



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

West Thames College

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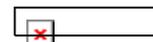
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Basic information about the college



Name of college:	West Thames College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Thalia Marriott
Address of college:	West Thames College London Road Isleworth TW7 4HS
Telephone number:	020 8326 2000
Fax number:	020 8326 2001
Chair of governors:	John Branczik
Unique reference number:	130447
Name of reporting inspector:	Michael John Davis
Dates of inspection:	1-11 December 2003

Part A: Summary

- effective consultation and communication with staff
- improving pass and retention rates at most levels of provision
- good pastoral support for students
- effective collaboration working to meet the needs of a diverse community
- well-managed induction and enrolment processes
- wide range of courses, many with good progression opportunities.

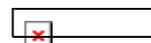
What should be improved

- management in some curriculum areas
- proportion of good teaching through better sharing of good practice
- use of information and learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning
- management of work-based learning
- development of students' key skills
- co-ordination and management of tutorials
- provision of learning support for level 2 and level 3 students

- students' attendance and punctuality
- links with employers.

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

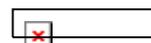


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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 and mathematics	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses, but pass rates on General Certificate of Education Advance Subsidiary (GCE AS) courses are mostly low. Progression from GCE AS to Advanced level (A-level) courses is poor. There is good assessment practice and much good teaching in mathematics. Teachers respond effectively to the diverse needs of students.
Business	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are unsatisfactory on most courses. There is insufficient good teaching that stimulates or enthuses students, but assessment practice is good. Students' punctuality and attendance are poor. Links with employers are underdeveloped. Support for students is effective, and there are good opportunities for progression to higher level courses.
Information and communications technology	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates on most courses are low. Much teaching is undemanding and uninspiring. Basic software is outdated and there is little use of ILT. Students' attendance and punctuality are poor. There are a wide range of courses for students aged 16 to 18 and good opportunities for progression.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade: unsatisfactory. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory on most courses, but they are low for work-based learning. There is much good teaching on beauty and holistic therapy courses. The number of salon clients is inadequate to meet the needs of hairdressing students. Target setting for students is weak and attendance at lessons is poor.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on childcare courses but are unsatisfactory on level 3 health and social care courses. Teaching is generally satisfactory but some students are not sufficiently

	challenged in lessons. Support for students is good and they benefit from good links with employers. There has been unsatisfactory progress in addressing staffing problems.
Art, design and media	Satisfactory. Pass rates are improving on most courses but remain low on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate media courses. Teaching is generally satisfactory and very good on entry level courses; however, teachers make insufficient use of ILT to support learning. Specialist accommodation for art is spacious and well maintained, although learning resources for media are inadequate.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses, but are low on GCE AS law and sociology. Much teaching is good and learning is purposeful. Students are well supported and make good contributions in lessons. Self-assessment and strategic planning lack rigour.
English and English as a foreign language	Satisfactory. There are high retention and pass rates on English courses. Teaching is mostly satisfactory or better but on EFL courses it is often inspirational. English teachers do not pay sufficient attention to individual students' needs. The management of key skills communication courses at levels 2 and 3 is poor.
English for speakers of other languages	Satisfactory. Retention rates are satisfactory and pass rates for students who are entered for nationally accredited courses are high. There is much good teaching on adult courses, but often teaching is uninspiring for students aged 16 to 18. Initial assessment is effective and students are well supported. There is insufficient sharing of information and good practice.
Literacy, numeracy and entry to employment	Satisfactory. Entry to employment contributory grade: satisfactory. Teaching on pre-access and E2E courses is good. There is effective literacy and numeracy support for students on entry level and level 1 courses. Teachers pay insufficient attention to needs of individuals during group activities. Many students with additional support needs experience delays in receiving help.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Success rates have risen steadily and are now at or above the national average for colleges of the same type. There is good strategic planning which involves governors, managers and staff. Most staff support the college's objectives and are aware of their role. The principal and the executive team provide good leadership. Communication and consultation with staff are effective. Governance is good. The board receive regular briefings and reports on the college's performance. Quality assurance systems have been revised. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced, but there has been no improvement in the good or better teaching, which remains low. There is insufficient sharing of good practice. Implementation of an ILT strategy has been slow. Management and co-ordination in some curriculum areas is poor. The college has good collaborative links with local schools and the community. Links with employers are weak. Some systems for collecting and analysing data are underdeveloped. The self assessment process is good but some of the college's grades were better than the inspection grades.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

