

Sutton Coldfield College
This file contains
the September 2001 inspection report
and
the May 2002/January 2003
monitoring inspection report

NB Sutton Coldfield took over the assets and undertakings of North Birmingham College on July 31 2002, when that college was dissolved. Further information is in the January 2004 re-inspection report on the right-hand side of Sutton Coldfield's page on the Ofsted web site.



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Inspection report

SUTTON COLDFIELD COLLEGE

Dates of inspection: 24–28 September 2001

© Crown copyright 2001. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

College inspection reports are available on the OFSTED website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Reference: HMI 341

Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the college	3
Part A: Summary	4
Information about the college	4
How effective is the college?	4
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas	5
How well is the college led and managed?	7
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?	7
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?	7
Students' views of the college	7
Other information	8
Part B: The college as a whole	9
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors	9
Achievement and standards	9
Quality of education and training	10
Leadership and management	13
Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas	15
Science	15
Mathematics	19
Engineering	22
Business and accounting	26
Business administration and management	30
Information and communications technology	34
Sports, leisure and travel	39

Health, social care and public services	43
Visual arts	47
Performing arts and media	50
Humanities	54
English, languages and communications	58
Foundation programmes	62
Part D: College data	65
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01	65
Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01	65
Table 3: Retention and achievement	65
Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level	66

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Sutton Coldfield College
Type of college:	Further Education College
Principal:	Mr Graham Jones
Address of college:	Lichfield Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands B74 2NW
Telephone number:	0121 355 5671
Fax number:	0121 355 0799
Chair of governors:	Anne Underwood
Unique reference number:	130466
Name of reporting inspector:	Lindsay Hebditch HMI
Date(s) of inspection:	24–28 September 2001

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

Sutton Coldfield College is a large general further education (FE) college to the northeast of Birmingham. The college has 9,000 students on roll, 40% of whom are full-time. Some 50% of the full-time students are from minority ethnic groups. About 70% of students are aged 19 or over. Work-related training is provided for approximately 150 students. There are 12 New Deal clients. In 2001, the college recruited students from 170 schools in the Birmingham area. Retention rates in local schools are above the national average. The unemployment rate in Birmingham is more than twice the national average, but in Sutton Coldfield it is low. In its mission statement, the college aims 'to increase prosperity in the West Midlands by providing first-class education and training for all'.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be good in three of the curriculum areas and satisfactory in the remaining nine. Provision in health, social care and public services is unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- good pass rates
- wide range of provision for school leavers
- well-resourced specialist accommodation
- outstanding business and community links
- good tutorials and effective support for students
- effective action by management to raise students' levels of achievement.

What should be improved

- low retention rates on some general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses
 - unsatisfactory teaching in some curriculum areas
 - some unsuitable teaching accommodation
 - insufficient sharing of good practice.
-

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Satisfactory. The pass rates on GCE A-level courses in science are good, but retention rates are low. Large numbers of students progress to higher education (HE). Practical skills are taught effectively, but there is much poor teaching in theory lessons.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. The pass rate on the GCE A-level is high, but the retention rate is very low. Students who complete the course obtain higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their previous pass rates. Most of the teaching is good.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Retention rates are good. Adults do better than learners aged 16 to 18 on all courses. Much teaching is poorly planned. Engineering equipment and workshop facilities are very good. Provision for work-based learners is good.
Business and accounting	Satisfactory. The retention and pass rates of adults on national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses are high. Retention rates on business courses for students aged 16 to 18 are low, but pass rates are high. The best teaching is on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses. In some lessons the teaching fails to meet students' needs.
Business administration and management	Good. Retention rates, pass rates and teaching are good. Assessment of students' work is insufficiently rigorous. Specialist facilities for students on administration courses are good.
Information and communications technology (ICT)	Satisfactory. There is a wide range of courses offering good opportunities for progression. Retention rates on part-time courses for adults are high, but retention and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and GCE A level are low. Part-time courses are managed effectively.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. Retention rates on GNVQ courses are low. Pass rates on first diploma and GCE A-level courses are good. Lessons taught by full-time staff are good. Many of the lessons taught by agency staff were unsatisfactory. There is a good range of enrichment activities.
Health, social care and public services	Unsatisfactory. Adults on access, counselling and management courses are successful in meeting their learning goals. Retention and pass rates are low on most courses for students aged 16 to 18. There is much unsatisfactory teaching on courses for students aged 16 to 18. Course management is inadequate.
Visual arts	Good. Students' pass rates are good on courses at advanced level but poor on the GNVQ art and design course at intermediate level. The area is well managed and there is a broad range of good quality specialist courses.
Performing arts and media	Good. Students produce a high standard of work and pass rates are good. Most teaching is good, and none is less than satisfactory. Courses are well designed and ably managed. Some of the teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory.
Humanities	Satisfactory. The general studies course is well managed and students on it produce work of a high standard. Retention rates are low, but most students who complete their courses pass. Some GCE A-level lessons are poorly taught. Some of the teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory.
English, languages and communications	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on GCE advanced subsidiary level (GCE AS-level) English are high. The pass rate in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) English is poor, and declining. In most lessons teaching is effective and well planned, but good practice is insufficiently shared. There is insufficient use of information technology (IT). Some teaching accommodation is unsuitable.
Foundation programmes	Satisfactory. There are good pass rates on courses leading to certification in basic skills. Some teaching is unsatisfactory and fails to meet the learners' needs.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. Governors provide effective oversight of the direction of the college. The management of the college's finances is good. Strategies to improve students' pass rates have been successful. The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous and it has failed to identify significant weaknesses in teaching. Management information and data on students are now more reliable.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college successfully meets the needs of young people and adults from a broad and diverse local community. Significant numbers of students are recruited from socially and economically deprived areas and many travel long distances in order to attend the college. Many students whose prior achievements are poor are recruited to full-time courses. Provision and support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are effective. The college has carried out a comparative analysis of the achievements of students from minority ethnic groups, and of male and female students. The analysis shows that no particular group of students performs better, or less well than any other. The findings of this analysis have not been circulated widely in the college.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Teachers provide students with good support. There is a comprehensive range of support services available, including extensive arrangements for personal support. Arrangements for initial guidance and induction are comprehensive and work well. Tutorials are effective.

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

- supportive and friendly teachers
- good tutorial support and access to additional support
- welcoming adult environment
- some excellent specialist accommodation and resources
- broad range of courses.

What they feel could be improved

- organisation and methods of teaching key skills
-

-
- some inadequate accommodation
 - timetabling of courses.

Other information

The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	56.2	27.8	16.0
19+ and WBL*	62.3	23.2	14.5
Learning 16–18	55.7	27.8	16.5
19+ and WBL*	68.1	17.4	14.5

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 inspection coincided with what was, for most students, the second teaching week of the academic year. The college had recruited more students than it had planned for and many teaching arrangements were still temporary. Some classes were meeting their teachers for the first time, while others were being taught in temporary accommodation. Some classes were very large and contained students of widely differing abilities.
2. The college's data on students' achievement in 2001 shows that pass rates are high overall. However, much of the data on students' achievements for the preceding three years is unreliable, making overall trends in performance difficult to assess. The courses at the college lead to a wide range of qualifications. Most students are enrolled on courses leading to level 2 qualifications. Students on vocationally specific courses are more successful than those on general education courses. Where students aged 16 to 18 and adults enter for the same qualification, the students aged 16 to 18 achieve higher pass rates. The overall attendance rate is high at 81.5%. However, many students arrive late to lessons. Further details about students' achievements and the quality of particular courses are given in Part C of this report.

16–18 year olds

3. Students' pass rates for individual GCE A-level subjects in 2000/01 are mostly good. The highest pass rates were on art and design, general studies, physical education (PE), psychology, sociology and business studies courses. The average points score for students taking two or more GCE A-level subjects was 13.9. This figure does not take account of some particularly good results obtained by students who completed their course.
-

Many students, however, have GCSE grades which only just meet the college's entry requirements for GCE A-level courses. On average, they achieve a pass rate in each of their GCE A-level examinations at a higher grade than that predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. In 2000/01, the retention rate on GCE A-level courses was low at 63%. Students on GNVQ advanced/AVCE courses also obtain results better than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Their retention rates are high. The pass rate on national diploma courses was high at 92%.

4. Retention rates are low on GNVQ intermediate and foundation courses. The pass rates for most GCSE subjects are unsatisfactory. For example, of 147 students aged 16 to 18 who completed the GCSE English course, only 37% passed. Retention and pass rates are good on courses leading to NVQ level 2.

5. There were 150 government-funded trainees on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes in engineering, customer service, accountancy and business administration. The apprentices performed well on the customer service programme and seven of the nine who began the programme obtained an NVQ at level 3. Engineering apprentices performed well and half of those who left in 2001 had fulfilled all the objectives in their individual learning plan. On the accountancy programme, however, of the 15 apprentices who began their training in 1998, only seven gained an NVQ at level 3 and only two carried out their training plan in full.

Adult learners

6. In 2001, there were high pass rates for adult students. The pass rates on courses over 24 weeks at levels 1 and 2 were 88% and 81%, respectively. Adults who follow vocationally specific courses do well at all levels. NVQ pass rates are consistently good. The pass rates for NVQ level 2 and NVQ level 3 were 79% and 97%, respectively. Students achieve high standards of work and good pass rates on management and professional courses at level 4. Most students who attend the full-time access programme are successful. Retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses show wide variations. Many are unsatisfactory and some are poor.

7. The majority of adult learners who attend classes to improve their literacy and numeracy make good progress, and many obtain externally accredited awards.

8. The proportion of New Deal clients who obtain employment is low, at 31%. Of the clients' who receive training in electrical installation, 35% obtain their target qualification. This proportion is line with the national average. The clients' retention rate is high.

Quality of education and training

9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 260 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 58% of these and unsatisfactory in 16%. The quality of teaching varied significantly across the college. The best teaching was in business administration and professional courses, visual arts, and performing arts and media. In four

curriculum areas, at least 25% of teaching was unsatisfactory. Most adult students were attending classes that were specifically planned for them. The quality of teaching was better in lessons for adult students.

10. Practical lessons were the most successful in engaging the students' interest and motivating students to learn effectively. Specialist facilities and resources were excellent. There was great variation in the quality of theory lessons. The best lessons were those the teachers had planned carefully to ensure that the range of learning activities was suitable for all students in the class. They constantly checked that the students understood what they were doing. Assignment work required the students to use the knowledge and understanding they had acquired in lessons in order to carry out a specific task. In the weaker lessons, teaching was unimaginative. Some teachers talked too much and failed to arouse the students' interest or enthusiasm. The effectiveness of lessons in key skills varies widely. The workshop sessions on key skills are good. In some other lessons, however, key skills are not taught in a relevant vocational context. Students do not value their lessons in key skills.

