



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## King Edward VI College, Nuneaton

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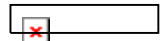
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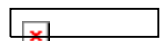
**Basic information about the college**



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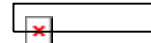
Name of college:	King Edward VI College, Nuneaton
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Keith Butterworth
Address of college:	King Edward Road Nuneaton Warwickshire CV11 4BE
Telephone number:	024 7632 8231
Fax number:	024 7632 6686
Chair of governors:	Stuart Hall
Unique reference number:	130840
Name of reporting inspector:	Cathy Morgan HMI
Dates of inspection:	September 29-October 3 2003

**Part A: Summary**



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## Information about the college



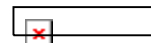
King Edward VI College, Nuneaton is a voluntary-aided sixth form college, established in 1974. The college is situated near the centre of Nuneaton, a town with a mixed industrial and commercial economy which is within commuting distance of Coventry, Birmingham and Leicester. Within Nuneaton and North Warwickshire, pass and participation rates of school-leavers are significantly and consistently below rates for the county as a whole.

In 2002, around 24% of Year 11 students in Nuneaton transferred to the college. Recruitment is principally from nine 11 to 16 partner schools in Nuneaton and North Warwickshire, but also extends to Coventry and the western fringes of Leicestershire. The college enrolls a small number of students from the four schools in the area with sixth forms. North Warwickshire and Hinckley College also recruits students from the area to General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and Advanced level (A2) courses.

The curriculum mainly consists of subjects at GCE AS and GCE A2. Almost all students are full time and aged 16 to 18. The number of students has increased steadily to around 850, but recruitment is constrained by the limits of the college accommodation. A small number of students choose to follow Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses. Both 3-unit and 6-unit single award courses are offered in five subject areas. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is 10%, which is higher than the proportion in the local population.

The college mission is 'to promote the maximum personal, intellectual and social development of each student through the provision of high-quality learning experiences'.

## How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of education to be good in mathematics, business, humanities and English and satisfactory in science, information and computer technology (ICT), visual and performing arts and foreign languages. The college's key strengths and weaknesses are listed below.

### ***Key strengths***

- high pass rates at GCE A level
  
- high and improving retention rates
  
- good range of enrichment opportunities

- good progression to higher education (HE)
- effective assessment arrangements and monitoring of students' progress
- good academic support for students
- very good governance
- strong financial management.

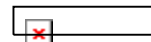
***What should be improved***

- pass rates in some subjects
- the proportion of high grades at GCE AS and A2
- the standard of teaching and learning
- poor accommodation and specialist learning resources
- initial assessment of students and the take up of additional learning support
- key skills management and teaching
- the promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity

weaknesses.

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

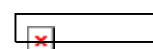


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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>Satisfactory.</b> Student retention rates are high on most courses. There are high pass rates in physics, but pass rates in chemistry are low. Practical work is well organised. A minority of teaching is dull and unchallenging and some laboratory accommodation is outdated.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well in mathematics. Pass and retention rates are high. Students receive good specialist support. Monitoring of students' progress is thorough. Teaching styles lack variety with little use of information learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Most pass rates are high, but pass rates in economics for 2003 were low. Retention rates are high on all courses. Teaching is good. Students receive effective subject support. There is insufficient access to ILT in lessons.
Information and computer technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates have improved and were high on all courses in 2003. Students make good use of specialist learning resources on the college intranet, but are hindered by limitations of other information technology (IT) resources. There are shortcomings in the teaching of theory. Leadership of the area is good.
Visual and performing arts	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass and retention rates in film studies are high. Retention rates are low and declining on the 6-unit AVCE course in performing arts. Teaching in performing arts is good, but across all subjects much teaching is insufficiently challenging. Limited specialist resources restrict student activity.
History, geography, politics, law	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates are high in all subjects, with the exception of GCE AS geography. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities and effective specialist study support. Teaching is generally well planned, but there is little sharing of good practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
Psychology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies	<b>Good.</b> Pass and retention rates are high in most subjects. Much teaching is lively and enthusiastic. There is rigorous and effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress. Teachers work well together in teams, but there is insufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
English	<b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are high and many students achieve

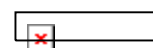
	higher grades than predicted by their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results. Teaching is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, but students are given too few opportunities to participate in lessons. Assessment is rigorous and effective.
Modern foreign languages	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Retention rates on most courses have improved and are above the national average. Pass rates in GCE A2 German and Spanish have improved, but the pass rate in GCE AS German has been low for the last three years and in 2003 declined to 60%. Teaching is good. A newly appointed head of department is making a very positive impact on all aspects of the provision.

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



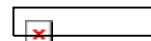
Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college achieves its focused mission of ensuring success at advanced level study for local young people. The college has addressed some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Other issues, however, remain unresolved. Managers have been successful in improving retention rates and students' pass rates overall are at least in line with predictions based on their performance at GCSE. Teachers support their students well. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive, but are inconsistent in their implementation. Managers do not monitor the quality of teaching effectively and have not developed strategies to improve it. In many areas, self-assessment is not self-critical enough. The promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity remain weak, as at the time of the last inspection. Financial management is strong. Governors make a very good contribution to the work of the college.

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



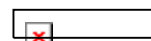
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college provides good academic opportunities for full-time students from a range of backgrounds. Academic and welfare support for students are effective. The college offers a wide range of subjects at level 3 and has an entry requirement for all subjects of five GCSE passes A to C, including English or mathematics. Places on courses are offered impartially and, subject to reaching capacity, all those students who achieve the entry requirements are accepted. The college does not target under-represented groups, but the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than the local population. Some college buildings are grade 2 listed and only limited improvements can be made to them. As a result, many parts of the college are not accessible to students with restricted mobility. The college has made a satisfactory response to the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). Amendments to the college equal opportunities policy meet the requirements of the Act and include a revised disability statement with an action plan. There has been a rolling programme of training related to specific aspects of equal opportunities. The college makes reasonable adjustments to ensure all students can join its courses. Nevertheless, despite recent improvements, 42% of the site remains inaccessible to those with restricted mobility. The colleges' response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act is slow. The college has a race equality policy, but no corresponding implementation plan. Equal opportunities are not strongly and explicitly promoted through the teaching or tutorial programme.

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



Support for students is good. Students receive helpful pre-entry guidance and support. The recruitment process is clear and impartial. Applicants are given clear opportunities at each stage of enrolment to review their subject choices. Induction on to courses is effective. Staff are approachable, accessible and generous with their time. Systems for initial assessment and the provision of additional learning support are not effective in ensuring that all students' needs are identified and met. The take up of additional learning support is low. There is thorough monitoring of students' progress and attendance by subject teachers and personal tutors. Procedures for supporting those students who are causing concern are very effective. The college provides significant specialist subject support, which is valued by students. The recent development of a youth worker team has extended the effective personal support for students. Careers guidance is good. A high proportion of students progress into HE.

### **Students' views of the college**



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

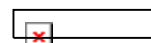
#### ***What students like about the college***

- helpful and supportive staff
  
- relaxed and welcoming atmosphere
  
- good subject workshops for extra support
  
- being treated as adults
  
- college council for fund-raising, social events and student issues
  
- free periods for independent study
  
- enrichment activities
  
- good reputation and achievements.

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

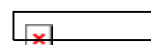
- key skills
  
- canteen facilities and prices
  
- classrooms are too small, with poor heating
  
- registration and tutorial arrangements
  
- poorly furnished common room
  
- general lack of space and insufficient social areas
  
- availability of books and resources.

### **Other information**



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

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





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

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	64	31	5
Learning 16-18	61	33	6

*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).*

## Achievement and standards

1. In 2002/03, full-time students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 99% of college enrolments. All students studied qualifications at level 3 and approximately 4% of enrolments were on level 2 qualifications. Adult students account for less than 0.5% of the college's enrolments.