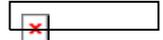
- good access to computers outside lessons
- helpful feedback on assignments
- responsiveness to cultural diversity
- helpful and knowledgeable library staff
- good advice about courses.

What they feel could be improved

- links between vocational courses and the world of work
- clubs and activities could be more prominent and better advertised
- sports facilities
- key skills lessons
- some boring teaching
- long gaps between lessons
- students being late

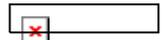
- o not enough variety of food in the canteen.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

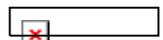


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	54	36	10
19+ and WBL*	61	35	4
Learning 16-18	55	34	11
19+ and WBL*	64	32	4

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

* work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. The college offers a wide range of vocational courses. These include GCSE, GCE AS and A level and access to HE courses. Courses are offered in 13 of the 14 areas of learning funded by the LSC.

modest levels of prior attainment. At the time of the inspection, there were 4,174 part-time students and 2,817 full-time students. Approximately 75% of the students are adults. A quarter of these are following full-time courses. There are 45 young people on foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships in hair and beauty. Over 50 young people are on the new E2E programme that offers training in a range of vocational skills. Almost half of the full-time students are on ESOL courses or have progressed from these programmes to other college provision. Students following qualifications on foundation programmes account for more than one-third of the college's overall provision. Nearly half of the students follow courses at levels 1 or 2.

2. Over the last four years, the proportion of students who started courses and successfully completed them has steadily increased. For all levels and age groups in 2001/02, success rates were at or above the national averages when compared with similar colleges. Retention rates have also improved and are now mostly above the national average. In 2001/02, the retention rates on level 1 and level 3 adult courses were in the top 10% when compared with similar colleges and in the upper quartile for students aged 16 to 18. In 2002/03, retention rates for students 16 to 18 at level 1 and level 3 had further improved, but the retention rates for adults declined. Over the period 2000/01 to 2002/03, the retention rates on short course provision remained consistently below national averages.

3. In 2001/02, pass rates, when compared with the previous two years' results, improved for every level and age group. In 2002/03, pass rates for adult students on level 3 courses were above the national average for the first time in four years. In the same year, pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses also improved and are now well above the national average. However, although pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses have improved, they have remained consistently below the national averages, as have pass rates for all short courses.

4. The total number of students entered for key skills qualifications has declined from 2,834 in 2000/01 to only 30 in 2002/03. This is as a result of the college policy to restrict the number of key skills examination entries, even though full-time students are required to attend key skills classes. Of the 30 students entered in 2002/03, only 10 successfully completed. In many key skills lessons, the standard of work produced by students is below their actual ability. Attendance in many key skills lessons is poor.

16 to 18 year olds

5. The majority of full-time students and approximately 5% of part-time students are aged 16 to 18. Between 1999/2000 and 2002/03, the overall retention rates on courses at levels 1 to 3 were at or above the national averages for similar colleges.

6. In 2001/02, pass rates on level 1 courses significantly improved and remained well above the national average in 2002/03. Pass rates on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1 courses are good and have remained significantly above the national averages for the last two years. Retention rates on level 1 courses are generally satisfactory, with the exception of GNVQ foundation, which only improved to the national average in 2001/02. Pass rates on GNVQ foundation courses improved from 37% in 1999/2000 to 78% in 2001/02, but declined in 2002/03 to below the national average.

