



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



New College Swindon

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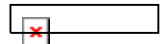
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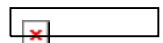
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Basic information about the college



Name of college:	New College Swindon
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Graham Taylor
Address of college:	New College Drive Swindon SN3 1AH
Telephone number:	01793 611470
Fax number:	01793 488987
Chair of governors:	David Rowlands
Unique reference number:	130851
Name of reporting inspector:	Annella Mochan HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 April 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



New College Swindon was established as a general further education (FE) college in 1983. It is located to the south east of Swindon in a new purpose-built campus which was completed in January 2003. The college also operates from two learning centres at Pinehurst and Moredon, in the north of Swindon and a business services unit in west Swindon.

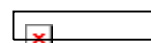
Student numbers have increased significantly over the last four years. The number of students aged 16 to 18 grew by about 61% between 2001 and 2004. Over the same period, the number of adult students almost doubled. In 2003/04, there were 16,508 students. Of these students, 2,607 were aged 16 to 18 and 13,901 were aged 19 and over. Of the 1,897 full-time students, 95% were aged 16 to 18. Nearly all adult students were on part-time courses. About 7% of students were from minority ethnic groups. Some 55% were female and 45% male.

In 2004, the proportion of pupils in Swindon schools achieving five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grades A* to C was 46.4% against a national average of 53.7%. Within the Swindon area, there is another general FE college and two schools with sixth forms. There is a tertiary college in Cirencester.

The college offers provision in 10 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) areas of learning. The college does not offer construction, engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy. It offers a very small amount of land-based provision.. In 2003/04, the highest numbers of enrolments for students aged 16 to 18 were on humanities, science and mathematics and visual and performing arts and media. For adult students, the highest numbers of enrolments were on health and social care and public services, leisure, sports and travel and foundation programmes. In April 2004, the college was designated as a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in information and communications technology (ICT) for business.

The college's mission is to provide quality education, training and services which 'meet customers' needs, encourage individuals to realise their full potential, support lifelong learning, and help young people, the community and business to prosper'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be outstanding in science and mathematics. The areas of business, ICT, visual and performing arts and media, social sciences, English, and literacy and numeracy were judged to be good. Provision in modern foreign languages was judged to be satisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3

- consistently good teaching and learning

- good accommodation and learning resources

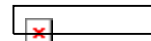
- effective partnerships and collaboration with schools, employers, and the community
- successful strategies to widen participation
- good support and guidance for students
- wide range of provision at level 3 and short courses for employers
- comprehensive consultation on strategic planning
- effective leadership and management
- good financial management and value for money.

What should be improved

- retention and pass rates on long courses for adult students
- key skills provision
- lesson observations
- teaching methods to extend and inspire students
- arrangements for identifying the numeracy support needs of students.

subjects and courses in the full report.

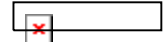
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

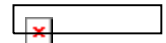
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Outstanding. Academic support is effective and pass rates are high. Teaching is innovative and exciting and students make effective use of ICT in lessons. Students benefit from well-equipped modern laboratories. There is a wide range of courses.
Business	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses, but low on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) economics. There is much good and lively teaching, although in a minority of lessons teaching is unimaginative. Academic and pastoral support are strong. The wide range of courses offers good progression routes.
Information and communications technology	Good. There is much good teaching and learning on advanced-level courses and the retention and pass rates are generally high. The wide range of courses is relevant to industry. Individual support for full-time students is good. In computer workshops, there is a narrow range of teaching and learning methods and students' progress is not monitored sufficiently.
Visual, performing arts and media	Good. There is much good and stimulating teaching and pass rates are high on most courses. The standard of practical work in dance, textiles and media is high. Accommodation and specialist resources are outstanding. In a minority of lessons, students' behaviour is poor and there is insufficient checking of students' learning.
Social sciences	Good. Retention and pass rates are high on courses for students aged 16 to 18, but low on distance learning courses. Teaching is well planned and organised. There is extensive academic and personal support and assessment and monitoring of students' progress are thorough. There is poor development of oral skills for students aged 16 to 18.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. The contributory grade for modern foreign languages is satisfactory . There is much good teaching and students have a high standard of oral skills in English and modern foreign languages. Pass rates are high on GCSE and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) English courses. Specialist resources are good. Pass rates are low in modern foreign languages and there is a narrow range of learning activities on GCSE modern foreign languages courses.
Literacy and numeracy	Good. Retention and pass rates are high. Teaching is well planned to meet individual learning needs and support for students is good. The wide range of provision is responsive to local needs. Attendance is poor in some lessons. There is insufficient assessment of the numeracy needs of students.

How well is the college led and managed?



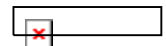
Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership is provided by the principal and senior managers. Communication is good. Governors and managers work closely to steer the college's development. Strategic planning is very good. Some aspects of the college's development plan are insufficiently precise. There is successful collaboration and partnerships with schools, employers, and the community. Student numbers have increased substantially and overall retention and pass rates have continued to improve. Students aged 16 to 18 on advanced courses are particularly successful. Too many adult students on long courses fail to complete their studies. Quality assurance arrangements are well established and generally effective. The self-assessment report overstates some of the college's strengths. The lesson observation procedures have overestimated the quality of teaching and learning. Curriculum management is mostly good. Teaching is consistently good. Financial management is good and the college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Through partnerships, the college has successfully widened participation. The range of courses has been extended in response to the needs of the local community and employers. The college has responded well to national initiatives such as employer training pilots and the Skills for Life agenda. The expanding programme of courses for school pupils is attracting increasing numbers. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Most college premises are accessible to those with mobility difficulties. There are clear policies on equality of opportunity and race equality. Equality and diversity are promoted well throughout the college. The college's response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) is good. The college fully complies with disability legislation and the requirements of race equality legislation. Student data are analysed by gender, ethnicity, age, disability and participation. The college's equal opportunities development plan does not have actions to resolve the underperformance of students from minority ethnic groups. Staff and governors receive leaflets on race equality and disability, but they have not received sufficient training on their responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) or the Disability Discrimination Act.

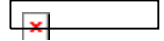
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. The college provides students with thorough and impartial pre-entry guidance and advice. Induction introduces students to the college effectively and helps most of them settle into their studies well. Not all students on full-time or substantial part-time courses receive an assessment of their numeracy needs. Tutorial support is good. Academic support is particularly effective. Students' attendance and progress are carefully monitored. Teachers provide much additional academic and pastoral support outside lessons. There is a high level of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Arrangements for childcare are good. Support on personal issues, welfare and finance is readily available. Guidance and

distance learning long courses leaving their courses early. Careers advice and guidance on progression to employment, further study, and higher education (HE) are good.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- good induction

- range of courses

- good teaching and support

- prompt feedback on marked work

- friendly and approachable staff

- students can have their say

- feel safe

- new buildings and facilities

- good library and availability of ICT

- choice of food in the college restaurant.

