



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Varndean College

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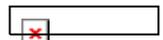
**Basic information about the college**



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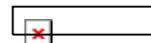
Name of college:	Varndean College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Alan Jenkins
Address of college:	Surrenden Road Brighton East Sussex BN1 6WQ
Telephone number:	01273 508011
Fax number:	01273 542950
Chair of governors:	Paul Loman
Unique reference number:	130668
Name of reporting inspector:	Annella Mochan HMI
Dates of inspection:	29 September-3 October 2003

**Part A: Summary**



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## Information about the college



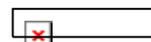
Varndean College is a sixth form college in Brighton, East Sussex. The college's main catchment area covers the unitary authority of Brighton and Hove. The college is based at Surrenden campus which it shares with an infant school, a junior school and two 11 to 16 schools. Brighton and Hove has one other sixth form college and a medium size general further education (FE) college and two universities. There are three secondary schools with small sixth forms and one Roman Catholic secondary school with a larger sixth form. In addition, there are three independent schools with large sixth forms. Within Brighton and Hove, there are three maintained special schools and two non-maintained residential special schools with post-16 provision. Achievement levels in some schools in Brighton and Hove are low. In 2002, the proportion of pupils aged 16 achieving five A\* to C grades in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, at 46%, was below the national average of 52%.

The college offers education and training in 12 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) areas of learning. No courses are offered in construction and land-based subjects. In 2001/02, the college enrolled 948 full-time students aged 16 to 18, and 1,110 part-time students mostly aged 19 or over. In 2001/02, the majority of students described themselves as white with around 2% describing themselves as Black or Chinese. The college has diversified and extended its range of vocational courses and education and training opportunities for adults. An increasing number of part-time adult students are enrolled on college courses.

Brighton and Hove has a strong service sector economy and only a small number of people employed in manufacturing industries. There is a strong financial services sector, expanding business services sector and growth in the cultural and creative industries. Tourism and the conference market make a significant contribution to the local economy. Despite this, Brighton and Hove faces many challenges. Unemployment remains at more than twice the regional rate and average earnings remain relatively low. In some areas, such as east Brighton, there remains severe social and economic disadvantage.

The college's mission is to provide accessible learning opportunities for individuals in an open community. It aims to do so in a supportively structured environment in which each student is encouraged and inspired to enrich their experience, to add value and achieve success.

## How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged provision in humanities to be outstanding. Provision in science, business, information and communication technology (ICT), visual arts, performing arts and media, social sciences and English and modern foreign languages is good. Provision in mathematics is satisfactory. The main strengths and areas for improvement are listed below.

### **Key strengths**

- students achieve well on advanced level courses

- good value added on GCE A-level based on students' prior attainment
- high standard of students' work
- much good teaching and learning
- extensive enrichment opportunities for students
- good support for students
- good range of appropriate courses
- effective development of part-time adult provision
- productive partnerships which effectively widen participation
- good collaboration with schools and other colleges
- effective leadership and management.

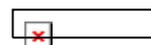
***What should be improved***

- pass rates at levels 1 and 2 for adults on part-time courses
- systems for recording the achievement of adults
- accommodation which inhibits teaching and learning

- specialist resources for some curriculum areas
  
- teaching and pass rates in key skills
  
- quality assurance arrangements.

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

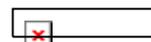


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates on most General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses are high. The pass rate on GCSE biology was low in 2003. Support for students is effective and progression to higher education (HE) is good. Most teaching is good or better. Accommodation for chemistry is poor.
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching is mostly good. Teachers make good use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons. There is a broad range of mathematics options for students. Support for students is effective. Retention rates on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) mathematics are low.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses are high. Teaching and learning are good. Students have good study skills, but insufficient consideration is given to the development of key skills. Some classroom accommodation is cramped.
Information and communications technology	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is generally good. Students have good practical skills. Additional support for students is effective. Retention and pass rates are low on some courses. Some teaching rooms are inappropriate.
Visual arts	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are consistently high, but retention rates are low on some courses. Progression to further study in art and design is good. Students' work is of a high standard. Most teaching is good or better. Insufficient use is made of new technologies and accommodation is cramped.

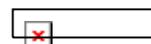
Performing arts and media	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high on most courses. Teaching is mostly good or better. Students' work is of a high standard. Individual support for students is effective. There are insufficient specialist resources.
Humanities	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. Students' research skills are good and their work is of a high standard. Teaching is effective and teachers have high expectations of their students. The enrichment programme is good.
Social sciences	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are high with good value added. Retention rates are low on some courses. Students respond well to mostly good or better teaching. Students display good debating skills. The completion of key skills portfolios is poor.
English and modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is well organised and stimulating. Pass rates on most GCE A-level courses are high. Student written and oral work is of a good standard. Enrichment opportunities are good. Some aspects of quality assurance are weak.

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



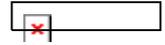
Leadership and management are good. There is a clear strategic direction from the principal and governors. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good or better. This enables most students who complete their advanced level course to achieve better grades than those predicted on entry to the college. Students are successfully prepared for progression to HE. Pass rates at levels 1 and 2 are unsatisfactory for a minority of adult students. The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous. Action plans do not always contain clear targets for improvement. The good practice that does exist is not always shared across the curriculum. Deficiencies in the management information system (MIS) have resulted in the achievements of part-time adult students not being recorded fully. The college has ongoing problems with some poor and crowded accommodation. Provision is good in most curriculum areas, satisfactory in one and outstanding in humanities. The college provides good value for money.

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



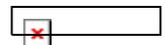
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. Promotional materials are designed to encourage students from areas of social and economic disadvantage. The college has successfully widened participation by extending its range of courses. A broader range of vocational courses has been introduced to meet the needs of students and provide better progression opportunities. An increasing number of adults attend courses at the college and at venues in the community. The college has good links with local schools to encourage young people to stay in education. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support to enable them to participate fully in college life. The college has responded appropriately to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). The equality and diversity policy has been revised. In consultation with governors, staff and student representatives an action plan has been produced and the college has made some progress in its implementation. However, students' achievements are not analysed for the different groups of students in the college. There is good access to all parts of the college for wheelchair users.

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



Guidance and support for students are good. Great care is taken to ensure that students are enrolled on the most appropriate programme. Students' additional support needs are identified before the start of their course. However, this does not include an assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs. Learning support for students is readily available and is effective. Well-planned induction helps students settle into college life quickly. Academic and pastoral support is strong. Students at risk of leaving their course early receive additional tutorial support. In a few instances, individual target setting with students is weak. Student attendance is carefully monitored. Advice and support for students applying to HE or intending to go into employment are good.

## Students' views of the college



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

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

- approachable staff
  
- treated with respect
  
- friendly college
  
- good support in and out of lessons
  
- the surroundings and playing fields
  
- extra activities, trips and sports
  
- good range of courses and learning resources

- good teaching.

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

- overcrowded and expensive canteen with poor food
- accommodation in the huts
- learning resource centre too small
- social space and student facilities
- key skills.

**Other information**

The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

**Part B: The college as a whole**

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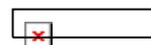
**Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors**

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	79	20	1
19+ and WBL*	80	20	0
Learning 16-18	78	21	1
19+ and WBL*	85	15	0

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



### 16 to 18 year olds

1. In 2001/02, approximately 81% of all qualifications taken at the college were by students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on level 3 courses. On these courses, the overall retention rate has improved since 1999/2000, and in 2001/02 was just above the national average at 90%. Over the same period, the overall pass rate also improved and in 2001/02 was at the national average of 88%. Of the level 3 qualifications taken by students aged 16 to 18, approximately 95% were GCE AS and A-level qualifications. Analysis of GCE AS and A-level results show that over the last four years many students have achieved well, gaining grades significantly higher than those predicted from their prior attainment at GCSE. In many subjects, a high proportion of students gain high grades. In 2001/02, the overall pass rates on advanced vocational qualifications were satisfactory, having been significantly below the national average in the previous year.

2. In 2001/02, approximately 13% of all qualifications taken by students aged 16 to 18 were at level 2. Over the period 1999/2000 to 2001/02, overall retention rates on these courses have been just above the national averages, but overall pass rates at GCSE have been consistently below the national averages. However, inaccurate recording of students' achievements for GCSE courses, particularly in 2001/02, has contributed to the apparent low overall pass rates at level 2. The data produced by the college during the inspection show that overall pass rates at GCSE have in fact remained close to the national averages. The overall pass rates on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses have remained consistently above the national averages. The overall pass rates on other level 2 qualifications have been consistently poor. Overall retention rates at level 1 have declined over the three-year period from 1999 to 2002, and in 2002 were just below the national average. Although the overall pass rate on level 1 qualifications has improved, it remains significantly below the national average.

