



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Huntingdonshire Regional College

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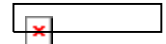
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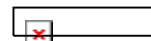
**Basic information about the college**



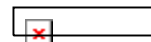
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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Name of college:             | Huntingdonshire Regional College                            |
| Type of college:             | General further education                                   |
| Principal:                   | Anne Constantine  |
| Address of college:          | California Road<br>Huntingdon<br>Cambridgeshire<br>PE29 1BL |
| Telephone number:            | 01480 379100  |
| Fax number:                  | 01480 379127  |
| Chair of governors:          | Dr Glyn Rowlands  |
| Unique reference number:     | 130612  |
| Name of reporting inspector: | Bernard McDonald  |
| Dates of inspection:         | 15-19 March 2004  |

**Part A: Summary**



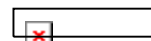
## Information about the college



Huntingdonshire Regional College is a relatively small general further education (FE) college serving the needs of a widely dispersed population. The main college site is located in the town of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. Most students live in Huntingdon, in the Great Ouse valley towns of St Neots and St Ives, or in villages and rural settlements. Huntingdonshire, which has a population of approximately 150,000, is a relatively prosperous area. Levels of unemployment are low. Most students who enrolled on college courses in 2001/02 were adults. In total, there were 675 full-time students, of whom 40% were aged 16 to 18, and 8,682 part-time students, of whom 90% were adults. Students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 26% of all enrolments when measured as full-time equivalent students. Most students aged 16 to 18 enrol onto courses at level 2. Smaller numbers take courses at level 1 and level 3. There are 80 work-based learners, of whom 16 are advanced modern apprentices, 44 are foundation modern apprentices and 20 are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ). In 2001/02, the ratio of female to male students was 2:1. In the same period, 3% of students at the college identified themselves as having a minority ethnic background, which is slightly higher than the proportion in the local population. The college makes provision in each of the 14 areas of learning. The largest areas are Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and, and the smallest is retailing and customer service.

The college is one of several providers of post-16 education and training within the area. In the county there are four colleges of FE, two sixth form colleges and a former college of agriculture and horticulture. There are seven secondary schools with sixth forms in the area, one independent school with a sixth form and two schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most schools offer a range of vocational education programmes, and neighbouring FE colleges offer programmes similar to Huntingdonshire Regional College. The mission states that the college 'encourages lifelong learning and aims to be the first choice provider of vocational education and training for individuals and employers in Huntingdonshire'.

## How effective is the college?



Huntingdonshire Regional College has made satisfactory progress since it was inspected by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate in March 2002, when it was judged to be inadequate. At that time four curriculum areas and leadership and management were judged to be unsatisfactory. Provision is now good in three areas, satisfactory in six and unsatisfactory in just one area. Improvements have been made in work-based learning but this aspect of the college's work remains unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

### **Key strengths**

- good standard of students' work in several areas
  
- high retention and pass rates for adults on level 2 courses

- good students' attendance
- good support for individual students
- effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- good provision in animal management, visual arts and humanities
- productive partnerships to widen participation
- effective and clear leadership.

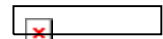
***What should be improved***

- rates of retention for students of all ages at level 1 and for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3
- average class size
- quality of teaching of 16 to 18 students
- quality of resources and accommodation in several areas of learning
- arrangements for key skills
- provision of literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and work-based learning

- o breadth of the curriculum in some areas
- o financial position of the college.

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

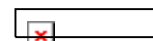


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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  |
|--|--|
| Animal care  | <b>Good.</b> All teaching is at least good and some is excellent. Retention and pass rates are high on animal technology certificate courses and the pass rates on most other courses are above national averages. Students receive good individual support. Retention rates on the animal technology diploma are low and there is inadequate tutorial support for animal technology students.                         |
| Engineering  | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Work-based learning <b>unsatisfactory.</b> All teaching is at least satisfactory, but too few lessons are good or better. Pass rates are high on most courses but retention rates at entry level are low and the rate of framework completion by modern apprentices is poor. Students receive good support in lessons. The motor vehicle workshops are overcrowded.                               |
| Business administration, management and professional | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Work-based learning <b>unsatisfactory.</b> There is good teaching in accounting but administration lessons do not challenge the students sufficiently. Retention and pass rates are high on NVQ accounting courses with good progression to higher levels. However, retention and pass rates on the NVQ level 1 in administration are low. Reviews are ineffective and achievement rates are low. |
| Information and communications technology            | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Most teaching is at least satisfactory but little is good or better. Retention rates are high on many courses but there are low pass rates for adults at level 1. Students develop good information technology (IT) skills. There is weak monitoring of the progress of some full-time students.  |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy                      | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Work-based learning <b>unsatisfactory.</b> All teaching is at least satisfactory and the majority is good. Retention and pass rates are high on some courses. Students reach a good standard in their practical work. Good support is provided but some of the arrangements for assessment are unsatisfactory.  |

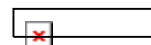
|   |  |
|---|--|
| Health and social care  | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Retention and pass rates are high and the teaching is good on many adult courses. Retention rates are low and students are making slow progress on full-time childcare courses. Support for students is strong and counselling courses are well managed. The implementation of key skills and some aspects of resources are unsatisfactory. |
| Visual and performing arts  | <b>Good.</b> The standard of students' work, and pass rates on most courses, are high. There is much good teaching and students receive a good level of individual support. There is some poor accommodation for art courses, and the range of fine art courses is narrow.   |
| Humanities  | <b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high on the access to higher education (HE) and wider key skills courses. There is much good teaching and students receive effective support in a well-managed area. Pass rates in advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) psychology and sociology are low. Some of the resources are inadequate.                                      |
| Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Students gain valuable skills in real working environments in preparation for employment. Teaching is mainly satisfactory, but some students are insufficiently challenged within lessons. Some individual learning plans are not well used. There are good relationships with external organisations.                                      |
| Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages        | <b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Although there is some good teaching, too few lessons are at least satisfactory, and too many students make poor progress. Insufficient attention is given to the individual learning needs of students and there are some inappropriate learning materials in use. There is a good range of provision.                                   |

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



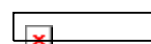
Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has revised its mission, and managers and governors provide clear strategic direction. The college has made satisfactory progress in rectifying weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The quality of provision has improved in four curriculum areas. Students' attendance in lessons has increased and pass rates have improved on courses for 16- to 18-year-olds at levels 1 and 3. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved and the monitoring of performance is more rigorous. However, the quality of curriculum management varies and retention rates remain persistently low on many courses for 16- to 18-year-olds and on adult courses at level 1. Student numbers on many courses are low. Enrolments have declined and are below target for 2003/04. The college's financial position remains weak. A range of policies and plans to address the strategic objectives has been introduced. It is too early to judge its full impact on improving provision and ensuring consistent performance across the college. Communications in the college are good. Since the last inspection, staff morale has improved and the values and objectives of the college are understood and strongly promoted by staff at all levels. The quality of curriculum management is mostly satisfactory, but varies considerably across subject areas. The quality of provision in literacy, numeracy and ESOL remains unsatisfactory. Arrangements for the assessment of key skills and the management of work-based learning are also unsatisfactory. Management of student support services is good. Quality assurance procedures have improved since the last inspection. The self-assessment report is detailed and inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses that it identified. Comprehensive staff development, coaching and management training programmes have also taken place. Governors monitor students' performance and progress closely against agreed targets. The awareness and promotion of equality and diversity is good. Management information systems and the use of data are good. Resources are carefully deployed and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

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



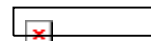
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. It is committed to a policy of inclusiveness and it continues to widen participation in FE by extending the range of full-time and part-time courses within the curriculum with flexible access arrangements to meet the needs of a wide range of students. On the main college site other facilities for the community, such as a fitness centre, doctors' surgery and primary care centre, further encourage local involvement. An increasing number of students are recruited from areas of high deprivation and from groups who have traditionally not taken part in FE. The college is responsive to students with additional social or learning needs and those with disabilities. For these students it works through partnerships with a variety of firms and charities that provide training opportunities in realistic working environments. The college is involved in a number of partnerships with the local education authority and local schools. Partnerships have resulted in courses designed specifically to persuade students to remain in, or return to, education and training. There are examples of integration and good provision for young disaffected and excluded pupils. It provides a successful programme of wider key skills at community venues in conjunction with the probation service. Links with the local community and industry are improving. A large and thriving music school for all age groups meets at weekends. Vocational programmes in veterinary nursing and work-based learning are organised in conjunction with an increasing number of local employers. Provision is made for minority ethnic groups, parent groups and those needing help with basic education. People with restricted mobility are able to use most facilities, but access to many parts of the college is not straightforward and there is a shortage of some specialist amenities. The college has prepared a thorough written policy to promote race equality and an action plan, which identifies clear action points and time scales. It also monitors, by ethnic group, the admission and progress of students and staff recruitment, but not yet the career progress of staff. In the past year the college has introduced a new equality and diversity policy which takes account of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001. It has made a satisfactory response to the act but more needs to be done to ensure that there is easier access to all areas of the college for those with restricted mobility. The college has also taken effective steps to implement the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

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



Support for students has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Students receive good, impartial initial advice and guidance. The prospectus and course information sheets are well designed. Learning support is provided effectively in different ways to suit the needs of individuals. Students are well informed about the wide range of services available to them at the college including counselling, health care, financial assistance, the nursery, careers advice and learning support. Induction to the college is good and the services available to students are carefully explained to them. Arrangements for learning support for full-time students are effective. Few part-time students, however, are assessed for their learning support needs. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory for full-time students but are variable for part-time students. Careers education and guidance are well managed. Students' attendance is monitored carefully. The retention of students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses has improved since 2001. There is little support for students who are not based at the college's main site.

## Students' views of the college



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

***What students like about the college***

- friendly, helpful and supportive staff
  
- relaxed learning environment
  
- very good support provided by student services
  
- good choice and low prices of food in the canteen
  
- good IT facilities
  
- wide variety of teaching methods
  
- inclusive environment for students with disabilities.

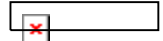
***What they feel could be improved***

- some drab accommodation
  
- the narrow range of extra-curricula activities
  
- the lack of leisure facilities
  
- access to computers in classrooms



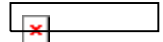
- o teaching of key skills.

## Other information



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local 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 should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

## Part B: The college as a whole



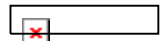
### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

| 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 to 18     | 49                                      | 40                              | 11  |
| 19+ and WBL*          | 66                                      | 30                              | 4   |
| Learning 16 to 18     | 46                                      | 43                              | 11  |
| 19+ and WBL*          | 67                                      | 30                              | 3   |

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

*\*work-based learning*

## Achievement and standards



1. Summary data for students' achievements indicate that pass rates for most learners were near to the most recent national averages for colleges of a similar type in 2002/03. Over the 3-year period to

level 3 the improvement in pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 has not been matched by adults. The retention of students at level 1 has declined significantly over the last three years. Retention at levels 2 and 3 improved on most courses in 2002/03 and the rates are mostly above the national average. Overall attendance in the lessons observed was 86%, a figure that exceeds the national average. Attendance was highest in animal care and health and social care, at 93%. By comparison, in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, the attendance rate was 70%.

2. The college does not make much use of measures that compare data about students' prior attainments with their results, either for target setting or course planning. Its general certificate of education (GCE) provision is now very small.

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

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

4. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have improved over the past three years, but they remain below the national average at levels 2 and 3. The improvements at levels 1 and 3 have been significant. For example, although the number of general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) entries has fallen over the last three years, the number of students gaining high grades has risen from 29% to 47% and is now comfortably above the national average. At NVQ level 2, the pass rate has risen from 72% to 83%, and this is also well above the national average. In information and communications technology (ICT), students develop their IT skills well. For example, full-time students on level 3 courses design good web sites. Beauty therapy students perform their tasks with a good level of professionalism.