11. Most teachers demonstrate thorough knowledge and technical competence in their specialist areas. Teachers with industrial or commercial experience used it to add realism to their lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are harmonious and effective. Students appreciate the willingness of their teachers to help them in lessons, in tutorials and give them advice on how to work on their own. Arrangements for providing work-based trainees with help and support were good. The trainees were highly motivated. They were following appropriate training programmes in companies where they were able to develop a range of skills.

12. The college has some very good specialist resources and accommodation. There is a new technology centre, an amenities centre with separate social facilities for students aged 16 to 19 and adult students and a large key skills centre at the main site. The well-equipped learning resource centres and learning technology centre are used appropriately by students to develop their research skills and work effectively on their own. In some curriculum areas, classrooms are unsatisfactory. In many instances, noise from adjacent rooms interfered with teaching. The college's buildings are accessible to wheelchair users. Extensive nursery provision makes it easier for more adult students to attend the college.

13. Most members of the teaching staff are well qualified and suitably experienced in their subject or vocational specialisms and approximately 75% hold a teaching qualification. The college makes substantial use of agency staff. Currently, one quarter of all lessons are taught by staff not directly employed by the college. The use of agency staff affords the college a good degree of flexibility in its staffing arrangements. For instance, the college has been able to provide training for night-shift workers. Some curriculum areas employ agency staff in large numbers but have not provided them with adequate support or monitored their work. The lessons taken by some agency staff are poor. Staff do not share effective learning materials and good practice sufficiently.

14. There is regular and effective assessment of students' work on most courses. Students receive formal reviews of their progress three times a year and they also have

individual interviews with their personal tutors. Students receive comprehensive reports on their work and these help them to make further progress. There is a detailed assessment policy relating to programmes which aim to help students acquire specific competences and this sets out clearly the roles and responsibilities of internal verifiers and assessors. In business and science, internal verification procedures are thorough. In other areas, however, they are insufficiently rigorous and do not cover assignment briefs adequately. Assessment of work-based learners is well managed, although some apprentices have had few assessments by direct observation of their work.

15. There is a wide range of courses and good progression opportunities for school leavers who choose to attend the college. These include a pre-entry programme, extensive foundation provision and a wide range of level 2 and level 3 courses. In some curriculum areas, however, there are not enough courses for adults and some good specialist resources and facilities are underused. For example, the design centre is located in the town centre but it provides only a narrow range of courses in the evenings. Provision for adults in the community has expanded substantially in recent years. For example, the college now offers more extensive basic skills provision in areas of high deprivation and also a broader access to HE courses. The college provides for both the social and learning requirements of adults, including childcare needs and access through local outreach centres.

16. The college has wholeheartedly embraced Curriculum 2000 initiatives. Students are offered a wide choice of subjects across an extensive range of programmes and an integrated college timetable makes it possible for most students to follow the course of study they want. All students learn the key skills of communication, IT and application of number, and also how to improve their own learning and performance. There is a good range of enrichment and enhancement activities from which many students benefit. Examples include the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, Asian music (drumming and bhangra), sports coaching, fashion shows and 'Sixth Sense', a student magazine. These activities help to develop students' team-working skills.

17. There are good links and a range of liaison activities with local high schools. The college has established an innovative and effective partnership arrangement with a high school in a deprived area where there is high unemployment. Since establishing this partnership, the number of students from this school who have joined courses at the college has doubled.

18. The college has effective links with employers and offers an extensive range of courses, often customised to meet the needs of companies and employees. There are some excellent facilities for trainees. Courses in engineering are given high priority.

19. There is close liaison between the college and local schools. Well-presented publicity materials give prospective students clear information about the college. Appropriate advice is given to students at their entry interview. Induction programmes are well organised and informative, prepare students well for the demands of their courses and brief them appropriately on the college's support services. The network of support and

guidance services is highly valued and extensively used by both young people and adult students.

20. Additional learning support is available to students whose needs for it are identified through initial assessment. Some students themselves request additional learning support. Appropriate one-to-one specialist support is offered to students with learning difficulties, to those who need English language support and those with visual or hearing impairment. Additional help with English and mathematics is available to students through timetabled sessions, and on a drop-in basis at the college's study centres. Since receiving additional learning support, some students have improved their performance and their motivation has increased. However, the college does not monitor how effective additional support has been in helping students to succeed on their courses. In lessons, the additional support given to students identified as requiring it is often good. In some instances, however, insufficient help was given to other students who were clearly in need of assistance.

21. The quality of personal support for students is particularly good. A qualified and experienced full-time counsellor provides a confidential service on demand. A financial adviser provides students with useful advice and assistance with the cost of travel, resources and maintenance through the access fund and the college's support fund. This has enabled some students to remain at the college when they otherwise would have left. Students said how highly they valued the support they received and how it had enabled them to study effectively.

22. The quality of tutorial provision has improved since the last inspection, and is now good. Tutors know their students well and play a key role in identifying those who need help and directing them to the appropriate services. There are well-defined and understood disciplinary procedures. These include procedures for dealing with unsatisfactory attendance, which provide an early warning of potential behavioural and attitudinal problems students may have. In the case of younger students, their parents or carers are kept informed of the progress the students are making, and any difficulties they may be experiencing.

23. The college's careers and guidance service is well managed. The quality of advice given is good. There is a high demand for the service. The accommodation it uses is often crowded, with the result that there is inadequate space for interviews where individuals can receive guidance and advice in private.

Leadership and management

24. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction for the college. Governors are provided regularly with information on the college's academic work and they monitor academic performance effectively. They have shown sound leadership in the development of the college's services and facilities for students.

25. The organisation of the college was recently changed to enable staff to focus more effectively on the needs of different groups of students. Responsibility for the curriculum and standards is shared between the three directorates of business development, continuing

education and the sixth form centre. A fourth directorate is responsible for supporting students and staff and the fifth looks after resources and finances. The quality of leadership and management within curriculum areas is mostly good. The quality of leadership and management at programme area level varies significantly, however, and there is insufficient sharing of good practice in the running of courses. Such practice, for example, relates to the induction and monitoring of agency staff, the quality of internal verification, and the assessment and improvement of teaching and learning.

26. Quality assurance procedures have improved over the last year and have helped to raise the level of students' achievements in the college. There are frequent reviews of the quality of the provision through the college's internal inspection procedures, which include an analysis of students' views. Through its self-assessment process, the college arrived at a higher grade profile for lessons than did the inspectors. Although the college has taken a number of initiatives to improve teaching, there is little evidence to show that it has improved since the last inspection.

27. The quality and accuracy of the college's management information have improved significantly. The management information system currently provides a good range of regular reports on pass and retention rates, funding, applications for courses and attendance. There have, however, been past problems with management information and much of the information on students' retention and pass rates before 2000/01 is inaccurate and unreliable. College managers have not been able to make assessments of performance in which they have confidence. There are comprehensive arrangements for monitoring progress towards achieving targets at course level, but the targets themselves have been set on the basis of unreliable information.

28. The college's self-assessment process is well established and takes account of the views of staff and students. Employers and external organisations, however, are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process and their views are not sought. The current self-assessment report identifies strengths and weaknesses, and includes a development plan to address weaknesses and useful background information. Self-assessment is carried out thoroughly but inspectors did not agree with some of the findings and considered some of the grades to be too high.

29. The equal opportunities committee meets six times a year to monitor and discuss the promotion of equal opportunities. In the college, measures for dealing with students' grievances, racial and sexual harassment, including an appeals procedure, are clear.

30. Management of the college's finances is good. Financial expenditure is monitored carefully, although comparisons with costs in other colleges have not been made recently. Budgets for programme teams are based on units of funding and take account of the different costs of courses. Purchase of substantial equipment is based on a bidding and approval system. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science

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

Strengths

- broad range of provision for school leavers
- good pass rates for students who complete their course
- high rates of progression to HE from level 3 courses
- well-organised practical work.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GCE A-level courses
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- unsatisfactory implementation of some college procedures.

Scope of provision

31. The college provides a broad range of appropriate science courses for school leavers. These include courses in GCSE science subjects and GCE A and AS-level physics. There are vocational courses in science at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. The college also offers a course leading to an advanced national diploma in forensic science and criminal psychology. The range of courses provides a wide choice for full-time students aged 16 to 18 and good progression routes. Courses are popular, attracting more than 500 students each year, and recruitment is socially inclusive. There is a high proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and students of all abilities are welcomed. There is insufficient provision for adults or employed students. There are few short courses or part-time courses in science. There is little access to courses after the start of the academic year. There are few links with industry.

Achievement and standards

32. Retention and pass rates on some courses are good. For example, the proportion of students who obtained grade C or above in GCSE subjects in 2001 was 64%, well above the national average of 41% for colleges. Pass rates are good on GCE A-level courses and the grades many students obtain are higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their earlier performance in the GCSE. However, retention rates on GCE A-level courses are very

poor. Less than half of the students who begin the course achieve a GCE A level-pass. Many students progress to HE.

33. Standards of work for formal assessment are high. Coursework for the GNVQ advanced course shows that students have high levels of understanding and can apply scientific knowledge well. Students' practical work is good. On GCE A-level courses, students demonstrate sound scientific reasoning and their experimental work is careful and accurate.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Science, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	120	137	95
		% retention	68	72	69
		% pass rate	56	80	64
National diploma in science	3	No. of starts	21	53	35
		% retention	76	79	97
		% pass rate	93	88	88
GNVQ advanced science	3	No. of starts	28	34	33
		% retention	82	94	88
		% pass rate	82	48	90
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	97	94	100
		% retention	53	78	23
		% pass rate	74	53	78
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	66	73	68
		% retention	65	81	34
		% pass rate	71	49	86

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	40	37	26
		% retention	65	73	42
		% pass rate	55	48	82

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

34. Much of the teaching of science is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, the work is well planned, and students are set clear learning objectives. Teachers explain scientific concepts and technical terms clearly. There is effective use of imaginative analogies and examples from the student's own experience to illustrate theoretical points. For example, in a GCE A-level chemistry lesson, a car model was used to explain acid-base theory. In another lesson, probability in atomic structure was explained effectively by relating it to the location of a student in the college through reference to the student's timetable. Practical lessons are well planned and organised. Students work individually or in small groups and pay due attention to safety. Handouts and worksheets are clear, informative and used effectively to help students in lessons and encourage them to carry out further study at home. In the large number of unsatisfactory lessons, there is little variety in the teaching approaches and insufficient involvement of students in learning activities. Teachers make few checks on whether the students understand what they are doing and do not differentiate the tasks to cater for the wide range of ability of the students. Some lessons are disrupted by students who arrive late. There is insufficient use of ICT in science teaching. Key skills are taught in separate lessons and not as an integral part of science courses.