3. Overall, the standards achieved by students aged 16 to 18 are mainly good or better. In the humanities and English and modern foreign languages curriculum areas, many students achieve high standards of written and oral work during their lessons. In the humanities and business studies areas, students develop good research and analytical skills. In social sciences, students demonstrate good command of the topics being taught during group debates. Standards of practical work in visual arts, media and performing arts are high.

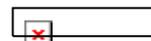
### Adult learners

4. In 2001/02, approximately 28% of all qualifications taken at the college were by adult students.

The significant majority of adults were enrolled on long duration level 2 courses and on short courses. Between 1999 and 2002, overall retention rates for adults on courses at levels 1 and 3 have been above the national averages, but have declined at level 2 to below the national average in 2002. Retention rates on short courses are close to the national averages and are satisfactory. The data produced by the college's MIS show that overall pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 are unsatisfactory, being significantly below the national averages. However, data held by managers of adult provision indicate a better picture of achievement. College managers acknowledge that many achievements, particularly at level 2 in 2001/02, have not been recorded on the MIS. Overall pass rates on level 3 courses have improved since 1999/2000, and in 2001/02 were well above the national average at 83%. The pass rates on short courses have been consistently low and are poor. The pass rates on access to HE courses are generally high, and many adults progress from these courses to HE.

5. Overall, pass rates on key skills qualifications are poor. Although many students gain partial achievement, most fail to complete the full qualification at level 2 in application of number, ICT and communication. In 2001/02, pass rates were very poor. Actions taken by the college to address these weaknesses included a thorough review of delivery models and changes to the teaching and recording of evidence for key skills. Data provided by the college for students completing in 2002/03 indicate that achievement of full key skills qualifications has improved.

## Quality of education and training



6. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 137 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 79% of lessons, which is above the national average for sixth form colleges. Some 1% of teaching was less than satisfactory which equates to only two lessons. Teaching and learning were particularly successful in humanities, English language and literature and modern foreign languages. The proportion of good or better lessons was lowest in mathematics and science. The grades awarded for learning were similar to those for teaching. Overall, there is no marked difference in the quality of teaching in lessons attended by adults than in those lessons attended by students aged 16 to 18. However, attainment during lessons is better for students aged 16 to 18 than for adults. The overall attendance rate in lessons observed by inspectors was slightly above the national average at 86%. It was particularly high at 90% in humanities, but low in mathematics at 80%.

7. There was some variation in the quality of teaching. Overall, lessons taught by full-time teachers were better than those taught by part-time teachers. Teaching was most effective on level 1 programmes. The lowest proportion of good or better teaching was at level 2 especially on GCSE programmes. Teaching and learning were most effective where there was a balanced mix of theory and practical activities.

8. Teachers prepare schemes of work carefully. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers use a range of appropriate activities to promote learning, including individual and group work, discussions, question and answer sessions, written work and practical tasks. Lessons are lively and teachers create a purposeful atmosphere. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic, inspire their students and have high expectations of them. Challenging tasks, that interest students, encourage independent learning. Students develop in confidence and willingly contribute their own ideas and critical thoughts in class debates. Teachers effectively build upon students' existing knowledge and consolidate previous learning. However, in a small minority of lessons, not enough checks were made on students' understanding. In the less effective lessons, the more able students are not extended sufficiently and in a few instances teachers fail to provide weaker students with adequate support to enable them to grasp difficult concepts or skills.

9. Assessment is well planned across all subject areas. Published schedules enable students to plan their work. Students are prepared thoroughly for examinations. Class tests are set regularly to check students' knowledge and develop their examination techniques. Homework is set regularly, marked

promptly and returned. However, not all teachers ensure that students complete and submit their homework. Most teachers annotate students' work with constructive and encouraging comments and give clear direction on what students need to do to improve their performance. In a few instances, feedback is insufficiently detailed. Spelling and grammar are not always routinely corrected. Appropriate standardisation procedures are in place to ensure that marking is accurate. Most students make good use of ICT and their work is well presented. Students' progress is closely monitored. Parents and/or guardians are kept well informed of students' progress through regular reports home and consultation evenings.

10. The college employs 106 teachers, of whom 48 are employed full time and 58 are employed on fractional full-time contracts. In addition, 47 part-time hourly paid tutors are engaged to teach on evening programmes for adults. Some 94% of teachers hold a teaching qualification, and the remainder are working towards gaining a teaching qualification. Most teachers and tutors are well qualified in their specialist subjects. Staff-development activities are linked to the college's strategic objectives. Funds for professional development are well used. The college employs an ICT trainer to support the needs of staff. Recent staff development activities have kept staff up to date on learning styles, virtual learning environments, equality and diversity, and special educational needs and disability legislation.

11. The college is sited on a large and pleasant green field campus site, shared with four local schools. Playing fields are extensive and students are able to use a swimming pool located on the grounds. Sports facilities include a gym and a fitness centre. Social space for students in the college is insufficient and the cafeteria becomes crowded at peak times. Since the last inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in October 1998, the college has attempted through its accommodation strategy to sell some of its land and to use the proceeds to improve and extend the accommodation. However, the plans were not approved, and the college is now planning to improve some aspects of the present accommodation to allow a small growth in enrolments. In many curriculum areas, classrooms and specialist rooms are too small to accommodate comfortably the number of students using them, restricting teaching and learning activities. Most teaching rooms are appropriately furnished. Some classrooms and ICT rooms are equipped with data projectors, and a few have interactive whiteboards. Where these facilities are available, teachers make skilful use of the equipment to enliven their lessons. Accommodation and specialist resources at the larger outreach centres used by the college for adult provision are adequate. Students are able to access learning and assessment materials on the college's intranet from home.

12. The learning resource centre is small, but has an adequately stocked library. There are, however, insufficient facilities for private study. There is a good range of 'drop-in' ICT facilities for students but they close relatively early in the evening, preventing use by adults attending evening classes. Most computer rooms are poorly ventilated. In the business and humanities curriculum areas, teachers make good use of ILT to promote learning. The college has recently improved the facilities available to students studying modern foreign languages by establishing a new computerised language laboratory. All parts of the campus are accessible for wheelchair users.

13. The college offers a wide range of courses mainly at level 3 that effectively meet the needs of school-leavers. Some 44 subjects are offered at GCE AS and A level. AVCE programmes are offered as single or double awards in business studies, health and social care, ICT, performing arts and travel and tourism. The college reviews its curriculum offer regularly. Provision at level 2 has been extended to better meet the needs of students and prepare them for progression to level 3 courses. The current level 2 offer includes intermediate GNVQ programmes in leisure and tourism, art and design and business and 11 GCSE subjects. Timetables are planned to enable students to combine subjects that best meet their needs. The college works closely with a unit for young people with moderate learning difficulties to enable them to attend a good range of college-based courses. Access to HE courses provide an alternative route for adults to progress to HE. The college successfully attracts an increasing number of part-time adult students to mainly ICT, modern foreign languages and arts courses. In 2002/03, around 1,400 adults enrolled on courses based at the college with a further 600 attending courses run by the college in community venues.

14. The college is committed to providing a key skills curriculum for students aged 16 to 18. The key skills curriculum comprises the key skills of ICT, communication and application of number. Students

undertaking level 3 qualifications are able to study for level 2 key skills and additionally, communications and ICT at level 3. There is a clear structure for the management of the key skills curriculum. The key skills curriculum is managed by a key skills co-ordinator, who oversees subject co-ordinators for each of the three key skills. Each of the subject co-ordinators work closely with teaching teams to provide support in the delivery and assessment of key skills. In response to poor pass rates in key skills, managers have undertaken a rigorous review of teaching, learning and assessment methods for key skills. Changes implemented for the 2003/04 academic year include allocation of additional teaching and learning time and further training for staff. Many students are yet to be convinced of the value of skills qualifications, and attendance at some lessons is low. Some students are insufficiently motivated to complete their coursework. The arrangements for recording achievement of key skills are unclear.

15. Enrichment opportunities successfully extend the curriculum. Students benefit from a diverse range of activities. A good number of students join the Millennium Volunteer scheme and work on a variety of projects in schools, hospitals and the community. Students' knowledge is enhanced by the many influential speakers invited to the college by the media and politics societies. Students from all curriculum areas contribute to musical and stage productions. Trips and visits are integral to many courses.

16. Pre-entry guidance and advice are effective. Information on courses and criteria for entry to the college are clear. Care is taken to ensure that students are placed on the most appropriate programme. Liaison with partner and feeder schools is good. College staff visit schools and talk to prospective students and their parents. Year 10 and Year 11 pupils are invited to the college for taster sessions and open evenings. Student induction is well planned and helps students settle into college life quickly. On some programmes, students are invited to a pre-induction event to meet former students. Specialist services such as additional support, careers guidance, counselling and welfare are promoted at induction and through publicity materials. There are no childcare facilities on the main site, but crèche facilities are available at some outreach centres and students are assisted in obtaining financial support for childcare.