5. Despite improvements in 2002/03, there has been an overall decline in the retention of students on courses at levels 1 and 3 in the three-year period ending in 2002/03, and they remain well below the national average. By contrast, a more significant improvement in retention at level 2 means that the rate now exceeds the national average. The majority of students registered for key skills courses are at levels 1 or 2. The retention rates have remained consistent over the last three years, with about three-quarters of those who started remaining to the end of the course.

### ***Adult learners***

6. A significant majority of the students at the college are aged 19 and over and are attending part-time courses. Pass rates have been well above the national average at level 2 for the last three years. However, pass rates at levels 1 and 3 were just below the national average in 2002/03. Although the pass rates at level 1 have risen significantly over the past 3 years, the rates at level 3 have actually fallen in the same period. There were nearly 2,000 short course enrolments in 2002/03. The overall retention rate for short courses is high but the overall pass rate is below the national average.

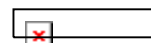
7. In several curriculum areas inspectors found that students achieve good standards in the work they produce. In animal care, students demonstrate good levels of practical skills in tasks such as weighing and bandaging. In ICT, adults with little or no previous experience of using computers gain useful skills in using applications that they are subsequently able to use at home or at work. In counselling and access courses, students demonstrate good levels of skill in critical analysis. In visual art students gain sufficient skill and confidence to undertake ambitious and successful projects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities gain skills, which enable many to undertake tasks in sheltered employment. Across the county, students referred by the probation service gain useful wider key skills, which help them to gain confidence in their search for employment.

8. Retention rates have been well above the national average at level 2 for the last three years. However, the rates at level 1 fell sharply in 2002/03 and, for what is a large group of students, they are now well below the national average. The college has recognised that this is partly associated with its sub-contracted ICT provision and changes have been made for the current year. Retention at

level 3 improved in 2002/03 and is now above the national average.

9. There are 81 young people undertaking work-based learning, mostly in motor vehicle engineering, accounting, administration and hairdressing. Since the original inspection, the rate of completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks, or NVQs, has improved, but it is still very low. For example, in motor vehicle engineering, of the 83 learners who have started since 1999/2000, 13 have completed their planned outcome, 12 of whom were on NVQ-only programmes. In business administration, management and professional, of the 52 learners who have started since 1999/2000, twelve have completed their planned outcome, and of these four were on NVQ-only programmes. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, of the 45 learners who have started since 1999/2000 only 3 have achieved their planned outcome. In recent months, the college has taken action to address the weakness identified in the original inspection. A work-based learning co-ordinator has been appointed along with administration and learner support staff. More effective recruitment and induction practices have led to increased rates of retention. However, learners' progress is still slow. The provision of key skills has improved and is now more closely linked to vocational activities. In-year results indicate improvements over previous years. However, at this stage, few learners have completed the full key skill requirements of their apprenticeship framework.

### Quality of education and training



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 142 lessons. They judged teaching to be good or better in 61% of these, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 6%. The profile of grades for learning is very similar. Learning was unsatisfactory in 5% of the lessons. The overall standard of teaching was found to be higher than that observed at the time of the last inspection, undertaken by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate in March 2002, when only one half of the lessons observed were judged to be good or better and 10% were unsatisfactory. The highest proportion of good or better teaching was observed in animal care and humanities. Too few lessons were judged to be good or better in engineering, ICT, literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The grade profile for teaching and learning shows a significant difference when comparing lessons for adult learners with those of students aged 16 to 18. Two-thirds of the lessons for adults were judged to be good or better, compared to less than a half of the lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Only three lessons in work-based learning were observed and they were all judged to be satisfactory or better. There is no significant variation in the quality of teaching associated with the level of course, with the exception of entry-level and higher-level courses. Around 70% of lessons at levels 1, 2 and 3 were judged to be good or better, whereas 80% of the lessons at the higher level, and only 50% of entry-level lessons were of this quality. Part-time teachers taught more than half of the lessons observed. There is a small difference in the quality of lessons taught by full-time staff compared to those taught by part-time staff. The proportion of lessons taught by full-time teachers that was judged to be good or better was 66% compared to 57% by part-time teachers. However, the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons taught by part-time teachers is slightly lower than that for full-time teachers.

11. In the better lessons, well-planned teaching provides appropriate challenges to students of differing abilities. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and students are well motivated to learn. This is particularly evident in animal care and in humanities, but it was also noted in the teaching of adults in health and social care. In accounting, teachers skilfully draw upon the students' work experience and in visual and performing arts many teachers enrich their lessons by drawing upon their own current practical experience.

12. In the poorer lessons, teachers fail to take adequate account of the individual learning needs of students. This was evident in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students in literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes. Individual learning plans are not used as a basis for lesson planning. Too many lessons are taught to the whole class, regardless of the individual needs of students. In these lessons, which are often dull and uninspiring, the learning and

attainment is unsatisfactory for a significant number of students in the class. In some areas too much of the teaching was, at best, only satisfactory. For example, in engineering, the use of questioning by teachers is poorly developed, as is the use of teaching aids. In ICT, teachers talk for too long in lessons and students' learning is not helped by providing them with workbooks which contain errors.

13. In its self-assessment report the college recognised the need to improve arrangements for the provision of key skills in several areas such as business administration, management and professional, and health and social care. Inspectors found that, although the arrangements for co-ordinating key skills have improved, the provision is ineffective in too many respects. For example, in parts of the business area there is insufficient staff expertise available and in hairdressing and beauty therapy there is no clearly understood strategy for ensuring that students gain their key skills. In some areas, the teaching of key skills does not take the students' vocational interests sufficiently into account.

14. Most teachers are appropriately qualified in their vocational area. In some areas, for example, accountancy, art and hairdressing and beauty therapy, teachers make good use of their experience to enliven lessons. Some 70% of full-time teachers hold a formal teaching qualification, but amongst part-time teachers only 30% are teacher-trained. The overall arrangements for staff development are satisfactory and there is an appropriate emphasis upon improving the proportion of staff holding teaching qualifications.

15. The quality of resources and accommodation in several areas are in need of improvement. Teaching rooms are good in some areas, for example accounting, but in too many areas the rooms are inappropriate in certain respects. In motor vehicle engineering the workshops contain too many out-of-date vehicles and the area quickly becomes overcrowded. In health and social care and humanities the rooms are drab and uninspiring. Inspectors noted the improvements made to accommodation in hairdressing and beauty therapy since the last inspection, but there is still unsuitable accommodation, which adversely affects learning. Resources used in some lessons are of variable quality. For example, there are too few modern resources in health and social care, and in lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, some learning materials are poorly reproduced and they contain material at an inappropriate level. Humanities' teachers do not have sufficient access to teaching aids. While there is access to most parts of the college for wheelchair users, in some areas it is far from easy. The college is well maintained and there are some attractive displays of students' work.

16. The library provides a pleasant and welcoming learning environment. There is a satisfactory range of resources in most areas. There is a good choice of books available for humanities students but in literacy and numeracy some books are outdated or in short supply. The college has a modern computer network and a satisfactory ratio of computers to students. Use of the college intranet by students and staff is increasing, but this facility is not available to students in community centres. Good use is being made of computers by teachers to monitor attendance and there are plans to develop the information network to monitor students' assessments.

17. Initial assessment is effective for full-time students and work-based learners. It identifies their need for additional learning support and their level of key skills in the application of number and in communication. There is no formal system of initial assessment for part-time students. However, they can refer themselves, or be referred by their tutor, for additional learning support during their course. The initial assessment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inappropriate for some.

18. Assessment procedures at the college have been reviewed since the last inspection but there are still weaknesses in their implementation. The monitoring of assessment has been improved. Individual learning plans and assessment plans can be electronically recorded and progress against them tracked. Learning directors from each curriculum area, reporting to a senior manager, have responsibility for monitoring assessment practices. Students are regularly given assessment plans to help them plan their work. In the visual arts, individual learning plans are well written and students make good use of them to organise their work. However, in many curriculum areas the targets are not clear or are inappropriate. Teachers in literacy and numeracy, and teachers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do not use the information contained in the learning plans to

plan their lessons effectively to meet the needs of their students. There is insufficient employer-based assessment of work-based learners and assessment in the workplace is poorly co-ordinated. The assessment of work-based learners is not focused on their individual needs and the arrangements for the assessment of key skills are inadequate.

19. The quality of the written feedback provided by teachers is not uniformly good. On access courses, tutors make constructive comments and return work promptly. In some areas, feedback is not sufficiently detailed to make clear to the student how performance can be improved. For example, the feedback in ICT is much more thorough and prompt for students on level 1 and 2 courses than for those at level 3. In practical lessons in engineering and visual arts, teachers encourage students to evaluate the standard of their own work before it is formally assessed.

20. The progress of most full-time students is effectively monitored. Students falling behind are entered onto the monitoring system as at risk students and follow-up support is provided. Work-based learners, however, are often unclear about their progress. Parents/guardians of students under 18 years of age receive progress reports twice during the year and are invited to at least two parents'/guardians' meetings each year. Not all employers of part-time students receive regular reports on their employees' progress.

21. Internal verification is now good. The college has a comprehensive handbook for internal verification, which includes a policy and procedures. A senior manager monitors all external verifiers' reports and progress reports against actions. Action plan updates are issued monthly and regular audits ensure that internal verification practices are closely followed.

22. The college provides a range of predominately vocational full-time and part-time courses for students across all age ranges. The college meets its widening participation objectives, and has been successful in providing education and training opportunities in most curriculum areas from entry-level to level 4. The majority of courses meet the needs of the local community. For example, links with a local veterinary training provider have increased opportunities for veterinary nurse training. Summer and Easter holiday courses are designed to attract new learners. Childcare provision is a significant factor in enabling parents to return to learning.

23. The college has established some effective links with local industry, business, the probation service and charitable organisations. Members of the senior management team represent the college on a range of local groups, for example, the local strategic partnership and the 13 to 19 entitlement group. In most curriculum areas, good links with employers help the college to provide a satisfactory range of work experience placements. An innovative and effective collaboration with the county's probation service provides opportunities for people serving a period of community punishment to gain wider key skills at level 2. Over 150 highly motivated learners have completed wider key skills awards during the current academic year.

24. Links with local schools are effective and improving. The college is developing its increased flexibility partnership programmes with five local schools. The number of young people aged 14 to 16 participating in vocational training at the college has risen from 67 in 2001/02 to 170 in 2003/04. Pupils can undertake vocational courses in engineering, hairdressing, and care.

25. There is satisfactory provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Successful access courses to HE are offered. Progression rates into employment and into HE are good. A narrow range of extension and enrichment activities are available across the college. Themed enrichment activities take place based on links with local organisations or related to national campaigns, such as national no smoking day. Other enrichment opportunities include trips to the theatre or museums and some lunchtime activities, including trampolines and relaxation classes. The college recognises, however, that only a few students take up these opportunities. The college also has a successful regional music Saturday school attracting a wide range of young people into the college.

26. Support for students has improved since the last inspection and is now good. More student support is now offered to part-time evening students, while work-based learners are making

increased use of the college's support services. The prospectus and course information sheets are well designed. Potential students receive a speedy and helpful service when they contact the college. All applicants for full-time courses are invited to an interview where they receive detailed information about the college and their chosen course and are assessed to establish their literacy and numeracy support needs. This is followed by a further guidance interview with curriculum staff to ensure students enrol on the right course. Induction to the college is good. The services available for full-time and part-time students are carefully explained. There is insufficient support provided for students who are not based at the college's Huntingdon site. For example, student services' staff do not visit the St Neots site.