What they feel could be improved

- cramped and overcrowded building

- insufficient social space

- parking for cars and space for bicycles

- paying for withdrawals from the cash machine

- prices in the college restaurant and vending machines.

Other information

The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC 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

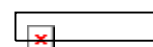
Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
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Teaching 16-18	72	24	4
19+ and WBL*	67	29	4
Learning 16-18	71	28	1
19+ and WBL*	71	25	4

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. The college offers a wide range of courses which can be studied full time or part time. Using summary data on retention and pass rates at a college-wide level, the key indicators show that the achievements of students aged 16 to 18 on advanced courses are particularly good. For the same age group, the pass rates for students on level 1 and level 2 courses are good, but the retention rates are below the national averages. The overall retention rates for students aged 19 and over on long courses at levels 1 to 3 are poor. The overall pass rate on long courses at level 1 is also poor. Pass rates on level 2 and level 3 courses are generally good.

2. Overall, retention and pass rates on key skills at levels 1 to 3 are very low. In 2003/04, only 9% of students enrolled on the three main key skills of application of number, ICT and communication successfully gained a full qualification. Many students do not value key skills and choose not to sit the external tests or complete their portfolios. In response to the low achievement of key skills, the college has recently revised its policy and plans to review the teaching and delivery models.

3. Students are well prepared for progression to further study or employment. In 2003/04, progression to HE for students who completed their studies was high at 83%. Levels of internal progression are generally good, with students progressing from foundation to intermediate and to advanced courses.

4. The overall attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was above the national average at 80%. It was highest, at 88% and 84%, on visual, performing arts and media, and science and mathematics courses, respectively. It was lowest on literacy and numeracy at 65%. The college monitors attendance closely and absences are followed up promptly.

16 to 18 year olds

5. In 2003/04, approximately 66% of qualifications taken at the college by students aged 16 to 18 were at level 3, 14% were studied at level 2 and 14% were at level 1. On level 3 courses, the overall retention and pass rates have been consistently well above the national averages since 2000/01. Retention and pass rates also rose in each year from 2001 to 2004. In 2003/04, both the retention rate and pass rate were 86%. On the measure of success rates, which is the proportion of enrolled students who achieve their qualification, the college is in the top 10% of general FE colleges. Data which compare students' examination results with their previous achievement at GCSE show that students achieve higher grades than expected in some AS-level and GCE A-level subjects. In mathematics, psychology, and accounting and finance students consistently achieve higher grades than those predicted.

6. Students on level 1 and level 2 long courses are less successful than those on level 3 programmes. The overall retention rate at level 1 has risen in the four years to 2004, but it still

remains below the national average. In contrast, in each of the last four years, the overall pass rate has risen substantially and is well above the national average. Since 2001/02, the retention rate has declined on level 2 courses and in 2003/04 it fell to 63% which is well below the national average. However, over the same period, there has been a significant improvement in the overall pass rate and in 2003/04 it was well above the national average at 87%. The overall retention rate on short courses is similar to the national average, but the pass rate is consistently well above.

Adult learners

7. In 2003/04, approximately 84% of students were adults. The overwhelming majority of these students were on short part-time courses. Since 2000/01, the overall retention and pass rates on short courses have been above the national average and show year-on-year improvement. Of the qualifications taken by adult students on long courses, 45% were at level 1 with 26% and 7% at level 2 and level 3, respectively. In 2003/04, there were 16,423 enrolments by adults on short courses.

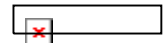
8. In 2002/03, the success rate on long courses at level 1, 2 and 3 placed the college in the bottom 10% of general FE colleges. Approximately 1,200 adult students were enrolled on GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level distance learning courses. A high proportion of these students failed to complete their courses. This adversely affected the overall retention and pass rates of adult students enrolled on long courses at level 2 and level 3. In 2003/04, about 600 adults enrolled on distance learning courses and in the current academic year there are about 300. The college plans to reduce this number further.

9. College data for 2003/04 show a significant rise in the retention rate at level 1 bringing it to just below the national average. The retention rate at level 2 shows no improvement and although at level 3 it has risen slightly, it remains low. College in-year retention data for 2004/05 indicate that the retention rate is rising. Between 2000/01 and 2003/04, the overall pass rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 were at or slightly above the national averages. In 2003/04, the pass rate fell by 12% at level 1 to well below the national average, at level 2 it remained stable and at level 3 it fell slightly, but remained above the national average.

10. Pass rates are high in literacy and numeracy on work-based programmes. The pass rates for students who study national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace are satisfactory. Achievement of the full apprenticeship framework is slightly above the national average, but it is still low. Since 2002, of the 51 students who have started an apprenticeship, some 40% have achieved the full framework.

11. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C of the report give more details about achievements and the standards reached on particular courses.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 100 lessons. Teaching was judged to be good or better in 71% of the lessons observed, satisfactory in 25% and unsatisfactory in 4%. This profile is significantly better than the national average for general FE and tertiary colleges. The grades awarded to learning were similar to those for teaching.

13. The standard of most teaching and learning is consistently high. There is much very good teaching in science and mathematics, business, and ICT. There are marked differences in the quality of teaching and learning by level of course. The best teaching and learning was at level 3 with 78% of lessons graded good or better. Teaching and learning at level 2 was less successful with 50% of lessons graded good or better and 43% satisfactory. At entry level and level 1, 54% of lessons were graded good or better and 38% satisfactory. Teaching is best on AS-level and GCE A-

level subjects. At the inspection, four lessons were graded less than satisfactory and these were spread across levels 1 to 3.

14. Overall, students aged 16 to 18 are taught better than adult students. Some 72% of lessons for students aged 16 to 18 were good or better compared with 67% for adults. About a quarter of lessons observed were taught by part-time staff. The quality of lessons taught by full-time teachers is slightly better than those taught by part-time teachers. Some 73% of lessons taught by full-time teachers were good or better compared with 68% for part-time teachers. Teaching was better in theory lessons than in practical lessons or where there was a mix of theory and practice.

15. The best lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individual students. Most teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to engage and maintain students' interest. Teachers have high expectations of their students and set high standards. In science and mathematics, there is much innovative and inspiring teaching. In business, enthusiastic teaching motivates students well. Stimulating teaching in visual, performing arts and media encourages students to work collaboratively. In lessons, students generally make good use of ICT to develop their knowledge and skills. In a minority of lessons, teaching is dull and fails to inspire students. In the less effective lessons, teachers talk too much, students are not involved sufficiently, and their learning is not checked frequently enough.

16. The overall standard of accommodation is very high. In curriculum areas, some accommodation and facilities are outstanding. Teaching rooms are clean, attractive and spacious, but a few have poor lighting. Students' work is celebrated and there are many attractive displays throughout the college. However, some teaching rooms lack subject identity. Resources for teaching are good and many classrooms have digital projectors and whiteboards. Restaurant facilities are very good and double as social space for students. Alternative social space is dispersed through the college and is very crowded at break times. Care has been taken to ensure that all sites comply with current legislative requirements. Specialist aids and adaptations are readily available for students who need them.