2. During the three years from 2000/01 to 2002/03, the overall retention rate for students aged 16 to 18 on long courses has improved considerably, from 80% to 95%. Retention rates are now well above the national average. During the same period there has also been an upward trend in the overall pass rate, from 84% in 2000 to around 90% in 2003. This overall pass rate has remained broadly in line with the national average for sixth form colleges.

3. At level 2, retention rates, which had declined in 2000/01, improved to 94% in 2001/02, significantly above the national level. The retention rate fell slightly last year, but remains well above average. Having improved markedly in 2000/01, the overall pass rate at level 2 has remained just below the national level in subsequent years. However, the proportion of students achieving grades A to C for GCSE mathematics and English compares favourably with similar courses in other colleges. In GCSE mathematics, pass rates were particularly high at 80% in 2002/03, twice the national average.

4. At level 3, the overall retention rate increased markedly last year to 96%. The retention rate for the second year of the GCE A-level course was uniformly high; most subjects recorded rates at 98% or above. Retention rates for most GCE AS subjects were above 90%. The overall pass rate for GCE AS and A level improved from 84% in 2001 to 88% in 2002. Data on students' achievements in 2002/03 show further significant improvement at GCE A level. The overall pass rate at level 3 has improved to 90%. The pass rate at GCE AS is at the national level of 87%, with seven subjects recording 100% pass rates. The pass rate at GCE A level is 96%, just above the national level, with 15 subjects recording 100% pass rates. Pass rates have been consistently high over a number of years in most science subjects, mathematics, business studies, most humanities subjects and English.

5. Data for 2003, which compare students' results at GCE AS and A level with their previous achievements at GCSE, show that students are achieving higher grades than predicted in some subjects. The degree of improvement is considerable in English, mathematics, and religious studies. However, many students achieve below their expected grade in chemistry, art and design, film studies and modern languages. Pass rates in GCE AS geography, art and design, chemistry and modern languages have been consistently low for the last three years. Data for other subjects show students achieving results broadly in line with predictions made on entry. The pass rates for the higher grades of A to B, 28% of students in GCE AS subjects and 40% in GCE A-level subjects, are

well below the national level. Nevertheless students have increased their average GCE A-level points score in each of the last three years.

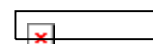
6. Retention rates on AVCE courses are high, and results for 2003 show 100% pass rates on four out of the five single awards, a clear improvement over the previous year. Pass rates on the three AVCE 3-unit awards ranged from 82% to 100% in 2003. With the exception of performing arts, the percentage of higher grades achieved on AVCE courses remains low compared to the national level. In health and social care, students achieved much higher than their predicted grades in 2003.

7. Achievements in key skills are poor. The vast majority of students studying one or more key skills fail to complete all aspects of the assessment programme. Of the 442 students who joined the college in 2001, only 14% had achieved a single key skills qualification, mostly at level 2 only, by the time they left the college two years later. No students achieved a level 3 key skill qualification through successful completion of a portfolio and external assessment.

8. The average attendance of students during the inspection was good at 89%; some 5% above the national average for sixth form colleges. In visual and performing arts and in history, geography, politics and law attendance is well above the sixth form college average for these subjects; in other subjects attendance is broadly in line with the average. Most students arrive on time.

9. The standard of students' work, particularly their written work, is high, and often excellent. Students are well motivated and make good progress in their subjects. Inspectors found the standard of students' coursework in most subject areas to be high. In ICT, second-year students produce project work of an exceptional quality. Performing arts students demonstrate high levels of competence in their craft. In art and design, however, students' research and observational drawing skills are underdeveloped. In humanities, most students maintain well-structured files containing work in which they express their ideas effectively. In English, students produce fluent and convincing written work. Students' oral skills in most subject areas are not as well developed as their written skills. There is little evidence in many subjects of students' ability to work on tasks collaboratively with their peers. Most students progress into HE.

### Quality of education and training



10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 120 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 64% of these, satisfactory in 31% and less than satisfactory in 5%. It was excellent or very good in only 21% of lessons. The proportion of teaching that was good or better is lower than the average for sixth form colleges in all but two subjects. The quality of teaching varies considerably across the subject areas. In five of the nine areas inspected, no teaching was judged as less than satisfactory. In two areas, however, teaching was less than satisfactory in over 10% of lessons observed.

11. The best teaching was in modern foreign languages, where all lessons were good or better, and in business. The teaching of practical lessons in ICT and science is effective and students produce work of a high standard. Foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to improving students' oral skills. Specialist workshops are used effectively in all subjects to supplement classroom learning and students often benefit from one-to-one support from their teachers. Students are well behaved and diligent.

12. In the most effective lessons, the aims and objectives are shared with students and revisited during the lesson to confirm that learning is taking place. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They work productively with a wide range of abilities using question and answer, demonstration, discussion, small group and individual work to promote learning. Clear explanations relate theory to practice and effective demonstrations enhance students' learning. Teachers use up-to-date and relevant visual aids and specialist resources well to stimulate interest and motivate

students to participate. In business lessons, teachers enable students to demonstrate high level analytical skills.

13. In the weaker lessons, teaching is often dull, undemanding and does not challenge students to achieve. Teachers do not adapt their learning materials and style to cater for the full ability range of the students. They make insufficient checks on students' learning and progress during these lessons. In some mathematics and visual and performing arts lessons, there is insufficient challenge for the most able students. Students have little opportunity to participate actively in many lessons and are unable to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. In humanities, mathematics, English and ICT, students spend too much time on low level tasks such as copying notes from the board. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in humanities. In English lessons, there is a lack of opportunity for students to develop and extend their oral skills. There is no evidence of key skills being integrated effectively into lessons and in business, visual and performing arts and ICT, opportunities for key skills development are missed. The use of ILT is restricted in business lessons and there is too little use of ILT in the teaching of mathematics. There is a lack of sharing of good practice in teaching.

14. Teachers are well qualified, have good subject knowledge and expertise. All teachers have, or are working towards gaining, a teaching qualification. The college strategic plan is used to identify training priorities to which individual staff training requests are mapped. Most involves subject-specific development and attendance at awarding body conferences. The staff development policy does not provide sufficient focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. A substantial programme of lesson observations has been undertaken, involving heads of department and college managers. The grades awarded under this programme were, however, significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors.

15. The college is located within a conservation area. Some buildings date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are grade 2 listed. The college recognises that a large proportion of the accommodation is poor and needs improving. It is not possible for students with restricted mobility to gain access to almost half of the college. Some classrooms are not ideally suited to their purpose. In English, psychology, biology and mathematics, classrooms are too small for the size of the student groups that use them. Facilities for visual and performing arts students are poor. In physics and chemistry, the outdated laboratories, reported as a weakness in the last inspection report, have not improved. There are few areas in the college for students to socialise and the refectory is overcrowded at peak times. The accommodation strategy confirms that development opportunities of the site are limited. At the time of the inspection, a feasibility study on alternative accommodation is being completed with the local LSC.

16. Study facilities for students are satisfactory. The library provides a good range of books and periodicals for loan and for reference. Library staff provide good support for students in developing their research skills. Improvements have been made to ICT resources and to the number of computers available for staff use although, in some curriculum areas, there are no workstations available in teaching rooms. The learning centre is well managed and students make good use of the ICT facilities. The college intranet, although at an early stage of development in most courses, is well used by science and ICT students. The physics intranet site provides extensive additional resources. The effective use of ILT to support learning is limited, though it is used well in physics, geography, history and modern languages. There are limitations in the specialist resources in ICT which impede students' learning.

17. The schedule of monitoring, reviewing and reporting students' progress is rigorous and well planned. Students are given target grades at the start of their course, based on their GCSE achievement. There is careful monitoring and reviewing of students' progress against these of targets, particularly in business and humanities. Assessment of students' work is thorough. The assessment system in modern foreign languages is exemplary. All subjects produce assessment guidance in their schemes of work and in most subjects these are clearly communicated to students. Students are well prepared for external examinations and good use is made of regular homework and tests. Teachers mark work promptly. Marking is rigorous and feedback is detailed and helps the students to improve the standard of their written and practical work. Good use is made of assessment report forms in humanities. There is good moderation of coursework on most courses

and effective team marking in art and design.