17. Effective procedures are in place to identify the support needs of students. Prior to admission students are assessed to identify the additional support they require and their preferred learning style. However, the outcomes from the learning styles analysis are seldom used in planning teaching and learning. There is no specialist diagnostic testing of students' literacy and numeracy needs. Appropriate additional support is put in place ready for students starting at the college. Most students make good use of the support available. Additional support staff sensitively follow-up students who have been identified in need of support, but have not taken advantage of the services offered. Additional support for study skills is easily available to all students at an accessible drop-in centre. The college does not fully evaluate the effectiveness of additional support and the impact on achievement.

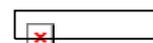
18. Academic and pastoral support are strong. Specialist personal tutors meet their student group weekly. Students follow a structured tutorial programme. Group tutorial topics keep students well informed, but sometimes do not cater adequately for individual needs and abilities. In addition, students have individual tutorials with their personal tutor at least once a term. Tutors are sensitive to the needs of individual students. The personal support is highly valued by students and they feel that tutors and academic staff are approachable and helpful. Additional tutorial time is allocated to students who are identified as being at risk of leaving their course early. Student attendance is carefully and effectively monitored. Lateness at lessons is challenged appropriately. Subject tutors use student concern slips to highlight unacceptable work, attendance or behaviour. Personal tutors follow up any issues quickly. The quality of tutorials is monitored regularly through the college's observation scheme.

19. Overall, monitoring and reviewing of students' progress are good. GCE AS and A-level students are set minimum expected grades for each subject based on their prior achievements. However, the monitoring of students' progress towards their expected grade is uneven across the different subjects. In a few instances, target setting to help students achieve their full potential is weak. Some targets are too vague and have no specified completion date.

20. There are good guidance and support for students applying to HE and for the smaller proportion of students who go directly into employment. Guidance staff work closely with the full-time Connexions personal adviser. The careers library is welcoming and has a comprehensive stock of information on FE and HE and careers. Planned progression and careers days include activities relevant to FE and HE and to employment. A good range of employers attend the college's annual careers fair. However, most curriculum areas do not have any formal links with employers.

21. The college does not have a service of daily worship. An active Christian union operates and meetings are well publicised to all students. The college is sensitive to the needs of students of different faiths.

## Leadership and management



22. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors have established a clear direction for the college. Managers, staff and governors work constructively to achieve the college's objectives. Communication throughout the college is good. The college's strategic plan includes objectives related to meeting the learning needs of local communities and raising students' achievements. There are appropriate development plans for the college's strategic objectives. Milestones have been determined for measuring progress towards these objectives and the college is making steady progress towards achieving them. The college is currently challenged by the need to revise its accommodation strategy to enable it to cope with a growth in student numbers.

23. Governors are appropriately involved in determining the character, mission and strategy of the college. They are strongly representative of the college's stakeholders and members have a good range of relevant experience. There is a high standard of governance. This is reinforced by use of a comprehensive self-assessment based on best practice. Governors keep up to date with current educational developments. They are well informed about the college and receive regular reports on student and curriculum matters.

24. Overall, students achieve well at the college. Most students on GCE AS and A-level courses achieve better grades than those predicted for them based on their prior attainment at GCSE. Value added scores are high in many subjects. Retention and pass rates on level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18 are equal to or above national averages. Retention rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 are also at or close to national averages. However, pass rates at levels 1 and 2 for a minority of largely adult students are unsatisfactory. In early 2003, a detailed analysis of the pass rates for adult students was carried out and some action has been taken to address underperformance. However, there has been insufficient manager and governor focus on areas where students' achievements are low. There are some deficiencies in the MIS. In particular, data on the achievements of adult students on part-time courses at levels 1 and 2 have not been recorded fully. The college is taking corrective action to resolve this issue. The college successfully prepares students for entry to HE. In 2002, some 90% of applicants to HE were successful.

25. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The college works collaboratively on a range of partnerships and has been effective in widening participation and engaging students who are not traditionally represented in FE. The number of adults attending part-time courses at the college and at venues in the community has doubled over the last three years. Co-operative working with the general FE college and the other sixth form college in Brighton has contributed to more rational planning of the curriculum for school-leavers. The college is an active member of the Brighton Lifelong Learning Partnership. The college is also involved in the Brighton and Hove partnership and curriculum initiatives for students aged 14 to 19.

26. The college's response to legislation on race relations, special educational needs and disability is satisfactory. College policies have been revised and published to meet the requirements of current legislation. They are easily accessible on the college website and reference is made to them in the

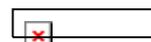
student diary. The college promotes equal opportunities well. An equality and diversity group, which includes senior managers and two students, is responsible for monitoring and reporting on these issues. Two governors have undertaken relevant training to support the board's monitoring role. Introductory staff training on equality and diversity has taken place. A further staff development action plan for 2003/04 contains a range of relevant activities for teachers, tutors and support staff. Students, but not parents, have been consulted on this plan. However, progress in implementing the action plan has been slow. An access audit has been carried out which has led to improvements to signage, ramp access and toilets. The college acknowledges that it has been slow in analysing the performance of different groups of students.

27. Overall, the management of the curriculum is good. Leadership is generally sound at course and curriculum area levels. Teaching teams, tutors and support staff work effectively in teams and have a strong commitment to students to enable them to maximise their potential. Teaching and learning resources within curriculum areas are well managed and used effectively. This is particularly evident in areas such as visual and performing arts and media where student numbers have grown significantly.

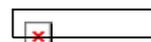
28. Quality assurance arrangements focus on students' achievements and take into account internal and external data based on students' prior attainment. Self-assessment, which is central to the quality assurance system, is insufficiently rigorous and evaluative in some curriculum areas. Action plans do not always specify clear targets for improvement. Procedures have not been fully effective in addressing consistently low pass rates in some subjects at levels 1 and 2. Internal lesson observations are insufficiently self-critical. Where good practice exists, it is not always shared either within or across curriculum areas. Student views are sought through questionnaires and meetings with the principal and governors. Feedback from students indicates high levels of satisfaction. Parents' and employers' views are not routinely canvassed.

29. Financial management of the college is satisfactory. The college's financial position is monitored closely by managers and governors. From a history of budget surpluses, the college is now forecasting deficits in the year just ended and for the next three years. Managers and governors are aware of the need for robust action to correct the situation. The college does not have a system to assess the costs relating to individual courses. Reserves available to commit to a capital programme to implement the property and growth strategies are limited. Overall, the college provides good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science



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

#### **Strengths**

- good pass rates at level 3
  
- much good teaching and learning

- good progression to HE from the access course
- effective and well-organised support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rate in GCSE biology in 2003
- poor laboratory accommodation for chemistry.

### **Scope of provision**

30. The college offers a broad range of GCE AS and A-level science courses. These include GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, physics and electronics and science in the environment. In addition, GCSE courses in science and biology are offered. An access to HE in science course is offered to adults. The college does not offer foundation or vocational courses in science. At the time of the inspection, some 275 students were enrolled on science courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

31. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are at or above the national averages. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving high grades in GCE AS chemistry, physics and biology were close to the national averages. The pass rates in GCE AS science in the environment and GCE A-level electronics have been consistently outstanding at 100% over the period 2000/01 to 2002/03. Progression from GCE AS courses to GCE A-level courses has increased by 11% over the last few years. The majority of students achieve well on their GCE AS and A-level courses, and gain higher grades than predicted on the basis of their attainment at GCSE. In 2002/03, the retention rates on GCE AS and A-level courses were at or above the national averages. The retention rates on the GCSE courses have improved, and in 2002/03 were close to the national averages. The pass rate for those adults who complete the access to HE course is high, and a high proportion of these students progress to HE.

32. The standard of coursework achieved by most students is high. Most students organise and maintain their notes well. However, a few students on GCSE courses demonstrate poor literacy and organisational skills. Students have a good record of success in the Chemistry Olympiad and Analytical competitions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	**	19	22
		% retention	59	84	82
		% pass rate	43	75	50

GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	44	54	58
		% retention	86	91	90
		% pass rate	84	84	81
GCE AS biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	76	82	89
		% retention	86	89	83
		% pass rate	86	84	92
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	*	15	25
		% retention	*	100	96
		% pass rate	*	87	100
GCE A-level biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	*	38	39
		% retention	*	97	95
		% pass rate	*	92	95
Access to science	3	No. of starts	**	**	15
		% retention	77	86	60
		% pass rate	80	92	89

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

\* qualification not comparable

\*\* fewer than 15 starts

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

33. Much teaching and learning is good or better. The best lessons are well planned, and students demonstrate purpose and focus. Teaching activities are appropriately varied, and lessons progress at a good pace. In one lesson in biology, the teacher used discussion, questioning and ILT effectively to ensure that students were engaged and challenged. As a result, students made good progress and achieved high standards of work. In the few less successful lessons, teachers sometimes failed to focus the students' attention on the task set. These lessons were not as purposeful and the students' understanding was less well developed. Teachers organise practical work well, setting tasks which interest and motivate students. In a physics lesson on viscosity, students were measuring the rate at which ball bearings of different size travelled through honey. Using laptop computers they analysed their results on a spreadsheet. This developed both their mathematical and information technology (IT) skills. Students are highly motivated and are well supported by their teachers and technical staff. On GCE AS and A-level courses, target grades are set for students based on their prior attainment. Students' progress towards their target grade is regularly reviewed. Students' work is marked accurately. However, feedback from teachers is not always sufficiently detailed.

34. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in their subjects. Overall, teaching accommodation is satisfactory, but often cramped. Some rooms are too small for the number of students using them. In most subjects, there is a good range of specialist science equipment which adequately supports practical work. Equipment is readily available in all areas. However, the laboratory accommodation for chemistry is poor. Most students are provided with course textbooks. Some rooms have good displays of learning materials. Teachers have developed a broad range of helpful materials which are available to students on the college's intranet. The materials include homework assignments, support material and extension work activities. Students can access the intranet from college and from home, and many use it effectively.

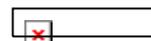
35. Support for students is well organised and effective. Additional support lessons in mathematics and science are offered to students. Students are able to discuss their work with teachers at times other than during lessons. Students with English as a second language are well supported by

teachers and support staff.

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

36. Courses are well managed. Most schemes of work are well developed. Teachers review their courses annually to identify weaknesses. Actions taken to improve retention rates have been successful. The lesson observation scheme has identified areas for improvement, and appropriate actions are being taken. Staff development activities have focused on managing and improving the science intranet and the greater use of differentiated tasks in lessons to raise the achievement of less able students.

### **Mathematics**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good teaching and learning in the majority of lessons
  
- effective use of ILT by teachers
  
- effective support for individual students
  
- broad range of mathematics options for advanced level students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates in GCE AS mathematics
  
- insufficient development of mathematical concepts and language for a minority of students
  
- insufficiently rigorous self-assessment.

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

37. Courses in mathematics are offered at intermediate and advanced levels. Of the 307 students enrolled on courses in mathematics, 258 are aged 16 to 18 studying full time and there are 49 adults studying part time. Students enrolled on GCE AS mathematics courses are able to study for one or two years depending on the grades achieved at GCSE mathematics. The well-structured advanced level mathematics curriculum enables students to choose from a broad range of options at GCE AS and A level. A small number of students enrol on the GCE A-level further mathematics course. GCSE mathematics is offered to students aged 16 to 18 who have previously achieved a grade D or E in the qualification. All other students without at least a GCSE grade C mathematics study key skills application of number at intermediate level.

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

38. Pass rates have improved significantly over the last three years in GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics. On GCE AS and A-level mathematics courses, the pass rates in 2003 were close to the national averages for sixth form colleges. In 2003, the percentage of students obtaining high grades increased significantly to around the national averages. However, retention rates on the GCE AS mathematics course have been low. Retention rates on GCSE mathematics courses have improved over the last three years and the pass rate is above the national average. The percentage of students progressing from GCE AS to GCE A-level courses is low. Most students achieve grades at GCE AS and A level similar to those predicted on the basis of their prior attainment at GCSE. In 2003, some 40% of students studying mathematics at the college progressed to mathematics-related courses at HE institutions.

39. Students arrive punctually, work well in lessons and are committed to their studies. In many lessons, they are able to demonstrate appropriate attainment in key concepts and techniques. Students pay good attention to detail in setting out problems, reflecting the good practice demonstrated by their teachers. However, a minority of students demonstrate insufficient development of mathematical concepts and language and these students often achieve lower standards in lessons.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE mathematics (1 year)	2	No. of starts	174	127	142
		% retention	78	87	86
		% pass rate	33	51	52
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	100	110	133
		% retention	84	80	72
		% pass rate	61	75	73
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	47	44
		% retention	*	98	98
		% pass rate	*	80	95

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

\* qualification not comparable

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

40. Teaching and learning in most lessons are good. In the better lessons, teachers plan their lessons effectively and key concepts are taught well. Teachers make good use of ILT to enliven their lessons and to help students make progress. For example, in one lesson, the teacher was able to demonstrate definitions of trigonometric functions using an interactive whiteboard. The teacher was able to show dynamically a point moving around a circle and the angles encompassed which helped

students understand the trigonometric concept more easily and quickly. In a GCSE lesson, the teacher used a computer presentation effectively to demonstrate visually the meaning of the different mathematical averages.

41. In some lessons, teachers check students' progress and understanding thoroughly, often drawing on students' knowledge and ideas. Students often work well together and discuss each other's methods when working on examples. In the weaker lessons, teachers fail to challenge the more able students to extend their mathematical thinking. In one particularly weak lesson, there were long periods of inactivity while students copied notes from the board and those who finished quickly spent time unproductively waiting for others to finish.

42. Assessment of students' progress is satisfactory. Teachers mark work promptly and give appropriate constructive written and oral feedback. Solutions to questions are available on the intranet and students are able to access these both in college and at home. Any issues concerning individual students' attendance and progress are followed up promptly by personal tutors and guidance leaders. However, procedures for setting personal targets for students to help them achieve their full potential are poorly developed.

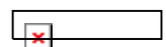
43. Resources are satisfactory. Most mathematics lessons take place in classrooms which display posters relating to mathematical topics, but examples of students' work are lacking. Rooms are equipped with data projectors and one room available for mathematics lessons has an interactive whiteboard. However, some rooms are too small for the numbers of students who use them and the cramped conditions restrict teachers from moving around the room to check the progress being made by individuals. All students are provided with textbooks for their courses and teachers have developed good worksheets for GCSE students. Materials provided during lessons, together with past examination papers and solutions, are available to students on the college's intranet.

44. Students are guided and supported well. Comprehensive guidance is provided to students to help them choose a course appropriate to them. At the start of their courses, an effective induction programme helps students to make the transition from school to college. During induction, tests are used to diagnose any gaps in students' prior mathematical knowledge and additional support strategies are developed by teachers. Support is provided by mathematics teachers, often outside of timetabled lessons, or by staff in the additional support centre. The additional support centre is staffed by mathematics teachers for six sessions a week and is well attended by students on mathematics courses. The support is effective in meeting the needs of individuals. Students speak very highly of the support they receive and consider their teachers to be accessible and approachable.

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

45. The mathematics department is well led and teachers work well together. Team meetings take place regularly and the views of students are considered and acted upon. Teachers often share good practice. However, some other aspects of quality assurance are weak. For example, self-assessment of the quality of the provision is insufficiently rigorous. The lesson observation scheme lacks clear criteria and the grades awarded to teaching are often too generous. Co-ordination of ILT resources within the mathematics department is good. A member of the department regularly assists and trains teachers in its use.

### **Business**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on many courses
- much good teaching and learning
- development of good research and analytical skills by students
- effective learning support for students
- good range of provision for young people and adults.

### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient attention to the development of key skills
- some cramped classroom accommodation
- weak course review procedures.

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

46. The college offers a good range of courses to young people and adults. Provision is reviewed regularly and new courses introduced to meet demand. Courses offered include GCE AS and A-level business studies, accounting, economics, world development, and an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) business and intermediate GNVQ business. These courses are mainly taken by full-time students aged 16 to 18. The college has widened participation by extending its provision to adults. A full-time level 2 business administration course for adults and young people is offered at suitable hours to attract women with family responsibilities. Part-time short courses in book-keeping and computerised accounting are offered at the college and at a venue in the community. At the time of inspection there were 274 students on business courses. Of these, 194 were full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 80 adults on full-time or part-time courses.

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

47. The pass rates on GCE A-level economics are high. In the last three years, all students taking the examination passed. Pass rates on GCE A-level business studies and GCE AS accounting improved in 2002/03 and are now above the national average. Retention rates on these courses are high. The pass rate on GCE AS economics has been just below the national average over the last two years. In 2003, the majority of students on GCE A-level courses achieved higher grades than

those predicted from their GCSE performance. Pass and retention rates on intermediate GNVQ and AVCE business courses have been variable over the last three years. In most cases, retention and pass rates are around the national average. Attendance during inspection was high at 88%. In the few cases where students did not arrive at class on time, the lateness was challenged appropriately by the teacher.

48. Students apply themselves well to their studies. They arrive well prepared for lessons. Students make relevant contributions to lively class discussions and they enjoy their learning. They develop good research and analytical skills and the standard of work is generally high. IT is used effectively to present information in assessed work. Students develop a good knowledge of business and are able to relate their knowledge to current business practice.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GNVQ business	2	No. of starts	*	16	30
		% retention	*	75	77
		% pass rate	*	100	78
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	35	36	17
		% retention	83	92	88
		% pass rate	62	58	80
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	56	71	78
		% retention	84	94	86
		% pass rate	89	81	81
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	39**	37	40
		% retention	77	100	90
		% pass rate	83	84	97
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	16**	***	***
		% retention	75	89	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

\* course not offered

\*\* 2-year GCE A level

\*\*\* fewer than 15 starts

***Quality of education and training***

49. The majority of teaching and learning is good or better. Lessons are well planned and include a variety of appropriate activities to maintain student interest and meet the needs of students with different learning styles. Challenging tasks are set to develop students' business skills and knowledge and to encourage independent learning. In one lesson, students effectively worked in teams on an exercise analysing different management styles. The activity achieved its purpose, resulting in students being able to discuss from their own experience, the effects of different approaches to leadership. In a few instances, work failed to sustain the interest of students and their learning was not routinely checked. Some teachers use ICT and the business area intranet effectively to explain business concepts. Accounting students make good progress in understanding complex aspects of business accounts by the very effective methods used by teachers to explain the

concepts. In an accounting lesson, the teacher carefully led the students from previous work into the new concepts using worked examples and making effective use of directed questions to check understanding.