17. Learning resources are of a high quality. There are sufficient computers and a good range of specialist software. The library stock is up-to-date and adequate. It is supplemented with stocks of books and other learning materials held within curriculum areas. The library and quiet study area become cramped due to the large number of students using them. The open-access computer learning centre provides additional study facilities and usage is very high.

18. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Some 86% of full-time and 58% of part-time teachers have a teaching qualification. Technicians are well qualified, provide good support to teachers, and make a valuable contribution to students' learning.

19. Assessments and verification practices are good. Assessment is well planned and regular. Assignment briefs are clear and students know what is required of them to achieve high grades. Some identify opportunities to gather evidence towards key skills qualifications. Marking of students' work is thorough and fair. It is often annotated with useful guidance to help students improve their future work. In a few instances, marking is cursory and grammar and spelling are not corrected. Most work is returned promptly.

20. The arrangements to monitor students' progress are good. All students have individual learning plans which are reviewed and updated regularly by subject teachers and personal tutors. Challenging and realistic targets are set against which students' performance can be measured. Learning plans are used well to guide students in their studies and keep them fully informed and focused on their work. There are comprehensive arrangements to support students who are at risk of underachieving. Formal reviews of progress take place each term.

21. The college offers a wide range of provision and is responsive to the needs of local schools, employers, and the community. It offers a significant range of AS-level and GCE A-level subjects, and a number of level 3 vocational courses. The college's provision at level 1 and level 2 is less extensive. It has been designed to provide opportunities for students to progress to level 3 courses

or employment. The college runs Adult and Community Education at its main site and other venues in the community.

22. There are strong partnerships with local schools and other education and training providers. Around 200 pupils aged 14 to 16 are studying at the college. Around half of the pupils are studying vocational and GCSE courses and the remainder are on provision for the gifted and talented. The college works closely with other colleges to avoid duplication of provision in the Swindon area.

23. Links with employers are effective. The college has a substantial programme of short courses which are mainly delivered on employers' premises. These include health and safety, call handling, and provision for the health care sector. There are no systematic arrangements to gather the views of employers.

24. Pre-entry advice and guidance are comprehensive and impartial. Detailed information on courses and the criteria for entry are available on the college's website and from prospectuses. Knowledgeable admissions and recruitment staff ensure that prospective students make an informed decision about which course to study. Induction is well planned with an interesting range of activities to introduce students to college life. It is effective and helps most students settle into their studies well.

25. On joining the college, students' learning styles are assessed. Not all teachers use the outcomes well to plan teaching and learning. Most students undertake an initial assessment to identify their literacy needs. However, the college does not routinely assess students to identify their numeracy needs. Initial assessment for adults on employer training pilots and NVQ programmes is good. The college provides good assistance for students who have been identified as needing support. This includes learning support staff working with students in and outside lessons, and extra timetabled lessons. Most students take advantage of the support offered.

26. Tutorial support for students is good. Full-time students have regular individual or group tutorials. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Parents and guardians of younger students receive regular progress reports and are invited to subject consultation evenings. Part-time students have tutorial support from a teacher on their course. Guidance and support arrangements have not been fully effective in stopping about half of the adult students on distance learning long courses leaving their courses before they complete them. The college is taking action to address this issue. Cross-college events are run throughout the year to raise students' awareness of various topics such as equality and diversity, and health and fitness. Academic support for students is particularly good. Extra lessons are provided for students who want to extend their studies further and for those who are experiencing difficulties. Extensive support is provided by tutors outside lessons.

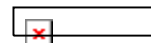
27. Careers education and guidance are good. College staff liaise closely with the Connexions service. Extensive support is given to students applying to HE. Links with HE providers and universities are strong. Clear information on employment prospects, training opportunities, and other colleges is made easily available to students. At the end of their course, nearly all students remain in education, training or employment.

28. The college offers a good range of services to students. There are effective mechanisms to arrange childcare for students. Financial support is available to students who are facing hardship. These funds have been used well to help students with transport costs. The college's counselling service appropriately refers students to specialist support agencies as needs arise. The chaplaincy service is valued by both students and staff. The college has a thriving enrichment programme. It is reviewed regularly and is responsive to students' interests. Attendance at enrichment activities is very high. However, some students cannot attend due to timetable conflicts.

29. The college approved its second child protection policy in October 2004. Four senior members of staff are designated as child protection officers, of whom two have received appropriate training. The college undertakes police checks for staff working with children. Most members of staff have attended a briefing on college arrangements for child protection. Appropriate arrangements are in place to brief new staff. Teachers are aware of the need to be alert for signs of abuse and to whom

they need to report their concerns. Governors have received written materials on child protection and legislative requirements.

Leadership and management



30. Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership and management are provided by the principal and senior managers. Since the last inspection, the college has successfully moved to a new purpose-built campus, and increased student numbers substantially. The percentage of students completing their courses and achieving qualifications has improved. Overall, the college's success rate has risen and is now well above the national average for FE colleges. Students aged 16 to 18 on AS-level and GCE A-level and short courses are particularly successful. Whilst very high numbers of students aged 19 and over are successful on short courses, too many students in this age group fail to complete long courses at levels 1 to 3. College data indicate improvements in retention rates for adult students during the current year.

31. Senior managers work well as a team. Managers meet regularly to monitor the college's performance and the quality of the curriculum. At all levels, management is open and approachable. Staff morale is high and turnover is low. Communication is effective across the college. Staff and managers work in open plan offices and are readily accessible to colleagues. There are various effective mechanisms to gather the views of students and staff. The weekly news bulletin keeps staff and students informed of key events and activities. The principal and other senior staff regularly visit partner organisations and venues in the community served by the college.

32. Strategic planning is very good. The planning cycle is clear and well defined. There is wide consultation on strategic planning. The views of development agencies, employers, partner organisations, governors, managers and staff are actively sought. Detailed information on the local labour market, employment and population trends is fully considered. The strategic plan is comprehensive and provides a sound basis for planning and developing the college's work. The annual development plan enables the college to focus and make progress on its priorities. However, some action points in the development plan and associated curriculum plans lack specific measurable outcomes.

33. Governors and senior managers work in close partnership to steer the college's development. Board members have extensive experience of business, community and public life and bring a broad range of skills to the college. Members are clear about their roles and the monitoring of financial matters is good. However, many members have little experience of the complexities of FE. Training for governors is sometimes insufficient. This prevents them from participating fully in discussions, for example, asking appropriately probing questions, or to recognise when more information would be helpful. Papers presented to governors sometimes lack clarity and provide an incomplete picture.

34. Curriculum management is mostly good. Course teams are well led and managed. Communication between staff is good and they work together effectively. Managers are clear about their priorities and have a strong sense of professional purpose. Teachers have easy electronic access to key information on students and their attendance. Data reports on enrolments, retention and pass rates are available on demand. Overall, work-based learning and other work with employers are well managed. Support services, administrative areas, and the college estate are managed effectively. Health and safety are given a high priority.