18. Teachers maintain up-to-date records of students' progress. Most subject teams regularly discuss student performance and there is good communication with personal tutors. Teachers know their students well. There is early identification of students causing concern. The college 'record of concern' procedure is used effectively to monitor the progress of these individuals. Students at risk of underachieving are required to attend additional one-to-one subject support workshops. These are effective in all curriculum areas with the exception of visual and performing arts. There is little monitoring of attendance at workshops and no evaluation of their effectiveness in raising achievement.

19. Almost all courses offered by the college are at advanced level. These comprise 26 GCE AS and A2 subjects, 5 single award and 3 three-unit AVCE programmes. Almost all students are able to study their first-choice subjects at GCE AS and A2 level. Provision at level 2 comprises GCSEs in English and mathematics and there is no provision below this level. The college has made a strategic decision to focus only on full-time provision for students aged 16 to 18 at advanced level. The college is restricted in developing new provision by its accommodation and resources. However, it has maintained provision in subjects with small numbers, for example in foreign languages.

20. The college has good recruitment procedures. There is a comprehensive range of guidance activities to enable applicants to make informed choices. These include open evenings and visits to local schools. All applicants are interviewed and impartial guidance is given throughout the enrolment process.

21. Key skills provision is poor. Students are expected to achieve key skills qualifications at level 2 in communications, application of number and IT in addition to one key skill qualification at level 3. IT key skills are provided through a workshop but attendance is poor and less than a third of the students who begin their course are successful. The level 3 key skills are integrated into specialist subjects, however, very few students complete their portfolios. Poor commitment by many staff and students to the effective implementation of key skills.

22. Curriculum enrichment activities are well established in the college. Students benefit from an extensive programme of activities, particularly in English, visual and performing arts and humanities. Some enrichment is also offered by the college council and youth worker team, for example, through fund-raising, social events, and some lunchtime sessions on personal and social topics. Students speak highly of the benefits of participating in enrichment activity.

23. About 30 students a year take school placements and a smaller number participate in community placements. Limited work placements are arranged on AVCE courses, although these are generally poorly integrated into the programmes. A small proportion of students participate in work experience. In business, there is no organised programme of such experience for students and, in ICT, students have little opportunity to experience commercial environments.

24. The college works in liaison with a local general further education (FE) college. It has close links with age 11 to 16 schools in the area and is a member of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce. The college does not have strong links with employers or the wider community. The college is not proactive in using labour market intelligence in making links with employers. Stronger links are being established through the use of placements for AVCE students, but these are still in the early stages of development.

25. Initial diagnostic assessment and the identification of individual learning needs of students is ineffective. All full-time students are given a basic initial spelling test to identify their reading age. This is used to identify the additional learning support needs of very few students and the take up of those identified is low.

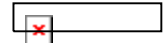
26. Where students identify a specific learning difficulty or disability, the college attempts to provide appropriate individual support. Where possible, classes are moved to accessible locations but some specialist resources and some classrooms are not accessible to students with restricted mobility.

Students with visual or hearing impairments are better catered for in terms of adaptations and equipment. There is no assessment of students' individual learning styles. The college has been successful in identifying some dyslexic students and in providing appropriate support for them.

27. The poor take-up of additional learning support is partially compensated for by good academic support by teachers through specialist workshop provision and individual support outside of lesson time. There is a programme to support some of the more able students, for example, those applying to Oxbridge. Students who do not achieve the minimum of two passes at GCE AS required to progress on to GCE A2 courses are referred to the college 'Restarter' mentoring programme. The programme has proved successful for 75% of students participating in its first year.

28. Students are well supported by their personal and senior tutors. All students receive good guidance through the tutorial programme and from their senior tutor about HE or alternative progression routes. Careers guidance is good and well integrated into the tutorial programme. Personal support for students has recently been further improved through the introduction of a youth support team. The team, which includes a counsellor, is valued by students.

## Leadership and management



29. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college is successful in its primary role of ensuring success for students at advanced level study and preparing them for HE. The college has addressed some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Other issues, however, remain unresolved. Managers have been successful in improving retention rates and students' pass rates overall are at least in line with predictions based on their performance at GCSE. The provision of additional learning support for students remains a weakness. Managers do not monitor the quality of teaching effectively and have not developed strategies to improve it. The proportion of good or better teaching observed in the inspection is significantly below that seen in sixth form colleges nationally. The management of the curriculum is good in business, ICT and modern foreign languages. It is at least satisfactory in all other subjects, although there are shortcomings in the rigour of quality assurance procedures and a lack of emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

30. The college mission is clear and focused. Staff, managers and governors share a common sense of purpose, which is articulated in the college vision. The college seeks to be the first choice local provider of advanced level education for young people. Mutual respect and strong guidance and support are at the heart of the college's vision. Staff have identified a series of actions to ensure that this vision is reflected in the college's work at all levels. However, the monitoring of these actions is ineffective and insufficiently formal. All areas of the college are involved in reviewing their work and planning for improvement. Departmental operational plans are aligned with the college's strategic objectives. The implementation of these plans is monitored by managers and governors. The college's strategic aims for the next three years are appropriate. There is a clear cycle of planning, consultation and review. The college has also identified a series of related objectives for the coming year. These objectives are not always measurable and it is not clear how their achievement will be gauged. It is not clear who is responsible for ensuring that they are achieved.

31. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and involve all teaching and support staff. There are service standards for most areas. Appropriate targets for retention rates, pass rates and value added performance are set and monitored. A governor and senior manager review departmental operational plans. In many areas, self-assessment is not self-critical enough. The resulting development plans do not rigorously address weaknesses. Students' views of their courses and experience at college are surveyed and analysed and are generally positive. There are also student focus groups and a student council whose recommendations are taken seriously by college managers. For example, in one curriculum area, a common scheme of work and a new policy on the setting and marking of homework were introduced as a result of discussions with students. All teachers are observed in lessons, usually by their line managers. The results of these observations

feed into the teaching department's evaluation of its own performance. The teaching grades awarded by the college are significantly higher than those given by inspectors. The college's lesson observation reports do not give a clear evaluation of teaching and learning. Analysis of lesson observations is underdeveloped and poorly exploited. Tutorials are not observed as part of this programme. The college has an unclear picture of the quality of its teaching and learning and has not developed effective strategies for improvement. As at the time of the last inspection, there is no external moderation of the self-assessment process. Insufficient attention is given to the quality of teaching and learning in subject self-assessment reports. The grades awarded by inspectors, however, matched those awarded by all departments with the exception of modern foreign languages.

32. The college has introduced a diversity statement to draw together a range of policies relating to equal opportunities. It has drafted a revised disability statement, with an action plan. Managers provide an annual report to governors on equal opportunities within the college. The tracking of the progress and achievement of students from minority ethnic groups is in its early stages. A few departments have analysed students' progress and achievement according to their ethnicity. Students' views are not systematically analysed for equal opportunities issues, but appeals and complaints are monitored at each meeting of the governor's strategic planning and quality committee. There are few complaints of any kind. Most are informal and resolved in a satisfactory manner. While equal opportunities are implicit in the vision of the college, there is little explicit promotion. The lack of monitoring of equal opportunities, which was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, remains.

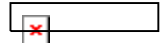
33. Financial management is very strong. Senior managers have access to timely and appropriate information and it is used effectively to monitor the college's activities, its finances and to inform planning. All budget holders receive regular financial monitoring reports. They are informative and profiled according to the individual needs of the budget holder. Achievement of the governors' financial objectives is monitored closely and reported on regularly. Effective training has been given to middle managers in their budgetary responsibilities. There is close analysis by senior managers of costs versus income at departmental level. The college does not yet relate the cost of provision to the number of students who achieve their qualification. The college has undertaken some detailed financial benchmarking of itself against similar colleges. Accommodation, though poor, is used effectively. For the first time ever, in 2003-04, the governors have approved a deficit budget. Pay costs for the coming year are currently forecast at 80.7% of the college's income. This is a high proportion. Budget allocations in some teaching departments are low.