27. Students are well informed about the wide range of services, including counselling, health care, financial assistance, the nursery, careers advice and learning support, which are available to them at the college. At the time of the inspection, 35 full-time and 23 part-time students were receiving financial assistance to send their children to either the college's nursery or to childcare providers in the community. On many full-time courses, learning mentors work closely with tutors to help students both individually and in groups. They cover issues such as bullying and equality and diversity as well as providing personal support for students. The mentors also offer evening provision for those who cannot access the service during the day. Students are appreciative of the support provided by the college and indicate high levels of satisfaction in the college's survey of their views. Counselling is made available to all students. Data show that students from all curriculum areas benefit from this service, although there has been very low take up of the service in the evenings. There are also good links with external agencies such as the community police to provide additional specialist support.

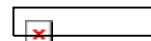
28. Arrangements for learning support for full-time students are effective and have improved since the last inspection. At the start of 2003/04, 109 students were placed on the at-risk register. A further eight students who self-referred, or were referred by their tutors, have since been added. At the time of the inspection, 68 at risk students were being supported. The support is provided in many ways. Learning mentors see the at risk students on a regular basis to help them to stay on their course and achieve their qualification. In some areas a team-teaching approach enables students to receive support within their lessons. One-to-one support is also provided where required. The college's analysis of the performance of students receiving learning support shows that more are retained and achieve than those who do not take up the support available. Few part-time students, however, are assessed for their learning support needs.

29. Tutorial provision is satisfactory for full-time students. Tutorials are timetabled for all full-time courses. Although they are not an entitlement for part-time students, in some curriculum areas individual tutors do provide them. The college monitors the quality of tutorials through the end-of-year student review, but not systematically during the year. New tutors are trained but there is no formal training or tutorial job description for existing tutors. The development of tutorial work is being taken forward by the appointment of an advanced practitioner for tutors and the tutorial steering group. A small range of teaching and learning materials for tutors to use during tutorials is available in the library.

30. Students' attendance is monitored carefully. The college has computer-based systems for recording attendance and tutors can retrieve the information easily. Absences are quickly followed up through the sending of postcards or telephone calls to students' homes where necessary. Students with a history of poor attendance are placed on the at risk register where they are closely monitored. The retention of students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses improved in 2002/03 and was showing further signs of improvement at the time of the inspection.

31. Careers education and guidance are carefully planned. There are very strong links with the local Connexions service for students of all ages. Its personal advisers attend the college regularly to provide students with careers guidance as well as help with their personal and social development.

## **Leadership and management**



32. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the inspection in March 2002, the college has made satisfactory progress in addressing its weaknesses. Governors and senior management provide a clear strategic direction. The quality of provision has improved in four of the nine curriculum areas inspected at the original inspection. Students' attendance in lessons has increased and pass rates have improved on courses for young people aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 3. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved and the monitoring of performance is more rigorous. However, the quality of curriculum management varies and retention rates remain persistently low on many courses for those aged 16 to 18 and on adult courses at level 1. Student numbers on many courses are low. Enrolments have declined and are below target for 2003/04. The college's financial position remains weak.

33. There is effective leadership from senior management. The college has revised its mission statement and corporate objectives. It has also redefined its key areas of provision and decided to increase the proportion of vocational courses more suited to the needs of its local community and local employers. The strategic plan addresses the major issues with key objectives and targets based on addressing weaknesses and raising success in line with the new vision. A range of associated policies and plans, including arrangements for monitoring, have been introduced. Many of these have been introduced recently and it is too early to judge their full impact on improving provision and ensuring consistent performance across the college. The college's operational plan for 2003/04 is comprehensive and coherent and identifies the actions required to achieve the strategic plan. Progress against the various plans is monitored regularly. Some planning and review processes, for example for self-assessment and programme review, are not yet sufficiently integrated within the overall planning process.

34. Communications in the college are good. Accountabilities are mostly clear and there is a good level of delegation to managers at all levels who, although accountable, feel empowered to make decisions within their areas of responsibility. Since the last inspection staff morale has improved and the values and objectives of the college are understood and strongly promoted by staff at all levels. They feel fully informed about most aspects of college business and value the open and consultative style of senior managers. There is a broad range of meetings at all levels which enable staff to contribute their thoughts, views and ideas on all issues. The college management team comprises the principal, three assistant principals and the director of finance. The team meets weekly to discuss a wide range of matters but minutes do not always clearly reflect the level of debate and decisions reached. The team is committed to the strategic plan and has a clear understanding of college's intention to continue to improve.

35. The quality of curriculum management is mostly satisfactory but varies considerably across subject areas. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in operational planning and management within the curriculum. Eight learning directors now manage areas of the curriculum. This is leading to more effective teamwork at course level, better communication and more systematic analysis of attendance, progress, achievement and recruitment data. Most significantly, effective teaching is seen as a priority. Curriculum areas are adopting the college's Supporting Young People Towards Achievement plan in an attempt to improve retention and pass rates, particularly for those aged 16 to 18. The plan establishes more effective initial advice, guidance and initial assessment, and these are leading to improvements in on-programme support. Management of student support services is good. There is close monitoring of attendance and performance through an on-line attendance monitoring system that includes direct access to students' independent learning plans. While retention and pass rates have improved in some areas, the plan has yet to deliver consistent regular improvements in retention and pass rates for all students. Poor performance persists on a minority of courses and the college has failed to meet retention and pass rate targets for adults at levels 1 and 3.

36. Quality assurance procedures have been further developed since the last inspection and, although most are consistently implemented, many course team reviews are inadequate. The self-assessment report is detailed and includes good data analysis. Grades awarded by inspectors exceeded those awarded by the college itself in two curriculum areas and matched in all others except one, which was lower. The quality of four curriculum areas and one area of work-based

learning have improved by one grade, four have remained the same and one was worse. The quality of provision in literacy, numeracy and ESOL and work-based learning, and the arrangements for the assessment of key skills are unsatisfactory. Self-assessments for service areas are underdeveloped. Curriculum monitoring and target setting are well established. Learning directors meet regularly with senior managers to review progress against targets but there is no formal system to identify under-performing courses. Students' views are gathered in meetings and by questionnaire. The results are analysed and improvements have been implemented.

37. To improve the quality of teaching and students' learning, the college has developed its lesson and tutorial observation scheme since the last inspection. Trained observers observe all staff at least once a year. Much informal observation of teachers by each other also takes place. Observation grades are subject to a rigorous standardisation process. In the inspection, the proportion of good or better teaching rose from 50% to 61%, while the proportion of poor teaching declined from 10% to 6%. This closely matched the college lesson observation profile in 2003/04. Wide variations in the quality of teaching across some curriculum areas remain. All newly appointed teachers have a mentor and their teaching is observed within the first six weeks. Three advanced practitioners offer good support and training to teachers and assist in the sharing of good practice. Comprehensive staff development, coaching and management training programmes have taken place since the last inspection.

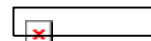
38. The college promotes equality and diversity for students and staff and recognises the importance of support for individuals in ensuring equality of opportunity. An assistant principal is responsible for ensuring the college maintains a good level of response to equal opportunities issues. The college is taking effective steps to implement the Race Relations Amendment Act. It has prepared a thorough written policy to promote race equality and an action plan that identifies clear action points and time scales. It also monitors, by ethnic group, the admission and progress of students, and staff recruitment, but not yet the career progress of staff. Some 6% of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 2% in the local community. The college analyses the performance of its students and sets targets to improve diversity within its provision. It has made an effective response to the requirements of SENDA. Staff have attended training and governors have had a briefing on disability awareness. The college has effective procedures to deal with harassment and complaints.

39. Governance is good. Governors bring a wide range of valuable experience to the college and are committed to its success. Since the last inspection, they have been closely involved in the strategic development of the college and share a common understanding with managers of the college's future direction. They have played a major role in monitoring the post-inspection action plan and have supported the principal and senior staff during a period of rapid change. They recognise the challenge faced by the college in raising skill levels in the local community. Governors scrutinise the academic performance of the significant courses and receive accurate reports on retention and pass rates compared with targets.

40. The college's financial position is weak. Weaknesses in financial planning and cost controls resulted in considerable operating deficits over the past two years. Although forecast to break even in the year ending July 2004, the college is unlikely to achieve its income targets and expects to record a further deficit. Managers and governors monitor the financial position closely and have introduced detailed budgeting down to course level, tighter expenditure controls and an integrated computerised financial package. Satisfactory value for money is assured by careful deployment of resources, ensuring that teachers' time is used efficiently and that all courses operate with sufficient students to at least cover costs. A new marketing plan and improved links with schools, employers and local organisations are starting to promote the college effectively and generate more interest, to increase student enrolments. The management information system remains sound. Student information is accurate, readily available and increasingly used by staff at all levels for planning and monitoring purposes.

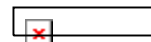
## **Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas**





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## **Animal care**



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

### **Strengths**

- high retention and pass rates on animal technology certificate course
- high proportion of very good teaching
- good individual support for students
- very effective strategies to improve teaching and learning.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on animal technology diploma course
- low pass rates within the planned duration on the level 3 veterinary nursing course
- inadequate tutorial arrangements for animal technology students.

### **Scope of provision**

41. The college offers part-time courses for the certificate and membership diploma in animal technology. It also has a franchise arrangement with the College of Animal Welfare for part-time courses in veterinary nursing, pre-veterinary nursing and animal care and full-time national certificate and advanced national certificate courses in animal care at seven sites across the country, including the college's main site. At the time of the inspection there were 157 students at the College of Animal Welfare, most of whom were adults studying part-time. All of the 32 students studying animal technology were part-time. Eight students aged 14 to 16 were enrolled on a course leading to NVQ level 1.

### **Achievement and standards**

42. Pass rates are high for the animal technology certificate and the national certificate in animal care. For two of the past three years, most students who completed the NVQ level 2 course in veterinary nursing achieved the qualification. Pass rates on NVQ animal care courses are at, or below, national averages. Significant numbers of students on the NVQ level 3 course in veterinary nursing do not achieve the qualification until six months or more after the end of their course. Retention rates on the pre-veterinary nursing course are declining. At the time of the inspection, only 21% of students who had enrolled on the animal technology diploma course had been retained.

43. Most students work well in lessons. They develop good practical skills such as wound management and animal breeding techniques and veterinary nursing students, for example, can recognise different wounds, describe treatments and carry out bandaging early in their courses. More experienced students have sufficient confidence to help those who are less experienced. Students produce a good standard of written work and most are able to discuss and answer questions in theory lessons competently. In 2003, all national certificate students achieved the key skill of communication qualification.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in animal care, 2001 to 2003**

| <b>Qualification</b>          | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Pre-veterinary nursing        | 2            | No. of starts           | 39          | 54          | 21          |
|                               |              | % retention             | 92          | 89          | 81          |
|                               |              | % pass rate             | 81          | 73          | 65          |
| NVQ veterinary nursing        | 2            | No. of starts           | 85          | 85          | 47          |
|                               |              | % retention             | 88          | 86          | 85          |
|                               |              | % pass rate             | 84          | 46          | 76          |
| Animal technology certificate | 2            | No. of starts           | 30          | 18          | 16          |
|                               |              | % retention             | 80          | 94          | 100         |
|                               |              | % pass rate             | 71          | 100         | 94          |
| Animal technology diploma     | 3            | No. of starts           | 17          | 18          | 15          |
|                               |              | % retention             | 71          | 50          | 67          |
|                               |              | % pass rate             | 58          | 44          | 60          |
| NVQ veterinary nursing        | 3            | No. of starts           | 67          | 61          | 26          |
|                               |              | % retention             | 96          | 84          | 96          |
|                               |              | % pass rate             | 55          | 24          | 48          |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

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

44. All teaching is good and most is very good. Lessons are well planned. In the best lessons, teachers encourage their students to take part in discussions and regularly ask them open questions to check their understanding of the topic. They make good use of white boards, flip charts or computerised projections to display diagrams and summarise key points. Students have frequent opportunities to carry out mini-tests and small group research in lessons or independently using worksheets they are given to help them produce their own notes. Most teachers also encourage students to use textbooks and to feed back their findings to the rest of the class. Some teaching is imaginative. For example, full-time students on the advanced certificate in animal care planned and managed a National Pet Week stand as part of their course. Later they evaluated the event by

calculating the final accounts and using video film to analyse the positive and negative impacts of their marketing. In practical lessons, teachers set students realistic work to help them develop their practical skills. For example, animal technology students carry out egg incubation, weighing and candling to monitor fertility over several weeks.