7. Pass rates have steadily improved on level 2 courses and have been above the national average for the last two years. Retention rates on level 2 courses are generally in line with national averages, with the exception of NVQ level 2. For example, of the 138 students who started an NVQ level 2 in 2001/02, only 61 completed. In 2002/03, this figure improved but the retention rate remains well below the national average. On GNVQ intermediate courses, pass rates were unsatisfactory for the three years to 2001/02, but improved significantly in 2002/03. The pass rate on GNVQ intermediate media has remained low and is currently 17% below the national average. Retention rates on GCSE courses improved from 55% in 1999/2000 to 76% in 2002/03. Pass rates are around the national average.

8. Retention rates on level 3 courses have steadily improved over the last four years and have

remained above the national averages. Retention rates on advanced vocational courses are good. Pass rates are at the national average of 71%. Generally, pass rates on level 3 courses have steadily improved but remain below the national averages. In 2001/02, the average points score for students entered for AVCE and GCE AS and A-level examinations was 102.7. This was significantly below the national average points score of 254.7 and the Hounslow local education authority (LEA) average of 196.7. The college has made no significant attempt to analyse and evaluate the extent to which courses have increased students' achievements at advanced level over and above what might have been predicted from their previous attainments at entry. In 2002/03, only 66% of students who completed their GCE AS and A-level course passed the examination. Few students progress from GCE AS courses to the relevant GCE A-level. Pass rates on GCE AS science courses are significantly below the national averages. On GCE AS and A-level English courses, a very low proportion of students achieve high grades. Pass rates on GCE AS computing have declined markedly over the last three years.

9. Most students are attentive and ready to answer questions in lessons. In some cases, however, their ability to express themselves does not always match the quality of ideas. Most of the students' written work, in terms of its standard and its organisation, is satisfactory or better. In science lessons, students work sensibly and safely in laboratory practical sessions and rapidly develop necessary skills. In further mathematics lessons, students are able to demonstrate their mastery of complex statistical notation both in responses to questions and in their completion of written problems. Art students demonstrate good drawing skills and work effectively across a wide range of media and materials. Students on film studies, English and humanities courses demonstrate good levels of analysis and critical awareness. However, in 11% of the lessons observed by inspectors, the standard of students' work and the progress they were making was unsatisfactory. Student attendance, at 68%, was well below the national average for colleges.

10. Students on E2E courses make good progress. Occupational skills are effectively developed and students are well prepared for employment. Many work-based learners who follow modern apprenticeships in hair and beauty make slow progress. Retention and pass rates are poor. Between 1999/2000 and 2002/03, 67% of the 17 learners who started an advanced modern apprenticeship in hair and beauty left before the end of the programme. Of those who remained, only one achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework and five achieved an NVQ at level 3. Over the same period, a total of 166 learners started a foundation modern apprenticeship in hair and beauty. Of those who have left, 75% did not achieve a qualification. The remaining 25% gained a full NVQ at level 2, but only 8% attained the full modern apprenticeship framework.

Adult learners

11. The trends in overall pass and retention rates for adult students are similar to those for students aged 16 to 18. The pass rates on most courses for adults have steadily improved to about or slightly above the national average. In 2002/03, there was a slight decrease in retention rates at levels 2 and 3 and a significant decrease at level 1. College initiatives to improve the number of students who remain on course have been mostly successful. Despite a downward trend in 2002/03, overall retention rates have remained at or well above the national averages.

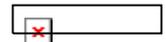
12. The majority of students on level 1 courses follow ESOL and/or basic skills courses. Retention rates on these courses are good and pass rates are about the national average. Pass rates on level 2 courses have steadily risen from below to above the national average. Pass rates on GCSE courses improved to 89%, well above the national average for 2002/03. On GNVQ and equivalent courses, the pass rate in 2001/02 was 75%, significantly above the national average of 59%. Overall retention rates on level 2 courses have remained at least 5% above the average. However, there was a significant decrease in the retention rate on NVQ level 2 courses, from 88% in 2001/02, to 57% in 2002/03.