35. Homework is set regularly and marked carefully. Assignment materials for vocational courses are designed imaginatively and cover the competences students need to acquire in order to obtain their qualification. Work is marked fairly and accurately. Teachers provide the students with written feedback on their work, but in some instances, their comments are too brief to be useful. Students' progress reviews are comprehensive. Action plans are produced by students with long-term, monthly and short-term targets.

36. There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers but there is a lack of cover when teachers are absent. Students are able to use a good range of specialist equipment in their practical work and they receive good support from technicians. There is a useful Internet site to help chemistry students, but there are few computers available to students in laboratories.

Leadership and management

37. The leadership of science is enthusiastic and purposeful. However, the implementation of some college procedures is poor. For example, lessons are frequently cancelled if the teacher is absent. Agency teachers do not receive sufficient support and are not integrated sufficiently with the full-time teachers. There is a lack of sharing of ideas and good practice. There are regular staff meetings, but little discussion at them on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The process whereby staff watch one another teach has not been rigorous enough and has not resulted in the identification of specific weaknesses in teaching.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- good achievements by students on numeracy courses
- good teaching for students aged 16 to 18
- effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate on GCE A-level mathematics courses
- ineffective classroom management in some lessons
- insufficient sharing of good classroom practice.

Scope of provision

38. The college provides a broad range of programmes in mathematics at a variety of levels. Some 120 students a year are entered for GCE A-level or AS-level mathematics. Students taking GCE AS-level mathematics who achieved grade C in GCSE mathematics follow a foundation course in advanced mathematics. Some 300 students enrol on GCSE mathematics and 200 students work towards a qualification in numeracy at stage 2 or 3. Adult learners account for approximately 20% of enrolments and are represented on all courses.

Achievement and standards

39. The overall performance of students in GCE A-level mathematics is unsatisfactory. Although the pass rate increased significantly in 2000/01, the retention rate was poor at 48%. In each of the last three years, less than half of the students who enrolled on the course completed it successfully. In 2000/01 the pass rate on the GCE AS-level course was low at 51%. The pass rate for GCSE mathematics is in line with the national average. However, the college operates a selective entry policy so that only students who have achieved a grade D previously for GCSE mathematics are enrolled. Results on the numeracy course have been good at both of the levels offered. Levels of attainment are broadly in line with those predicted, but students make slow progress towards achieving their key skills application of number certification at levels 2 and 3.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Mathematics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Numeracy stage 2	2	No. of starts	92	71	45
		% retention	82	75	87
		% pass rate	70	77	67
Numeracy stage 3	2	No. of starts	143	120	150
		% retention	80	78	70
		% pass rate	82	76	98
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	215	238	295
		% retention	79	80	72
		% pass rate	46	35	44
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	120	120	114
		% retention	68	80	48
		% pass rate	40	42	71

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

40. Much of the teaching for students aged 16 to 18 is good, and for adults, it is satisfactory. Most GCE A-level and GCE AS-level lessons start with a teacher-led discussion and then the students work through examples. The quality of the discussions varies. In the best lessons, the teacher leads students to the argument through skilful and challenging questioning, which involves students fully and retains their interest. There is a strong emphasis on the development of mathematical thinking. Students are encouraged to use their common sense and find alternative methods of solving problems. In one effective practical lesson on mechanics, imaginative use was made of simple apparatus to determine the centre of mass of a triangular lamina. In weaker lessons, teachers confine their checks on students' learning to general questions to the class and provide the answers themselves on the whiteboard. Little use is made of ICT in lessons.

41. On GCSE and numeracy courses, the teaching of theory is mainly satisfactory. The range of teaching methods is narrow. Once students have completed a diagnostic assessment

of their learning needs, they work from individual worksheets, helped by the teacher. Where this is the only planned learning activity, some learners aged 16 to 18 become bored and frustrated, whilst adult learners make increasing demands of the teacher because they are not clear of what is expected of them. Teachers give individual students good support, both during lessons and the regular mathematics workshop sessions. The take-up of additional support in lessons is high. Tutorials are well planned and meet the needs of individual students.

42. The quality of assessment practice varies considerably. Some teachers mark work regularly and carefully, clearly identifying where errors have been made and suggesting how the correct solution to a problem might be achieved. Students are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. Other teachers provide marking which is only rudimentary and they merely show where the student has made errors. Many students on GCSE mathematics courses do not carry out or complete the homework they are set.

43. Teachers are well qualified. Most teaching accommodation is satisfactory, but some temporary classrooms are drab.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management of courses are mainly good. Staff meet regularly to discuss schemes of work and students' progress and achievements. Reviews of provision have resulted in changes to courses. There are now more appropriate alternatives to GCSE mathematics courses for those who were unsuccessful at school, and improved progression routes from courses. Low success rates on advanced-level programmes remain a problem.

Engineering

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

Contributory grade: work-based learning is **Good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good retention rates on most programmes
- good pass rates
- excellent equipment and workshop facilities
- well-planned on-the-job training for apprentices
- good management of work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on numeracy programmes for students aged 16 to 18
- slow progress of some apprentices towards achieving qualifications
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- poor accommodation for theory sessions
- unsatisfactory tutorials for part-time students.

Scope of provision

45. The college provides a broad range of courses leading to craft qualifications from level 1 to level 3. Technician courses have been updated and now lead to a national diploma in computer control and a qualification in computer maintenance. Of the 800 enrolments on courses in engineering in 1999/2000, 59% were adults, mostly on craft courses at level 2. A similar proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 were on level 2 craft and level 3 technician courses. Ten apprentices are on a programme specifically designed for a major car manufacturer. Most apprentices attend the college full-time for a year and then on one day each week for a further three years. The majority of students who complete the national diploma programme progress to HE. Most work-based trainees are advanced modern apprentices and are employed by engineering companies in the north of Birmingham.

Achievement and standards

46. Retention rates on college programmes in engineering are consistently good. Pass rates are good on most programmes. For example, the pass rate on the national certificate

course was 94% in 2001. However, the pass rate for learners aged 16 to 18 on the mechanical production competencies course has been low in each of the last three years.

47. The average retention rate for modern apprentices is good at 70%. Of the 47 modern apprentices who left the programme between April 2000 and March 2001, 24 have completed the full apprentice framework. Thirty of them achieved an NVQ at level 3 and all of them achieved an NVQ at level 2. Many have achieved qualifications beyond those required for completion of the framework. For example, 40% of the apprentices entering the fourth year of their apprenticeship have achieved three NVQs at level 3, in addition to qualifications required by the framework. Ten apprentices on the car manufacturer's programme achieved 34 distinctions in the 71 examinations that they took. The standard of most students' work is satisfactory. Mature modern apprentices from a national car manufacturer are engaged in projects on the design and testing of emergency stop circuits for installation on machine tools in the college workshops. Apprentices who started within the last year have made rapid progress with key skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ engineering	2	No. of starts	174	68	106
		% retention	99	84	88
		% pass rate	59	86	60
City and Guilds 214 part 2	2	No. of starts	40	21	*
		% retention	88	90	*
		% pass rate	43	58	*
City and Guilds 228 part 2	2	No. of starts	29	21	16
		% retention	83	86	63
		% pass rate	29	6	38
City and Guilds part 2	2	No. of starts	37	98	*
		% retention	86	83	*
		% pass rate	90	68	*

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	51	58	24
		% retention	75	84	100
		% pass rate	76	53	96
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	19	44	27
		% retention	63	73	93
		% pass rate	100	72	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* data unavailable

Quality of education and training

48. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching on courses at the college. Most lessons are poorly planned. Schemes of work lack detail. Lessons do not always follow the scheme of work. Lesson plans are not produced for all lessons, and where they do exist they lack detail. The teaching methods are narrow in their scope and seldom meet the needs of all learners effectively. Some teaching methods are inappropriate for the subject and class. For example, in theory lessons for adults the teachers talk too much and do not check that learners have understood what they have said. There is insufficient use of practical teaching aids, such as examples of tools or models. In the better classes, teachers effectively link the tasks undertaken to the students' experiences in the workplace. Practical examples are used to strengthen the students' understanding. On some courses, the students work through excellent workbooks and task sheets. These contain demanding exercises differentiated in difficulty, to meet the needs of all students. Modern apprentices work in large companies which design and produce engineering products to a high standard. They all offer apprentices a wide range of experience through which they can learn engineering skills. Most apprentices have on-the-job training plans, which set out the time they spend in each area of the company. They often have experience of the commercial as well as the technical departments. The apprentices' supervisors are highly skilled and suitably experienced. Apprentices on the car manufacturers' programme are highly motivated to gain all they can from their course. In addition to the one day each week they spend at college, they are also given a further day of practical off-the-job training in the car plant.

49. Most teaching staff are appropriately qualified and some have gained recent industrial experience on secondment. The equipment and facilities in the college are excellent. Many of the machines match those currently used in industry. In contrast, electronics laboratories lack sufficient basic equipment. Many theory lessons take place in

inappropriate accommodation. Several classes are located in rooms which are too small for the group. Other theory classes are taught in computer rooms where the students do not have enough desk space to write notes. Monitors on the desks often obscure the view of the teacher.

50. The progress of full-time students is monitored carefully. During tutorials, students record their short-term and long-term learning goals for their action plans. The action plans help students to identify what they need to do in order to achieve their qualifications. Tutorials for part-time students are not planned or structured and are usually of little value. They are often used as a means of providing students with extra time in which they can complete their assignments.

51. Assessment is well managed and fair. The college's two full-time assessors carry out most of the assessment for NVQ level 3. Other assessors are employed by the college but are located in employers' premises. Assessment and verification are tightly controlled. Apprentices' records contain an estimate, in percentage terms, of how much work has been carried out towards achievement of the NVQ, and they show which NVQ and key skills units have been completed. The records are updated every month. When apprentices leave, a record is kept of their reason for leaving. Some apprentices have made slow progress towards the achievement of an NVQ at level 3 and did not start key skills training until a late stage of the course. A few apprentices have rarely been assessed through observation of their performance at work.

Leadership and management

52. Responsibility for the management of engineering courses in the college is divided between three faculties. Each faculty has produced self-assessment reports. These provide a fragmented evaluation of engineering and there are some discrepancies between the judgements in each report. Action has yet to be taken in one programme area to improve teaching and learning and students' achievements.

53. Work-based learning in engineering is well managed by a separate unit within the college. Following the identification of weaknesses in the provision of work-based learning, changes were made to the way it was organised. These changes have proved effective and apprentices now progress at a faster rate and receive better support.

