a new dimension to their learning. In some curriculum areas, learning support is effectively integrated through the key skills programmes, although this can be inconsistent. Some staff offer informal support on current assignments, but this is not getting to the root of the real problem.

96. Initial assessment is effective and well documented. Students' needs are identified and targets set and recorded on individual learning plans which inform lesson planning. In the better lessons, skill-based targets are leading to clear differentiation in teaching and learning. For entry level students, learning targets are being set at a level which will allow the students to function in society and actually apply their learning in everyday life. There is inconsistency in the assessment and



monitoring procedures in learning support, particularly in the recording of students' personal progress. However, some good practice is emerging and staff development is helping the team to expand. The learning support programme is both flexible and responsive, but some students do not take up support even when they have an identified need. Strategies for reaching these students are not working and are being reviewed. Closer links have been forged with the guidance team and personal tutors in order to track students who are not taking advantage of the support on offer. Learning support, when accessed formally by the student, is effective. Learning support assistants are used well in many sessions. They are part of a team approach to teaching and learning. The work is carefully planned by the main tutor and roles are well defined.

97. Progress reviews take place three times a year when targets are reviewed and updated. In discrete provision, review is not always used effectively to support progression. Students on several courses have reached a plateau or are even regressing in their learning. Teachers are reluctant to tell students that the provision is no longer meeting their needs. The system is not robust enough to support staff in making difficult decisions. There is insufficient provision above entry level to which students could progress.

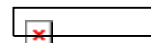
98. Both full-time and part-time staff have good access to staff development opportunities. The head of school has ensured regular updating to take account of the ongoing changes to curriculum and standards in basic skills. However, some staff are not appropriately qualified to deliver the full range of basic skills. This is reflected in their teaching methods for some elements of the work. Resources and general accommodation are good. The resource-based learning centre is well used by students and has specific teaching areas for key skills delivery. Both staff and students have good access to ICT equipment on the main site, but equipment and general resources are limited in the community.

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

99. Quality assurance systems are in place and measures are effective at programme level. There are many developments in this area of work and careful planning has been required to implement improvement and change. Further planning and change is needed to further increase access and improve equality of opportunity across all levels. There is effective co-ordination in key skills which is having a positive impact on the curriculum. Work is going on at both management and curriculum level to develop relevant local partnerships which are meaningful to the further development of provision and will thus be further inclusive.

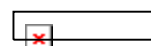
100. There is limited staffing capacity in this area of work that impacts negatively on the programme offer. There is insufficient basic skills provision above entry level on the main college site and a limited programme offer in the community. Developments are under way to address these issues, the first of which has been the appointment of two development workers.

## **Part D: College data**



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

Level	16-18	19+
1	47	44
2	43	30
3	9	14



<b>4/5</b>	0	0
<b>Other</b>	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>16-18 No.</b>	<b>19+ No.</b>	<b>Total Enrolments %</b>
Science and mathematics	399	221	6
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	162	60	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	448	187	6
Business administration, management and professional	135	818	9
Information and communications technology	555	2,248	27
Retailing, customer service and transportation	3	99	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	274	200	5
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	110	97	2
Health, social care and public services	292	1,878	21
Visual and performing arts and media	65	81	1
Humanities	26	225	2
English, languages and communication	373	232	6
Foundation programmes	884	291	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,726</b>	<b>6,637</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

<b>Level (Long Courses)</b>	<b>Retention and pass rate</b>	<b>Completion year</b>			
		<b>16-18</b>		<b>19+</b>	

		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	256	415	*	368	298
	Retention rate	*	78	83	*	73	89
	National average	*	79	**	*	78	**
	Pass rate	*	75	80	*	80	88
	National average	*	68	**	*	68	**
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	588	448	*	547	685
	Retention rate	*	84	90	*	78	81
	National average	*	76	**	*	78	**
	Pass rate	*	73	75	*	85	73
	National average	*	69	**	*	69	**
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	253	219	*	579	525
	Retention rate	*	77	66	*	81	81
	National average	*	77	**	*	78	*
	Pass rate	*	73	62	*	75	71
	National average	*	76	**	*	69	**
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	***	***	*	38	28
	Retention rate	*	***	***	*	82	96
	National average	*	***	***	*	84	**
	Pass rate	*	***	***	*	60	89
	National average	*	***	***	*	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).*

*\* data unreliable*

*\*\* data not available*

*\*\*\*numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

*Sources of information:*

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

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

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	66	31	3	29
Level 2 (intermediate)	70	21	9	33
Level 1 (foundation)	83	17	0	18
Other sessions	58	33	8	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>92</b>

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