45. In practical lessons, teachers are occasionally too quick to make suggestions or carry out tasks rather than allowing students the time to think for themselves and learn from their experiences. In theory lessons teachers sometimes miss the opportunity to demonstrate equipment that students may not be familiar with, such as specialist biopsy tools, or to show effective restraint procedures using live animals. Part-time students are not always encouraged to use computers for research.

46. Most classrooms have interesting displays of students' work and technical information. At the College of Animal Welfare, computerised projectors, video and television equipment is readily available for teachers and students to use. Library resources are satisfactory with appropriate books and journals. However, at one centre the books are locked in a cupboard and students are not encouraged to use them. There is a good range of animals. There are also appropriate laboratory resources. At most centres there are not enough computers for students to use.

47. Student assessment and the reporting of progress are satisfactory. Internal verification is thorough, although actions required by assessors are not always effectively followed up. Most students discuss their progress with their tutors during tutorials. At the College of Animal Welfare students are set appropriate targets, which are carefully monitored. However, at some centres, tutors do not make good use of tutorials. Tutorial provision for animal technology students is unsatisfactory. The tutorials are timetabled during the lunch break when students have to travel from an out-centre to the main college site. When they do occur, clear targets are not set. Some animal technology students are required to work on the day of their course and therefore miss lessons or tests. Employers receive regular reports on student attendance but not progress. Students' written work is marked carefully and teachers make helpful comments to help students improve their work.

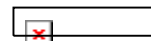
48. Work placements for students are well organised. Links with employers are satisfactory and the College of Animal Welfare has an employer advisory panel. The advanced national certificate course was introduced in 2003 to provide progression for students on the national certificate course. To meet the demands of employers, at one centre veterinary nursing students start at 12.00 and finish at 19.00. Animal technology courses are taught as modules and students can study one module at a time if necessary to meet their particular needs or work patterns.

49. Personal support for students is good. Induction is thorough and students are carefully assessed to identify their additional support needs. Support is provided both in lessons and during individual support sessions. A support tutor co-ordinates the provision of additional learning support for the College of Animal Welfare at all its centres. The support provided is effective and includes, for example, the use of recording equipment and lesson notes printed on coloured paper.

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

50. Leadership and management of the area are good. There is effective communication between the main site and other centres. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, internal verification and support for students, especially at the College of Animal Welfare. Lesson observation is comprehensive and at the College of Animal Welfare all teachers are evaluated by the students they teach and required to produce their own action plan for improvement. Staff development days, which take place every six months, involve teachers from the main college site. Induction for new teachers is effective. Initially they take an instructional techniques course and are mentored prior to achieving a teaching qualification. The self-assessment report identified most of the weaknesses identified at the inspection.

## **Engineering**



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

***Strengths***

- high pass rates for motor vehicle level 1 and 2 courses
  
- high attendance rates
  
- good learning support in lessons
  
- wide range of motor vehicle provision at entry and level 1 to meet local needs
  
- good standard of students' practical work at foundation level.

***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on motor vehicle entry-level course
  
- overcrowded motor vehicle workshops
  
- insufficient access to specialist IT equipment
  
- poor planning of assessment and monitoring of progress for work-based learners
  
- poor achievement rates for work-based learners.

***Scope of provision***

51. The college offers a broad range of engineering courses. Full-time courses are offered from foundation to advanced level in electronic, mechanical and motor vehicle engineering. At the time of the inspection, there were 500 students, just over half of whom were aged 16 to 18. The majority of students are part-time. There are also 32 work-based learners, mainly foundation modern apprentices, on motor vehicle programmes. London Chamber of Commerce and Industry entry award and NVQ level 1 in performing engineering operations courses are provided for 14- to 16-year-old school pupils.

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

52. Pass and retention rates on most courses are high. On many courses almost all the students who are retained achieve the qualification. Many retention rates have improved significantly over the past three years. For example, the retention rate on the level 2 motor vehicle course was below the national average in 2000/2001, but was well above the national average in 2002/03. The attendance rate in lessons inspected was very high, at 87%. Retention rates in work-based learning have improved over the past two years.

53. The standard of work produced by students on motor vehicle foundation level courses is high. Students achieve high standards of practical work, including those on school link courses where the activities set are demanding and challenge the pupils' abilities. For example, students are able to undertake complex tasks such as assembling miniature robots as part of their study of electronics. A good range of successfully completed practical work is displayed in the workshops.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 2001 to 2003***

| <b>Qualification</b>                                      | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| City and Guilds 3992 motor vehicle repair and maintenance | E            | No. of starts           | 21          | 25          | 23          |
|   |              | % retention             | 57          | 68          | 65          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 92          | 100         | 93          |
| City and Guilds motor vehicle progression award           | 1            | No. of starts           | 21          | 25          | 32          |
|   |              | % retention             | 57          | 68          | 78          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 92          | 100         | 96          |
| City and Guilds 2301 Autocad                              | 2            | No. of starts           | 15          | 12          | 16          |
|   |              | % retention             | 93          | 75          | 81          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 71          | 100         | 100         |
| City and Guilds motor vehicle progression award           | 2            | No. of starts           | 19          | 21          | 19          |
|   |              | % retention             | 63          | 71          | 89          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 83          | 67          | 94          |
| National certificate/diploma in engineering               | 3            | No. of starts           | 17          | 20          | 15          |
|   |              | % retention             | 46          | 44          | 60          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 0           | 30          | 79          |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

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

54. All teaching is at least satisfactory, but only a small proportion is good or better. Teachers plan their lessons well using standardized individualised lesson plans and schemes of work. In the better theory lessons teachers make good use of working models and visual aids to explain technical concepts. In practical lessons teachers often encourage students to work in groups and learn from

each other while they regularly check that students are learning. In many motor vehicle foundation-level lessons two teachers work together to provide individual help and support where necessary.

55. In some lessons, students are required to spend too long copying notes from whiteboards. The lessons then proceed very slowly and students learn little. Work-based learners all follow the same programme rather than proceed at their own pace and little account is taken of their prior attainment.

56. Resources for engineering are satisfactory. The engineering and motor vehicle workshops are well equipped. The recently converted electronics workshop contains a good range of equipment, although some is dated and needs replacement. The computer numerically controlled (CNC) facilities are limited. Motor vehicle equipment is old although adequate for purpose. However, the restricted space between vehicles makes it difficult to maintain safe working practices during practical lessons. Most work-based learners undertake work placements where there is a wide range of up-to-date equipment and current production vehicles. Some learners regularly use the most up-to-date equipment and benefit from manufacturer-specific training. Staff are appropriately qualified.

57. There is poor assessment practice for work-based learners. Employers are not involved; instead all assessments in the workplace are undertaken by assessors employed by the college. There is insufficient focus on the needs of individual learners so that much of the evidence collected is duplicated. Despite regular reviews of their progress, work-based learners are not always aware of their progress towards the NVQ. College-based students have regular individual interviews to review their performance and their action plan, and to update their learning plans. Progress reports are sent to students, parents and employers each term and there are also four scheduled open evenings for full-time students each year. Student portfolios indicate that assessments for college-based students are consistently and rigorously applied. There is an effective internal verification system for engineering courses.

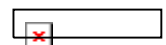
58. The wide range of provision from entry to HE level provides good opportunities for progression. Enrolments on entry and level 1 motor vehicle courses have increased in recent years. To ensure they remain financially viable, students on the national diploma and certificate in engineering courses are taught together for the common core units.

59. Tutorials for full-time students are good. Individual reviews provide guidance to learners on possible progression routes. All full-time students and work-based learners undertake a well-planned induction and an initial learning assessment, which provides a basis for individual help and guidance. However, not all part-time students take an initial learning assessment or have tutorials. Work-based learners get good individual support from an apprentice adviser who visits them regularly in the workplace

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

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are appraised annually and staff development is well-planned. Retention rates have improved at all levels since the last inspection. There are new policies and procedures for work-based learning, but work-based learning is not a standard agenda item at team meetings. The college has a target to increase the number of work-based learners and recent marketing activities have increased employer interest. The apprentice adviser checks health and safety and equality of opportunity during regular visits to the workplace.

### **Business administration, management and professional**



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### **Strengths**

- high pass and retention rates on NVQ accounting courses
- good teaching in the college for accounting courses and work-based learners
- wide range of accounting courses with good progression routes
- well-managed book-keeping and accounting courses.

### **Weaknesses**

- low completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- low retention and pass rates on NVQ1 administration course
- insufficient challenge and variety in administration lessons
- poor use of individual learning plans and progress reviews in work-based learning
- poor management and co-ordination of work-based learning
- ineffective course reviews and self-assessment on some courses.

### **Scope of provision**

61. The college offers a wide range of accounting courses, as well as courses in business, office technology and management. Full-time courses include the award of the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) at levels 3 and 4, and the certificate in administration at levels 1 and 2. Part-time courses include AAT at levels 2 to 4, book-keeping, computerised accounts, management accounting courses, and management courses at levels 3, 4 and 5. Part-time business studies courses include AS-level business studies and GCSE business. Most students are aged 19 or over. At the time of the inspection, there were 300 students, of whom 25 were aged 16 to 18. Nearly three-

quarters of the students are following courses in accounting and management, with the remaining one-quarter taking courses leading to qualifications in business administration. There are 22 enrolments in work-based learning, with 16 learners in accounting and 6 in administration.

### **Achievement and standards**

62. Pass and retention rates are high on the AAT courses, especially at level 2 where they are significantly above national averages. Pass and retention rates are low on NVQ level 1 administration. There is good progression to higher level accounting courses. For example, 6 out of 12 students have progressed from book-keeping level 3 to the AAT course, and 4 students progressed to the Chartered Institute of Management (CIMA) award at level 3. There is low completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks in work-based learning. Of the 38 apprentices starting training in the past 3 years only 8 have achieved the full framework.