13. Pass and retention rates have improved on GCE AS and A-level courses, but pass rates have remained consistently below the national averages for the last four years. Pass rates on advanced vocational courses are also unsatisfactory. In 2002/03, only 52% of students who were retained achieved a qualification. In 2001/02, the pass rate for NVQ level 3 courses, at 48%, was poor, but improved in 2002/03 to the national average.

14. In 2002/03, approximately 1,800 students followed short courses, of whom 86% were adults. Pass rates on these courses were poor. However, over the past 4 years, pass rates have risen from 47% to a satisfactory 71%. Retention rates for short courses are below average for students of all ages.

15. Adult students generally make good progress. In 68% of lessons, the progress made by students was judged to be good or better, which is above the sector average. Students on access to HE courses develop good reading habits. Students on ESOL courses with a vocational element achieve a high standard of work. Students on part-time management courses are effective in using management theories to solve problems that relate to their own jobs. On foundation programmes, students are able to articulate their thoughts confidently and clearly. They also work well together and support each other in lessons. Many students successfully progress from level 3 courses to HE. A significant proportion of students following ESOL courses progress to higher level programmes. In 2002/03, approximately 50% of ESOL students who were taught at home progressed to other college courses. Adult students' attendance and punctuality at lessons are better than for students aged 16 to 18, but are still five percentage points below the national averages.

Quality of education and training



16. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 186 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 57%, satisfactory in 35% and less than satisfactory in 7% of lessons. The percentage of good or better teaching is lower than the national average, at 65%, for all colleges inspected between September 2001 and June 2002. In 59% of lessons, students' learning was judged to be good or better: slightly below the national average. The percentage of lessons that are very good and excellent, at 22%, was three percentage points below the national average for similar colleges. The teaching of adult students is generally better than the teaching of students aged 16 to 18. The best teaching is at level 1, where 68% of lessons are good or better; the weakest is at levels 2 and 3. Overall, the proportion of teaching that is less than satisfactory is at the national average. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in humanities or in science and mathematics.

17. The general standards of teaching are the same for all staff, but a greater proportion of unsatisfactory lessons are taught by full-time teachers. There are no differences in the general standards of practical and theory teaching. The best teaching is in the areas of science and mathematics, humanities, art, design and media, and ESOL. On GCE AS courses, 75% of lessons are good or better. The highest percentage of teaching that is less than satisfactory is on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national and the GNVQ intermediate courses, at 27% and 22%, respectively.

18. There is good teaching in most curriculum areas. In the better lessons, teachers set challenging assignments and are able to effectively monitor and support students' progress. Where teaching is effective, teachers set tasks and questions that are individually tailored to meet identified student needs. In the good lessons, there is clear and patient explanation of ideas, and good checking of learning.

19. Too much teaching is only satisfactory and the proportion of good lessons is low. Weaker lessons are sometimes characterised by poor use of ILT and a lack of appropriate teaching methods. During group activities, many teachers do not focus sufficiently on the needs of individuals. Teachers use the same methods and materials irrespective of students' individual abilities and needs. Some teaching is uninteresting, undemanding and lacks variety, and there is no attempt to check students' learning. Some lessons are not planned thoroughly and lesson objectives are not made clear to students. Teachers often speak too quickly and give students confusing instructions. There is an over-reliance on copying or repetition of phrases without sufficient checking of understanding. Much teaching of key skills is unsatisfactory and many students' key skills are not

properly developed.

20. Most teachers are well qualified and experienced in their subject areas. Teachers on some vocational courses lack recent industrial and commercial experience. The college employs approximately 180 full-time teachers; 70% of full-time teachers hold a teaching qualification and a further 23% are currently being trained. Just over 160 part-time teachers are employed through a recruitment agency, accounting for some 15% of the college's overall budget for teaching staff. Of these, only 30% hold a teaching qualification and a further 16% are working towards one. Staff appraisal, review and development arrangements are well established and effectively managed. Staff development plans are clearly linked to the college's strategic objectives. Staff participation in training and development activities is good. Whole-college staff development days have been highly successful.