50. Insufficient attention is given to the development of key skills. There is not enough liaison between the subject teachers and the key skills co-ordinator to highlight opportunities for key skills development. Students are unclear about what is required and their level of interest in obtaining this qualification is generally low.

51. Assessment and monitoring of student progress by subject teachers are good. Homework and tests are set regularly. Marked work is returned quickly with constructive comments to help students to improve. Students receive comprehensive advice about the requirements for internally set assessments and are given clear deadlines for submission. They are also well prepared for examinations.

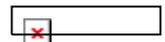
52. Teaching staff are well qualified and enthusiastic about their teaching. Equipment and resources for business students are good. Classroom teaching aids have recently been updated and some rooms have digital projectors and computer linked whiteboards which provide access to the intranet and the Internet. The college intranet facility is also available to students working at home and gives them access to course materials prepared by teachers as well as providing links to recommended educational and business Internet sites. Students find these resources helpful. Some classroom accommodation is poor. Rooms are too small for the number of students in the group, ventilation is poor and the layout of furniture makes it difficult for some students to follow the teacher's work at the display board and take notes. The monitoring of group work by teachers is restricted by the difficulty in moving around the room.

53. There is effective learning support for individual students from subject teachers and through the college additional support system. Students are encouraged to take-up additional support and a good proportion of them take advantage of this support. Students value the subject support given by teachers outside of class time. Comprehensive subject handbooks provide helpful information to students on the content and requirements of their courses. Appropriate additional support for part-time students is available on two evenings a week.

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

54. Leadership and management in the curriculum area are satisfactory. Teachers work effectively as a team and maintain good communication including regular, documented team meetings. The recently appointed curriculum co-ordinator has introduced appropriate strategies to improve student performance. These include an enhanced system of monitoring and follow-up of student absence. The self-assessment report identified these areas for action and the improvements are beginning to have an impact. The self-assessment process does not include detailed analysis at course level. There are no course reviews and student survey results are not formally taken into account. In lessons, there is good promotion of equal opportunities.

### **Information and communications technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- much good teaching and learning

- high standard of students' practical work
- effective use of good learning resources by students
- effective additional support for weaker students
- broad range of ICT provision for young people and adults.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on full-time ICT courses
- low pass rates on GCE AS ICT and CLAIT courses
- inappropriate accommodation for some ICT and computing courses.

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

55. The college offers a wide range of ICT courses at the main campus and at a number of outreach centres. The courses offered at the outreach centres are attended by mostly adults. Approximately 150 full-time students aged 16 to 18 are on courses leading to qualifications which include the new vocational GCSE in ICT, the single award AVCE in ICT and GCE AS and A-level ICT and computing. Over 400 adults attend courses at the main campus or at one of the outreach centres. The significant majority of adults are enrolled on courses leading to the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examination (OCR) certificate for IT users and the European computer driving licence (ECDL) qualifications.

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

56. Most students achieve a high standard of practical work. They use software with confidence, develop good research skills through their use of the Internet, and the documents and web pages produced by them show good creative skills. Students' coursework is often designed for use by local clubs and businesses, and includes well-constructed databases and Internet sites. Teachers set high standards for students by demonstrating the exemplary work produced by previous students.

57. The pass rates on the GCE AS and A-level computing are high. In 2003, all students who completed the GCE A-level computing gained the qualification. The proportion of students gaining high grades on GCE AS and A-level computing and on the AVCE ICT courses is at or above national averages. Students on these courses achieve well compared to their prior attainment at

GCSE. However, the pass rates on the GCE AS course in ICT have been consistently below the national averages. The grades achieved on this course when compared to attainment at GCSE show that students are underachieving. Retention rates are above the national averages on many courses and have improved on others. However, retention rates remain below the national averages on GCE A-level courses in ICT. The pass rates for adults on courses including computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) are improving, but in 2002/03 they remained below the national averages. Overall attendance at lessons was 84%, being well above 90% in some lessons, but low in key skills lessons. Each year approximately 60% of full-time students progress to HE courses and about 20% gain employment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
OCR CLAIT	1	No. of starts	185	130	492
		% retention	79	83	69
		% pass rate	47	60	*
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	37	39	37
		% retention	87	85	84
		% pass rate	100	85	87
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	57	77	38
		% retention	75	79	76
		% pass rate	65	61	66
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	29**	18	17
		% retention	72	94	100
		% pass rate	76	88	100
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	26**	18	19
		% retention	38	78	89
		% pass rate	90	71	82

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

\* data not available

\*\* 2 year GCE A-level course

***Quality of education and training***

58. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Teachers prepare their lessons well. Most teachers cater effectively for students with a wide range of different abilities by using an appropriate variety of teaching and learning activities. The better schemes of work identify opportunities for the development of key skills. Where it is available in classrooms, teachers use ILT effectively during lessons. Students are encouraged to seek help when needed. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to work independently and making decisions for themselves. In one lesson, the teacher arranged for a marketing expert to provide a presentation to students. Following the presentation, students made good progress, both in groups and individually, to identify good and poor house-style documentation. They completed the lesson by designing documents of a high standard. During an evening lesson, newly enrolled students made rapid progress in web-page design, assisted by skilful demonstrations given by the teacher and by working well with each other. Most teachers ask challenging questions of their students. However, a few teachers fail to check students' understanding carefully, and often give too much information, thereby reducing the students' need to think for themselves.

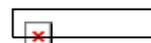
59. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Technical support for students is good. Some classrooms used for ICT courses are bright, well furnished and have useful wall displays, whilst other rooms are cramped with insufficient workspace and poor lighting. Some rooms used for teaching theory are inappropriate. In rooms designed for practical work, the data projection images are often difficult to read from the back of the classroom. There are sufficient numbers of computers which are networked and offer access to up-to-date software. The college network is well maintained by a team of IT support staff. An IT helpdesk provides additional support for students. Students on full-time courses make good use of the teaching notes, presentations and assignments available on the computer network and on the intranet. The learning resources centre and open access IT centre are well used by students. There is an adequate stock of books and other learning material.

60. Teachers and personal tutors set challenging targets for their students and help them to identify appropriate actions to achieve their targets. Students' progress is reviewed regularly. Following the assessment undertaken at the beginning of their courses, some students are provided with helpful extra tuition at the additional support centre and during lunchtime workshops. In many of the outreach centres, the college provides extra support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Courses offered at the outreach centres are proving to be successful in meeting the needs of a wide range of adults, many of whom lack the confidence to attend the main college.

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

61. The management of ICT and computing courses is effective, and is undertaken by two separate teams who work closely together. The teams undertake regular course reviews where curriculum and administrative issues are discussed. The self-assessment report identifies weaknesses in retention and pass rates and on some courses strategies have been developed to address the weaknesses. Recent and appropriate staff development activities have included student behaviour management, the teaching of specific software packages and how students' understanding of the uses of ICT may be improved. Full-time and part-time teachers work well together and share good practice.

### **Visual arts**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- consistently high pass rates on full-time courses
  
- high standards of student work
  
- lively and effective teaching
  
- good progression of full-time students to further studies in art and design

- o well-managed visual arts curriculum area.

**Weaknesses**

- o low retention rates on GCE AS photography and art in 2003
- o insufficient use of ICT by students
- o cramped accommodation in photography and three-dimensional studies.

**Scope of provision**

62. There is an appropriate range of full-time courses offering progression for full-time students from GCSE and intermediate GNVQ to GCE AS and A level. Subjects include painting, sculpture, photography, textiles, mixed media, graphic design, three-dimensional (3D) design and critical studies. The programme of classes for part-time adult students includes photography, drawing and painting and pottery. There are currently 544 visual arts students. Of these, some 418 are full-time students aged 16 to 18 on courses offered by the visual arts area. The adult education department manages a small programme of part-time courses for adults. At the time of the inspection, there were 126 adult students.

**Achievement and standards**

63. Pass rates on full-time courses are consistently high. In 2003, on nearly all courses, the high grades achieved were above the national averages. Pass rates over the last three years on GCE A-level photography and intermediate GNVQ art and design have been 100%. In 2003, students in all subjects achieved higher grades than those predicted from their GCSE grades. Retention rates fell to below the national averages in 2003 on GCE AS photography and fine art.