34. All staff are appraised annually. Lesson observations are formally linked to appraisal and the latter is used to identify individual staff development needs. The college gives good support to the few teaching staff who need to gain a teaching qualification. All teaching staff are required contractually to gain an appropriate teaching qualification. New staff are allocated a mentor who supports and monitors their work. The college identifies staff development priorities. These mirror, but are not explicitly linked to, overall college objectives. For example, there are some college objectives where no staff development priorities have been identified.

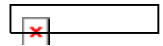
35. The governors' contribution to the work and life of the college is very good. They have a clear strategic vision of the college's future. They monitor its performance, both academically and financially, in great detail. Governors are linked to areas of the curriculum or service departments. They monitor action plans and achievement of targets closely. They are aware of most of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and of the financial challenges it faces. They have excellent working relations with senior managers. Governors monitor their own performance effectively.

36. Communications within the college are generally good and have improved. There is a weekly briefing with team leaders, a daily bulletin and monthly staff newsletter. The small size of the college also aids informal communication. Although curriculum leaders demonstrate a commitment to improving students' performance, there is insufficient identification and dissemination of good teaching practice. Overall, the college provides good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science



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

#### **Strengths**

- high pass rates in physics
  
- high retention rates on most courses
  
- effective organisation of practical work
  
- rigorous monitoring of students' progress.

#### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates in chemistry
  
- outdated chemistry and physics laboratories
  
- dull and uninspiring teaching in a minority of lessons.

#### **Scope of provision**

37. The college provides GCE AS and A2 courses in biology, chemistry, physics and electronics. Recruitment to these courses is increasing annually with some 358 individual enrolments on the four GCE AS courses in 2003/04. There are no full-time vocational programmes at levels 1 or 2 in science. At the time of the inspection, all students were aged 16 to 18 and attended full time.

#### **Achievement and standards**

38. The pass rates on the GCE AS and A2 courses in physics have shown steady improvement over a three-year period and are now above the national average. The pass rates for both GCE AS and A2 chemistry courses, however, are significantly below the national average.

39. The overall pre-entry qualifications of students on science courses are below the national average. The analysis of students' achievements in relation to their GCSE grades indicates that GCE AS students in biology and students in GCE A2 in physics and electronics achieve above the level expected of them. The proportion of GCE AS and A-level students achieving high grades remains low, with only GCE A2 physics students achieving A to B grades higher than at the national average in 2003.

40. Retention rates have improved in the last three years and are now at or above the national average for all courses except for GCE AS chemistry. Retention rates are outstanding on the GCE AS biology course having increased from 84% to 97% in the last three years.

41. Student attendance and punctuality are good. Students are well motivated. Their work is of a high standard and they demonstrate good academic knowledge and understanding.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE A2 biology	3	No. of starts	127	85	98
		% retention	71	98	98
		% pass rate	93	89	91
GCE A2 chemistry	3	No. of starts	76	42	44
		% retention	74	98	98
		% pass rate	82	93	86
GCE A2 physics	3	No. of starts	60	34	44
		% retention	82	97	100
		% pass rate	88	91	95
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	132	144	159
		% retention	84	91	97
		% pass rate	86	83	81
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	90	86	89
		% retention	87	93	87
		% pass rate	67	71	78
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	81	77	66
		% retention	83	91	92
		% pass rate	70	74	84
GCE AS electronics	3	No. of starts	24	24	29
		% retention	88	96	100
		% pass rate	86	57	87

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

***Quality of education and training***



42. Practical activities are well organised and effectively integrated into many lessons. Students pursue practical experiments with care and enthusiasm. Teachers are successful in managing large groups of students undertaking chemistry and biology experiments.

43. The best lessons are carefully planned, teaching activities are varied and well managed; students are focused and purposeful. In a well planned GCE A2 biology lesson on the role and function of the human kidney, students located the position of the kidney through dismantling a model, labelled its ultra-structure after undertaking a dissection and then examined slides of various parts of the kidney under the microscope. The lesson concluded with students successfully answering a relevant examination question on the topic and undertaking research on the process by which the blood is purified.

44. In less effective lessons, teaching is dull and insufficiently inspiring for students. Teachers make too few checks on students' learning. There is a lack of opportunity for students to take responsibility for their learning. Insufficient use is made of experimental work to reinforce theory in these lessons.

45. Good use is made of electronic presentations using powerpoint to support the students' learning, particularly in physics and biology. Science material is at varying stages of development on the college intranet. The physics site provides extensive additional resources to assist students outside of lessons.

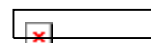
46. Most students' work is of a high standard. Teachers mark student work rigorously and carefully annotate it to highlight how it might be improved. Students' progress is effectively monitored. Homework is set each week and students' are well prepared for external examinations through regular tests. Students receive good support from their teachers. Students make good use of the regular subject workshops to gain additional understanding of science topics or receive additional mathematics support.

47. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Staff make good use of opportunities to enhance their ILT skills, but this is not sufficiently aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. The modern biology laboratories provide a good learning environment. No significant improvements have been made to the outdated chemistry and physics/electronics laboratories since the time of the last inspection. All of the physical science teaching takes place in these laboratories irrespective of the size of the group or the nature of the teaching; this limits the teaching strategies which can be employed. Physics and electronics laboratories are not accessible to students with restricted physical mobility.

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

48. Curriculum management is satisfactory and is provided by both a head of biology and a head of physical sciences. There is efficient use of staffing resources. Communication between managers and teachers is good. There is good team working within the science areas and good sharing of teaching resources. Self-assessment is well established and identifies points for action. Action plans, however, do not give sufficient emphasis to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The number of lessons graded good or better through the internal lesson observation programme was much higher than that awarded by inspectors.

### **Mathematics**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates
- high retention rates
- thorough monitoring and assessment of students' progress
- comprehensive subject support for individual students
- good progression to HE.

### ***Weaknesses***

- narrow range of teaching styles
- lack of challenge for the most able students
- insufficient focus on improving teaching in the self-assessment process.

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

49. The college offers courses in mathematics at GCSE, GCE AS and A2. Students are able to study GCE AS mathematics having achieved a grade C at GCSE. Enrolment of students in mathematics has been fairly consistent over the last three years, there are 127 students following the GCE AS mathematics course and 85 on the GCE A2 course. A GCE A2 further mathematics course is also provided, with 18 first-year students and 14 second-year students. A foundations of mathematics course is offered to science and other students who wish to achieve a further qualification in mathematics. All students who have not yet achieved a grade C at GCSE follow a modular GCSE course; there are 53 students on this course.

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

50. Pass rates in mathematics are high. GCE A2 pass rates have continued to improve and are above the national average for sixth form colleges. Pass rates at GCE AS are high and are also consistently above the national average. The proportion of high grades achieved by students is at the national average in all courses. Analysis of students' achievements in relation to their GCSE grades indicates that most achieve above the level expected of them. GCSE pass rates at grades A\* to C are high and, at 80% in 2003, are significantly above the national average.

51. Retention rates on all courses are high and are above national averages. Student attendance is good and is well monitored by teachers. Students are well organised and produce work of a high standard. Students are successful in national mathematical competitions. In 2002, four students won the regional final of the engineering education project with the Motor Industry Research Association. The rate of progression to HE is high and a substantial proportion of students study degree programmes with a strong mathematical content. Prospective Oxford and Cambridge candidates are identified early and are well supported through the application process.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	75	70	54
		% retention	89	93	83
		% pass rate	51	64	80
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	172	153	145
		% retention	92	90	94
		% pass rate	76	81	84
GCE A2 mathematics	3	No. of starts	101	87	79
		% retention	76	99	99
		% pass rate	86	98	96

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

***Quality of education and training***

52. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory or better. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. Students are enthusiastic and well motivated. The teachers know their students well and they prepare them effectively for external examinations. In the most successful lessons, students respond well to a range of activities and teachers use careful questioning to check students' understanding. For example, in a GCE A2 further mathematics lesson, students' understanding of Newton's laws of motion was enhanced by an effective demonstration by the teacher using a bottle of water suspended from a spring and a simple parachute with a weight attached.