Business and accounting

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on NVQ accounting courses
- good and improving pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- imaginative teaching on GNVQ intermediate and AVCE courses
- good personal support for individual students
- flexible attendance arrangements for adults.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for students aged 16 to 18
- lack of commercial realism in GCE A-level accounting courses
- insufficient access to computers in lessons
- poor match between work set and the learning needs of some students.

Scope of provision

54. Business courses for around 650 full-time students aged 16 to 18 include GCSE business studies, GCE AS and A level in business studies and accounting, GNVQ foundation, GNVQ intermediate and AVCE business. About 200 adults are working towards an NVQ in accounting. Most are employed in financial occupations and there are currently three work-based modern apprentices who attend college on one day each week to study accounting. NVQ courses are offered during the day and in the evenings and teachers design flexible attendance patterns to meet individual needs. In 2000, an access to HE course in business was introduced for adults. In 2001, a small group of students has been recruited for this.

Achievement and standards

55. Retention rates for most full-time 16 to 18 courses are slightly below national averages. For example, in 2001, the retention rate for full-time GCE A-level students was 51%. The pass rate for students who completed their GCE A-level course was high, at 90% and most students obtained grade C or above. In many instances, the grade students achieved was higher than that predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on most level 2 and level 3 courses are at the national average, though GCSE pass rates are low. The pass rate is low on the GNVQ foundation course. In each of

the last three years, less than a third of the students who started the course have achieved a qualification.

56. Retention and pass rates for adult students are good. Retention and pass rates of part-time students on courses leading to an NVQ in accounting at levels 2, 3 and 4 have improved over the last three years and are now well above the national average.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Business and accounting, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation business	1	No. of starts	48	23	25
		% retention	63	65	44
		% pass rate	43	47	73
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	39	46	44
		% retention	77	78	73
		% pass rate	66	72	69
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	63	59	56
		% retention	84	66	67
		% pass rate	69	67	68
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	81	73	54
		% retention	58	78	54
		% pass rate	82	59	79
NVQ accounting (AAT)	3	No. of starts	89	65	56
		% retention	85	91	82
		% pass rate	63	48	61
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	86	64	53
		% retention	85	88	81
		% pass rate	62	52	61

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level business and accounting	3	No. of starts	178	159	145
		% retention	71	72	53
		% pass rate	67	55	90
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	44	55	78
		% retention	91	96	82
		% pass rate	19	33	67

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

57. There is a good working atmosphere in lessons and many teachers are adept at strengthening students' understanding by making links with past lessons. For example, when discussing the determinants of demand and how changes affect markets, students referred to notes taken previously, interpreted their own graphs and used topical business scenarios to justify their conclusions. Teachers on GNVQ and AVCE courses showed particular skill in giving the work a focus which matched the interests of the learners. One group gathered information from trade literature and the Internet to illustrate the retailing methods of well known companies. Another group of students engaged in role-play to explore ways of accepting payment for goods. The students then drew on their own experiences to highlight good and poor practice. On GCE A-level business courses, teachers questioned students skilfully to test their understanding.

58. A small proportion of teachers have no clear learning objectives for their lessons and explain concepts to students instead of encouraging them to think them out for themselves. Their teaching methods are narrow in scope. They require the students to carry out unimaginative learning activities such as note taking, instead of stimulating tasks designed to extend their knowledge and understanding. Insufficient reference is made in lessons on the GCE A-level accounting course to modern business practices. Students complete practical accounts' exercises without a basic understanding of why or how the activities are useful in a work context. In contrast, students on GNVQ and AVCE courses engage in learning activities, such as educational visits and work experience, which help them to understand how theory can be applied to practice effectively.

59. In many lessons, the class was taught as a whole. Teachers seldom modified their teaching methods to help some students who had difficulty in keeping up with the others. It was rare for teachers to provide individual students with alternative learning materials and activities, to enable them to learn more effectively. It was particularly apparent that some

students who had progressed from foundation courses to intermediate-level courses, or from GCE AS-level subjects to GCE A-level work, required individual attention in the early stages of their new course. Some students needed to fill significant gaps in their knowledge, whilst others were repeating work unnecessarily.

60. Some teachers of full-time students are not aware of key-skills specifications and subsequently lose opportunities to develop and assess them. Students do not understand the relevance of key skills. The college has been slow to plan and develop the required key-skills training for modern apprentices.

61. Teachers give regular feedback to students about their progress and marked work is returned promptly. Sometimes, work is marked by more than one teacher to ensure that grading is fair. Internal verification procedures are thorough.

62. All students have weekly tutorials and receive good pastoral support. During one-to-one tutorials, the students are given target grades to aim towards and deadlines by which work to be assessed must be carried out. Some of the accommodation timetabled for tutorials is unsuitable because rooms are used in which individual students are unable to talk to the tutor in confidence. On most courses, the students elect a course representative. Meetings of course representatives are held to discuss concerns the students may have. Teachers are particularly sensitive to the needs of adults. They make flexible arrangements for tutorials to accommodate adults who have personal and work commitments.

63. Teachers are well qualified. Part-time staff make a significant contribution to the teaching. The accommodation for business is mainly satisfactory. Following heavy enrolment at the time of inspection, it had been necessary to timetable some larger classes into rooms too small for them. The teaching methods which could be implemented under these circumstances were severely restricted in their range. It was difficult for students in a large class crammed into a small room to carry out group work, structured discussion, or individual assignments. The average class size at the time of inspection was 13 students, which was much higher than the average size of business studies classes which have been inspected in colleges during the past year. There is insufficient use of IT to provide commercial realism in business and accounting lessons. GCE A-level students do not have any lessons in rooms in which there are computers. Some students on the GNVQ intermediate course in business have only two lessons a week during which they have access to computers. Many students use the well-equipped learning resource centre, though at busy periods there are not enough computers there to meet student demands.

Leadership and management

64. Programme managers maintain good communications with one another and aim to raise standards. Course teams meet regularly. Managers produce annual reviews and development plans from which the key strengths and issues in the self-assessment report are drawn. Course reviews give a comprehensive analysis of enrolments and retention and pass rates during the year. The reviews, however, are not effective in identifying issues requiring attention over the two years' duration of advanced programmes.

Business administration and management

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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- well-resourced business training office
- wide range of courses
- well-planned lessons
- comprehensive work-experience programme.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous in assessment
- poor teaching in some lessons for students aged 16 to 18.

Scope of provision

65. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in administration and management. A course leading to an NVQ in administration is offered to students on day release from employment. Vocational courses are available leading to a range of qualifications, including those of professional bodies. There are currently 154 full-time students of whom 76 are aged 16 to 18. There is one New Deal client and three students on NVQ administration programmes in their workplace. Of the 439 part-time students, 83% are over 19 years old.

Achievement and standards

66. Examination results are very good. Pass rates on most management courses are above the national average. On the certificate in management course they are significantly above the national average. The pass rate on the legal secretaries' diploma course for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students on the general administration courses are consistently good.

67. Retention rates are high on most courses. Most students are well motivated, keen to attend and punctual. Some lessons, however, are not well attended. For example, a lesson on the NVQ level 2 administration was attended by less than half the students on the register.

68. Most students' written work is well organised and neatly presented. Most students on advanced-level courses demonstrate that they have an appropriate level of knowledge, are able to interpret data and can apply business theory in practical exercises. Students working

to become qualified legal executives were able to apply the principles of negligence law through case studies. In a lesson on management, they developed their skills of information analysis and team building successfully through debating the most effective way to carry out a cave rescue.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Business administration and management, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE office applications	2	No. of starts	**	13	13
		% retention	**	84	100
		% pass rate	**	54	54
ILEX legal secretaries' diploma (1 year)	3	No. of starts	**	25	15
		% retention	**	84	87
		% pass rate	**	95	*
RSA audio transcription 3 part 2 (1 year)	3	No. of starts	66	41	37
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	80	98	95
Advanced certificate in marketing	3	No. of starts	13	17	18
		% retention	67	65	78
		% pass rate	50	67	*
CIPD certificate in personnel practice (1 year)	3	No. of starts	42	54	43
		% retention	98	94	86
		% pass rate	95	90	*
Certificate in management (2 year)	4	No. of starts	16	31	12
		% retention	81	84	100
		% pass rate	92	76	*

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001). * data not available ** course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, on management courses, often very good. In the best lessons, teaching is planned well. Teachers draw effectively upon their professional experience, use successful teaching methods, and excite and hold the students' interest. Lessons have clear aims and objectives. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They use examples familiar to students to demonstrate business theory. In a lesson on the certificate in marketing course, students were set an exercise on a major retail store chain with well-known outlets and this helped them to understand the importance of market segmentation. In some lessons for students aged 16 to 18, the pace is too fast for them and explanations of theory are not clear. The students lose interest and make slow progress.

70. Students on the medical and legal secretarial programmes benefit from a well-organised, sixteen-week work-experience programme. Students welcome this and say it has increased their understanding of the respective professions. While on their work experience, they are able to gather evidence of their acquisition of skills for inclusion in their assessment portfolios. Younger students gain more confidence through dealing formally with members of the public. Where necessary, employers will change the students' duties to enable the students to gain more experience. Some 48% of students on legal secretarial courses were offered employment by the providers of their work experience.

71. Assignments are relevant to the programme of study. Students are informed of performance criteria and know what is expected of them. Formal assessment, however, lacks rigour. On some courses, teachers use a narrow range of assessment methods and carry out a disproportionate amount of assessment through the formal marking of students' written work. Teachers mark and return work promptly but their comments do not indicate how students can improve their work to obtain a higher grade. Little assessment is carried out in the work place.

72. Tutorial support is good. All students are allocated personal tutors and meet with them regularly. Adult students may contact their tutor by telephone at any time. Tutorials for part-time students have been introduced this year.

73. Teachers are well qualified and most have experience of management or commerce. They regularly update their professional knowledge by attendance at professional body conferences and relevant training events. Rooms are furnished appropriately, but the temperature in some of them is too high. The business training office provides a professional realistic working and training environment. Resources in the new IT suite are excellent. Library facilities are good and the students make good use of all the learning resources they offer.

Leadership and management

74. Programmes are well managed. Course teams meet regularly. Courses are altered to reflect changing requirements. Staff are aware of the needs of the employers and the local community. For example, there is an advisory committee for the course for medical

secretaries' practitioners and receptionists. This consists of local medical practitioners who meet twice a year with a faculty head to discuss course provision. The college has organised short secretarial courses on medical terminology and has changed the course for practice managers to reflect the needs of current general medical practices. Faculties use the college's quality assurance procedures. Teachers observe one another's lessons and managers monitor teaching more formally. Programme reviews are detailed and include an effective analysis of examination results. Action plans resulting from the reviews, however, do not always identify clearly those areas of work which need to be improved.