64. The standard of work in most subjects is high. Students develop good research skills. This is demonstrated in the well-developed logbooks that contain regular references to, and analyses of, artists' and designers' work. Some of the presentations in logbooks are untidy. In a GCE A-level painting lesson, students were working on large-scale portraits using collage and acrylic colour. The work was expressive and vigorous. While the work is of a high standard, it is mostly within an expressionist tradition and students are not exploring other styles. Intermediate GNVQ students produce work which is often above the standard required for the award. Significant numbers of students progress to further study. In 2003, around half of those taking a visual art GCE A-level progressed to pre-degree foundation courses. The majority of intermediate GNVQ students progress within the college to GCE A level.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ art and design	2	No. of starts	18	17	*
		% retention	76	82	92

		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCSE photography	2	No. of starts	*	*	16
		% retention	61	100	88
		% pass rate	100	83	86
GCE AS photography	3	No. of starts	77	71	108
		% retention	76	93	76
		% pass rate	100	100	96
GCE AS art	3	No. of starts	101	102	97
		% retention	80	90	74
		% pass rate	77	98	100
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	77	56	66
		% retention	78	96	95
		% pass rate	93	100	98
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	51	43	43
		% retention	76	95	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level design	3	No. of starts	19	33	44
		% retention	100	84	91
		% pass rate	100	100	98

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

\* fewer than 15 starts

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

65. Most teaching and learning is good or better. Teaching is lively and effective. All teachers are well prepared and lesson plans and schemes of work are thorough. The schemes of work are well sequenced to encourage independent learning and develop students' understanding of technical and design processes. In all subjects, there is good attention to observation drawing to inform students' designs and finished pieces. In an intermediate GNVQ lesson, students studied the work of Ben Nicholson for homework. Due to skilful questioning by the teacher, all students were able to contribute to an informed discussion on his career, using technical terms such as linear and abstract in context. The lesson progressed with students exploring drawings in the style of Ben Nicholson. There are some projects that involve computer-generated imagery in photography and graphics, but most students are not being encouraged to use computers to explore and extend their visual work. There is a good range of visits planned within the full-time curriculum and a visual arts enrichment programme for full-time students which includes visits to artists and galleries.

66. Students receive excellent support for their practical work from subject teachers and are well informed on the progress of their work. The main teaching style is one-to-one support in the studio and students benefit from regular verbal feedback on their work. However, students do not receive sufficient written feedback on their work and progress from subject staff. Students have a schedule of assignments for each unit of study and homework is set regularly. Students' work is assessed promptly and formative feedback given.

67. There is an appropriate range of five studios covering photography, painting, textiles and printmaking, 3D studies and graphic design. At times, conditions are cramped and this affects student work, particularly in one photography studio where the darkroom is inadequate. The 3D studio is cluttered due to the amount of equipment needed for ceramics, metal and wood processes.

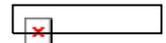
This severely limits the scale and scope of students' 3D work. There is insufficient access to computers in the studios, with only 12 computers for the 6 studios. Teachers are well qualified and some are practising artists and designers which benefits students.

68. Students value the individual progress tutorials. However, the group tutorials are less successful. Support for students applying to HE or intending to go into employment is good.

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

69. The visual arts area is well managed. Teachers and tutors work well as a team. There are regular meetings which result in clear action plans for improvement. The curriculum offer is reviewed annually. The range of subjects offered has been changed to better meet the needs of students. The management of resources is good. Studios are carefully managed. Technicians are effectively deployed to support staff and students. Staff are aware of issues of equal opportunities, and curriculum materials in critical studies have been adjusted to take account of gender issues. Part-time courses for adults are managed separately. There are few links between adult courses and the full-time provision. Progression opportunities for adult students are unclear.

### **Performing arts and media**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in media, film studies and performing arts drama
  
- high standards of practical work in media, film studies and performing arts drama
  
- much good or better teaching and learning
  
- effective individual support for students
  
- broad range of enrichment activities.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- some poor accommodation and insufficient specialist resources

- insufficiently robust quality assurance arrangements
  
- low pass rates in GCE AS music.

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

70. The college offers a range of courses, mainly at level 3. At advanced level, students may enrol on courses in GCE AS and A-level media studies, film studies, dance, drama and theatre studies, music and music technology, AVCE performing arts and a national award in dance. At level 2, GCSE media studies is offered. All students are full-time and most are aged 16 to 18. The curriculum area has grown significantly over the last two years. Currently, 540 students are enrolled with 324 of these studying media and film studies courses.

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

71. Pass rates on most courses are above the national averages. The percentage of students achieving high grades on GCE A-level performing arts drama and media and film studies is high. In 2003, the pass rate on GCE AS music technology rose significantly to above the national average. Most students achieve well above what is predicted from their attainments prior to starting their courses at the college. In the last two years, pass rates have been low on GCE AS music and dance. The proportion of students achieving high grades has also been well below the national averages. Retention rates on most courses are at or slightly above the national averages. Few students achieve their key skills qualifications. During the inspection, the average attendance at lessons was good at 89%.

72. Media and film studies students produce work which is creative, of a high technical standard and illustrates a sound understanding of media codes and conventions. These students also demonstrate good research and critical analysis skills. Students on drama courses demonstrate strong group work, characterisation and improvisation skills and relate theory to practice. In dance, students' creative, improvisational and expressive work is of a good standard, but movement and analytical skills are less well developed. Music students demonstrate a good knowledge of the language of music, style and genre. However, their compositional skills are limited with weak development of musical ideas. In music technology, students use specialist software programmes with confidence and the most able students produce tracks with a degree of musical merit. The majority of students in this area achieve a good level of independent learning skills.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE media studies	2	No. of starts	17	27	25
		% retention	47	93	80
		% pass rate	88	68	85
GCE AS film/video production	3	No. of starts	36	47	58
		% retention	86	83	79
		% pass rate	100	97	100
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	76	46	56
		% retention	72	96	89

		% pass rate	100	98	100
GCE AS music technology	3	No. of starts	*	34	32
		% retention	*	88	84
		% pass rate	*	70	93
GCE AS drama	3	No. of starts	41	23	42
		% retention	90	87	93
		% pass rate	100	77	79
AVCE performing arts	3	No. of starts	23	16	25
		% retention	96	94	84
		% pass rate	100	100	90
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	71	88	109
		% retention	86	85	84
		% pass rate	98	97	98

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

\* course not offered

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

73. Teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard in media, film studies and performing arts drama where most students make good progress. Teachers have high levels of specialist subject knowledge. Teaching is enthusiastic and teachers have high expectations of their students. In media and film studies, well-designed learning materials are used effectively by students. Teachers frequently demonstrate and participate in practical work in performing arts and dance sessions, and this helps to stimulate students' confidence and creativity. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of teaching and learning strategies such as group and pair work and whole class discussion and relate theory to practice. Homework is set and marked regularly and reinforces learning. Course teams work closely together to produce a well-planned learning programme. In a media lesson on world cinema, students gained a sound understanding of the contextual and historical aspects of interpretation and analysis. In a performing arts lesson, students worked hard to gain a strong practical response to, and firm understanding of some basic concepts in Stanislavsky's method of acting. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not pay enough attention to meeting the needs of less able students and the most able are not always sufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve their full potential. Study skills and student note-taking are often weak. Homework is set regularly and where written feedback is given, it is informative and gives helpful guidance to students on what they need to do to improve. In a minority of cases, written feedback is not sufficiently detailed.

74. There is a lively enrichment programme of drama production and music support sessions. A media society regularly invites a range of professionals working in the industry to speak to students and an Open College Network (OCN) course in publicity and journalism provides an opportunity for students to extend their knowledge. There are few formal industry links but many staff are practising professionals and involved locally in the industry, bringing valuable contacts and expertise to students.

75. Some accommodation is of a poor standard and there are insufficient specialist resources in all areas. Music and music technology students work in a cramped and poorly equipped music room with a very basic multi-track digital recording studio. Noise pollution restricts work and in 2003, recordings of exam pieces were made off-site or during the weekends. The college has recently purchased new sequencing software to alleviate previous technical problems. The drama studio is shabby and cramped and there are insufficient facilities for students' private rehearsals. Despite a significant investment in four new digital editing suites and upgraded accommodation for media

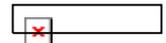
students, facilities do not adequately meet the demands of the large number of students in the area. Dance students work in a large gym, but they have no mirror in which to observe their work. Staff are well qualified with relevant recent industrial and professional experience. Technicians effectively support students and teachers. The learning resources centre has a wide stock of periodicals, books, scores, videos and CDs and the college intranet is actively used by students and staff.

76. Individual support for students is effective and students speak highly of the support they receive. Study skills support is readily available and take-up of this support is effectively monitored. Media and film studies students benefit from an impressive range of study skills learning materials. Most tutors record students' progress and ensure that they keep up-to-date with their work. However, formal progress reviews and individual student target setting are insufficiently frequent to adequately monitor the progress of the least able students.