53. Although satisfactory, some teaching is unimaginative. There is little variety in the teaching methods used and limited opportunity for students to be actively involved in group work or discussion of mathematical concepts. Too many lessons involve students in excessive copying of examples from the board with insufficient explanation or demonstration. In some lessons, teachers do not vary their approach sufficiently to meet the needs of individual students. There is insufficient challenge for more able students and limited use of ILT to support learning.

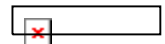
54. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are effective. Homework is regularly set and marked promptly. Teachers provide detailed feedback which informs students about how to improve their work. Good use is made of students' target grades based on their GCSE results and their progress toward achieving this grade is carefully monitored. Teachers effectively identify students who are underperforming. Compulsory additional specialist support is provided for such students in the form of workshops where they receive good small group and one-to-one support. Attendance at mathematics workshops is good and closely monitored.

55. Accommodation in mathematics is satisfactory. Two rooms are too small for the size of the groups which impacts on the range of classroom activities which can be employed. A subject resource room provides a range of text books to supplement those available in the college library. An interactive whiteboard has recently been installed and training in its use is planned.

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

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The team work well together and regularly discuss student performance formally at meetings and informally in the mathematics staff work area. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. The team set and monitor targets for pass rates, retention rates and attendance and this has led to improvements in all three areas. Self-assessment does not make sufficient use of evidence from teaching observations to monitor or improve the quality of teaching. There is insufficient sharing of resources and successful practice in teaching.

### **Business**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on GCE AS and A2 business studies
  
- high retention rates
  
- good teaching
  
- good specialist support for students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- unsatisfactory pass rate on GCE AS and A2 economics in 2003
  
- insufficient access to ILT.

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

57. The college provides GCE AS and GCE A2 courses in business studies and economics and the AVCE three-unit and single awards in business. The provision is all at level 3 and designed for full-time students aged 16 to 18, of whom 180 study business studies, 40 study economics and a small number follow an AVCE course.

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

58. Retention rates are high. They have been consistently above the national level on GCE AS and A2 courses and have improved significantly on AVCE courses between 2001/02 and 2002/03. There are high pass rates, above the national average, in GCE AS and A2 business; the pass rate at GCE A2 reached 100% in each of the last two years. A significant number of business studies students achieve above the level expected of them based on their GCSE grades. The proportion of students achieving high grades is in line with the national average. Pass rates on the AVCE three-unit and single awards improved significantly in 2003. Pass rates in GCE AS and A2 economics fell significantly in 2003, from above the national level to well below it.

59. Students' work is of a high standard. Written assignments are well-structured and demonstrate students' ability to provide comprehensive responses to set tasks. In lessons, many students demonstrate a good level of understanding of the theoretical aspects of business and economics and they are able to apply effective evaluation skills soon after being introduced to a new topic.

60.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	101	118	120
		% retention	91	94	95
		% pass rate	95	87	90
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	*	36	29
		% retention	*	97	97
		% pass rate	*	86	71
GCE A2 business studies	3	No. of starts	82	69	67
		% retention	73	99	99
		% pass rate	95	100	100

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

\* fewer than 15 starters

***Quality of education and training***

61. Most teaching is good. Teaching strategies within lessons are varied, with a good balance of verbal exposition, questioning and use of learning resources, to stimulate students. Teachers make explicit and helpful linkage between subject theory and practice. In one lesson, the teacher used a mayonnaise tasting exercise effectively to involve students in comparing branded and non-branded products. Students were able to critically evaluate various sampling methods and demonstrate the higher level analytical skills required for good GCE A2 performance. In some lessons, teachers are not sufficiently responsive to the full range of students' abilities which leaves many students unchallenged.

62. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in their subjects. They attend subject-specific training days and commercial updating. Learning resources to support business and economics students are mostly good. The library contains an appropriate stock of up-to-date materials. The use of ILT in lessons is restricted and teachers have to plan to move classes into the learning centre or library. This disrupts students' learning and inhibits the integration of IT into lessons.

63. Assessment is thorough and students' progress is closely monitored. Individual learning plans are used effectively. Students' action plans are reviewed regularly and adjusted according to individual circumstances. Homework is set regularly. Assignments, assessment criteria and marked

work are moderated in line with established assessment policies. Students' written work is marked promptly, with clear and constructive feedback which helps students to improve their performance. There are good opportunities for students to develop their examination skills through half-term tests and mock examinations. Moderator reports are positive.

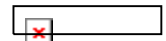
64. Business courses have some good external links which enrich students' learning. Industrial trips are arranged with local businesses. One visit to a local garden centre was planned around a business strategy module and included informative lectures by two managers about their strategic planning for the business. There is no planned work experience for business students and they have an under-developed appreciation of practical aspects of business and lack awareness of the commercial world. The value and importance of key skills are not effectively promoted to students. Opportunities are missed to integrate key skills into business lessons and assignments, even on the AVCE courses.

65. Teachers provide good academic support to individual students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Students comment very positively about the help and support they receive from teachers. Students receive comprehensive advice and guidance before they enrol on to the courses, and business students find this particularly helpful in confirming their preferred choice of course. Comprehensive careers education is included within the tutorial provision.

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

66. Leadership and management are good. The small team of teachers work closely and effectively together and targets set for student achievement are mostly met. There are regular, minuted staff meetings, and actions agreed are subsequently monitored. The performance of individual students and courses are closely analysed, particularly in relation to external benchmarks, and used to set future targets. The self-assessment report is not a critical evaluation of the provision and it identifies normal expectations as strengths, for example, that students find the topics covered to be relevant. Internal lesson observations fail to focus on the quality of students' learning and records of observations provide no indication of how lessons might be improved.

### **Information and communication technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on all courses in 2003
  
- effective specialist learning resources on the college intranet
  
- good specialist support for practical projects.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on GCE A2 in 2003
  
- undemanding teaching of theory
  
- limitations in specialist resources which impede students' learning
  
- lack of rigour in course review and evaluation.

**Scope of provision**

67. The college offers only full-time provision at level 3. GCE AS and A2 courses in ICT and AVCE ICT as a single award are provided. At the time of the inspection, there were 64 first-year students and 43 second-year students in this area.

**Achievement and standards**

68. Pass rates on all courses have improved and in 2003 they were above the national average. Few students, however, achieved high grades. The retention rate for the second year of the GCE A2 course in 2003 was low, at 88%, compared with the national average of 96%. The number of students attaining key skills IT is low. Attendance at ICT lessons is good and students attend punctually. Students are enthusiastic and hardworking. Second-year students produce well-analysed examination projects with good database designs.

69.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	164	135	85
		% retention	88	94	88
		% pass rate	61	66	85
GCE A2 ICT	3	No. of starts	90	62	59
		% retention	67	98	88
		% pass rate	70	89	96

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

**Quality of education and training**

70. Teachers plan practical lesson activities well. They have good subject knowledge and deal competently with students' queries. Students receive good and effective support with their practical work in lessons and they are able to develop successful solutions to their own project designs. In one GCE A2 lesson, students received excellent guidance in preparing for their examination

projects. The teacher dealt effectively with a wide variety of activity relating to the systems life cycle, including prototyping screens and navigation, documenting user requirements and project planning.

71. Skilful questioning by teachers enables students to think through, and often solve, their own problems. This technique was used well by the teacher in an introductory lesson on normalisation where, when given a list of data fields, students were guided carefully and they all successfully produced the data in third normal form.