63. The overall standard of students' assessed work is satisfactory. Some part-time students, however, develop high standards and are able to make a valuable contribution to their employer's business objectives. For example, one student is leading the development of a company's IT strategy. Students in administration are, however, slow to develop the necessary attitudes and skills to maintain lifelong learning and work in a modern office environment.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, management and professional, 2001 to 2003**

| <b>Qualification</b>      | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| NVQ1 administration       | 1            | No. of starts           | 8           | 11          | 14          |
|                           |              | % retention             | 25          | 18          | 57          |
|                           |              | % pass rate             | 50          | 100         | 13          |
| Text processing stage 1   | 1            | No. of starts           | 60          | 52          | 33          |
|                           |              | % retention             | 77          | 83          | 100         |
|                           |              | % pass rate             | 80          | 93          | 79          |
| NVQ accounting (one year) | 2            | No. of starts           | 18          | 22          | 14          |
|                           |              | % retention             | 94          | 100         | 79          |
|                           |              | % pass rate             | 82          | 91          | 82          |
| Book-keeping and accounts | 2            | No. of starts           | 14          | 16          | 29*         |
|                           |              | % retention             | 93          | 75          | 90*         |
|                           |              | % pass rate             | 69          | 67          | 58*         |
| NVQ accounting (one year) | 3            | No. of starts           | 35          | 50          | 35          |
|                           |              | % retention             | 80          | 88          | 94          |
|                           |              | % pass rate             | 68          | 57          | 61          |
| NVQ accounting (one year) | 4            | No. of starts           | 25          | 26          | 29          |
|                           |              | % retention             | 96          | 65          | 90          |
|                           |              | % pass rate             | 63          | 53          | 77          |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* data for short course in 2002-03

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



64. The majority of teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory. The best teaching is on college-based accounting courses and for work-based learners. Lessons are well planned and the aims and learning outcomes are shared with students. Teachers vary their teaching activities to help students learn, and often draw on their students' experiences of work to help them explore concepts in a practical context. In a level 4 accounting lesson, the teacher made effective use of case studies and supporting materials to increase student understanding of personal tax issues. The lesson was informative, and students became more confident in the subject. The teaching of technical certificate subjects to work-based learners in administration is good, and frequently includes preparation for key skills external tests. Students on level 1 and 2 administration courses develop their practical skills in the college administration services office.

65. In administration lessons at levels 1 and 2, teachers do not challenge their students sufficiently or engage the less motivated or less confident students. In a few lessons, there is insufficient attention given to exploring issues in greater depth in order to ensure that students of different abilities are able to realise their potential and develop their personal skills. The teaching of key skills is not effective.

66. Teachers on accounting courses are well qualified, and many have current or recent industrial experience. There is good access to IT facilities in classrooms and study skills workshops. Some classrooms are bright and welcoming, and provide a good learning environment. The designated teaching room for accounting groups is well equipped with interactive whiteboard and IT. Some rooms are dull and uninviting. The college administration office, which is used by level 1 and 2 administration students to practise their office skills, is cramped.

67. The monitoring and recording of progress for work-based learners is poor. Individual learning plans are not updated accurately. The college's review and assessment documents do not provide learners with clear targets or a clear record of what they should be doing to develop skills or collect evidence. Employers are generally supportive of learners and they are usually involved in monitoring visits, but they do not always contribute fully in the learners' training programme. Accounting tutors make frequent visits to work-based learners but some visits do not focus sufficiently on the requirements of the occupational NVQ.

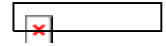
68. The wide range of accounting courses provide good progression opportunities, including those for students who wish to resume or take up a career in administration. Part-time office technology qualifications are offered on a flexible basis through office skills workshops, although enrolments are low. There are few business studies courses. A few work-based learners are placed on the advanced framework in response to employer demands, when their job role, age and current skills would suggest that a foundation apprenticeship would be more appropriate.

69. Tutorial support is good. For example, a guest speaker from a local employment agency spoke to full-time AAT NVQ level 4 students, who were predominantly adult women, about returning to work. The students found the session extremely beneficial in developing their knowledge and confidence to return to employment. Most new students take an initial assessment to find out whether they need additional support. On accounting courses, students also take a vocational skills test. There is close and regular contact with work-based learners.

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

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Bookkeeping and accounting courses are well-managed with regular team meetings and effective schemes of work and lesson plans. However, the college has been slow to address low achievements on the level 1 administration course. There is poor co-ordination of work-based learning between course teams and the college's work-based learning unit. Quality assurance and self-assessment in work-based learning is unsatisfactory and there has been slow progress in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Course review and evaluation are good for accounting courses, but in other subject areas they are sometimes brief with unclear action plans or measurable outcomes.

## Information and communications technology



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

### **Strengths**

- high retention rates on many courses
- good development of students' ICT skills
- good level of individual support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates on long level 1 courses for adults
- poor quality workbooks for students in ICT centres
- weak monitoring of the progress of full-time students on level 3 courses.

### **Scope of provision**

71. The college provides full-time courses from level 1 to 4 and part-time computer literacy courses from entry to level 3. Part-time provision includes short, one and two-year European computer driving licence (ECDL), City and Guilds, Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR), computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) qualifications. At the time of the inspection, there were 50 full-time students and 863 part-time students. Most full-time students were aged 16 to 18 and most part-time students were aged 19 or over.

### **Achievement and standards**

72. Retention rates are consistently high for most courses. For example, the retention rate on the national diploma course has been above the national average since 2001. Retention rates are high on level 1 courses for adults. Pass rates are high on short college-accredited courses and are improving on City and Guilds courses, but have declined on long level 1 courses for adults. They are significantly below national averages for CLAIT and ECDL. Pass rates for the national diploma in computing have been below the national average for two out of the past three years, but they varied in 2003 from 56% for the software development option to 100% for the systems support option, compared with an overall national average of 84%. In 2003, a high proportion of students who

completed the first diploma in IT achieved high grades. The attendance rate at lessons inspected was high, at 82%.

73. Students demonstrate a good understanding of ICT hardware and software and good skills in using applications and internet research. National diploma students design very good websites and produce good entity relationship diagrams. Students on the first diploma produce well-annotated screen drops that describe how to send attachments with emails. Adults who have no previous experience of computers develop useful ICT skills, which they use in new or enhanced job roles or at home.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2001 to 2003***

| <b>Qualification</b>                                      | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| City and Guilds 7261 certificate in computer applications | 1            | No. of starts           | 37          | 170         | 26          |
|   |              | % retention             | 92          | 29          | 77          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 88          | 10          | 55          |
| CLAIT   | 1            | No. of starts           | 204         | 244         | 86          |
|   |              | % retention             | 81          | 89          | 85          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 56          | 64          | 38          |
| Computing for the terrified - short                       | 1            | No. of starts           | 17          | 55          | 40          |
|   |              | % retention             | 100         | 18          | 100         |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 76          | 60          | 95          |
| European computer driving licence                         | 1            | No. of starts           | 12          | 31          | 59          |
|   |              | % retention             | 92          | 97          | 88          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 82          | 83          | 25          |
| GNVQ intermediate IT/first diploma IT                     | 2            | No. of starts           | 16          | 17          | 28          |
|   |              | % retention             | 81          | 82          | 79          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 0           | 43          | 77          |
| National diploma in computing                             | 3            | No. of starts           | 16          | 17          | 30          |
|   |              | % retention             | 69          | 71          | 73          |
|   |              | % pass rate             | 73          | 100         | 73          |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

***Quality of education and training***

74. Most teaching is at least satisfactory and some is good. Teaching is better on full-time courses. The best lessons are well planned with a good mix of activities to involve and interest all students, taking into account their differing abilities. For example, in one lesson the teacher provided clear prompt sheets and used praise and encouragement to motivate the students. They responded positively and produced some high-quality presentations. Teachers provide students with interesting case studies and sources of reference for their research. A feature of some lessons is the use of questions to challenge students to think things through for themselves. Group work is carefully planned to pair stronger and weaker students so that they can work together. In the office skills workshop students are supported well by teachers as they work independently on CLAIT modules.

75. In some lessons, however, teachers talk too much and fail to involve students sufficiently in discussing and analysing the information provided. In one lesson the students had no access to

computers and all the practical work had to be done outside of the lesson. In another, the teacher was slow to ensure that the students focused on the task and so instead they spent too much time on Internet research. Adult students on computer literacy courses work independently through a range of booklets at a pace and time to suit their needs. However, workbooks in the ICT centres contain many errors causing confusion for students and some loss of confidence. In IT workshop sessions, teachers provide support in response to students' requests. At busy periods, however, students have to wait for attention and time is then wasted as students try to resolve problems on their own.

76. Resources for ICT are satisfactory. The college has recently upgraded the computers in two rooms and data projectors are available for teachers to use. Students also have access to computers in the learning resource centres. Most of those who teach on full-time courses have teaching qualifications and many have updated their ICT skills recently. Technicians who support adult learners have City & Guilds and ECDL qualifications.

77. Internal verification is thorough and assessment is rigorous. All students receive an assignment schedule at the start of their course. Assignment briefs are clear and provide opportunities for differentiation through helpful guidance on grading. Assignments are posted on the intranet for students to access. Adult students have their progress regularly reviewed and recorded by their teachers. The monitoring of students' progress on level 3 full-time courses is, however, weak. For example, some teachers provide feedback on marked work that is too brief with little or no guidance on how to improve, and some are slow to return marked work. Others do not always set students targets or encourage them to achieve them. At the time of the inspection, therefore, several students at level 3 were behind with their assignments. The on-line progress tracking system is helpful, but not always up-to-date.

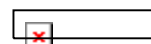
78. Enrolments on full-time and part-time courses have declined. The college has introduced level 1 and 4 courses to improve opportunities for progression. Students on level 1 and 2 courses are taught the key skills of communications and numeracy discretely, but many find that this fails to engage their interest. Key skills are integrated with the vocational units for level 3 students. A 93% pass rate has been achieved by students using a recently introduced on-line test for IT key skills. This compares very favourably with the 4% pass rate in 2003.

79. Students receive good initial advice and guidance and are aware of the student support services in the college. Full-time students and some part-time students take an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs. Additional learning support is provided when needed. Tutorial support for students is good. A few students benefit from the support of a learning mentor.

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

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Challenging targets are set for retention and achievement for each full-time course. Course teams meet regularly to review students' progress and share teaching resources. A mentor system is in place to support new teachers. Staff development has included training in equality of opportunity. Course self-assessment reports take account of student feedback and are reviewed regularly, but are brief and insufficiently self-critical. The self-assessment report did not identify the good retention rates and the poor pass rates.

### **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

### **Strengths**

- high retention and pass rates on beauty therapy NVQ level 2 and the diploma in anatomy and physiology
- good standard of students' practical work
- good teaching
- good individual support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention and pass rates in work-based learning
- poor arrangements for key skills in hairdressing
- late assessments in beauty therapy NVQ
- some inappropriate teaching accommodation
- ineffective target-setting at reviews in work-based learning.

### **Scope of provision**

81. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy and holistic therapies. Part-time courses include manicure and artificial nails, body massage, Indian head massage, reflexology, and anatomy and physiology. At the time of the inspection, there were 25 students aged 16 to 18 and 55 adults on full-time courses, and 23 students aged 16 to 18 and 79 adults on part-time courses. There were 19 learners on modern apprenticeship programmes, mostly at foundation level. Courses are also provided for school pupils aged 14 to 16.

### **Achievement and standards**

82. Retention and pass rates are high on the beauty therapy NVQ level 2 and the diploma in

anatomy and physiology. There are, however, low retention and completion rates in work-based learning. Of the ten advanced modern apprentices to enter training since 2000, only one is still in learning and there have been no framework completions. On the foundation modern apprenticeship, the rate of framework completion for 2001 is 14%. Of the 17 who started in 2002, 3 apprentices have completed and 7 are still in learning. The NVQ pass rate for work-based learners in 2001 was 33%. There are low key skills achievements.