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

77. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are sound. Communication across the team is good. The curriculum is well planned to meet the changing needs of students. Schemes of work are well-designed. Some aspects of the self-assessment report lack evaluative judgements. Course action plans are insufficiently detailed. Appropriate strategies are not in place to address the small amount of poor performance. Good teaching practice is not always shared across curriculum teams.

## **Humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates on the majority of courses
  
- high standard of students' written and discussion work
  
- effective development of students' analytical and research skills
  
- much good teaching
  
- beneficial enrichment programme
  
- varied and effective learning activities.

## **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates in GCE AS geography in 2003.

## **Scope of provision**

78. The college offers a broad range of humanities subjects at GCE AS and A level. Subjects include history, geography, government and politics, archaeology, citizenship, and classical civilisation. GCSE humanities was introduced in 2002. The access to HE courses provide good opportunities for adult students to study humanities subjects. At the time of the inspection, there were 360 students in the curriculum area.

## **Achievement and standards**

79. Pass and retention rates in GCE AS and A-level government and politics and history are outstanding. In 2003, pass rates of 100% were achieved in GCE A-level geography and GCE AS citizenship. There is an exceptional proportion of high grades on many courses, especially GCE AS and A-level government and politics and history and GCE AS classical civilisation and citizenship. The retention rates on most level 3 courses are high and above the national averages. Most GCE AS and A-level students make excellent progress in relation to their prior achievements and value added is good. Pass rates on access to HE courses are consistently high. In 2003, examination results on GCSE humanities were poor with only 25% of students achieving high grades of A\* to C.

80. The majority of level 3 students achieve high standards. Students are highly committed to learning and develop good analytical and independent study skills. Study skills are enhanced by comparing types of note-taking techniques and their usefulness to students with different learning styles. Written work is of a high standard. Students are able to identify issues and develop and support an argument and present their case both orally and in writing. In a history lesson, students learned about referencing the sources they had used for their coursework, and this learning was checked by group presentations. Most GCE A-level and access to HE students progress to HE.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	41	38	56
		% retention	88	82	89
		% pass rate	86	90	80
GCE AS government politics	3	No. of starts	23	46	40
		% retention	91	91	98
		% pass rate	95	95	100
GCE A-level government politics	3	No. of starts	*	16	30
		% retention	*	100	97
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	102	112	106
		% retention	94	93	96
		% pass rate	98	94	96
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	*	80	81

		% retention	*	99	99
		% pass rate	*	100	98
GCE AS classical civilisation	3	No. of starts	21	26	24
		% retention	90	81	79
		% pass rate	95	100	95

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

\* qualification not comparable

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

81. Teaching is good and often very good. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge with which they are able to inspire students. Teachers have a good rapport with students, create a purposeful atmosphere in class, and have high expectations of their students. Up-to-date learning materials are used to engage students' interest. Teaching methods are diverse, with extensive use of question and answer sessions, discussions and group feedback, so that students learn from each other and develop their confidence. In classical civilisation, each student researched a Greek character and then distributed their work to the whole group to study and keep for reference. Students learn quickly to respect the views of others, and acquire information in different situations and from a range of sources.

82. Some of the teaching was innovative and successfully engaged students' interest. In an archaeology lesson, students were provided with troughs in which to wash finds. These artefacts were then discussed in groups and categorised, before results were reported and conclusions recorded. In a geography lesson, students considered evidence on migration and asylum policies from graphs, video and the college intranet, to allow them to understand the complexity of the issues, and to replicate the decision-making processes involved. Students work with interest and enthusiasm and are keen to learn and to participate. In most lessons students work co-operatively in pairs or larger groups or take part in whole-class discussions.

83. Students are offered an impressive range of enrichment activities, including local visits and fieldwork, trips to conferences, and visits to sites abroad, to enhance and complement their learning. An active politics society, open to all students, attracts influential speakers representing diverse views. Students are able to gain familiarity with differing political ideas, and able to explore issues by questioning the speakers. There have been recent talks on race relations and communism, whilst previous guests have included members of Parliament and councillors from the major political parties, as well as representatives from pressure groups. Adult students visit the University of Sussex and Brighton libraries and attend Geographical Association lectures to develop their information-gathering and research skills.

84. Staff are experienced, well qualified and update their knowledge through attendance at courses and conferences. Teaching and learning resources are good with adequate access to computers. Almost all humanities teaching takes place in hatted accommodation which is sometimes too small for the number of students in the group.

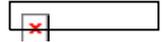
85. Students receive good individual attention from teachers and tutors. Assignments are used effectively to monitor students' progress and develop their examination skills. Homework is set regularly, marked and returned promptly. Feedback on students' work is detailed and makes clear suggestions for improvement. Generous and helpful advice and guidance are provided for students applying to university.

### **Leadership and management**

86. Curriculum leadership and management are good. There are regular meetings of the whole team

and at subject level. Communication across the different areas is good. Teams have a culture of self-improvement. Students' views are considered carefully and appropriate action taken. The self-assessment report for humanities clearly identifies areas for improvement. Strategies have been put in place to address poor student performance in geography. However, the self-assessment reports for access to HE and classical civilisation courses are less comprehensive. Insufficient use is made of the outcomes from lesson observations.

## Social sciences



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

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates at GCE A level and good added value
- good debating skills displayed by many students
- much good or better teaching
- good use of varied learning resources
- detailed and constructive feedback on students' work
- effective and valued additional support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- some low retention rates in law and philosophy
- failure of many GCE AS philosophy students to achieve their full potential
- insufficient direction to advanced level students to complete their key skills portfolio

- o insufficiently rigorous self-assessment.

### **Scope of provision**

87. The provision in social sciences includes GCE AS and GCE A-level courses in psychology, sociology, law, philosophy and critical thinking and GCSE psychology and sociology. Access to HE courses are offered in social policy and humanities. Enrolments in the social sciences have risen over the past three years. At the time of inspection there were 469 enrolments at GCE AS, 170 at GCE A level and 45 on GCSE courses. Almost all of these students are aged 16 to and 18 studying full time. There are 37 adults on access to HE courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

88. Attainment in lessons ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and have many opportunities to develop good debating skills. In a critical thinking lesson, students marshalled arguments and counter-arguments about boxing. This developed their ability to put aside their personal views and argue objectively. The progress of psychology students is impressive. GCE AS psychology students use their detailed knowledge of Milgram's study on obedience to discuss the ethical considerations it raises. GCSE psychology students are able to relate memory tasks to theoretical studies about memory. The standard of much oral work is high, but students' written work is more variable. At GCSE and GCE AS, a few students provide incomplete explanations or express their meaning unclearly.

89. Recent GCE A-level pass rates have been high, as has the proportion of students gaining high grades. At GCE AS, high pass rates in 2001 were generally not maintained in the following years, with most subjects falling closer to national averages. However, over the same period, value added scores show that GCE AS students perform significantly better than expected when compared with their GCSE grades on entry. GCE AS and A-level psychology and sociology show consistently high value added scores. However, many GCE AS philosophy students fail to reach their full potential. In 2002, the higher grade pass rates were low and declined further in 2003. Most retention rates at GCE AS and A-level have remained at the national average for sixth form colleges, but in law and philosophy they have fluctuated and are sometimes low. Pass and retention rates for GCSE courses improved to around the national average in 2002, but the improvement was not sustained in 2003. Access to HE students are consistently successful in gaining their qualification and progress to HE. GCSE students have good rates of progression to level 3 courses within the college. A high proportion of GCE AS law students progress to GCE A-level compared with a much smaller proportion in sociology. Overall, student attendance is generally high.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	22	25	18
		% retention	64	80	72
		% pass rate	36	50	46
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	31*	31	54
		% retention	71	87	94
		% pass rate	77	93	98
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	42	76	78
		% retention	74	91	86

		% pass rate	100	94	85
GCE AS critical thinking	3	No. of starts	21	83	92
		% retention	90	90	89
		% pass rate	95	80	90
GCE AS philosophy	3	No. of starts	39	59	59
		% retention	69	86	85
		% pass rate	96	69	80
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	51*	53	75
		% retention	73	92	92
		% pass rate	97	98	99

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

\* 2-year GCE A-level course

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

90. Teaching and learning are mostly good or better. The better lessons are skilfully taught, sustaining students' interest and promoting effective learning. Teachers have high expectations of their students. Teaching methods encourage students' active involvement in well-structured and varied activities. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of study skills and collaborative working. Independent learning is fostered by regular homework, organised under sections which students must, should and could do. Students respond with intellectual effort and progressively develop their understanding of the language, content and methods of the social sciences. In a sociology lesson, students applied their skim reading skills to material about perceptions of violence in society. Their subsequent discussion enabled them to appreciate the different approaches to the subject used by journalists and sociological researchers. A number of interesting out-of-class activities enrich students' experience. In a few less effective lessons, insufficient guidance was given to students. Learning activities are not well-planned to enable the most and the least able to achieve their full potential. Advanced level students receive insufficient direction to complete their portfolio for the key skill of communication.