72. Teaching in theory lessons is often undemanding. Time is not used effectively. Teachers often talk for too long and students work on routine tasks such as copying from overhead transparencies, giving little opportunity to engage the students and check their understanding. There is too little use made of data projectors to demonstrate complex theory in these lessons. Teachers do not make students aware of the opportunities that are available in lessons to develop their IT key skills and gather evidence for accreditation. Formal schemes of work and lesson plans often lack detail and do not identify the expected learning outcomes.

73. The department benefits from recruitment of staff with recent commercial experience, however, students have little opportunity to experience commercial IT environments.

74. Students and staff have good access to the Internet. Students use the many specialist learning resources on the college intranet effectively both during and outside lessons. There are adequate numbers of textbooks for students' use. There are, however, some resource limitations which impede students' learning. Some computers are very noisy which makes it difficult for students to hear their teacher; the different versions of software in use across the college affects the format of students' files; projection screens are either too small or too reflective; and students are limited to too few free pages of printing from the college network. In lessons, some students do not observe good health and safety practice in workstation usage.

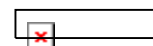
75. Assignments are well written and grading criteria are clear to students. Assessment and internal verification practices are effective and closely monitored by the head of department. Teachers regularly set homework which they return promptly with good verbal feedback, however, there is a lack of written feedback to show how the work could be improved.

76. All students receive informative advice pre-enrolment to ensure they are on the most appropriate course. There is no systematic assessment of additional learning support needs for students. All students have a weekly tutorial which is effective in supporting their career choices and progression to HE. There are timetabled practical workshops for students which provide good specialist support for assignments and homework.

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

77. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has established good team working. The focus on representation of females on ICT courses has led to an improved participation rate from around 16% last year to 40% this year. Many of the new systems that are now in place, which include the sharing of good practice, have yet to demonstrate improvement. There is weak review, monitoring and evaluation of provision. Little use is made of feedback from the students and insufficient importance is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the self-assessment process.

### **Visual and performing arts**



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



### **Strengths**

- high pass rates in film studies
- high retention rates in art and design and GCE AS film studies
- extensive enrichment activities.

### **Weaknesses**

- declining pass rate in GCE AS art and design in 2003
- low and declining retention rates in the single award AVCE in performing arts
- insufficiently challenging teaching
- poor standard of specialist resources.

### **Scope of provision**

78. All students are full-time, aged 16 to 18 following GCE AS or A2 programmes. Currently, 48 are studying for an AVCE single award in performing arts. At the time of the inspection, there were 79 students in art and design. Film studies is increasing in popularity, with 91 students currently studying this subject. There is no provision below level 3.

### **Achievement and standards**

79. Since the introduction of film studies in 2001, retention rates on both GCE AS and A2 courses have been high and pass rates have risen to an excellent 100%. In art and design, the pass rate at GCE AS has declined over the last three years whilst the pass rate at GCE A2 level has improved slightly to around the national average. Retention rates are high on art and design and GCE AS film studies courses. There are low and declining retention rates in AVCE performing arts, whilst pass rates rose to 100% in 2003. Analysis of students' achievements in relation to their GCSE grades in art and design indicates that most achieve below the level expected of them.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCE AS art and design	3	No. of starts	44	62	52

		% retention	91	94	98
		% pass rate	93	91	86
GCE AS film studies	3	No. of starts	32	50	67
		% retention	94	94	91
		% pass rate	90	100	100
GCE A2 art and design	3	No. of starts	32	32	46
		% retention	66	100	98
		% pass rate	95	94	96
GCE A2 film studies	3	No. of starts	*	20	31
		% retention	*	100	94
		% pass rate	*	90	100
AVCE performing arts single award	3	No. of starts	*	22	20
		% retention	*	77	60
		% pass rate	*	88	100

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

\*course not running

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

80. The majority of teaching is satisfactory: that for performing arts is good. In the better lessons, teachers use creative and innovative techniques to inspire students and encourage contributions from individuals. In a well-planned performing arts lesson, students confidently discussed their ideas for a street performance through the characterisation of Victorian celebrities. They made good use of previous research on the subject and the activity was thought provoking, challenging and enjoyable.

81. Most lessons are aimed at the middle of the ability range and there are insufficient activities to challenge the more able students or to support those who find tasks difficult. Key skills are not evident in lesson planning and only a minority of students are building an appropriate portfolio. Some of the weaker lessons in art and design lack focus and teachers do not always plan lessons effectively. There is too little opportunity for students to engage in specialist discussions and extend their understanding of contextual research. Students' sketchbooks contain some satisfactory observational drawing, but there is too much emphasis on copied images and irrelevant text and little evidence of them extending their drawing techniques or developing ideas for projects.

82. Specialist resources are poor in all areas. The limited resources in art and design restricts students' work to painting and drawing at tables which limits the production of large-scale 3D drawings. There is little display of students' work. The lack of an editing suite, resources room or projector and screen, impacts on the range of practical work experienced by film studies students. The classroom layout restricts the organisation of group activities and the viewing and discussion of film. In performing arts, good use is made of the limited space available, although the room is not soundproofed and there is no theatre or rehearsal room.

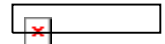
83. Assessment requirements and criteria in performing arts are clear. Students produce informative log books for writing notes at the end of lessons and for completing homework. Log books are regularly reviewed and teachers provide good written feedback in them. In film studies, students receive informative written feedback on draft essays and assignments which helps them to improve the quality of their work. There is effective team marking in art and design. Attendance at lessons and at weekly tutorials is good. Student absence is followed up promptly. Students value this and view it as an indication of the college's caring supportive environment.

84. There is an extensive enrichment programme for specialist and non-specialist students. Teachers organise regular visits to museums, art galleries and theatres including Tate Modern and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Students have recently benefited from visits to Barcelona, Dublin and Amsterdam. Performing arts students perform in schools as part of the 'Theatre in Education' programme and are currently working on ideas for a city centre street performance of 'Switching on the Christmas lights'. Art and design students are involved in making props for film study students' photograph exhibitions and for all performances. Students from a variety of courses across the college painted an interesting mural of 1960s' images in their common room.

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

85. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work co-operatively, sharing resources and student projects. The location of staff offices and teaching rooms presents difficulties in communication. The lack of regular meetings to discuss and plan the curriculum, means that good practice is not always shared within teams and across the provision.

### **History, geography, politics, law**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in GCE A2 history, politics, GCE AS and A2 law
  
- high retention rates in GCE A2 history, law and politics
  
- wide range of enrichment opportunities
  
- effective specialist study support for students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rate in GCE AS geography
  
- insufficient sharing of good practice among teachers.

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

86. The college has a thriving portfolio of advanced level subjects in humanities. Students are able to work towards GCE AS and A2 qualifications in history, politics, geography and law in addition to psychology, sociology, philosophy and religious studies. Currently, 244 students are following GCE AS courses and 142 are studying at GCE A2 level. Politics has the smallest cohort of students with 18 first-year students and 9 who are studying at GCE A2 level.

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

87. Pass rates are excellent on GCE A2 level courses in history, law and politics, all of which achieved 100% in 2003. The pass rate for GCE A2 geography has fallen from 100% in 2002 to around the national average in 2003. At GCE AS in history and law, pass rates are high and in GCE AS politics are around the national average. In contrast, the geography GCE AS pass rate has been below the national average for the last three years.

88. Retention rates over two years are generally at or above the national average for all GCE A2 programmes, with history and politics achieving 100% for both years. The retention rates on GCE AS courses has been above or in line with the national average for the last three years.