21. The main site provides satisfactory accommodation and facilities for students. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant improvements to its main campus.

22. Students with restricted mobility have good access to the college's accommodation and resources. The college has started to organise its campus by curriculum areas. Specialist learning resources are good in hair and beauty, art and design and science. In media, specialist resources are inadequate. Teaching and learning resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent. There is a particularly innovative sensory experience room for students with profound and complex learning difficulties. The students' common room is well designed with an internet café and accommodation for all the main student services. A flexible learning centre provides students with good access to IT facilities. The sports facilities available for students' use are very limited. The college has plans to develop two playing fields and a sports and fitness centre is being developed.

23. The library is well-stocked and provides a friendly and supportive environment for students to study and undertake research. There is a wide range of books, periodicals, specialist journals and multimedia resources for each curriculum area. Some of the book stock in history and psychology is out of date. Links between library staff and teachers are well developed. Learning resources and access to IT equipment at the college's skills centre are currently insufficient. The college recognises this and has made plans to resolve the issue. The ratios of computers to students and staff are 1:4 and 1:2, respectively, which are in line with the average for the sector. Progress in implementing ILT within the college is very slow. There is no up-to-date ILT strategy and there is little evidence of the impact of ILT on teaching and learning. The college intranet is underdeveloped. Computer resources are not efficiently used to support teaching and learning.

24. The college has well-established systems and procedures for the assessment and verification of students' work. A comprehensive handbook is regularly updated and circulated to curriculum teams and more common paperwork is being developed. Full-time students are regularly assessed. GCE AS and A-level students are regularly set homework. Many courses produce a calendar of dates for the submission of assignments. Each term, tutors formally review full-time students' progress. Most course handbooks clearly explain the assessment criteria. The recording and monitoring of work-based learners' progress is poor. For students following ESOL courses, individual learning plans are not always effectively used to set goals and monitor progress. Most teachers mark students' work carefully. They write constructive and encouraging comments that help students to improve. Teachers are not as good at giving guidance to the more able students. Some teachers pay insufficient attention to students' written work in the classroom. Initial assessment is effective at entry level and level 1, but not for students at levels 2 and 3.

25. Teachers regularly review students' goals and targets. However, the targets themselves are often inappropriately focused. Some teachers set general targets rather than those specific to individual needs. Short-term target setting for students on the E2E programme is poor. Internal verification systems are generally thorough and effective. In some areas, internal verification procedures include the evaluation of assignment briefs. External verifier reports are mostly positive. A senior manager receives all external reports and monitors agreed action plans. At the course level, there is little analysis of different groups of students' performance. The college has two meetings a year for the parents or guardians of full-time students. Entry level students have an additional event

in September. These are generally well attended, but not all curriculum teams keep records. Parents or guardians are automatically contacted if there are any concerns. Employers who sponsor a student attending the college do not systematically receive feedback.

26. The college has carefully redesigned its curriculum offer. The focus has been to reduce competition and better meet the needs of local communities. For example, the college has reduced its GCE A-level programme and increased its entry level and level 1 provision. The college has a wide range of full-time and part-time vocational courses from entry level to HE. The ESOL provision is very large. Nearly half of the full-time students are following or have progressed from ESOL courses. The vocational curriculum has been significantly modified. For example, refugees and asylum seekers can now attend the courses that meet their needs. Most curriculum areas offer students good progression opportunities. However, the range of courses and progression opportunities in humanities, science and mathematics are limited.