35. The quality assurance policy and procedures are clear and well established. All staff contribute to self-assessment and have a good understanding of the procedures. For curriculum areas, the grades awarded by the college were broadly in agreement with inspection grades. Some aspects of the curriculum self-assessment reports are insufficiently self-critical and too many of the strengths stated are normal practice. The programme of lesson observations ensures that teachers are observed at least once a year. The college's grade profile for lesson observations overestimated the

quality of teaching and learning. Some weaker aspects of teaching are not identified. The college acknowledges that lessons have been graded too highly and is taking remedial action.

36. Staff development is sound. It is well planned and aligned to individual development needs and college priorities. Teachers are encouraged to update their professional knowledge and improve their qualifications. The impact of staff development is reviewed regularly. The recently revised appraisal scheme for permanent staff is comprehensive. Part-time members of staff have a support review meeting with their manager to identify development needs. Appraisal reviews for teachers consider the outcomes from lesson observations and data relating to students' performance.

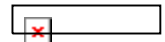
37. The college has successfully widened participation in the Swindon and Wiltshire areas. Managers work hard to promote the college in the community. There are productive working arrangements with a large number of partner organisations. The range and number of courses offered has increased in response to the needs of employers and the community.

38. High numbers of new students have been attracted into learning, especially at level 1 and level 2. The college has responded well to national initiatives such as the employer training pilot, and the national literacy and numeracy strategy.

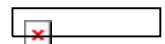
39. There are clear policies on equality of opportunity and race equality. The college promotes equality and diversity well. Cross-college events are held regularly to raise awareness and combat discriminatory practices. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is good access to college premises for people with mobility difficulties. The college's equal opportunities monitoring report includes an analysis of students' participation, retention and pass rates by gender, ethnicity, disability and age. Staff recruitment and the staff profile are analysed appropriately. The college's development plan does not clearly identify strategies to address the underperformance of students from minority ethnic groups. The governing body has not yet formally approved the monitoring report from 2003/04 or the resultant development plan. Staff and governors have not received sufficient training on their responsibilities under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 or the Disability Discrimination Act. Complaints are analysed for equality of opportunity issues. The summary report on complaints to governors is unclear. The college is fully compliant with the requirements of disability legislation and meets the requirements of race equality legislation.

40. Financial management is good. Resources are appropriately allocated to courses based on the level of activity and type of provision. There is rigorous and frequent monitoring of partnerships. College funds are managed prudently. Resources are effectively deployed. The college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- innovative and stimulating teaching
- effective use of ICT by students in lessons
- highly effective academic support
- high-quality well-equipped laboratories
- wide range of courses.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCSE mathematics and human physiology and health courses.

Scope of provision

41. The college offers a wide range of courses. Full-time provision includes advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) science, AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics, use of mathematics, further mathematics, biology, chemistry, environmental science, geology, human biology, physics, electronics, and GCSE mathematics, human physiology and astronomy. Level 1 qualifications are offered in data handling and finance. Biology and science is offered as part of an access to HE course. Part-time provision includes GCSE mathematics, physics and astronomy, and AS-level biology and chemistry. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,211 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 170 part-time adult students enrolled. In addition, school pupils aged 14 to 16 attend a GCSE mathematics course at the college and others join GCSE and AS-level science courses.

Achievement and standards

42. Overall pass rates on advanced courses are high and well above the national average. On AS-level and GCE A-level courses, the proportion of students gaining high grades of A and B is consistently high. In 2003/04, all students who passed AS-level further mathematics gained high grades. Retention rates are high on most courses particularly at GCE A level. In 2003/04, the pass rate on the one-year GCSE mathematics course for full-time students aged 16 to 18 was above the national average at 50%, but this is still low. The pass rate on GCSE human physiology and health is well below the national average. Examination results for AS-level mathematics show that students make better progress than predicted from their previous qualifications on entry.

43. Students are confident and work enthusiastically. They have good oral and written communication skills. Students express themselves well in discussions and competently debate complex concepts. Students are adept in the use of ICT. On science courses, they develop good

research skills. Human biology students used the Internet with confidence to research foetal development from ultra-sound scans. Physics students record experimental data directly on to spreadsheets. High-achieving mathematics students are passionate about their subject. GCE A-level mathematics students apply concepts of Maclaurin's series effectively. They are competent with algebra and expansions of formulae. Chemistry and biology students develop very good skills with apparatus in their experimental investigations. Mature students on evening courses are particularly highly motivated.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics (1 year)	2	No. of starts	149	222	145
		% retention	71	63	68
		% pass rate	29	47	50
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	16	31	33
		% retention	100	68	61
		% pass rate	25	38	20
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	81	89	103
		% retention	89	91	85
		% pass rate	72	79	83
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	174	172	193
		% retention	80	88	83
		% pass rate	79	86	88
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	49	37	42
		% retention	100	100	95
		% pass rate	94	89	94
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	123	137	128
		% retention	91	89	95
		% pass rate	92	94	99

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

44. Most teaching is imaginative and challenging. Lessons are thoroughly planned and take account of students' different learning styles. In many lessons, the use of ICT is outstanding. It is very effective in motivating students and promoting learning. In a mathematics lesson for adult students, the students observed geometrical figures manipulated on an interactive whiteboard. This enabled them to understand and apply Pythagoras theorem successfully. In an AS-level mathematics lesson on correlation, students used interesting puzzles for the generation and analysis of data. In science lessons, teachers use practical work skilfully to assist students in learning difficult or abstract concepts. In a GCE A-level chemistry lesson, students used titrations on different solutions to understand calculation of the equilibrium constant. Electronics students learn about memory chips by building their own memory cell circuits. In a small minority of lessons, teaching is dull, teachers talk too much and they do not involve the students sufficiently.

45. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They update their professional skills regularly. Accommodation is excellent. Classrooms are light and spacious. Laboratories are of a very high standard and well equipped with scientific apparatus, computers, and interactive whiteboards.

Technician support is good and laboratories are well maintained.

46. Student' progress is monitored rigorously. Students negotiate target grades with their teachers against which their progress can be measured. Arrangements to support underperforming students are effective. In mathematics and science subjects, there are regular and frequent tests and homework. Work is marked promptly with constructive comments to inform students about what they need to do to improve.

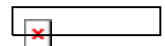
47. The wide range of courses provides students with a good range of options and progression opportunities. Liaison with local schools is excellent. Pupils attend long-established courses for the gifted and talented in practical science and mathematics. There are very good links with university and scientific institutions which broaden the experiences of students.