89. The proportion of students achieving high grades at GCE AS and A2 in politics and in GCE A2 in geography is well above the national average. The standard of students' work in the majority of subjects is good.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in history, geography, politics, law, 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	64	74	84
		% retention	88	95	93
		% pass rate	75	81	77
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	68	76	63
		% retention	93	93	90
		% pass rate	97	90	95
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	45	90	71
		% retention	84	92	86
		% pass rate	92	86	92
GCE AS politics	3	No. of starts	*	20	16
		% retention	73	100	88
		% pass rate	100	85	86
GCE A2 geography	3	No. of starts	49	34	50
		% retention	84	97	96
		% pass rate	85	100	96
GCE A2 history	3	No. of starts	67	48	42
		% retention	79	100	100
		% pass rate	87	100	100
GCE A2 law	3	No. of starts	31	32	51
		% retention	45	100	98
		% pass rate	93	94	100

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

\* fewer than 15 starters

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

90. The majority of teaching is well planned. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan effectively to include opportunities for students to develop their powers of analysis and evaluation. In these lessons, good use is made of discussion, group work and question and answer techniques. For example, in politics, the teacher facilitated a lively and interesting debate regarding the powers of the American Supreme Court. Students demonstrated and improved their understanding of the issues relating to the President as Commander in Chief and presented their arguments in a clear and informative manner. In the minority of unsuccessful lessons, teaching is too prescriptive and does not provide students with sufficient opportunities to learn independently. In these lessons, teachers do not cater for the full range of ability in the group.

91. Most of the teaching rooms in humanities are dedicated to specific subjects and are well resourced. Teachers produce high-quality learning materials for student use in both printed form and on the college intranet. Geography students make good use of the intranet to access and complete their assignments. Specialist workshops, which are provided for students who require and request extra tuition, are used effectively to improve achievement and supplement classroom learning.

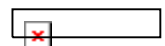
92. Students' progress is rigorously monitored and parents are well informed about progress based on the students' minimum expected examination grades. The majority of students' work is thoroughly marked and effectively assessed. Good use is made of assessment report forms in subject areas to provide extensive annotation to students, indicating where improvements can be made.

93. There is a wide range of enrichment opportunities to extend students' learning. Geography students benefit from residential fieldtrips to Dorset and Kenya and half-day fieldtrips for urban study. Law students visit the local magistrates' court as well as the Royal Courts of Justice, all of which provide students with a greater understanding of the work of the legal system. In history and politics, good use is made of visiting speakers and visits to a wide variety of historical sights. Students are successful participants in the European Youth Parliament, representing the United Kingdom in 1999 and 2003.

### **Leadership and management**

94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good communication and team working across full-time and part-time staff. The resources and facilities are well managed and utilised. Quality procedures are in place in all areas; course review and target setting are well established. The departmental self-assessment process is reflective and highlights areas for improvement over such matters as retention rates and student performance. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is less effective and there is insufficient sharing of good practice in relation to successful teaching methods.

### **Psychology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies**



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

#### **Strengths**

- high pass rates at GCE A2

- high retention rates
  
- some lively and enthusiastic teaching
  
- effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress.

**Weaknesses**

- low pass rate in GCE AS philosophy in 2003
  
- insufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

**Scope of provision**

95. The college provides a wide range of full-time GCE AS and A2 subjects in humanities which enables students to choose a variety of subject combinations. Students are able to work towards GCE AS and A2 qualifications in philosophy, psychology, religious studies and sociology in addition to history, politics, geography and law. A number of students choose one of these subjects as an additional GCE AS qualification in their second year. Psychology has grown significantly and now has the largest student entry in the college. At the time of the inspection, there were 241 first-year psychology students. No courses are available part time, all students are full time aged 16 to 18.

**Achievement and standards**

96. Pass rates for the small number of students in GCE AS religious studies are consistently outstanding at 100% over the last three years. A high proportion of students on these courses consistently achieve high grades above the national average. Pass rates are high in GCE A2 sociology, psychology and religious studies, being close to or above national averages. In 2003, the pass rate for GCE AS philosophy was low yet, for the same year, 100% of students passed GCE A2 philosophy. Student achievement of high grades in psychology, sociology and philosophy is at or below national averages. Students in psychology perform at or above the level predicted by their GCSE grades on entry to the college and religious studies students perform very well.

97. Retention rates are high in GCE AS psychology, GCE A2 sociology, GCE AS and A2 philosophy and GCE A2 religious studies. Students are prepared well for entry to HE and progression rates are high.

**A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies, 2001 to 2003**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	158	203	227

		% retention	88	96	91
		% pass rate	92	93	83
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	46	61	69
		% retention	87	89	86
		% pass rate	80	91	86
GCE AS religious studies	3	No. of starts	15	*	15
		% retention	80	*	87
		% pass rate	100	*	100
GCE AS philosophy	3	No. of starts	*	31	22
		% retention	*	87	86
		% pass rate	*	93	63
GCE A2 sociology	3	No. of starts	33	28	34
		% retention	55	100	97
		% pass rate	89	96	100
GCE A2 psychology	3	No. of starts	134	97	156
		% retention	63	96	96
		% pass rate	85	96	96

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

\* fewer than 15 starters

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

98. Most teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Such teaching promotes good relationships with students and effective learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching and learning methods to actively involve students. They make good use of questioning techniques. For example, in a psychology lesson, effective use was made of a popular television quiz show to recap on and reinforce prior learning. In a sociology lesson, religious artefacts were used imaginatively to stimulate a lively discussion on the functions of religion.

99. Tasks and activities are generally well planned to ensure that students develop appropriate knowledge and understanding. In a religious studies lesson, first year students, relatively new to the course, demonstrated good communication skills by confidently providing informative presentations to their peer group. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, aims and objectives are unclear and students are not challenged in ways which help them to develop skills of critical analysis. In such lessons, teachers talk for too long and students work on routine tasks such as copying from textbooks or writing out notes dictated by the teacher. The teachers' lack of attention to students' learning styles in such lessons prevents some of them from learning effectively.

100. Teachers make good use of the classrooms which are generally too small for the size of furniture available. The library is well stocked for most subjects and students make good use of the study space in the library.

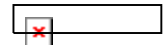
101. Teachers are clearly committed to providing strong academic support to students. Students make regular use of the subject workshops where teachers provide them with good additional specialist support. There are detailed assessment plans for each subject and an appropriate range of assessment opportunities are used. Assessments are well recorded and these records are used effectively by personal and subject tutors to monitor students' progress.

102. Individual target setting and action planning is regularly undertaken with all students. Target setting based upon students' predicted examination grades is thorough and is used effectively to encourage them to improve.

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

103. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Staff share common aims related to improving student achievement. Teachers work well together in teams and communication is good. Schemes of work and resources are shared, but there are few opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning. Newly appointed teachers are well supported through induction and a staff mentoring scheme. Annual reviews are undertaken and are valued by all staff. Teachers and managers regularly undertake professional development, however, few such activities relate to aspects of teaching and learning. Strengths relating to the quality of teaching and learning in the self-assessment reports are overstated.

## **English**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high retention and pass rates
  
- enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching
  
- effective assessment
  
- good specialist support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- little active student participation in lessons
  
- cramped accommodation
  
- lack of emphasis on improving teaching and learning in the self-assessment process.



### **Scope of provision**

104. The college provides GCE AS and GCE A2 courses in English language, English literature and English language and literature, as well as GCSE English for students wishing to re-take the examination. The key skill in communication is available at levels 2 and 3. There are just under 400 full-time students following an English course.

### **Achievement and standards**

105. Retention and pass rates are high and trends in performance show continuous improvement over recent years. In GCE AS and GCE A2 English language and GCE AS English literature, the pass rates and the proportion of students achieving high grades have improved, and are now well above the national average. In GCE AS English language and literature and GCE A2 literature, however, the proportion of high grades is below the national average. Most English language students achieve significantly higher GCE AS and GCE A2 grades than those predicted by their GCSE results. The pass rate in GCSE English is at the national level this year, but has been very high in the two previous years. The majority of students progress to relevant HE courses or to employment.