83. Students acquire good practical skills. For example, hairdressing students confidently use a range of techniques in hair colouring, and beauty therapy students demonstrate a high level of professionalism in client care. Students gain sound background knowledge that they relate to practical applications. Most work-based learners carry out a range of hairdressing techniques on clients in their salons, however, there is some slow unit completion. For example, some learners are undertaking colouring and cutting but have not completed the basic shampooing unit and there are others in the second year of the programme with very few completed units.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2001 to 2003***

| Qualification                 | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| NVQ hairdressing (one year)   | 2     | No. of starts    | 39   | 49   | 48   |
|                               |       | % retention      | 23   | 35   | 40   |
|                               |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 94   | 100  |
| NVQ beauty therapy (one year) | 2     | No. of starts    | 9    | 7    | 11   |
|                               |       | % retention      | 67   | 29   | 91   |
|                               |       | % pass rate      | 50   | 100  | 90   |
| Diploma in advanced nail      | 2     | No. of starts    | *    | 14   | 17   |
|                               |       | % retention      |      | 71   | 94   |
|                               |       | % pass rate      |      | 90   | 75   |
| Indian head massage           | 2     | No. of starts    | *    | 15   | 20   |
|                               |       | % retention      |      | 93   | 85   |
|                               |       | % pass rate      |      | 100  | 76   |
| Anatomy and physiology        | 3     | No. of starts    | 29   | 20   | 34   |
|                               |       | % retention      | 96   | 95   | 88   |
|                               |       | % pass rate      | 92   | 95   | 87   |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not offered

***Quality of education and training***

84. The majority of teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory. Good teaching in both hairdressing and beauty therapy effectively meets the individual needs of students. Lessons are well planned and the objectives are shared with students. Teachers are careful to ensure that students of differing abilities are sufficiently challenged by the lesson and teaching methods take account of the different learning styles of the students. In one beauty therapy lesson, students found a colourful audio data projector presentation to be very motivating.

85. There are poor arrangements for the teaching and assessment of key skills in hairdressing. Students' work has been interrupted by staff illness and staff leaving. The work produced is

fragmented and not always up to standard, resulting in some students feeling poorly motivated. Key skills units are not identified in the hairdressing assignment specifications or NVQ work. Some students and employers do not have a clear understanding of how evidence for key skills should be demonstrated.

86. Resources were identified as a weakness at the last inspection. Much has been done to rectify this. Specialist provision is now all located on the main site. A new hairdressing salon is of a commercial standard. However, there is still some inappropriate teaching accommodation. One hairdressing salon is small and unsuitably shaped for teaching theory and practical demonstrations. In beauty therapy, the new salons do not reflect commercial practice and are too small for some groups. Not all beauty therapy students can work on clients. There is no suitable classroom for beauty therapy students. Teachers regularly undertake professional development and most are either working towards or hold teacher qualifications. Work-based learners gain good experience through well-organised salon placements.

87. Too much assessment of students in beauty therapy NVQ occurs late in the course because students are unable to develop the necessary skills or work on clients early enough on their course. At the time of the last inspection, insufficient assessment in the workplace for work-based learners was identified as a weakness. Although a specialist work-based assessor has been recently appointed the weakness still remains. The learner's prior experience is not always acknowledged. Some learners arrive with considerable experience but they are not fast-tracked through the programme. Teachers do, however, provide constructive feedback and evaluation of the quality of their students' work.

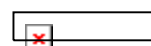
88. Links with industry, a significant weakness at the last inspection, have improved. The growth in provision meets the needs of the community. Students can undertake a good range of enrichment activities, and in 2003 they produced the first joint hair and beauty show. Timetables are planned to meet the needs of students who have family commitments.

89. Prospective students get comprehensive information about their courses and are interviewed by a student services adviser and a subject teacher. They also undertake a practical exercise. Additional learning support is well organised and effective. It is provided to individual students by a support teacher who attends practical lessons. Teachers provide good individual support for students and often arrive early for lessons with part-time students to give tutorial support. Work-based learners receive good pastoral support and are visited every six weeks by the apprentice advisor.

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

90. The management of the area is satisfactory. There has been an effective response to many of the weaknesses identified during the last inspection. There is sharing of good practice between hair and beauty teachers, peer observations, mentoring and regular staff meetings. Course reviews are satisfactory. However, there is a lack of understanding of the work-based learning review process within the curriculum area, and the documentation used does not inform the learner or employer of the targets set. Employers do not have a sufficient understanding of the modern apprenticeship framework requirements or of the roles of college staff in relation to work-based learning.

### **Health and social care**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass and retention rates on many adult courses
- good teaching on courses for adults
- strong and effective support for individual students
- well-managed counselling courses.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on full-time childcare courses
- slow progress towards completion on NVQ and full-time childcare courses
- inhibiting effect of small group sizes on learning on some courses
- weak course reviews on early years courses
- drab specialist accommodation with insufficient up-to-date resources
- unsatisfactory implementation of key skills.

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

91. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in health, social care, early years and counselling. Full-time courses in childcare and education at foundation, certificate and diploma level were introduced in September 2002, primarily for 16- to -18 year-olds. There are full-time and part-time courses for access to nursing and health care. The wide range of part-time provision for adults provided at different venues includes counselling courses at introduction, certificate and diploma levels. NVQs are offered at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education, care and play work, together with short courses in childminding practice and first aid. At the time of the inspection, there were 32 full-time students and 528 part-time students.



### **Achievement and standards**

92. Pass rates are high on most courses for adults. These include the access to nursing and health care, the diploma in pre-school practice and the certificate in counselling skills and theory. Most of these courses also have consistently high retention rates. For example, in the past two years, all of the students who enrolled on the certificate in counselling skills and theory course were retained. There is good progression from the access course to nurse training, supported by a strong link with a local school of health studies. However, retention rates on full-time childcare and education courses are low and declining. Few students achieve key skills qualifications on these courses.

93. The standard of students' assessed work is generally appropriate for the level of their course. Students' work on access and counselling courses is good and some demonstrates high levels of critical analysis. This skill is also evident in their contributions in lessons when dealing with competing theoretical perspectives. Counselling students develop good levels of personal awareness and a willingness to explore different approaches to professional practice. Foundation level students demonstrate good listening skills and show good insight into issues related to equal opportunities and discrimination. For some students, weaknesses in numeracy and literacy inhibit their progress.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 2001 to 2003**

| <b>Qualification</b>                         | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|--|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| First aid - paediatric                       | 1            | No. of starts           | 160         | 296         | 239         |
|  |              | % retention             | 94          | 99          | 98          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 74          | 95          | 98          |
| Certificate in counselling skills            | 2            | No. of starts           | 27          | 25          | 11          |
|  |              | % retention             | 96          | 88          | 100         |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 85          | 100         | 100         |
| Diploma in pre-school practice               | 3            | No. of starts           | 12          | 36          | 38          |
|  |              | % retention             | 100         | 92          | 97          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 100         | 100         |
| Access to nursing and health care            | 3            | No. of starts           | 16          | 10          | 13          |
|  |              | % retention             | 56          | 50          | 85          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 100         | 100         |
| National diploma in early years              | 3            | No. of starts           | 12          | 15          | 20          |
|  |              | % retention             | 75          | 67          | 60          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 30          | 50          |
| Certificate in counselling skills and theory | 3            | No. of starts           | 15          | 21          | 21          |
|  |              | % retention             | 73          | 100         | 100         |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 100         | 100         |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

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

94. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and students make good progress in almost two-thirds of lessons. Teaching and learning on adult courses are generally good or better. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives. Teachers inspire and challenge students to confront complex theoretical issues and their attendant ramifications for practice. They also encourage

students to take responsibility for their own learning. In a counselling lesson, students chose to examine their own main hindering forces as a way of exploring how to identify and manage these in clients. The intensity and depth of their self-revelation and ability to translate learning about themselves into factors affecting the counselling relationship demonstrated a level of attainment above normal expectations. The teacher skilfully and sensitively confronted students on the inappropriate nature of some of their responses and enabled learning objectives to be achieved.

95. On some courses there are low numbers of students. This limits the opportunities to develop group skills and makes it difficult to draw upon an adequate range of students' personal and practical experience in a vocational setting. In some lessons the content is insufficiently demanding. One class of second year students was engaged in activities more appropriate for the first year. The implementation of key skills is unsatisfactory. Students consider them to be irrelevant and unnecessary extra work. There is no coherent view of how to integrate them into the mainstream content of the courses.

96. Specialist accommodation for counselling and early years is drab and inadequately reflects the environments of the professions and vocations to which students are aspiring. There are few displays of students' work and few indicators of students' practical and presentation skills. There are insufficient up-to-date resources to help learning. The college is late in acquiring virtual babies and some equipment for measuring blood pressure is inoperable. Teachers have appropriate professional qualifications and most have recent professional experience. There are good opportunities for staff to gain teaching qualifications and to keep professional knowledge and skills up-to-date. Library resources are adequate.

97. Assessment is generally fair and accurate and internal verification is sound. Feedback to students on their work is generally detailed and mostly includes how they might improve to gain higher grades. Return of work is sometimes unduly delayed. Standardisation activities for all NVQ assessors are having a positive effect.

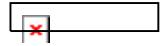
98. There is a good range of part-time provision, with flexible patterns of attendance. This meets local community needs and attracts some who would not normally participate in FE. Recruitment to full-time courses is low. The college has developed effective working partnerships with local employers and provides good opportunities for full-time students to become involved in voluntary work and charity activities. The access course arranges work experience in areas not normally available to students.

99. Support for individual students is strong and effective. Teachers have a good understanding of individual student's support needs. Formal reviews lead to action planning and identification of areas for improvement. Regular tutorials are held with both full-time and part-time students, who appreciate the wide range of sources of help available to them. These include learning mentors, basic skills and additional learning support, financial support, and personal support. The learning agreement for NVQ students now includes a commitment from the employer to support students through their programme.

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

100. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers are positive about the organisational changes and communicate well with each other. Effective action has been taken to improve assessment practice on NVQ and full-time childcare courses. Counselling courses are well managed. Regular meetings make effective use of the range of professional expertise to maintain a coherent programme. Outcomes are consistently good. Annual course reviews on early years courses are weak. Many are incomplete and self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous. Action points are unclear about the areas to be addressed and target setting is not well established. Teachers are aware of equal opportunity issues and diversity. Students have an appropriate understanding and regularly draw attention to them in lessons. However, visual displays relating to equality and diversity are minimal.

## Visual and performing arts



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

### ***Strengths***

- good standard of students' work
  
- high pass rates on most courses
  
- much good teaching
  
- good assessment practice
  
- good individual support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some poor accommodation for art courses
  
- narrow range of fine art courses
  
- small class sizes inhibit learning.

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

101. The college provides courses in the visual arts mainly at levels 2 and 3. The main full-time courses are national diplomas in photography, graphic design and music technology and the foundation diploma. There are level 2 and 3 part-time courses in embroidery, ceramics, life drawing and photography. Other courses include AS-level critical studies, levels 1 to 3 Regent Academy, City and Guilds interior design and GCSE art and design photography. At the time of the inspection, there were 165 students enrolled on full-time and part-time courses in art and music technology. Most students are aged 19 or over.

### **Achievement and standards**

102. Most students who enrol on courses are successful. There are high pass rates on most courses. In 2002/03 there were excellent pass rates on both the City and Guilds and the national diploma in design (photography) courses. There are also high pass rates on the City and Guilds courses in interior design at level 1 and in creative skills at level 2.