48. Academic and pastoral support for students are very good. Initial assessment identifies students' learning styles and aptitudes. Identified learning needs are referred to support staff and students are supported within lessons or through tutorials. Additional lessons are available for students who are experiencing difficulties with their work. Enrichment classes are offered to students who want to extend their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Guidance on HE and careers is very good.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum area is well organised and managed. Action has been taken to encourage more females to study mathematics. In some subjects, diversity is not actively promoted. The self-assessment report is generally self-critical. However, the grading of lessons is overly optimistic. Appropriate action plans are in place to address identified weaknesses. Staff development is very good. Good practice is shared regularly. Some schemes of work are underdeveloped, but lesson planning is very good. Science technicians are effectively managed to support students and teachers.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- much good and lively teaching

- wide range of provision with good progression routes

- strong academic and personal support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level economics
- unimaginative teaching in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

50. The college offers a wide range of business-related courses from level 1 to level 5. Full-time courses include general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation and intermediate business, AVCE business, AS-level and GCE A-level accounting, business studies and economics. Part-time provision includes a wide range of professional courses such as computerised accounting, word and text processing, and general or specialised human resource and management programmes. There are 666 students enrolled of whom 497 are aged 16 to 18 and 169 are aged 19 or over. Approximately 25% of students are part time.

Achievement and standards

51. Pass rates are high on most courses and many are above the national averages. In 2003/04, pass rates were 100% on the GNVQ intermediate business, AVCE double award business and GCE A-level accounting. Retention and pass rates are consistently high on GCE A-level business. In contrast, pass rates on AS-level economics have been well below the national average in two of the last three years. Part-time students generally make good progress. Pass rates on computerised accounts courses and the Institute of Management diploma have been high over the last two years. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory.

52. The standard of students' work is good. Students understand business theory. Teachers encourage them to use their experiences as employees or consumers to relate theoretical concepts to current business practice. Students are articulate in class and present business points and issues with clarity, balance and depth. They demonstrate good research and analytical skills, particularly when using specialised business websites. They analyse information critically to support and present coherent business arguments. Written work is well organised and of a high standard.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	*	24	24
		% retention	*	79	71
		% pass rate	*	58	100
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	63	76	70
		% retention	84	79	81
		% pass rate	81	80	81
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	172	162	163
		% retention	84	90	85
		% pass rate	88	84	83
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	26	52	40

		% retention	72	75	90
		% pass rate	53	74	58
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	86	126	78
		% retention	91	93	100
		% pass rate	96	91	99
GCE A-level accounting	3	No. of starts	19	25	28
		% retention	84	96	93
		% pass rate	100	92	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

53. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. They plan their work carefully with clear aims and objectives. Teachers are aware of the varying needs of individual students. Most teachers use a variety of methods to stimulate interest and involve all students in discussions. A range of imaginative and meaningful activities is used which contributes to lively and enjoyable lessons. In an advanced vocational business lesson, students studied health and safety and its influences on businesses. Students then carried out a risk assessment of possible hazards in their own workplaces and related this to current legislation. Students displayed a sound understanding of health and safety issues and the impact on businesses. In a GCE-A-level lesson on stakeholders' interests, students used the college as an example to consider the various interests of internal and external stakeholders. They worked productively in small groups to consider how conflicts of interest might arise and then explained to the whole class how conflicts might be resolved. In an accounting lesson, the teacher engaged students' interest with a quick revision game on debits and credits. In a minority of lessons, there is too much teacher-led activity. This is often rushed, stilted and dull, and fails to gain the interest of all students. In lessons, most teachers use a range of methods to check students' learning regularly, but in a few cases questioning is poor.

54. Teaching and learning resources are good. Teachers have appropriate academic and teaching qualifications. They have good access to professional development. Many attend examination meetings and staff development activities regularly. Some teachers have recent commercial experience, but there has been little systematic vocational updating for most business teachers. Accommodation is bright, pleasant and well maintained. Some rooms lack subject identity. There is good access to computers in the business area and these are very well used. Learning resources in the library are good.

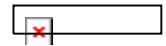
55. Arrangements for assessment, internal verification and moderation are sound. At induction, students are informed of the assessment requirements of their courses and know how to appeal if necessary. Written work is returned promptly and students value the detailed and constructive feedback they receive from their teachers. In a few instances, written feedback is cursory.

56. Support for students is good. Students receive clear information, advice and guidance to ensure that they are enrolled on the right course. Individual needs are identified at entry and specialist support is readily available. Full-time students have a well-planned tutorial programme. Students gain particular benefit from the individual sessions with their tutors. Students agree their individual targets and their progress is monitored and reviewed regularly. Students speak highly of the approachability of teachers and tutors and the support which they receive from them on a wide range of academic and personal issues.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum management is effective. Communication across the area is good. Managers and teachers work well together. There is a strong sense of commitment to continuous improvement. However, teams do not routinely use detailed quantitative data to monitor progress, but they do set annual targets for retention and pass rates. Some aspects of the curriculum self-assessment report are insufficiently self-critical. The college's lesson observation grades are much higher than those awarded by inspectors. Equality and diversity are promoted well. The range of courses has successfully attracted students from under represented areas of the community.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on many advanced courses

- much good teaching and learning on advanced courses

- wide range of advanced courses relevant to industry

- good individual support for full-time students.

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching and learning methods in computer workshops

- insufficient monitoring of students' progress in computer workshops.

Scope of provision

58. The college offers a range of provision from entry level to level 3. Subjects offered include AS-level and GCE A-level computing and ICT, and vocational courses such as GNVQ intermediate and AVCE. Part-time courses include the certificate for information technology (IT) users and various qualifications in computer applications and networking systems. At the time of the inspection, some 604 full-time, and 905 part-time students were enrolled. The area includes a CoVE in ICT for business.

Achievement and standards

59. Retention rates are high and most are well above the national averages. On GCE A-level ICT, the rate retention has been 100% in two of the last three years. Since 2001/02, pass rates show an improving trend and most are now high. Between 2001/02 and 2003/04, the pass rate on the certificate for IT users at level 2 rose significantly and is now well above the national average. The pass rates on ICT key skill at levels 1 to 3 are low. The retention and pass rates for full-time students enrolled on the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course are low.

60. The standard of students' work is high. National diploma students display a good understanding of IT when comparing different network topologies for robustness and functionality. Many part-time students are able to use advanced data analysis tools. They are confident when applying their new IT skills in accounts work and financial modelling. Students develop good IT skills and are able to transfer them effectively to various business settings. Most students use the Internet well and develop good research skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Certificate for IT users (short)	1	No. of starts	427	265	412
		% retention	88	79	97
		% pass rate	79	70	84
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	25	38	52
		% retention	72	79	87
		% pass rate	72	60	76
Certificate for IT users	2	No. of starts	503	219	219
		% retention	82	80	89
		% pass rate	14	20	91
AVCE IT (single award, 1 year)	3	No. of starts	63	47	81
		% retention	83	79	85
		% pass rate	38	81	67
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	68	72	49
		% retention	82	74	82
		% pass rate	75	72	83
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	55	59	30
		% retention	100	85	100
		% pass rate	87	80	93

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

61. Teaching in most lessons is good or better. Lessons are well prepared. Teachers take account of the wide range of ability within groups. They develop individual learning plans with students to meet their needs. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods to stimulate and extend students' knowledge. They vary activities which helps maintain students' interest and concentration. In a web-design lesson, students created websites that matched their interests and included a site for guitar tutors and a rugby skills developer. Students were very motivated and developed a high standard of

web-design skills. Effective use is made of examples from business and industry to relate theory to practice. Teaching is less successful in computer workshops. It is often at too slow a pace, lacks variety, and fails to stimulate students. Attendance and punctuality at workshops are not always recorded well.

62. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in the areas they teach. Specialist resources are good. Computing rooms are well decorated and air conditioned. Many teachers use screen projectors and the college intranet effectively. However, they make insufficient use of the technology available with interactive whiteboards. Most workstations are sufficiently spacious to allow for workbooks and students' notes. Assistive technology provided for students with additional support needs is good. Some accommodation on sites away from the main campus has poor access for those with restricted mobility and workstations are cramped.

63. Assessment is well planned. Work is returned promptly with clear guidance on what students need to do to improve. Monitoring of full-time students' progress is thorough. At induction, students are set minimum target grades. Students' performance against these grades and the progress expected of them is detailed and thorough. In computer workshops, the assessment of students' progress is weak, particularly for part-time students.

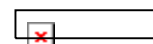
64. The wide range of courses meets the needs of students and industry. The CoVE is making good progress in achieving its recruitment targets. In response to employer needs, the centre has extended further the range of vocational courses offered. Specialist systems and network courses are now offered in collaboration with employers and local schools. The wide range of part-time courses has been successful in widening participation. These include projects aimed specifically at people whose first language is not English. The college also works with a number of partners to provide courses away from the college.

65. Academic and pastoral support are good, particularly for full-time students. Initial assessment is used to identify the learning support needs of students. Specialist support is offered to students who need it. Extra lessons are available for students who are at risk of underachieving. Poor attendance and lack of punctuality are followed-up promptly.

Leadership and management

66. Leadership and management are good. Members of staff work effectively in teams and communication is good. Managers meet regularly to review teaching and learning and students' progress. Data on students' achievements are used well to monitor and improve students' performance. Course reviews are comprehensive. Self-assessment is rigorous and mostly accurate. However, the lesson observation grades are much higher than those awarded by inspectors. Some aspects of the quality assurance arrangements with partners are insufficiently robust.

Visual, performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- high standard of practical work in dance, textiles and media

- much good and stimulating teaching
- outstanding accommodation and specialist resources
- wide range of provision at level 3.

Weaknesses

- poor attainment and behaviour of final-year performing arts students
- insufficient checking of learning in lessons.

Scope of provision

67. The college offers an extensive range of provision in visual arts, performing arts and media subjects including national diploma performing arts and AVCE art and design. AS-level and GCE A-level students can choose from courses in art, textiles, dance, drama, film, media, music, music technology and photography. In addition, GCSE photography and GCSE in four visual arts subjects are available. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,062 students aged 16 to 18 and 78 aged 19 and over.

Achievement and standards

68. Pass rates are very high on most courses, particularly at GCE A level. Retention rates are high on the majority of full-time level 3 programmes. In 2003/04, the pass rate on many courses was 100%. The proportion of students gaining high grades on most AS-level and GCE A-level subjects was around the national average. Students often demonstrate good study techniques by automatically taking notes for later use. They express opinions confidently and ask questions for clarification. Students' practical work is generally of a high standard, particularly in dance, media and textiles. Drama students have a good record of winning awards at national festivals. Attendance is good and students are punctual at most lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level drama	3	No. of starts	44	26	59
		% retention	91	92	85
		% pass rate	85	100	94
AS-level film/video	3	No. of starts	42	32	41
		% retention	67	84	93

		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	55	81	89
		% retention	89	96	99
		% pass rate	94	91	90
GCE A-level film/video	3	No. of starts	15	22	*
		% retention	93	95	*
		% pass rate	93	100	*
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	50	31	41
		% retention	96	81	100
		% pass rate	100	100	88
National diploma performing arts	3	No. of starts	22	48	20
		% retention	64	63	75
		% pass rate	79	83	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* fewer than 15 students

Quality of education and training

69. Most teaching is good. In lesson plans, most teachers take account of students' individual learning styles. Teachers share the aims and objectives of the lesson with students. All teachers demonstrate a very good command of their subject. Many use methods which encourage active and collaborative learning. In a textiles lesson, students worked independently and there was an extensive range of skills being applied to individual projects. Relationships between staff and students are generally good. However, in several classes where group discussions take place, some students make no verbal contribution and their learning is not checked. The level of students' attainment varies significantly across the different subjects. In film studies, students demonstrated sophisticated and perceptive awareness of Richard Lester's work and identified social class issues in *A Hard Day's Night*. Music technology students show good understanding of the principles underpinning film music, particularly the work of Gerry Goldsmith and Bernard Hermann. They are able to use specialist vocabulary correctly. Music students develop their instrumental skills through individual tuition. Final-year performing arts students show little awareness of good professional practice. Their attitude and behaviour in lessons is often poor, but is tolerated by teachers.

70. Teachers are well qualified and most have relevant experience as practitioners which benefits students. Much of the accommodation and resources are outstanding. The theatre allows for a variety of styles of production and end-stage work benefits from tiered audience seating. There are excellent lighting facilities. The dance studio is of exceptional quality. However, there is often poor practice in the use of these facilities. For example, performing arts students and teachers wear outdoor shoes on the specialist wooden sprung dance floor. Resources for art and design, especially textiles, are very good. Students have immediate access to a wide range of specialist equipment. Technical facilities are of industry standard. Technician support is very good. The learning resource centre is well stocked with relevant publications.

71. Assessment methods are good. Assignments are interesting and well planned. At induction, students complete their individual learning plans and set targets to work towards. In academic tutorials, students' progress towards their target grades is monitored effectively. Students' work is marked quickly and accurately. It is returned with helpful advice and comments on what students need to do to improve. However, teachers sometimes fail to correct basic grammatical errors.

72. The range of provision at level 3 is good. The college is currently extending the range of options

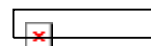
at level 2 to widen opportunities. Timetables are well organised and allow students sufficient study time. Enrichment activities are excellent and much is done that enhances learning. Residential study trips to London, Rome, New York and other cities are regularly organised. A wide range of stimulating visits to galleries broadens students' knowledge and the value of the visits is reflected in the work of students.

73. Support for students is good. Appropriate learning support is provided for students who need it. Extra lessons are arranged for students who are having difficulty with their studies and for high achieving students who want to extend their knowledge and skills further. Students' progress is carefully monitored and parents or guardians are kept well informed.

Leadership and management

74. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers use data on students' performance and other information to improve the provision in the best interests of students. Teachers are encouraged to develop their professional skills. Subject and course teams meet regularly and communication is mainly good. Mentoring and support for part-time teachers are not always fully effective. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical. Many of the strengths stated are standard practice. The lesson observation procedures have overestimated the quality of teaching and learning.