Information and communications technology

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

Strengths

- good results of students on the national diploma course in computer studies
- good results of students on the integrated business technology (IBT) level 3 course
- good retention rates on part-time programmes
- good participation and progression rates on part-time programmes
- good links with schools
- effective management of part-time courses.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on the GCE A-level computing course
- low pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in ICT
- much unsatisfactory teaching on full-time courses
- some poor course management
- insufficient use of information learning technology (ILT) in teaching
- some poor use of specialist accommodation.

Scope of provision

75. There is a broad range of full and part-time courses in computing and ICT from level 1 to level 4. There are good routes for progression from these courses. Enrolment on these courses has been high and is increasing. In 2000/01, 303 students joined the main full-time courses and 1,150 joined the most popular part-time courses. The college's part-time courses are arranged with considerable flexibility to meet students' needs. Courses are available throughout the week and they are of varying duration. The college has good links with schools. Some full-time and part-time courses are taught on the premises of local schools. The college has provided computers at a local primary school. These are used in the evening by part-time students enrolled on a college course and by a consortium of primary schools during the day. In a secondary school where post-16 participation rates are low, the college provides equipment and staff to enable pupils to work towards an AVCE in ICT.

Achievement and standards

76. Students on the national diploma in computer studies produce good work, and those who complete the course achieve high pass grades. The majority of those who complete the course go on to study computing at university. Students on part-time IT courses obtain good results. Pass rates on the IBT course at level 3 are very good and consistently above the national average. Retention rates on part-time programmes are good. Many part-time students progress within the college through IT courses at successive levels and say that they have improved their career prospects as a result. The retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course in ICT is improving, but the pass rate remains low. The pass rate on the GCE A-level computer studies course has improved significantly and some students who had low GCSE grades on entry do particularly well. The retention rate on this course, however, has fallen below the national average.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	1,225	1,241	797
		% retention	93	90	81
		% pass rate	59	51	63
IBT 2	2	No. of starts	210	485	276
		% retention	97	91	93
		% pass rate	85	53	59
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	40	63	79
		% retention	78	83	82
		% pass rate	77	46	45

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
National diploma in computer studies	3	No. of starts	65	66	107
		% retention	69	83	73
		% pass rate	82	73	88
IBT 3	3	No. of starts	26	88	108
		% retention	85	92	90
		% pass rate	*	68	89
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	94	95	117
		% retention	61	78	47
		% pass rate	46	43	71

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* data not available

Quality of education and training

77. Most of the teaching is at least satisfactory and two thirds of it is good. However, there is much unsatisfactory teaching on courses for students aged 16 to 18. Students appreciate the extensive availability of the IT workshops and the flexible way in which they are organised to suit individual aptitudes and abilities. Some students develop specialist skills in, for example, web-page design and Internet technologies. In most lessons, teachers explain their aims. They have extensive and up-to-date knowledge of their subject and make good use of this to extend students' understanding and skills. In one lesson, the teacher drew upon his commercial experience to help the students understand the real problems involved in designing a computer programme for a user who might keep changing the specification. In another good lesson, the teacher demonstrated a wide knowledge of programming and helped the students to recognise and avoid the most common mistakes in assigning variables in program design. The working relationships between teachers and students are good and most lessons are well planned. In the unsatisfactory lessons the teacher talked too much and the students did little more than copy notes from overhead transparencies.

78. Students on the second year of the national diploma course make good use of a well-designed resource manual to develop their skills in programming. The manual details extension activities such as designing animation routines which the more able students find demanding. Some teachers on full-time courses fail to take account of students' prior knowledge and students complete tasks which are too easy. In practical lessons, teachers

monitor the progress of individual students effectively and provide them with useful feedback on their performance.

79. In lessons, teachers make insufficient use of IT and specialist software and equipment such as scanners, projectors and digital cameras is not readily available to them. Teachers who have access to good teaching resources, such as multimedia projectors, give interactive demonstration which the students value and enjoy. There is a lack of some specialist resources. In some instances, course content has not been updated.

80. The new learning centre at the Erdington site is housed in good accommodation and has excellent equipment. The centre provides a rolling programme of induction to IT workshops, and assessment on demand. Part-time students use the facility extensively. In the best lessons in the learning centre, teachers were able to provide both interactive demonstrations on the wide screens and support and guidance for individual students. In some lessons, however, teachers failed to check that the students were making progress and that they understood what they were doing. The students in these lessons resorted to aimless surfing of the Internet or chatting. The best use is not always made of specialist accommodation on the main site. Some classes were timetabled in rooms unsuitable for them. At times, there are many classes all using the IT centre at the same time.

81. Assessment and recording forms used on part-time courses are used properly. Assessment practices meet awarding body requirements. On courses for students aged 16 to 18, there is a lack of consistency in the amount of homework the students are given, the frequency of their assignments, and the grading criteria teachers use. Some teachers give the students more detailed feedback on the quality of their work than others. There is no assessment policy and students are given insufficient information and guidance about how and when to complete their work. There are no formal procedures for the internal moderation of standards on computing and ICT courses.

82. Staff are appropriately qualified and most hold teaching qualifications. Some staff have not updated their commercial experience sufficiently recently.

83. Advice and guidance given to prospective part-time students is thorough and impartial. Part-time adult students also receive effective and timely tutorial support, including help with basic skills should they need it. Reviews of the progress of students aged 16 to 18 are not carried out and recorded well.

Leadership and management

84. Part-time courses in ICT for adults are managed effectively and the quality of the provision is monitored carefully and conscientiously. Curriculum teams meet frequently and minutes and actions arising from the meetings are recorded and circulated. The management of full-time provision is unsatisfactory. The college's quality assurance systems are not applied rigorously. Staff do not share good practice in the management of part-time courses. There is not enough communication and liaison between staff responsible for full-time

courses. Insufficient action has been taken to monitor the quality of full-time provision and ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Sports, leisure and travel

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on diploma and GCE A-level courses
- good teaching by full-time teachers
- extensive enrichment programme for sports students
- effective individual guidance and support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCSE PE and GNVQ foundation courses
- some poor teaching by agency staff
- poor timetabling arrangements
- inadequate support for agency staff.

Scope of provision

85. The sports, leisure and travel provision includes full-time GNVQ programmes in leisure and tourism at foundation and intermediate level and AVCE courses in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism. First, national, and higher national diploma courses in sports studies are also available. GCSE PE is offered as part of a full-time five GCSE resit package and as part of Curriculum 2000. GCE A and AS-level sports studies and physical recreation are also offered as part of Curriculum 2000. In 2000/01, this range of courses attracted 300 students, 97% of whom were aged 16 to 18.

86. Students on leisure and sports programmes have good opportunities to achieve additional qualifications. They can work towards up to six additional coaching awards, a qualification in first aid and NVQs in football coaching. They can also participate in the activities of football and basketball academies run by professional clubs. Each year a group of students travels to America to provide football coaching during the summer months. Travel and tourism students also study to obtain qualifications for overseas tours' representatives and they can take a one-day course for cabin crew.

Achievement and standards

87. There are high pass rates on the GCE A-level PE, national diploma and first diploma in applied science (sports studies). In 2000/01, four GCE A-level students achieved A grades and one student was among the top five in the country in terms of results. Last year, the first

diploma course was run for the first time and the pass rate was 100%. The pass rate on GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism was also 100%, but the retention rate was low. Pass rates on GCSE PE and GNVQ foundation in leisure and tourism courses are poor.

88. Students' work on GCE A-level courses is good. Students are able to analyse movement accurately and carry out in-depth analysis of their own and other students' sporting techniques and ability. Many students progress to HE and employment. For example, of the 15 students who obtained their national diploma in 2000/01, 10 progressed to HE and five entered employment. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored but attendance is low in some classes.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Sports, leisure and travel, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	No. of starts	23	27	22
		% retention	65	70	45
		% pass rate	53	42	50
First diploma in applied science (sports studies)	2	No. of starts	*	*	24
		% retention	*	*	75
		% pass rate	*	*	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	26	30	23
		% retention	69	63	39
		% pass rate	78	68	100
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	*	47	55
		% retention	*	67	53
		% pass rate	*	48	79
National diploma in applied science (sports studies)	3	No. of starts	*	16	19
		% retention	*	100	79
		% pass rate	*	82	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level PE	3	No. of starts	33	24	24
		% retention	61	71	71
		% pass rate	50	88	83

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

89. There is good teaching on the diploma, AVCE and GCE A-level programmes. Lessons are well planned and students find them stimulating. Students participate in learning activities with enthusiasm. In lessons on the AVCE course, learning tasks have clear relevance to the leisure industry. Students enjoy carrying out activities such as running the booking system of a local leisure centre. However, there is also much poor teaching. Many of the agency staff are unaware of the ability levels of the students in their groups and of what the students need to do in order to gain their qualification. Their lesson plans lack detail and teaching styles are narrow in range.

90. Students are given good support to enable them to improve their performance. Tutorials are effective in providing groups and individual students with help and guidance and the students value them. Students who have been identified as needing additional learning support are given extra help in the classroom and further work to carry out at home.

91. Homework clubs and the library drop-in centre are well used by students. Students receive good help in planning their assignment work and in preparing for examinations. Most students are given detailed and valuable feedback on their performance in assessments and they are told what they need to do to improve their work. On foundation programmes, systems for monitoring students' progress do not provide early identification of students who are falling behind with their assignments. On diploma courses, students' work is marked by more than one teacher with the aim of ensuring the assessment is fair. On GNVQ courses, arrangements for the internal verification of assessments are adequate.

92. Most teaching staff are appropriately qualified. Many have little teaching experience but they have relevant industrial and commercial backgrounds. Some teachers make good use of their recent industrial experience to make their lessons more interesting. There are good new intranet search facilities. Travel students can use an on-line booking service. Most facilities are satisfactory, but there is no sports field. Spanish and science are taught in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Leadership and management

93. Full-time staff have clear areas of responsibility and work well together. Programme teams carry out effective reviews of courses which have led to improvements in the quality of the teaching by full-time staff. Action to improve the GCSE course in PE has not, however, proved effective. There is insufficient support for, and monitoring of, the large number of agency staff employed. Some 48% of lessons are taught by agency staff. The college has introduced an induction for agency staff this year, but no new agency staff from this curriculum area attended it. Although agency staff are provided with a handbook, they receive insufficient guidance before they begin teaching their classes. Arrangements for the formal observation of lessons taken by agency staff are inadequate. Timetabling of classes is not systematic enough. Students are not always given accurate information on where lessons are being held and waste time trying to find them.

Health, social care and public services

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on national diploma and some adult courses
- good teaching on courses for adults
- good progression rates.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on many programmes
- poor and declining retention rates
- some unsatisfactory teaching on 16 to 18 programmes
- poor curriculum leadership and management
- poor deployment of resources.