103. Students' work is imaginative and of a high standard. Students make good progress in acquiring technical skills and they develop the ability critically to evaluate their work and that of others. Demanding learning goals and targets are achieved, and students are increasingly able to work independently. Students demonstrate originality when initiating their own projects and confidently discuss their intentions and approaches. They successfully undertake ambitious projects. For example, an embroidery student made a very large book about Peterborough Cathedral. Each page involved the use of different intricate techniques. Ceramics students have made large sculptures of organic forms. Students are successful in national competitions. For example, three embroidery students have had their work displayed in an exhibition in Peterborough, a photography student has won a City and Guilds medal for excellence and three photography students had work for a competition published in a national newspaper.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2001 to 2003**

| <b>Qualification</b>                                 | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|--|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| City and Guilds 7470 photography                     | 1            | No. of starts           | 3           | 7           | 20          |
|  |              | % retention             | 100         | 86          | 80          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 17          | 94          |
| City and Guilds introduction to home interior design | 1            | No. of starts           | 22          | 11          | 21          |
|  |              | % retention             | 59          | 55          | 67          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 100         | 100         |
| City and Guilds 7802 creative skills (life drawing)  | 2            | No. of starts           | 12          | 15          | 12          |
|  |              | % retention             | 67          | 93          | 75          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 77          | 89          |
| National diploma design (photography)                | 3            | No. of starts           | 9           | 7           | 13          |
|  |              | % retention             | 56          | 43          | 69          |
|  |              | % pass rate             | 100         | 100         | 100         |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

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

104. There is much good teaching. Many teachers use their current industrial experience to ensure students are aware of professional standards. For example, the interior design teacher is a partner in an architectural practice and refers to contemporary ideas and trends. Students are inspired by skilful demonstrations by knowledgeable teachers. Effective use is made of part-time teachers to help broaden the experience of students. For instance, the life-drawing tutor is an illustrator, and a music tutor writes music professionally. Students are encouraged to practise techniques that challenge and stretch them. Good use is made of completed work to develop critical thinking, and, by comparing, to evaluate their own work and the work of others. Students are encouraged to use unusual techniques to produce unconventional results. For example, in embroidery, soldering irons were used to burn nappy liners onto fabric to create exciting textural effects, which were then incorporated into complex embroidered panels. Students make good progress during their course. Sketchbooks are well presented and full of creative ideas.

105. Half of the lessons observed had seven, or fewer, students present. The small group size had an inhibiting effect on the quality of teaching and learning. The creative stimulus that can result from lively discussion was absent in these lessons.

106. Overall, resources are satisfactory. Some resources are of a high standard but some equipment is dated and the accommodation is poorly decorated. The art and design area contains four specialist rooms for different art activities. Two of these are base rooms for the full-time courses. The area also uses three temporary classrooms for life drawing, interior design and embroidery. These rooms are not conducive to effective teaching and learning as there is noise intrusion from adjacent rooms. There are satisfactory computer and music technology resources. The ceramics studio and the photography rooms are well equipped. A lift has recently been installed to provide wheelchair access to the first floor of the photography area.

107. Assessment practices are good. Assessment is well planned and monitored. Students complete weekly charts to record their progress and incorporate planning and research activities. They know their learning goals and outcomes, and receive clear written feedback to help them progress. The assignments on national diploma courses are well written with detailed assessment criteria for different grades. On other courses, students are well informed of assessment techniques and monitoring methods. Teachers carefully complete monitoring sheets to ensure students have completed all of their tasks and to track their progress in assignments.

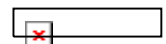
108. The range of courses, particularly in fine art, is narrow. There are no fine art courses at levels 1 and 2, and so there is no internal progression route into level 3. There are no media or performing arts courses. There are low numbers on the foundation studies course. Most students are aged 19 or over. A music school runs on college premises each Saturday. Established in 1966, it now has over 350 learners. There are two orchestras, four bands and eight ensembles as well as individual learners. It is funded mainly by tuition fees with contributions from the LSC and the local education authority. Students can sit examinations at the college as it is an accredited centre.

109. Support for individual students is good. Many adult students are returning to education, and some have personal problems. They appreciate the good support provided. In tutorials, teachers are sensitive to the different needs of students. For example, one student with additional needs receives extra practical help from the art technician to ensure that her studies are not adversely affected. A student with family problems is studying by distance learning until the difficulties are resolved and she can return to her studies.

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

110. Leadership and management of the area are good. Teachers are well supported by their line manager. Regular meetings take place in which teachers focus on quality assurance. Targets are set and staff identified to carry out actions. If part-time teachers cannot attend meetings they are contacted personally in order to be informed of any points raised or actions needed. Observation of teaching and learning occurs regularly and any necessary actions that have been identified in order to support teachers are followed up. Good practice is shared, and all teachers follow the procedures that have been agreed in meetings. Teachers from all courses work well together.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on the access to HE and the wider key skills programme.

- very good teaching, learning and attainment.
- good and innovative management of the curriculum area
- good support for individual learners.

**Weaknesses**

- poor retention and pass rates in AS-level psychology
- inadequate resources in the classrooms and laboratories.

**Scope of provision**

111. The college offers part-time courses in GCSE citizenship, AS-level sociology and psychology and full-time and part-time access to HE courses. A large number of students who are on community punishment orders study the wider key skills where they are undertaking their community activity. The venues include Cambridge, Peterborough, Huntingdon and St Neots. Much of this provision is provided at weekends. At the time of the inspection, there were 65 part-time and 28 full-time students studying at Huntingdon. Nearly 280 students were studying the wider key skills in the community. Most students were aged 19 or over.

**Achievement and standards**

112. Pass rates on the access courses are high for both part-time and full-time students. The retention rate on the one-year course was low in 2002/03. However, at the time of the inspection the attendance rate was good and fewer students had withdrawn from the course than in the previous year. Pass and retention rates on the wider key skills programme are high. Retention rates for AS-level subjects are well below the national averages.

113. Access students produce work of high quality. They demonstrate considerable progress since the start of their course. The portfolios produced by students taking the wider key skills contain examples of good and reflective work, in many cases well beyond the minimum requirements for the qualification.

**A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2001 to 2003**

| Qualification                  | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| Key skills working with others | 1     | No. of starts    | *    | 102  | 136  |
|                                |       | % retention      |      | 87   | 84   |

|                                |   |               |     |     |     |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
|                                |   | % pass rate   |     | 96  | 98  |
| Key skills working with others | 2 | No. of starts | *   | 83  | 129 |
|                                |   | % retention   |     | 92  | 88  |
|                                |   | % pass rate   |     | 92  | 95  |
| AS-level psychology            | 3 | No. of starts | *   | 21  | 28  |
|                                |   | % retention   |     | 57  | 64  |
|                                |   | % pass rate   |     | 67  | 39  |
| Access to HE (one year)        | 3 | No. of starts | 30  | 36  | 27  |
|                                |   | % retention   | 77  | 75  | 60  |
|                                |   | % pass rate   | 100 | 93  | 94  |
| Access to HE (two year)        | 3 | No. of starts | 13  | 10  | 13  |
|                                |   | % retention   | 54  | 50  | 71  |
|                                |   | % pass rate   | 86  | 100 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\* course not running

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

114. Teaching, learning and attainment are very good. The teaching is well planned. There is an emphasis on student participation. In a psychology lesson, groups of students gave presentations covering IQ and the nature/nurture debate. These presentations included role-play, simulations and joke telling. One class incorporated into their presentation an exercise in Urdu, the first language of one of the students, to illustrate the role of nurture. All of the teachers display a sense of enthusiasm for their subject, which is reciprocated by the students. In analysing themes in *Wuthering Heights*, the teacher correctly assumed that all the students had not only read the text but had annotated it and could quote examples of abstract concepts.

115. In the few less successful lessons the teachers asked questions of the class rather than nominated individuals. Teachers did not take the opportunity to check learning and to ensure that students of differing abilities were appropriately challenged throughout the lesson. This disadvantaged the less confident students. Some teachers referred to the Internet, but apart from using it to show the components of an electron microscope to a small group clustered around a computer screen, they made little practical use of it for learning. Data projectors were not used in the lessons observed.

116. Teachers know their subjects well and are well qualified. Lessons were adversely affected by the lack of resources and by the poor quality of the equipment that was available. Overhead transparencies were projected onto white boards too small to accommodate the image.

117. The quality of feedback to students is suitably thorough and in some cases it is typed for clarity. Assessment on the wider key skills project uses some very good, well-organised paperwork that enhances the professionalism and credibility of the provision.

118. The wide range of subjects offered on the access course gives students good opportunities to progress to university. There are strong links with local universities and HE institutions. Progression to HE is good, including the option to remain at the college to take the first two years of a history and literature degree under a franchise arrangement with a local university. A popular pre-access course runs in June prior to the start of the access course in September. The wider key skills project is very successful at bringing an accredited course to a range of people, for many of whom this represents

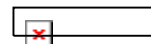
their first qualification. GCSE citizenship is taught as part of a programme for adults, which also includes GCSE mathematics and GCSE English.

119. Students receive good individual support and guidance. Teachers are generous with their time and formal and informal support is valued by the students. There is a well-regarded nursery on site for students' children. Financial support is provided for students who need it. Initial assessment leads to students being offered appropriate support. The wider key skills students are supported by well-qualified and highly committed tutors. Students use very well designed portfolios and mechanisms have been devised to make it possible for learners with literacy and numeracy difficulties to complete and achieve the qualification.

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

120. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are well led and supported and they are encouraged to contribute to the development of the area. Teamwork is good. The wider key skills project is well organised. Careful consideration is given through course review to identify areas for improvement and innovation.

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



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

### ***Strengths***

- good development of skills in preparation for employment
- good relationships with partner organisations
- good quality resources and accommodation.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient differentiation within lessons
- ineffective initial assessment for some students
- poor use of individual learning plans in some lessons.



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

121. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is provided with partners in a range of off-site and community locations. These partners include charitable organisations that have not-for-profit trading companies, which offer sheltered and supportive work opportunities for disabled and disadvantaged individuals. College staff are employed to work in the social partner settings. The range of accreditation includes skills for working life, life skills, literacy and numeracy accreditation at entry level, and NVQ level 1 in performing manufacturing operations. At the time of inspection, there were 49 full-time students and 36 part-time students in the college and 115 part-time students with nine partners compared with 259 students in 2001. The majority of learners are adults.

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

122. Due to changes to qualifications and programmes there are insufficient data for a three-year comparison of students' achievements. In 2002/03, 31% of students achieved external accreditation and 92% gained college certification. Some 35 students gained entry-level qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Students attend regularly and are punctual. Retention rates are high on most courses, at around 80%. In 2002/03, progression to other college courses was low, at 3%, with just over half of all students continuing their programme of study. Over 40% of students progressed to employment, training or sheltered employment.

123. Students develop good practical skills in preparation for employment and their practical work is of a good standard. The wide range of community-based provision for adults meets the needs of students from isolated and socially excluded groups, many of whom progress to sheltered employment within partner firms. In one partner organisation, students' activities include building a sports car and running a café. Other students work in a print finishing company using industrial equipment. They know the required quality standards and reject items that are poorly finished. In some partner firms, students are employed for part of the working week under a sheltered employment scheme.

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

124. Most lessons are at least satisfactory, but the proportion of lessons judged to be good or better is low and some lessons were unsatisfactory. The best lessons are well planned, and lively. Teachers choose appropriate day-to-day activities that enable students to learn by gaining hands-on experience. Students work effectively with each other and develop their communication, literacy, numeracy and team-working skills. For example, in a numeracy session, the main activity was based around a shopping trip. Using a selection of familiar products, students learnt how to make price comparisons and gained an understanding of the importance of weights and measures when doing this. In this lesson, the activities were practical and demanding, and there was good individual instruction in the use of equipment.