27. The college has successfully widened participation by catering for a very diverse group of students from a broad range of community and faith backgrounds. The college has good working relationships with most local schools and religious groups. The curriculum offer affords good opportunities for those who would normally have difficulty attending; for example, courses are designed to accommodate adults with childcare responsibilities. There are now 343 local school pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend the college weekly: an increase of 79% compared with last year. The college collaborates closely with a wide range of external agencies. For instance, the innovative development of the skills centre, opened in September 2003, was as a result of effective partnership working with the London Borough of Hounslow, BAA, local schools and the LSC. At the time of the inspection 135 Year 10 school pupils were attending the skills centre one day a week. The college has been highly successful in developing its community ESOL provision through six franchised arrangements. The college has also recently secured, and then franchised out to a work-based training provider, a contract for 120 construction students. The community-based provision offered by the college itself is very limited. The college has agreed not to replicate adult and community education provision managed by the LEA.

28. The range of additional enrichment activities for students is satisfactory. There are a large number of leisure and sporting activities. Course-specific enrichment activities are very limited. The key skills strategy developed by the college is ineffective. Few key skills classes appropriately relate to the students' main courses. The development of students' key skills is generally poor. Many students do not value key skills lessons. The overall development of students' employability skills is weak. There is poor co-ordination of work experience. There are few visits to or from employers.

29. Student information, advice and guidance are comprehensive and impartial. Information about what the college offers is provided in many places, including community locations. Leaflets are written in a range of different languages. Advisors help students find courses at other providers if the college cannot meet their needs. The college website is outdated. Promotional materials are being updated to remove any form of gender stereotyping. The admissions policy is clearly written and effectively implemented. There are good induction arrangements for full-time and part-time students. The induction week ends in a freshers' fair which is liked by the students. The college has well-developed child protection policies and procedures. These have been implemented and are frequently reviewed.

30. Senior management and staff effectively communicate their high expectations of students; this leads to mostly good behaviour and attitude. The importance of good attendance, punctuality, attitude and behaviour is stressed during induction. Classrooms and walls around the college have posters that reinforce these messages. Retention officers successfully work closely with students at risk of leaving the college and those with challenging behaviour. Much greater emphasis is now given to getting students on the right course. The number of early leavers has been reduced by 75% over the last three years. Across the college, retention, pass and attendance rates have steadily improved. However, attendance and punctuality during inspection were often poor.

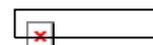
31. Effective and cohesive student support is provided by the careers, counselling and Connexions staff. They work well with the admissions team and with tutors. Students value the support they receive. Advice and guidance on financial, health, nationality and welfare matters and assistance

with childcare are good. The college is responsive to improvements suggested by students. For example, an improvement in financial advice to students led to full and early allocation of additional support funds in 2003/04. The range of student support services available at the recently opened skills centre in Feltham is mostly satisfactory.

32. Students following entry level, level 1, EFL, ESOL and access courses are initially assessed. Support, if required, is prompt and appropriate. Students on intermediate and advanced courses are assessed using a new computerised system. Problems with this process have led to delays. For example, some students do not receive the support they need until four months after starting their course. The standard of individual reviews and action plans for students is sometimes poor. In a few areas, one-to-one reviews are held frequently and are well documented. In many areas, however, reviews are infrequent and the recording of outcomes is minimal.

33. Tutors receive good documentation and planning materials for group tutorials. In the better tutorial sessions, students benefit by learning new topics. These complement their main course and broaden their understanding of important issues. In the poorer sessions, little or no learning takes place. Students are clearly not interested in the topics chosen by tutors. Some tutorials are cancelled or replaced by standard lessons. The collection and use of exit and destination information to aid planning is unco-ordinated.

Leadership and management



34. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal and three assistant principals with responsibility for resources, learning and students form the executive team. A new principal was appointed in 1999 and she provides good leadership. Two of the assistant principals have been appointed in the last two years. The team, through its actions, has demonstrated a determined approach to improve the quality of the students' experience and the links with local schools and the community. The proportion of students completing their courses successfully has steadily increased and collaborative links have improved significantly. A few weaknesses identified during the last inspection have yet to be fully addressed at course level.