Scope of provision

94. The college offers a wide range of courses for students aged 16 to 18, including those leading to GNVQ health and social care at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels, AVCE health and social care, the diploma in childcare and education, first diplomas in care and early years and national diplomas in health studies and early childhood education. Two new programmes introduced this year include those leading to the first and national diploma in public services. The college has responded to the needs of adult learners who have personal commitments outside the college, by offering a diploma in childcare and education course which is timetabled across a shortened day. Other provision for adults includes a variety of access to health studies courses, a course leading to an NVQ in early years care and education at level 3, a wide range of counselling courses and a diploma in management care services course for managers of residential and domiciliary care homes. There has been a large increase in enrolments on the NVQ programme this year. There is little provision at level 1 and 2 for adult learners.

Achievement and standards

95. Retention and pass rates are low on most courses for students aged 16 to 18. There are very low retention and pass rates on the diploma in childcare and education course, low rates on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses. Retention rates are low on the first diploma in caring course. Retention rates on the diploma in childcare and education and first

diploma courses have declined significantly in the last three years. There are high retention and pass rates on the national diploma in science (health studies) courses.

96. Pass rates on the NVQ early years and certificate in counselling courses are good. The pass rate on the diploma in management care services course is low. A large proportion of students on the course failed to complete work towards the qualification within the two-year time-scale allowed.

97. Many students progress to HE, other FE courses, or go into employment. For example, all students who obtained the national diploma in health studies progressed to HE. Of the 19 who obtained the national diploma, 11 went on to HE and the remainder went into employment. Most of the students who obtained a diploma in childcare and education, went into employment.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Health, social care and public services, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
First diploma in caring	1	No. of starts	19	16	27
		% retention	89	60	50
		% pass rate	60	33	80
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	18	12	17
		% retention	67	58	59
		% pass rate	8	43	50
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	15	15	13
		% retention	93	93	85
		% pass rate	100	100	91
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	15	33	33
		% retention	73	67	71
		% pass rate	57	50	59

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Access to health	3	No. of starts	15	48	58
		% retention	60	82	70
		% pass rate	67	82	66
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	64	30	37
		% retention	73	87	51
		% pass rate	79	88	58
National diploma in science (health studies)	3	No. of starts	28	34	21
		% retention	86	91	95
		% pass rate	83	90	95
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	48	21	21
		% retention	75	81	95
		% pass rate	50	94	95
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	18	12	18
		% retention	56	58	50
		% pass rate	30	67	67

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

98. Many of the best lessons are those for groups of adult students. These lessons are well structured and theory is linked to practice. Teachers encourage the students to draw on their own work experience as a means of strengthening their understanding of points made in the lesson. Clear learning objectives are set and students participate in learning activities with enthusiasm. In weaker lessons, there was no differentiation of teaching methods and learning activities to suit the diverse abilities of students in the class. Learning tasks were seldom demanding and they failed to extend students’ knowledge and skills. The lessons lacked momentum and a sense of purpose. Much of the unsatisfactory teaching is on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18. Groups of students are set tasks, but there are not deadlines for their completion, and they take too long to carry them out. Objectives set

lessons are not always met. During lessons, teachers fail to check systematically that students understand what they are being taught. A few students were allowed to dominate class discussions.

99. All students aged 16 to 18 are taught key skills through discrete lessons. These lessons do not relate closely to their main courses and students do not see their relevance. Some key skills lessons take place in rooms too small for the size of the class where it is not practical for the students to engage in group activities, discussion or individual project work.

100. Assignments are clearly written and meet course requirements. Assessment is rigorous and teachers make constructive comments to help students to improve the quality of their work. Assessment schedules are not always planned carefully and some students have to meet a series of deadlines in quick succession. Internal verification is carried out but not always planned well or recorded properly. Work placements are well organised and give students a variety of appropriate experiences. Teachers make visits to students in their placements to support them and check on their progress.

101. Most teachers are well qualified. The college's provision in this curriculum area has grown recently and there are staff shortages. Posts remain vacant and there are frequent changes of part-time teachers. There are insufficient assessors to cope with the recent expansion of the NVQ programme. Rooms are decorated with student's work relevant to the area of learning and in most cases, are bright and welcoming.

Leadership and management

102. Health courses, especially access programmes for adult students, are well managed. Courses are well planned and their effectiveness is monitored and evaluated regularly. Action plans to improve provision are specific with clear criteria for measuring effectiveness. Individual members of staff on the social care and early years programmes carry out their duties conscientiously but they lack leadership. Staff shortages and staff absence through illness has meant that managers often have to take classes themselves. Agency staff are not sufficiently informed of course content and assessment requirements before they begin teaching. Although self-assessment is conducted rigorously, course teams are not given accurate information to help them measure the effectiveness of their course against internal and external benchmarks. Accurate data are not available to course teams. Specific targets for improving retention and pass rates are not set. There is little effective action planning to rectify weaknesses.

Visual arts

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

Strengths

- good achievements of students on advanced-level programmes
- effective teaching
- high standard of students' work
- excellent learning resources
- good range of specialist programmes for full-time students
- good course management.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- poor retention and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate art and design course.

Scope of provision

103. There is a wide range of full-time courses in visual arts. More than 370 students are studying at intermediate and advanced levels. Courses include GCE AS-level art with options in textiles, graphics, 3D design and fine art and GNVQ in general art and design at intermediate and advanced level. Courses are offered leading to national diplomas in foundation studies, graphic design, 3D and fashion/textiles. The majority of students are aged 16 to 19. There are good opportunities for them to progress to other courses within the college, to HE and to employment. There is no discrete full-time provision for adults, although some join the diploma in foundation studies course. There are few part-time courses for adults.

Achievement and standards

104. Pass rates are high on advanced-level courses. Pass rates on the foundation studies, fashion/textiles and 3D courses are particularly good. In 2001, the retention and pass rates were 92% and 99%, respectively. On all courses, students' work is of a high standard and demonstrates the effective application of a wide range of skills and techniques. The work in students' sketchbooks is of a high standard and demonstrates that the students have acquired good skills of observational drawing. The evidence in students' portfolios indicates that students have used diverse and well-developed approaches to problem solving with confidence. Students use IT creatively. They develop their IT skills through project work and use them from an early stage of their course.

105. Retention and pass rates are poor on the GNVQ intermediate course. In 2000/01 the retention rate was only 57% compared with the national average of 78%. Of those students who completed their course, 56% achieved a full GNVQ compared with the national average of 80%. In 2001/02, 73 students have been enrolled on the GNVQ intermediate course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Visual arts, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	35	61	44
		% retention	86	69	57
		% pass rate	83	50	56
National diploma in fashion/textiles	3	No. of starts	21	13	16
		% retention	52	85	69
		% pass rate	91	91	90
National diploma in graphic design	3	No. of starts	17	19	35
		% retention	88	78	54
		% pass rate	73	71	90
National diploma in 3D	3	No. of starts	13	13	19
		% retention	77	92	68
		% pass rate	89	82	92
National diploma in foundation studies	3	No. of starts	75	76	83
		% retention	91	91	92
		% pass rate	100	87	99

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

106. The majority of the teaching was excellent. No teaching was less than satisfactory. Schemes of work are devised with care. Course teams plan lessons to ensure that the links between subjects are clear. Teachers aim to ensure that the students acquire essential skills which they can then use effectively to produce good work. The students find that activities

designed to assess their competencies are both interesting and exciting. For example, in a lesson on computer-aided design, the teacher aimed to help the students become more proficient in creating shapes, colours, lines and bezier curves. They were given an exercise involving the editing and adapting of a prepared graphic. It was possible within the scope of the exercise for students to reach a minimum competence or to develop and experiment further. The students found the exercise amusing but also demanding. It was designed carefully to suit the varying abilities of students in the group. Students value the freedom of interpretation they are given, which often results in exciting and distinctive work.

107. The teaching of key skills is well planned and closely linked to the art and design curriculum. Key-skills specialists work with course teams to ensure that key skills are taught within the context of the visual arts and are an integral part of the course. Critical studies are well planned and underpin practical work. Students value the range of expertise they gain and recognise how it furthers their development. Support for students is good. Students are appreciative of the guidance they receive before joining the course, and on the course itself.

108. Assignments are constructed carefully. Deadlines are clear and work is marked promptly. However, the written feedback some teachers give students on the quality of their work is insufficiently detailed and constructive. Internal verification of the assessment of assignments is not rigorous or systematic enough.

109. Staff are well qualified. The design centre offers a vibrant learning environment where students feel well supported. It is visually exciting and examples of students' and staff work are on display throughout the building. Technical equipment is up to date and appropriate. The centre is not easily accessible, however, to wheelchair users. The centre does not have parking facilities and students have to use a nearby pay-and-display car park. Some working areas are separated only by partitions which do not keep the noise out effectively. The library is small and does not have extensive stock and resources. It contains few video-films and journals and no CD-ROM facilities.

Leadership and management

110. Management is good and leadership is strong. Course team meetings are regular. Part-time staff are fully involved in the monitoring of provision. Students' retention and pass rates are not compared with national averages. Findings from analysis of these rates are not taken into consideration when drawing up the action plan for this curriculum area. The department has not taken comprehensive action to implement Curriculum 2000. Students work towards an additional GCE AS level in an art and design subject, but beyond this they do not undertake activities which aim to give breadth to their learning.

Performing arts and media

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on national diploma courses
- high standard of students' work
- well-designed and ably managed courses
- broad range of experiences for students
- good support for students on entry.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GCE A-level courses
- some unsuitable accommodation
- narrow range of provision for adults.

Scope of provision

111. The college provides extensive provision for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Most of the provision is at level 3. It includes full-time first and national diploma courses in dance and drama and GCE A and AS-level dance and drama courses. There are currently 85 students enrolled on these courses. There are 109 full-time students on media courses. These include GNVQ intermediate, national diploma, and GCE A and AS-level courses. Sixteen adult students are working towards a certificate in media. There are few part-time and full-time courses that have been adapted to meet the needs of adults.