91. The assessment of students' written work is effective. Marking of students' work is thorough with constructive comments to help them improve. Students benefit from the quality of the feedback they receive. Assessment is carefully scheduled and co-ordinated to assist students in planning their work. The monitoring and recording of students' progress are often weak. There is inconsistency in the use of student action plans and targets for improvement are not always completed.

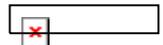
92. Teachers are experienced and appropriately qualified. They work well as a team and benefit from good staff development. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Teachers have developed very good learning materials. The stimulating content of these materials engages students' interest and promotes good learning. Up-to-date text books are supplemented by a good variety of resources in the learning resources centre. The library staff provide specialist guidance to students before they undertake coursework or transfer from GCE AS to A level. The intranet for social sciences contains good links to relevant websites which feature regularly in homework assignments. Social science teaching takes place in adjacent classrooms, each given a strong sense of subject identity by visually attractive displays. On sunny days they become uncomfortably hot. There is insufficient space in the library for private study.

93. Guidance and support for students are good. Additional support for social science students is sensitive to a wide range of individual needs. It includes support in the planning of essays and coursework. Students value the informal academic and pastoral support they receive from their teachers and tutors. However, some group tutorials do not sufficiently meet the different needs of students. Procedures to respond to poor attendance are generally effective. Students receive much detailed assistance when applying to HE.

## ***Leadership and management***

94. Curriculum management is good on most courses. Effective leadership and team work have contributed to the maintenance of high standards. Students benefit from the careful attention to detail in the way most courses are planned and run. Across the social sciences, managers have had some impact on improving retention rates and increasing the use of IT in teaching and learning. The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous. Some weaknesses are analysed, but actions to address them are not precise enough. Careful consideration is given to equal opportunities in curriculum planning and teaching. There has been some success in attracting more male students to social science courses. Teachers are alert to the use of discriminatory language. GCE AS sociology students study racism during their induction.

## **English and modern foreign languages**



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

### ***Strengths***

- lively and well-organised teaching
  
- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
  
- high standard of students' oral and written work
  
- extensive enrichment opportunities.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates on GCE AS Spanish and GCSE in 2003
  
- some overcrowded and cramped accommodation
  
- weak aspects of quality assurance.

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

95. The college offers an appropriate range of courses in English at GCE AS and A-level and GCSE and a good range of modern foreign languages. At the time of the inspection, 62 students were enrolled on GCE AS English language and 98 on GCE AS English literature. There were 28 students on GCE A-level English language and 73 on GCE A-level English literature. Some 75 students are repeating GCSE English. In modern foreign languages, 37 students were enrolled on GCE A level, 52 on GCE AS, 15 on GCSE Spanish and 31 on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Spanish. Approximately 440 adults were enrolled on 5 different languages at four levels.

### **Achievement and standards**

96. The pass rates on most GCE A-level subjects are high. The proportion of students gaining high grades in GCE A-level English literature, French and German are also above the national averages. Pass rates on nearly all GCE AS subjects are at or near the national averages. In 2003, the pass rates on GCE A-level Spanish was just below the national average and on GCE AS Spanish the retention and pass rates were low at 69% and 18%, respectively. In 2003 on GCSE English, the percentage of students gaining grades A\* to C fell to around the national average. Achievement on OCN language courses, predominately for adults, is generally good with nearly 80% of students gaining some form of accreditation. Retention rates on all courses is at or near national averages.

97. GCE A-level English students are able to express their ideas with confidence and at length. Many are able to effectively analyse texts and deal well with abstract ideas. A group examining the language of Jonson's *Volpone* indicated a clear ability to deal with the play in theatrical terms and responded appropriately to its style and characterisation. Discussion and debate on the attitudes of Goneril and Regan to Lear, their father, in the play's opening scene, led to effective analysis of how Shakespeare's language often means more than it says. GCE A-level French students learning the vocabulary of politics through written profiles of young French people soon used their new French words with confidence and skill in expressing their own political views. GCE AS German students, merely two weeks into the course, showed a growing oral confidence. Written work is of a high standard. Coursework for English language on gender stereotypes and conversation was interesting and original with effective research done and good judgements made. An English literature assignment on Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* achieved full marks in the examination for its careful analysis of ideas and critical judgement. A GCE A-level French project on the Le Pen controversy and the 2002 presidential election indicated excellent written skills in French, as well as imagination, in its presentation as an e-mail argument going between two friends. In a minority of lessons, students did not actively participate in classroom activity. Some modern language students, particularly at GCE AS, lacked the confidence to speak their chosen language in lessons.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2001 to 2003**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	85	58	54
		% retention	71	84	83
		% pass rate	43	57	49
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	19	26	25
		% retention	53	88	92
		% pass rate	70	91	81
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	35	48	45
		% retention	91	92	80
		% pass rate	91	91	81
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	*	17	29
		% retention	92	93	90
		% pass rate	92	93	88

GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	17	29	21
		% retention	65	86	95
		% pass rate	91	96	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	76	67	64
		% retention	71	94	92
		% pass rate	100	97	98
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	38	47	55
		% retention	87	77	91
		% pass rate	100	86	94
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	111	105	113
		% retention	86	90	89
		% pass rate	96	91	94

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

\* fewer than 15 starters

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

98. Most teaching is good or better. Overall, lessons sustain student interest and stimulate their learning through a combination of carefully thought out teaching materials with imaginative presentation of ideas. Group work is well planned to provide opportunities for individual students to present their views or argue a case. In a GCE AS English language lesson on varieties of written English, the teacher's outstanding management of the class helped students to produce sensitive analyses of short texts such as a lonely hearts advertisement, a diary entry, and a maths problem. This led to a sophisticated group discussion of audience, lexis and language use. With skilful questioning, the teacher reviewed and reinforced students' learning as the lesson progressed. In a level 1 language lesson for adults, students were encouraged to speak Spanish from the outset by the teacher's good use of humour and students learned quickly. A Spanish GCE AS lesson concentrated on grammar but was stimulated by constant changes of activity, and learning constantly being checked. GCSE Spanish students successfully used the Internet to increase vocabulary on sports. However, GCSE English lessons were less lively with a minority of students inattentive and uninterested by the topic. A French oral lesson for adults was effective when the teacher led discussion, but in group work too much English was spoken. Teachers provide effective individual support to their students and student progress is carefully monitored.

99. A wide range of opportunities are available to enrich students' learning. In English, there are visits from poets and writers, trips to theatres, a student magazine, and extension classes provided by former students who are now English undergraduates. Modern language students have trips and exchanges in mainland Europe and opportunities to work abroad.

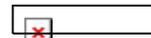
100. English teachers are highly qualified and include published authors and critics. The majority of modern language teachers are first language speakers and there is excellent use of the target language in most lessons. The languages laboratory is well resourced with computers. However, it is sometimes used as a conventional teaching space which restricts the type of learning activity that can be used. English classrooms are often cramped for the number of students in the group.

### **Leadership and management**

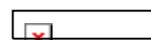
101. Curriculum managers in English and modern foreign languages provide strong leadership. Well-recorded and regular meetings have resulted in much sharing and development of good practice. Staff development activities focus on improving teaching. Teachers work effectively in teams. Well-developed schemes of work have contributed to lively teaching. Staff are effectively

deployed and resources are carefully managed. The lesson observation scheme lacks rigour. The self-assessment report lacks detailed analysis and fails to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses. Data on achievement on OCN language courses are poorly recorded and statistics on progress through the different language levels is not collected.

#### Part D: College data



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



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	1	47
2	16	38
3	64	12
4/5	0	0
Other	19	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the college in 2003*

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	598	531	14
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	18	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	300	156	6
Information and communication technology	809	74	11
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	7	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	264	82	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	9	361	5

Health, social care and public services	44	39	1
Visual and performing arts and media	891	14	11
Humanities	1,096	28	14
English, languages and communication	1,134	115	15
Foundation programmes	4	70	1
Unknown area of learning	1,353	149	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,520</b>	<b>1,626</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2003

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	514	308	78	453	245	214
	Retention rate	87	89	74	85	80	81
	National average	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate	33	32	59	50	46	57
	National average	70	66	71	67	70	75
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	521	819	461	153	186	519
	Retention rate	83	84	83	84	67	63
	National average	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate	74	52	*	41	69	*
	National average	80	85	84	70	68	71
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,621	3,151	2,957	120	114	92
	Retention rate	79	69	90	78	61	78
	National average	75	80	89	63	64	69
	Pass rate	72	89	88	61	68	83
	National average	85	86	88	65	67	75

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR

\* data unreliable

**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)	80	18	2	103
Level 2 (intermediate)	74	26	0	23
Level 1 (foundation)	90	10	0	10
Other sessions	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>137</b>

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