Social sciences



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

Strengths

- high and improving retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18
- well-planned and organised teaching
- rigorous assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- extensive academic and personal support for students
- effective management of access to HE and 16 to 18 provision.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on distance learning courses

- poor checking of learning in lessons

- poor development of oral skills for students aged 16 to 18.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in psychology, sociology, law and politics, and AS-level in critical thinking and GCSE psychology. Of some 1,000 enrolments on social science courses, almost 80% are full-time students aged 16 to 18. Most adult students study social sciences by distance learning. Over the last two years, the college has significantly reduced the number of students enrolled on distance learning courses. Social science subjects are available on an access to HE course which caters for around 80 full-time and part-time adult students.

Achievement and standards

76. Retention and pass rates are very high for students aged 16 to 18. In 2003/04, nearly all students who began GCE A-level social science courses completed them, with the majority of students gaining high grades. In psychology and politics, students generally did better than predictions based on their GCSE results. Over the past three years on AS level, retention and pass rates have risen to well above the national average. In 2003/04, all students who completed the access to HE gained the qualification. However, a high proportion of adult students on general education courses are unsuccessful. Most adult students attempting study by distance learning do not complete their courses. Pass rates on part-time courses for adults are mixed.

77. The standard of students' work is mostly good or better. Students demonstrate detailed knowledge of their subjects, particularly in what they write. They develop the ability to formulate increasingly convincing answers to examination questions. Students on the critical studies course are quick to recognise fallacies in arguments made during television debates. In lessons, students are able to sustain concentration on their own work. Adult students develop in confidence, volunteer their views, and engage in lively debate. Younger students speak mainly in response to a teacher's question, and then only briefly. The oral communication skills of these students are not well developed. Attendance at lessons is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology (2 years - adult students)	2	No. of starts	71	41	53
		% retention	15	24	15
		% pass rate	64	60	50
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	43	49	47
		% retention	93	98	100
		% pass rate	85	91	98
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	217	212	245
		% retention	71	83	83
		% pass rate	88	86	93

AS-level law	3	No. of starts	108	118	108
		% retention	76	76	85
		% pass rate	76	81	86
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	94	127	133
		% retention	72	78	82
		% pass rate	88	75	87
AS-level politics	3	No. of starts	41	33	29
		% retention	85	94	93
		% pass rate	97	97	96

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

78. Most teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully. They give students a clear sense of context and direction, relating new learning to what has gone before. The systematic teaching of research methods enables students to apply them successfully. Many of the materials prepared by teachers stimulate students' interest. Sociology students were able to make a better evaluation of the post-1944 educational system after they had sampled an IQ test once given to 11-plus pupils. In a law lesson, a well-devised handbook was used with a variety of textbooks to guide students through the topic of criminal damage. Teachers ensure brisk coverage of subject content and encourage students to take their own notes. Methods used to check learning are often dull and ineffective. Teachers sometimes move on to the next stage of a lesson without ensuring that students have a sound grasp of the previous one. In some lessons, teachers talk too much and students are not sufficiently involved. Access to HE students are encouraged to make short presentations. In contrast, insufficient opportunities are provided for discussion and debate between younger students to enable them to clarify and deepen their understanding. When small group work does take place, it is not always effective.

79. Teachers are well qualified and deployed effectively. They undertake regular professional development. Many are external examiners. Base rooms for social sciences are well resourced. There have good up-to-date texts, journals and handouts. Library resources are also good. Some classrooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards but teachers seldom exploit the potential benefits of the technology. The college intranet stores material which helps students revise and catch up on missed work, but there are few materials for independent learning.

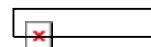
80. The assessment of students' work and monitoring of their progress are consistently thorough. Teachers use written assignments, tests and end-of-topic examinations effectively to prepare students for their examinations. Work is thoroughly marked and returned promptly. At termly reviews, students' progress towards their target grade is measured. Precise action plans are negotiated with students to help them raise the standard of their work.

81. Students receive effective academic and personal support. Extra revision lessons are offered regularly. Students value the high level of support they receive in and outside lessons. There is comprehensive advice and guidance on careers and extensive support for students applying to HE.

Leadership and management

82. Leadership and management of the curriculum are good. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. The quality of provision is thoroughly monitored and reviewed. Close attention is paid to the views of students. Action planning for improvement is largely successful. The self-assessment report gives insufficient prominence to the provision for adults and fails to take account of the weaknesses of the distance learning provision.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCSE and GCE A-level English

- much good teaching

- high standard of oral skills in English and modern foreign languages

- good specialist resources

- good course management in English.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on many modern foreign language courses

- narrow range of learning activities on GCSE courses in modern foreign languages.

Scope of provision

83. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level English and modern foreign languages courses. Subjects offered include English language, English literature, French, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish. There are 493 students enrolled on advanced level courses, some 253 students on GCSE programmes and a further 167 enrolments on beginners' courses in modern foreign languages.

Achievement and standards

84. Pass rates on GCE A-level English, AS-level French and GCSE English have been consistently high and well above the national averages over the three years to 2004. On most modern foreign languages courses, pass rates are low. In 2003/04, the pass rate on GCSE French was particularly

low. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses in 2003/04 were very high. On most other courses, retention rates are in line with or above the national averages.

85. The standard of students' work is high. Students' files are well organised and presented. On advanced-level modern foreign languages courses, most students have a high level of oral fluency. Their pronunciation and accents are good. In an AS-level Spanish lesson, students expressed their views clearly on environmental issues using a wide range of linguistic structures and tenses. In English, students speak confidently and express their opinions using an appropriate range of language. In an AS-level English lesson, students ably presented their analyses of tales from *The Bloody Chamber Anthology* by Angela Carter. Many students on GCSE modern foreign languages courses have difficulty understanding and using the language sufficiently well to communicate.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	135	149	164
		% retention	52	62	70
		% pass rate	67	77	79
GCSE French	2	No. of starts	17	43	28
		% retention	12	47	86
		% pass rate	100	25	29
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	42	60	47
		% retention	64	82	81
		% pass rate	89	88	92
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	36	40	53
		% retention	78	80	75
		% pass rate	93	81	95
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	25	40	25
		% retention	96	90	100
		% pass rate	100	100	96

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

86. Teaching is mostly good. Teachers set high standards. Lessons are well planned and often imaginative. Teachers provide challenging tasks in language and literature to motivate students. In a GCSE English lesson, students produced an insightful analysis of the poem *Nothing's Changed* by Takamkhulu Afrika. Students demonstrated an increasing awareness of symbolism and imagery. In a GCE A-level literature lesson on First World War poets, students reflected upon images from the Imperial War Museum to produce imaginative and creative writing. Students' analyse language within a linguistic framework and understand and use technical terminology proficiently. In an AS-level English lesson, students identified the social functions of dialect through a close analysis of the grammar and lexis.