Achievement and standards

112. There are excellent pass rates on National diploma courses. In 2000/01, 94% of media students and all dance and drama students achieved their diploma. Retention rates on these courses are also high. The pass rates on GCE A-level courses have improved over the last three years. In 2000/01, the pass rate on the GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts course was high, at 90%. Last year, the pass rate on the GCE AS-level course in drama was excellent, at 97%. The retention rate on the first diploma in performing arts course is unsatisfactory. The standard of students' work is high. In performing arts, all students are able to work on their own or in groups in lessons, performances and productions. Students learn quickly. In the second week of the academic year, first-year drama students were able to work collaboratively to develop narrative and movement sequences and perform them with

confidence. Students are punctual and the overall attendance rate for performing arts and media students is high, at 87%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Performing arts and media, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Certificate in media	2	No. of starts	4	9	16
		% retention	100	89	75
		% pass rate	100	62	83
First diploma in dance and drama	2	No. of starts	19	25	15
		% retention	63	72	67
		% pass rate	83	89	80
National diploma in dance and drama	3	No. of starts	10	20	32
		% retention	40	65	97
		% pass rate	67	100	100
National diploma in media	3	No. of starts	36	47	35
		% retention	69	85	85
		% pass rate	96	92	94
GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts	3	No. of starts	19	20	20
		% retention	74	68	55
		% pass rate	43	62	90
GCE A-level communications/ media	3	No. of starts	38	43	35
		% retention	87	77	69
		% pass rate	58	56	68

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

113. The overall quality of the teaching in both performing arts and media is good. All lessons were at least satisfactory. Schemes of work are comprehensive and specify learning objectives to be used in the planning of individual lessons. Most lessons are planned carefully and carried out well. Teaching is imaginative. In lessons, teachers provide students with a wide range of learning activities. For example, in one excellent lesson a group of national diploma students was asked to produce a short television news broadcast, involving the production and rehearsal of scripts and the management of the studio and control room. Students were assigned individual tasks and they carried out their responsibilities confidently, displaying good technical understanding. The final broadcast started on time and was excellent. The group then repeated the demonstration and students discussed with the teacher where good practice had been demonstrated and where improvements were needed. On performing arts courses, teachers give careful attention to ways of helping students develop performance contact work effectively. In a few less successful sessions some activities were too long and students lost interest.

114. Students on full-time courses can work towards additional qualifications. They choose those which are related to their main courses. There is little scope for students to broaden their learning beyond their main specialism and they seldom study other subjects in the college curriculum as part of their programme. Insufficient importance is attached to the development of students' key skills within their lessons.

115. Individual tutorials are used effectively to monitor the progress of students' work. Course leaflets are good. There is a well-organised induction programme and effective support for individual students during their course. Assessment of work is fair. Students are aware of deadlines for the completion of work and they usually meet them. However, insufficient detail is provided to students in feedback. Internal verification of assessments is satisfactory on courses in media.

116. Teachers are well qualified, suitably experienced and enthusiastic. However, most of them have insufficient up-to-date knowledge to provide specialist advice to students about more advanced courses. Few students progress from the arts and media courses to HE. Training of internal verifiers is poor in performing arts. Staff who are currently acting as internal verifiers have had no formal training and are not qualified assessors.

117. Specialist accommodation for performing arts and media courses is good. Students benefit from resources which are up to date and of professional quality. Accommodation is used heavily during the day. Some of the classrooms used for teaching theory are unsatisfactory.

Leadership and management

118. Programme managers provide good leadership. Teamwork is strong and there is a sharp focus on ways of raising standards. Demanding performance targets are set for and progress towards them is monitored carefully at regular staff meetings. The effectiveness of

the monitoring process, however, is adversely affected by the inaccuracy of the data on students' achievement available to course teams. The views of students figure prominently in self-assessment and course reviews. There has, however, been little discussion on the development of courses to suit new learners and on ways of improving the retention rate on GCE A-level courses.

Humanities

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

Strengths

- good GCE A-level results in 2001
- high standard of coursework projects in general studies
- strong determination of students to do well and succeed
- good management of the general studies programme.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- ineffective teaching methods in some lessons
- inadequate systems for monitoring the performance of staff and students
- poor accommodation.

Scope of provision

119. Provision mainly comprises GCE A and AS-level courses in history, geography, law, sociology, psychology, politics, philosophy, critical thinking, religious studies and general studies. Enrolments on GCE A-level courses in philosophy, politics, history, geography, and religious studies have been falling but the rate of decline has slowed since the introduction of GCE AS-level courses. Courses in five GCSE subjects are offered. GCSE examination entries fell from 206 in 1999/2000 to 110 in 2000/01. General studies is a compulsory component of all advanced-level programmes. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18. Only 8% of part-time evening students are aged 19 or over. The college has honoured its commitment to allow students who joined courses designed to give progression from GCE AS level to GCE A level, to work towards the GCE A-level subject of their choice, even if enrolments for it are low. GCE A-level religious studies is an example of a such a subject.

Achievement and standards

120. In 2001, the pass rates for all GCE A-level subjects taken by students of all ages, showed an improvement. The pass rates for GCE A-level geography, philosophy, sociology, psychology and politics were all over 80%. The pass rates for GCE AS-level subjects were also good, with the exception of religious studies. All first-year GCE A-level students must now take GCE AS-level general studies and the pass rate for this was 72%. Analysis shows that value was added to the achievements of most students aged 16 to 18 in five humanities

subjects. The GCE A-level grades they obtained were higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Overall, retention rates on GCE A-level courses declined in 2000/01 and were below the national average.

121. Students on the GCE AS-level general studies course produce excellent course work and make valuable contributions to class discussions. Students on the GCE A-level law course discussing offers and rewards, students on the GCE A-level evening in philosophy debating the validity of ontological arguments and first-year students on the GCE A-level course in history identifying dependable evidence, all demonstrated considerable skill in critical analysis.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Humanities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE humanities	2	No. of starts	146	206	110
		% retention	70	70	73
		% pass rate	25	29	80
GCE A-level humanities (history, religious studies, politics, geography, sociology, philosophy)	3	No. of starts	319	258	202
		% retention	63	66	55
		% pass rate	51	47	77
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	96	86	108
		% retention	67	84	72
		% pass rate	62	64	63
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	197	257	199
		% retention	72	65	48
		% pass rate	48	40	81
GCE A-level general studies	3	No. of starts	570	437	409
		% retention	58	73	51
		% pass rate	42	52	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

122. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but some is poor. In the more effective lessons, teachers demonstrate good knowledge of their subject. They use an appropriate variety of teaching techniques to excite and hold the students' interest. These lessons are well planned and learning activities and materials are good. Teachers introduced topics through imaginative methods of presentation and the students explored challenging issues enthusiastically. The students communicated with one another and with their teacher. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the teaching was dull and the learning objectives were not always made clear to the students. Some teachers do not use a wide enough range of appropriate teaching methods to meet the different needs of students. In these lessons a disproportionate portion of the lesson is spent on exposition and their management of time is poor. In many lessons across all subjects, teachers do not question students effectively to ensure they are all paying attention and that they understand what is being taught. In the weaker lessons, few students were doing anything constructive. They were not given demanding tasks or help in developing their thoughts and ideas to the full. Schemes of work and lesson plans lack detail and most learning materials are photocopied from textbooks.

123. There is inconsistency in assessment practices across subject areas and some teachers provide much better feedback to students than others. For example, in government and politics and sociology, effective use is made of a standardised feedback sheet which identifies areas of weakness and suggests areas for improvement. Scripts are well annotated with constructive advice from the teacher, and errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are corrected. Some teachers, however, provide only minimal written comments with their assessments and do not give the students enough guidance on ways of improving their work. There are effective arrangements for the moderation of the assessment of coursework in psychology and general studies.

124. Most students are keen to succeed and are attentive and purposeful in lessons. They speak highly of the learning opportunities provided by the range of courses on offer and many have chosen the college in preference to other post-16 providers nearer to their homes. Tutorial arrangements are effective. Students appreciate the support they receive from personal tutors and subject teachers. All students have their communication and numeracy skills assessed at the start of their programmes. Subject teachers, however, do not take the results of this initial assessment of students into account when planning lessons and deciding on teaching methods.

125. Most teachers are well qualified. The college has experienced problems in recruiting qualified staff in recent years for some subjects. Accommodation is poor. Many of the courses are located in temporary buildings which are unattractive and have no IT resources. There is insufficient use of IT in teaching and learning across all courses. Although most courses have their own base rooms, they do not contain subject-specific wall displays or examples of students' work. In some instances, defects in the accommodation make it difficult for the teacher to use a wide range of teaching methods. For example, in the old art block, rooms were inadequately furnished for the size of class, windows could not be

opened and the acoustics were poor. Sets of up-to-date textbooks are available for most courses and there is an appropriate range of specialist resources in the learning resource centre.

Leadership and management

126. Course management is strong in general studies. Minutes of staff meetings show that procedures for assessment and the monitoring of provision are effective. There are good communications between staff across all courses. Regular staff meetings take place at faculty and programme level and these are minuted. Subject staff meet regularly, but informally.

127. Systems for monitoring the performance of staff and students are inadequate. Some self-assessment reports are insufficiently thorough. Insufficient use is made of management information to analyse students' achievements and set targets effectively. The students' point scores in GCSE are available to tutors. There are no systematic arrangements for checking that the monitoring of students' progress is carried out with consistent thoroughness. The college has introduced new templates for schemes of work but the department is not using these. Current schemes of work lack detail, particularly in relation to teaching methods and the use of resources, and are not helpful to new staff. All new staff receive a two-day induction to the faculty. Some staff, however, who joined the college at the beginning of the academic year, have not received enough help and support. Staff are appraised annually. There is a scheme for observing lessons whereby staff watch one another teach. An internal audit team also observes lessons. The findings from lesson observations, however, are not taken into account in the appraisal of staff. There are no systematic arrangements for staff to share good practice.

English, languages and communications

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

Strengths

- good pass and retention rates on GCE A-level English courses
- some lively and purposeful teaching
- good quality of students' work and contributions in class
- particularly good and well-organised key skills communications materials
- effective and well-documented tutorial provision.

Weaknesses

- poor results in GCSE English language
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching and learning
- inadequate and unsuitable accommodation for some classes
- insufficient use of IT on courses
- ineffective deployment of staff.

Scope of provision

128. There is a wide range of provision for students aged 16 to 18. Level 3 courses include GCE A and AS-level courses in English and three modern languages: French, German and Spanish. GCSE courses in English literature, English language, communications studies, and the three modern languages are offered. The range of courses provides students with extensive progression opportunities. Some 150 students enrol for GCE A and AS-level courses each year of whom 90% are aged 16 to 18. Of the 240 students who enrol for GCSE English language, 85% are aged 16 to 18. There is little separate provision for adult students.

Achievement and standards

129. Students taking GCE AS-level examinations in English in 2001 achieved good results in all three syllabuses offered at the college. In the same year, there were high pass rates on the GCE A-level courses in English language and English language and literature. Retention rates were low on the GCE A-level courses in English language and English literature. Pass rates in modern languages improved from previous years. The pass rates on the GCE A-level courses in French, German and Spanish have improved in recent years. The value-added analysis of the GCE A and AS-level results indicates that most students did well.