125. Other lessons are less well planned. Many teachers do not ensure that the activities and resources are appropriate for students' individual needs, or promote independence. Students then lose interest and do not enjoy learning. In some lessons students are given inappropriate tasks and, despite high levels of support, they learn little. Some literacy and numeracy lessons are not related to vocational or daily living skills. There is an over-reliance on paper-based activity especially for non-readers. Teachers seek to overcome this difficulty by using inappropriate stimuli for the age of the students. They frequently celebrate achievement by urging rounds of applause. However, the more able students are not challenged sufficiently and they do not respond to teachers or are reluctant to participate in class activities. Some teachers have difficulty addressing challenging behaviour or coping with adult students. For example, in one lesson the teacher spoke to an adult student using language that was more appropriate for a young child. Following this, the student was reluctant to return to the task in hand.

126. Many teachers have significant experience of working with students with disabilities in a training

environment, but many have no formal qualifications. Resources and accommodation are good. Teaching accommodation is new, purpose built and of good quality, with access to appropriate resources. This is mainly off site, and in specialist accommodation for people with learning difficulties. There is limited access to specialist vocational facilities on the main college site. Where partner firms are involved in manufacturing, students use industrial standard equipment in well-equipped workshops. Good use is made of the local gymnasium, which is equipped to a high standard. IT resources are available at all centres with adaptive software or hardware.

127. Initial assessment is ineffective for some students. Although the arrangements are comprehensive and address literacy, numeracy, life, social and work skills at entry and pre-entry stages, the assessment method is inappropriate for some learners. There are insufficient links between the initial assessment and the national literacy and numeracy standards, especially in centres in the community. The initial assessment arrangements are designed to cover all students, but are inconsistently implemented by some partners. The process is lengthy and the links to the individual learning plans are not sufficiently clear.

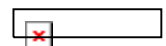
128. There is poor use of individual learning plans. Some targets do not reflect the student's learning needs sufficiently. Others are sometimes very general, such as 'to develop work skills' or 'to learn to work together'. The cumulative assessment of students' progress, recorded in their files, is often a record of what class activities have taken place rather than what has been learned. The learning plans are not effectively used to plan lessons. A significant number of lesson plans concentrate on learners' behaviour rather than on learning and achievement.

129. There is a high level of support for students. In most areas, support staff work closely with teachers and are aware of the students' needs. In some lessons, however, poor management of the learning support assistants leads to an over-provision of support. For example, learning assistants sometimes simply carry out tasks that the students could have completed. In one lesson, the support assistant answered on behalf of the student without the student having the opportunity to respond. In another lesson, learning assistants undertook the practical tasks instead of the students. Links with partner agencies enhance the support for students. Some students can access supportive and sheltered housing facilities and others can progress to sheltered employment schemes.

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

130. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. The college has effective links with a range of charities and firms with the main aim of ensuring students can progress to employment. New systems of planning and monitoring are in place, but some have yet to be adopted by all its partners or are implemented inconsistently. Staff who work in the community-based provision do not have enough opportunities to meet and share good practice. The quality and content of schemes of work and lesson plans vary too much. Some teachers make good use of individual target setting with their students, but this good practice is not shared across the curriculum area.

### **Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good range of provision
  
- good co-ordination of additional learning support.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient progress by a significant number of students
  
- inadequate arrangements to meet individual learning needs
  
- inappropriate learning materials in some lessons.

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

131. The college provides an appropriate range of courses in basic skills and ESOL, at its two main sites and at community-based venues. At the time of the inspection, there were 99 students enrolled on part-time literacy and numeracy courses, 191 students on ESOL courses and a further 180 students receiving additional learning support.

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

132. Pass rates are at, or just above, the national average in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. However, in key skills, pass rates are poor, partly because students are slow to submit their portfolios for assessment. Due to the changes in the provision and qualification outcomes, most courses have not been offered over a three-year period. Data are therefore insufficient for an achievement table to be included in this report.

133. A significant number of students make insufficient progress. Many students do not gain new skills during their courses. Instead, the skills that they arrive with are often merely reinforced so that little value is added. For example, in a literacy and numeracy support session a student completed a worksheet on fractions, even though he had previously accomplished a similar task. Most students' work is satisfactory, although the content and presentation of a minority are poor. During the inspection, students' attendance was low, at 70%.

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

134. Most teachers carefully plan and prepare their lessons, although they do not always take account of individual learning needs, particularly in whole class sessions. There is some very good teaching. In a level 2 literacy lesson, sherbet lemon drops were imaginatively used to stimulate persuasive descriptive writing about taste and texture. In a numeracy lesson, students presented data on recycling surveys they had conducted amongst friends and family. They were highly motivated and fully engaged in discussing and presenting their findings.

135. A high proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory. In these lessons teachers do not ensure that the individual learning needs of their students are appropriately addressed. In a key skills lesson the more able students found the application of number tasks too easy, while the least able students did not feel confident enough to join in a group game. Inappropriate learning materials are used in some lessons. These include materials that are either not suitable for adults, not relevant to the vocational interests of the students, or not related to their everyday lives. Unimaginative worksheets sometimes cover skills the students have already acquired. In a key skills lesson, students who had already achieved pass grades in GCSE mathematics were taking a level 1 numeracy qualification. In an ESOL lesson the teacher used words in a lecture on healthy eating that were well beyond the

students' vocabulary. The students were not given opportunities to practise basic speaking or writing skills and the majority sat silently and looked puzzled and confused. Very few teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) in their lessons.

136. Resources are satisfactory. The resources and classrooms in the basic skills suite at the main site are now good. Each room has independent learning technology resources and Internet access. There is also a large, bright and well-resourced basic skills room at the St Neots site. A good range of literacy, numeracy and ESOL resource packs have been purchased since the last inspection and these are readily available to both staff and students. Numeracy resources also include measuring equipment and games. However, library books are outdated and insufficient in quantity. There are very few spelling books, whilst those in stock are often more theoretical than practical.

137. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to meet the needs of individual students. Each student is given a detailed individual learning plan with short-term and long-term targets linked to national curriculum outcomes. Although the standard of these individual learning plans has improved since the last inspection, their use within courses is not yet fully effective. Students often write lines of "ok, ok, ok" or similar repetitive wording on the plan to express their view, particularly in the case of the weekly record proforma. Teachers make insufficient use of the information available to plan learning and assessments. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. In some lessons, imaginative assignments are set and thoroughly marked. However, in other lessons, the quality of students' work is not monitored and the teacher does not give enough feedback.

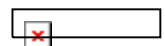
138. The college offers a good range of part-time courses from pre-entry to level 2 at community-based venues including schools and health centres. For example, two courses on how to make appointments and talk to the doctor were held at a health centre with the centre's staff involved. The college works closely with representatives of minority ethnic groups. Students on ESOL women-only groups at community venues have progressed to ESOL classes at the college. Key skills are taught wherever possible as part of the student's main course of study. The college also offers additional support for students on vocational courses. The proportion of local residents who have poor basic skills is very similar to the national average.

139. Advice and guidance is thorough and appropriate. Initial assessment is good. Additional learning support is provided for those students who need it. For example, students diagnosed as dyslexic receive support both on course and in individual sessions. Unauthorised absences are appropriately followed up by telephone or letter. Through partnerships and liaison with other agencies an increasing numbers of students are receiving advice and guidance.

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

140. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Since the last inspection a new learning director has been appointed, a dedicated basic skills suite has been created and the quality of learning plans and target setting have improved. The provision of additional learning support across seven vocational areas is well managed. There are regular meetings between the teachers who provide the support, those who teach key skills and those who teach on vocational courses to ensure students get the support they need. Although the college aims to ensure that by August 2004 all newly appointed teachers will have received specialist training, insufficient attention is paid to the quality of classroom practice. Key skills' co-ordination has improved, but the programmes are insufficiently linked to the students' vocational courses and they are often pitched at an inappropriate level.

## **Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03**

| Level        | 16-18 %    | 19+ %      |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1            | 38         | 26         |
| 2            | 39         | 15         |
| 3            | 15         | 12         |
| 4/5          | 0          | 1          |
| Other        | 8          | 46         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2002/03**

| Curriculum area                                      | 16-18<br>No. | 19+<br>No.   | Total<br>Enrolments (%) |
|--|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Science and mathematics                              | 236          | 164          | 5                       |
| Land-based provision                                 | 23           | 271          | 4                       |
| Construction   | 1            | 19           | 0                       |
| Engineering, technology and manufacture              | 146          | 178          | 4                       |
| Business administration, management and professional | 115          | 779          | 12                      |
| Information and communication technology             | 203          | 1,408        | 21                      |
| Retailing, customer service and transportation       | 0            | 21           | 0                       |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel              | 98           | 214          | 4                       |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy                      | 66           | 116          | 2                       |
| Health, social care and public services              | 106          | 1,074        | 15                      |
| Visual and performing arts and media                 | 98           | 342          | 6                       |
| Humanities   | 59           | 219          | 5                       |
| English, languages and communication                 | 125          | 227          | 5                       |
| Foundation programmes                                | 267          | 410          | 9                       |
| Unknown  | 24           | 713          | 8                       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1,567</b> | <b>6,155</b> | <b>100</b>              |

Source: provided by the college in 2004

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

| Level (Long Courses) | Retention and pass rate      | Completion year |      |      |      |      |      |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                      |                              | 16-18           |      |      | 19+  |      |      |
|                      |                              | 2001            | 2002 | 2003 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
| <b>1</b>             | Starters excluding transfers | 282             | 258  | 237  | 771  | 1218 | 1341 |
|                      | Retention rate %             | 70              | 61   | 65   | 72   | 70   | 53   |
|                      | National average %           | 75              | 76   | *    | 69   | 70   | *    |
|                      | Pass rate %                  | 58              | 66   | 74   | 57   | 67   | 68   |
|                      | National average %           | 69              | 71   | *    | 68   | 71   | *    |
| <b>2</b>             | Starters excluding transfers | 481             | 405  | 293  | 958  | 916  | 682  |
|                      | Retention rate %             | 69              | 65   | 75   | 77   | 78   | 78   |
|                      | National average %           | 70              | 72   | *    | 68   | 68   | *    |
|                      | Pass rate %                  | 66              | 69   | 68   | 77   | 78   | 77   |
|                      | National average %           | 69              | 71   | *    | 68   | 72   | *    |
| <b>3</b>             | Starters excluding transfers | 212             | 265  | 224  | 723  | 798  | 635  |
|                      | Retention rate %             | 62              | 58   | 60   | 69   | 69   | 74   |
|                      | National average %           | 71              | 77   | *    | 68   | 70   | *    |
|                      | Pass rate %                  | 56              | 62   | 75   | 75   | 68   | 69   |
|                      | National average %           | 77              | 79   | *    | 69   | 72   | *    |
| <b>4/5</b>           | Starters excluding transfers | **              | *    | *    | 39   | 39   | 75   |
|                      | Retention rate %             | **              | **   | **   | 90   | 74   | 87   |
|                      | National average %           | *               | *    | *    | 67   | 67   | *    |
|                      | Pass rate %                  | **              | **   | **   | 71   | 66   | 75   |
|                      | National average %           | *               | *    | *    | 55   | 56   | *    |

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 2000/2001 to 2001/02: College ISR; rates for 2002/2003.

\* data unavailable

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

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

| Courses                | Teaching judged to be: |                |                          | No of sessions observed |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                        | Good or better %       | Satisfactory % | Less than satisfactory % |                         |
| Level 3 (advanced)     | 70                     | 28             | 2                        | 50                      |
| Level 2 (intermediate) | 71                     | 29             | 0                        | 38                      |
| Level 1 (foundation)   | 69                     | 31             | 2                        | 16                      |
| Other sessions         | 37                     | 45             | 18                       | 38                      |
| <b>Totals</b>          | <b>61</b>              | <b>33</b>      | <b>6</b>                 | <b>142</b>              |

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