87. Modern foreign language teachers are fluent and confident in the languages they teach. Many have first-hand knowledge of the language and culture. This adds authenticity and interest to students' learning. In the most effective lessons, there is a wide range of learning activities and the target language is used as the main means of communication. Students gradually improve their fluency and accuracy in speaking and writing and develop good understanding of the spoken and

written language. In an AS-level French lesson, students read and listened to information about the French press, then ably used a wide range of newly learned terminology to present their views orally and in writing. In the less successful lessons, there is too narrow a range of learning activities and students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills.

88. Teachers on full-time courses are well qualified and experienced. They update their skills through regular staff development. Teaching and learning resources are good. Accommodation is spacious and modern and well resourced with audio and video equipment and projectors. Modern linguists benefit from high-quality digital recordings, individual listening posts and personal copies of taped material to prepare for listening and speaking examinations. There are good textbooks, topic specific learning packs and high-quality handouts.

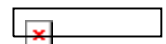
89. Assessment procedures and practices are good. Students' work is marked fairly and accurately. It is returned promptly with useful comments to help them improve the standard of future work. Full-time students have a formal review each term to monitor their performance and progress towards their target grades. However, some of these reviews are too general and do not assess competence in individual language skills sufficiently.

90. Support and guidance are good. All full-time students have an initial assessment to identify any specific learning needs and to ensure that they are on the most appropriate course. The induction programme is comprehensive. Individual tutorials are supportive. They are used effectively to monitor students' progress and deal with academic and personal issues as they arise. Students enjoy a range of enrichment activities which include trips abroad, theatre visits and subject conferences.

Leadership and management

91. Course management is good in English and satisfactory in modern foreign languages. Appropriate action has been taken to replace unsuccessful part-time courses in modern foreign languages with others which meet the needs of students better. Communication is good. Members of staff in teaching teams meet regularly. They focus on raising the standard of teaching and learning. Feedback from students is considered carefully and quickly acted on. In the self-assessment report, some weaknesses in modern foreign languages have not been identified fully resulting in slow implementation of strategies for improvement.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates

- well-planned teaching to meet individual learning needs

- good support for students

- wide range of provision responsive to local needs.

Weaknesses

- low attendance
- insufficient assessment of the numeracy needs of students.

Scope of provision

92. The college offers a wide range of provision in literacy and numeracy from entry level 1 to level 2. Most of the provision is short courses which are available during the day and in the evening. Some provision is offered in collaboration with partner organisations. There are around 4,100 enrolments on literacy, numeracy, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). About 78% of students are adults.

Achievement and standards

93. Pass rates on adult literacy and numeracy courses have increased substantially over the last two years from well below to significantly above the national averages. In 2003/04, the pass rates for these awards were about 20% above the national average. Between 2001/02 and 2003/04, the pass rates for ESOL provision declined from 100% to 73% which is significantly below the national average. Over the last two years, retention rates on all courses have been maintained at a very high level and are significantly above the national average.

94. Standards of students' work are good. Students' files are well organised and maintained. Students' literacy, numeracy and language skills improve significantly between the start and the end of their studies. Students developing their business letter writing skills are able to write and draft letters to a high standard after only a short period of time on their course. Students who had difficulty initially in understanding percentages and fractions quickly learned to convert fractions into percentages. Students improve their confidence and are very proud of the progress they make during lessons. Overall, students improve the literacy and number skills that are essential for employment and everyday life. Attendance rates during the inspection were well below the national average for the curriculum area and lower than other curriculum areas in the college.

Quality of education and training

95. Most teaching is good. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods which take account of their students' individual learning needs sensitively and effectively, particularly for those aged 16 to 18. Planning of lessons is mostly good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are referenced appropriately to the national literacy and numeracy core curriculum. Teachers generally explain learning tasks clearly. They are good at involving all students in discussions and learning activities. Good use is made of the students' own experiences and interests to develop and apply literacy, numeracy and language skills. In cooking lessons, teachers develop students' number skills well by linking the use of recipes to measuring liquids and understanding proportions. ESOL teachers who work with refugees and asylum seekers make very good use of their own multi-lingual skills to develop students' understanding and knowledge of English. In the less effective lessons, students' interest is not maintained and they lose concentration. On some individual learning plans, learning targets are insufficiently detailed and students do not understand them.

96. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in the areas they teach. They have a good understanding of their subject. The good range of materials which support learning and relate well to specific learning topics and the needs of students. Teachers and students have good access to computers. Accommodation for students is mostly of a high standard. A few classrooms are cramped for the number of students using them. Learning support assistants do not have a base room to prepare materials, maintain students' files and provide support for students.

97. Teachers generally make effective use of initial assessment to provide students with an appropriate range and level of support. However, although the college assesses students on full-time and substantive part-time courses to identify their literacy needs, it does not assess all students to identify their numeracy needs.

98. The college offers a broad and relevant range of literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision, which meets the needs of a wide variety of students and local communities. There is a high level of demand for courses and some have a waiting list. The college offers provision at local centres, on Ministry of Defence and employers' premises, and at the college's main site. The college has successfully widened participation by attracting people who are traditionally underrepresented in education. This includes asylum seekers, refugees and those from areas of social or economic deprivation. The college is committed to and promotes the Skills for Life agenda.

99. Support for students is good. Students receive effective individual support in and outside lessons. Students particularly value the personal support they receive from learning support assistants. Good communication between teachers and learning support assistants helps to provide students with a coherent programme of teaching and learning and individual support. Learning support assistants are good at developing students' ability to work on their own.

Leadership and management

100. Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy are good. Managers have been effective at ensuring students receive good teaching and learning and that most complete their studies successfully. Communication is good. Managers and staff meet regularly. Meetings have a clear focus on teaching and learning and the performance of students. All members of staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Some judgements in the self-assessment report are not written clearly and standard practice is often identified as a strength. Members of staff promote equality and diversity effectively to students and are sensitive to the different cultural needs of students.

Part D: College data

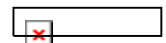
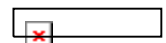


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	14	45
2	14	26
3	66	7
4/5	0	1
Other	6	21

Total	100	100
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Source: provided by the college in 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,196	570	7
Land-based provision	0	7	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	25	24	0
Business administration, management and professional	602	1,839	9
Information and communication technology	457	1,748	8
Retailing, customer service and transportation	1	100	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	790	2,065	11
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	379	6,832	27
Visual and performing arts and media	874	67	4
Humanities	1,320	423	7
English, languages and communication	649	595	5
Foundation programmes	321	2,045	9
Unknown area of learning	423	3,298	14
Total	7,037	19,613	100*

Source: provided by the college in 2005

* numbers are rounded and do not total 100

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long)	Retention and	Completion year				

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	78	19	3	73
Level 2 (intermediate)	50	43	7	14
Level 1 (foundation)	75	0	25	4
Other sessions	44	56	0	9
Totals	71	25	4	100

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