106. Students' written work is of a high standard. One student has had an essay published for the Nuneaton Arts Festival. Students have insufficient opportunity to develop and extend their oral skills in lessons.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	*	19	17
		% retention	*	84	82
		% pass rate	*	100	50
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	88	70	91
		% retention	81	94	95
		% pass rate	99	100	100
GCE AS English language and literature	3	No. of starts	83	57	45
		% retention	90	95	93
		% pass rate	84	93	100
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	66	81	78
		% retention	85	93	95
		% pass rate	91	92	99
GCE A2 English language	3	No. of starts	74	60	50
		% retention	72	98	94
		% pass rate	92	93	100
GCE A2 English language and literature	3	No. of starts	60	57	44
		% retention	80	100	95
		% pass rate	92	96	98
GCE A2 English	3	No. of starts	77	38	51

literature	% retention	79	95	98
	% pass rate	97	100	100

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

\* fewer than 15 starters

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

107. Much teaching is enthusiastic. Teachers have very good knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, their subject. They are engaging presenters of information and ideas. Where teaching is good, the learning activities enable students to participate in discussions based on structured worksheets and include useful plenary sessions in which teachers highlight the key learning points. Students in a GCE AS English language lesson dealt confidently with linguistic frameworks, used technical vocabulary accurately and explored aspects of pronunciation effectively. In a GCSE English lesson, students offered answers to questions on Orwell's *'Animal Farm'* with confidence, there was a supportive atmosphere and students demonstrated a clear respect for each others' views.

108. Most lessons, however, tend to be teacher led and students often spend considerable time copying notes from the board. There is too little variation in teaching and learning strategies and students are given few opportunities to engage actively in their learning. Students also have insufficient opportunities to work collaboratively.

109. There are very good working relationships between teachers and students. Students are interested in their work, enjoy the subject and appreciate the support teachers give outside of lesson time. Teachers provide good additional support to individual students in specialist subject workshops.

110. Assessment is well planned and coursework assignments are well designed to provide students with considerable variety and challenge. Students' written work is marked carefully with constructive and encouraging comments to help students improve their performance. Internal moderation arrangements are thorough and effective and external moderators' reports comment positively on the accuracy of the marking and the good variety of assignments set. Student subject profiles give useful details of progress and targets to be met.

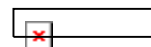
111. Teaching staff are well qualified and three are external examiners in their subject. The library stock has many books to support English courses, but there are not enough copies of the most popular texts. The English section of the college intranet includes useful material and activities for English language students, but it is still very limited in its literature content. Literature students make visits to the theatre and places of literary interest and there is an annual trip to First World War battlefields. Language students do not have access to the same breadth of subject enrichment activities.

112. Accommodation in some rooms is cramped and heating is poorly regulated so that rooms are sometimes very hot or very cold. One of the classrooms used is large, has attractive subject displays and offers a pleasant working environment.

### **Leadership and management**

113. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been year-on-year improvements in students' achievements on most courses. English teachers appreciate the autonomy they are allowed and share resources effectively. Staff development is largely limited to up-dating on course specifications. Quality assurance arrangements have insufficient impact. Schemes of work consist simply of lists of topics to be covered, rather than being used as a tool to promote effective teaching and learning. The department's operating plan is not related to the self-assessment, which in itself is not self-critical. The findings from internal lesson observations, including the weaknesses identified, do not lead to action to improve the standard of teaching and learning.

## Modern foreign languages



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

### **Strengths**

- good and improving retention rates
  
- good teaching
  
- effective pastoral and academic support.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates on GCE AS German and GCE AS and A2 French courses
  
- underachievement by many students.

### **Scope of provision**

114. This is a small subject area in which there are some 75 students following GCE AS or GCE A2 courses in French, German or Spanish. Student numbers have declined in recent years in German and Spanish. With the exception of GCE AS French, the number of students on each course is consistently low.

### **Achievement and standards**

115. Retention rates on most courses have improved and are above the national average, although the numbers of students involved are small. In GCE A2 German and Spanish the pass rate reached 100% in 2003. The pass rate in GCE AS German has been low for the last three years and in 2003 declined to 60%. Pass rates in GCE AS and A2 French are below the national average. The proportion of students achieving higher grades in language courses is well below the national average.

116. Students' listening skills develop quite effectively, and students cope well with the virtually exclusive use of the target language in lessons. Written work is often of a high standard. Students improve by noting the helpful comments and suggestions which follow meticulous marking. Standards of pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	29	26	44
		% retention	86	92	91
		% pass rate	76	92	81

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

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

117. Teaching in all languages is good and some is very good. Students make good progress in lessons which are often lively and challenging. Students respond well to the increasing integration of video, websites, satellite television and data projectors into their language learning. For example, in one German lesson, students' appreciation of the complex problems facing foreign pupils in German schools was augmented by a video clip from German television. Students were able to develop a good insight into the school life and experiences of a multinational class. Foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to improving students' oral skills and in reinforcing basic grammar, sometimes through enjoyable word games.

118. The rapport between teachers and students is excellent. The atmosphere during lessons is productive yet relaxed and is therefore conducive to learning. In the best lessons, there is constant teacher and student interaction. At times, teachers give English equivalents too readily and do not convey meaning by gesture, by other examples of usage or by synonyms. They occasionally overlook students' poor pronunciation and intonation.

119. The teaching team is sufficient for the number of students studying foreign languages. There are shortcomings in the standard of classrooms. The language laboratory is antiquated, but still functional. Resources for teaching and learning are being improved and include a data projector, a new satellite television receiver, audio and video recorders and access to Authentik's digital information bank.

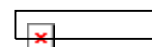
120. Assessment is suitably rigorous across the main language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Oral feedback during lessons is regular and informative. Homework is used well to forge the link between recent and new learning and is part of the on-going assessment of students' work. Students' work is very thoroughly assessed and corrected. Written feedback is usually thorough and detailed with guidance on how to improve. The colour coded marking system, used initially in GCE AS French, is exemplary.

121. Students receive good guidance and support. Teachers know their students very well and they take every opportunity to remedy weaknesses on a one-to-one basis. Students praise the willingness of their teachers to provide all kinds of support as and when necessary. During lessons, teachers use paired work effectively to identify any language areas where advice and help is needed. Students benefit from individual support sessions in subject workshops where weaknesses are addressed and rectified. The workshops are well visited and students speak positively of the value they derive from them. Resource areas are becoming more popular with students working independently on topics or conducting personal research. Language students are able to participate in a good range of visits and exchanges abroad. They also attend appropriate conferences and visit the HE institutions which interest them.

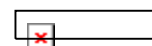
### **Leadership and management**

122. Leadership and management are good. The weaknesses in differentiation, equipment and monitoring of students identified at the time of the last inspection have been rectified. The relatively new head of department leads, both academically and administratively, by example; team spirit is strong and there is a clear commitment to common goals, including the rapid improvement of language provision. Many positive and appropriate initiatives have been introduced, such as the development of language links with partner schools, but it is too early to judge their impact.

## Part D: College data



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



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	0
2	4	0
3	95	0
4/5	0	0
Other	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>

*Source: provided by the college in autumn 2003*

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



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	803	3	25
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	3	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	36	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	248	4	8
Information and communication technology	193	1	6
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	251	1	8
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	41	0	1
Visual and performing arts and media	247	0	8

Humanities	935	2	29
English, languages and communication	460	1	14
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,217</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in autumn 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	22	*	*	*	*	*
	Retention rate	82	*	*	*	*	*
	National average	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate	94	*	*	*	*	*
	National average	70	66	71	67	70	75
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	301	172	157	*	*	*
	Retention rate	86	83	94	100	100	100
	National average	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate	70	82	81	27	50	100
	National average	80	85	84	70	68	71
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	1,744	3,256	2,906	*	*	*
	Retention rate	71	80	92	57	70	100
	National average	75	80	89	63	64	69
	Pass rate	81	84	88	25	100	100
	National average	85	86	88	65	67	75

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 1999 to 2002: College ISR.

\* fewer than 15 starters

**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)	64	31	5	112
Level 2 (intermediate) and Level 1 (foundation)	63	37	0	8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>120</b>

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