The grades they achieved were higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communications, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English literature	2	No. of starts	15	23	17
		% retention	67	61	65
		% pass rate	80	57	55
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	322	336	221
		% retention	80	86	79
		% pass rate	61	49	39
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	77	57	47
		% retention	62	79	64
		% pass rate	74	82	82
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	48	61	44
		% retention	79	69	55
		% pass rate	72	65	91
GCE A-level French language	3	No. of starts	11	11	9
		% retention	64	45	44
		% pass rate	17	0	50
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	43	33	37
		% retention	70	76	59
		% pass rate	85	77	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

130. Most lessons are well planned and confidently taught. Students benefit from a variety of appropriate learning activities. They are encouraged to ask questions, explore their ideas and express them through discussion. Learning materials are well produced. On courses on the key skill of communication, students are given worksheets and guidance notes which relate clearly to assignment topics. In one GCE A-level literature lesson students listened to an audiotape of a short section of 'Othello'. They were given a list of key issues to consider while they were listening. Subsequently, all the students contributed well to a discussion on these issues. The whole session was purposeful and productive. Many students in several GCE A and AS-level English classes know their texts well, and are developing analytical skills. In a GCSE English lesson, students made very confident and well-researched presentations to the class on the links between violence on television and violent behaviour in society. The presentations included material researched from the Internet. In modern languages' lessons, students are encouraged to speak the languages fluently and do so with some confidence.

131. In lessons where teaching is less effective, students are not given the chance to express their ideas and make useful contributions to class discussion. Some lessons lack drive and momentum and the students lose interest in them. In other lessons, the teacher talks too much and the students are not given anything constructive to do. Schemes of work establish clear schedules for assessment of students' work but give little indication of the teaching methods to be used. Lesson plans are not drawn up as a matter of routine. Some of the lesson plans which exist are inadequate. Teachers discuss different teaching styles and classroom practices informally but there has been little systematic sharing of good practice. There is little use of IT in lessons and schemes of work suggest that teachers do not give it high priority.

132. Teachers set relevant and challenging tasks. Students often respond to these wholeheartedly, and sometimes produce exciting and impressive work. Many students produce highly imaginative ideas but they are not always able to structure them effectively and express them cogently in their work. An excellent example of good work was a comprehensive and well-illustrated essay on 'Gulliver's Travels' by a GCE A-level student. It was an enthusiastic and fluent response to the text. There were also examples of well-researched and produced GCE A-level English language projects.

133. Assignments are marked carefully and accurately. Teachers usually provide students with helpful comments on the quality of their work in the form of notes on the page and a summary. This written comment is complemented by oral feedback to the class as a whole, and to individual students. In a few instances, teachers had failed to provide enough written feedback on marked work. Usually teachers establish good working relationships with students. In a small minority of lessons teachers fail to motivate students, or to secure their full co-operation. Staff do not share good practice and successful experiences sufficiently.

134. Tutorial provision is effective and well documented. All students undergo computerised diagnosis of their competence in the key skill of communication. They share the results of this with their tutor. Students' needs for additional learning support with communication skills are identified quickly. All individual students have regular individual interviews with their tutors during which their progress is reviewed and they are set targets. Students value the guidance and support they receive.

135. The learning resource centre has an adequate stock of books and some videos. A significant number of lessons take place in inadequate and unsuitable classrooms. Some of these are in temporary accommodation but others are in the main college building. Some classes have to use rooms which are too small, or where the soundproofing is inadequate and the students are distracted continually by external noise. Where this is the case, it is difficult for the students to succeed in discussion, group work, individual research or project work.

Leadership and management

136. Management is encouraging and positive. There is a genuine desire to serve the needs of students well. There are plans for the improvement of provision and procedures for monitoring their implementation. Management information has not been taken into consideration, however, when drawing up these plans. Up-to-date and accurate data are not taken into account in target setting. The use of IT is not an integral part of course provision but students have good access to computers and other IT in the learning centre, key skills and drop-in centres. Staff are not deployed effectively in some areas of the provision. GCE A-level classes are overstaffed with generally small classes. GCSE courses and GCE AS-level classes in English are often too large.

Foundation programmes

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for basic literacy and numeracy
- good accommodation
- good links with external agencies.

Weaknesses

- much unsatisfactory teaching
- lack of take-up of additional support
- failure to provide suitable learning materials to match students' needs.

Scope of provision

137. Basic skills provision for students aged 16 to 18 includes tuition in literacy and numeracy below level 2, including help with the key skills elements of foundation and intermediate programmes. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are enrolled on a wide range of college provision. These students are offered additional support to enable them to succeed on their programme of study. On the GNVQ foundation level course, students who require additional learning support are provided with a partner tutor who helps them during lessons. Students can also receive additional learning support through attendance at a drop-in workshop.

138. There is a wide range of programmes for adults who need help with literacy and numeracy. Enrolments on adult basic literacy programmes have remained constant over recent years, but there has been a significant fall in the demand for basic numeracy courses, and an increase in demand for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, on which 127 students are currently enrolled. ESOL is taught at three levels on two college sites. Tuition in basic skills is also provided through community-based family literacy programmes.

139. A Princes Trust Volunteer programme aimed at improving social and employability skills of young people aged 16 to 25 is provided across the area. At the time of inspection, two teams were working with young people who were disaffected with, and disengaged from, formal education.

Achievement and standards

140. Retention and completion rates of students on basic literacy and numeracy programmes are high. Pass rates on the numberpower programme are in line with the national average. There is a high level of achievement of those students entered for AEB English tests (100%), and the continuation rate for adults on basic literacy provision is 95%. Adult students also progress from basic-skills programmes to vocational courses.

141. Learning support tutors are linked to vocational programmes. They do not carry out any planning of learning support before their first meeting with the students they will be helping. Only 50% of those students identified as requiring support in literacy and numeracy during the academic year 2000/01 received it. The college does not offer a full-time course at pre-foundation level for students who are not yet ready for a mainstream course at the college.

142. Effective additional learning support is provided for students with disabilities and they are able to progress from entry-level provision to national diploma and HE courses. During 2000/01 additional support was provided to 87 learners. Of these, 70 continued in education after completing their chosen course of study.

Quality of education and training

143. There is much unsatisfactory teaching in basic skills. In the better lessons, teachers encourage students to participate in discussion and share ideas and experiences. In less successful sessions, learning is poorly managed. Teachers have low expectations of the students. They do not differentiate learning materials or tasks to suit the different abilities of the learners. Some students become frustrated and then do not want to participate in the lesson. On some programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD), teachers do not identify which learning styles are best for the students and they use some inappropriate learning materials. In the basic-skills workshop, students are not set tasks which relate to the context of their main course. Students receiving help with basic skills are given individual learning plans, but these do not state clear aims or specify targets to be met.

144. Adults on full-time foundation programmes carry out a variety of appropriate learning tasks in most lessons. In some lessons, however, they are made to spend a disproportionate amount of time on worksheets which some can not read easily. Most lessons take place in a classroom and adults have little opportunity to develop practical skills of independent living in a learning environment other than this.

145. Accommodation for basic skills and SLDD across the college is particularly good. All IT equipment areas have either administrative assistants or learning support assistants. All those involved in basic skills teaching have specific qualifications in teaching basic literacy and have recently attended national training programmes.

146. The college has good and effective links with external agencies. Support for sensory impaired students is provided by the local education authority, additional services are

provided to help students with specific disabilities. This support helps learners with additional needs to participate fully in their programme of study and achieve success.

Leadership and management

147. The development of a basic skills strategy is part of the college's strategic plan. A new structure for the management of basic skills has been introduced, but it is too early to judge whether it is proving effective.

Part D: College data
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2000/01

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	16.1	23.6
2	43.8	31.9
3	29.4	19.0
4/5	0.3	7.2
Other	10.4	18.3
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	3,065	2,499	23.4
Agriculture	0	0	0
Construction	65	310	1.6
Engineering	345	447	3.3
Business	1,034	2,271	13.9
Hotel and catering	217	108	1.4
Health and community care	226	751	4.1
Art and design	1,069	468	6.5
Humanities	7,901	2,160	42.3
Basic education	359	475	3.5
Total	14,281	9,489	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		1997/8	1998/9	1999/00	1997/8	1998/9	1999/00
1	Starters excluding transfers	620	712	630	745	914	1,418
	Retention rate (%)	84	85	89	89	88	84
	National average (%)	77	75	76	76	73	76
	Pass rate (%)	61	56	59	71	65	51
	National average (%)	48	59	64	55	58	66
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,837	1,508	1,795	977	1,053	1,468
	Retention rate (%)	86	78	79	92	87	86
	National average (%)	75	72	73	76	74	74
	Pass rate (%)	42	56	71	71	67	61
	National average (%)	57	65	69	57	63	66
3	Starters excluding transfers	3,147	3,078	2,916	1,145	1,180	1,211
	Retention rate (%)	73	71	81	79	78	80
	National average (%)	77	73	75	76	75	76
	Pass rate (%)	70	69	56	71	65	63
	National average (%)	59	65	66	59	63	67
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	8	6	11	360	387	306
	Retention rate (%)	63	100	100	90	86	85
	National average (%)	*	*	*	81	78	75
	Pass rate (%)	40	50	82	64	59	40
	National average (%)	*	*	*	50	56	55

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

Sources of information:

- 1. National averages: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
- 2. College rates for 1997/98 to 1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
- 3. College rates for 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.*

** data not available*

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)	60	26	14	146
Level 2 (intermediate)	57	26	17	74
Level 1 (foundation)	61	22	17	18
Other sessions	59	18	23	22
Totals	59.2	25.0	15.8	260

MONITORING INSPECTION OF SUTTON COLDFIELD COLLEGE

Outcome of monitoring inspection

- The overall provision in the curriculum area of **health, social care and public services** is now **satisfactory**.

Background

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management is unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted web site alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Dates of monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of Sutton Coldfield College took place on 28th May 2002 and 14th January 2003.

Health, social care, early years child care and education

In the September 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- good pass rates on national diploma and some adult courses
- good teaching on courses for adults
- good progression rates

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on many programmes
- poor and declining retention rates
- some unsatisfactory teaching on 16 to 18 programmes

- poor curriculum leadership and management
- poor deployment of resources

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that good progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision is now **satisfactory**. Pass rates have improved and in most cases are at or above the national average. At the examination in 2002, pass rates on level three courses improved significantly. The college has implemented effective systems to improve retention rates, which are now around the national average. Staff development has been undertaken by teachers to improve schemes of work and lesson planning. The quality of teaching has been improved and none of the teaching observed was judged unsatisfactory. Management of the curriculum area is much improved. Staff turnover has been reduced and new leadership introduced. Key appointments have resulted in more effective communication and more opportunity for the sharing of good practice. Team operation is now more cohesive. Internal verification procedures and practice have improved. Additional teachers and assessors have been appointed and staff are deployed more effectively. There is greater consistency in staff workload and a more coherent approach to curriculum planning.