35. The strategic plan is clear and staff at all levels are involved with its development. Governors and managers from across the college annually take part in a well-conceived planning day. The event starts with a briefing from the principal on national and local issues facing the college. The outcomes of the event are shared with staff at a development day and they are encouraged to respond. All staff and franchise partners receive a well-presented leaflet that summarises agreed objectives. Governors carefully review progress towards the goals set out in the plan. Ten key objectives are used to monitor the performance of the executive team. Most staff who responded to a recent survey felt they were consulted. They were clear about their personal roles in helping achieve aspects of the plan.

36. Governors are well informed about the college and receive regular briefings from the executive team and college managers. They are highly supportive of the college and have a good range of skills and expertise, including education, management, accounting, estates management and the law. Governors have defined their roles and responsibilities and monitor the college's progress carefully. They receive regular reports but are not fully aware of comparative standards for similar colleges. Meetings are well minuted by an experienced clerk. Governors ask probing questions of the senior managers. Personal links with curriculum areas are being revived. Indicators to measure the governors' own performance have not been developed. Overall attendance at meetings is satisfactory, although some individual attendance is low.

37. There are effective links with local schools and community organisations. The college is involved in a number of successful partnerships with local schools and the college is perceived as proactive and collaborative. The college has good links with a wide range of community groups. A new skills

centre in Feltham has been successfully developed with a number of partners. The principal chairs the local learning partnership and is a member of the local Connexions service board. The college offers a range of vocational opportunities for school pupils. The college recognises the need to improve links with employers and opportunities for work experience for students. The college has just gained approval for CoVE in e-skills.

38. Communications are effective and there is a communications strategy. The executive team uses a variety of methods to inform staff and to consult with them. The principal sends out a weekly bulletin which is valued by staff. She addresses the staff each term, meets regularly with all teams and takes a full part in the termly development days. The principal and all college managers are readily accessible to staff. An annual staff survey is carried out and staff concerns are acted on. Part-time and franchise staff are included in all communications and invited to relevant events. Part-time teachers are well supported by the college and are paid to attend meetings and staff development activities.

39. Quality assurance systems have recently been reviewed and improved. A clear annual cycle of events has been produced. The number of teaching and learning observations that were externally moderated increased from 88 in 2001/02 to 224 in 2002/03. A number of briefing events have taken place to support required improvements in teaching and learning. Teachers receiving unsatisfactory grades after an observation are required to agree an action plan and are observed again. Although some progress has been made to reduce the number of unsatisfactory grades, too few lessons are better than satisfactory. Good practice is not shared. Within the same area of learning, there is considerable variation in the distribution of teaching grades. The observation of part-time teachers provided by a teaching agency is unsystematic. Most part-time staff are observed by college managers at least annually, but the agency itself only observes around 10%. Over 200 agency teachers were used in 2002/03. Just under a half of the part-time teachers employed by the college have or are working towards a teaching qualification. The monitoring of the teaching by franchise partners is good. Slow progress has been made in introducing the use of IT into teaching. The ILT strategy is out of date and the action plan is weak. Course reviews form an important part of the college quality assurance system. However, in some areas, course reviews are insufficiently critical and the action plans lack detail.

40. The college has been successful in improving the retention and pass rates of its students. Rates have improved at most levels and age groups to above or around the national average for similar colleges. The target setting process is inclusive, starting at course level and aggregated to give realistic college targets. Targets are not yet set for progression and employment. Retention rates for courses are reviewed at six-weekly intervals. All staff attended a development day on improving students' behaviour, punctuality and attendance. Systems have been put in place recently and retention officers have been appointed to follow up absence. However, punctuality during inspection was poor in many areas and has not improved since the last inspection.

41. The performance management of staff is carefully reviewed and their appraisal is annual. Some of the targets agreed during appraisals are too general, although they are broadly in line with strategic objectives. The results of teaching and learning observations are taken into account. Underperforming staff are monitored and supported where necessary. Some staff have left the college because of poor performance. Managers receive training on how to carry out their duties. In a recent college survey, however, staff felt that insufficient action was being taken to deal with underperforming staff. In general, staff have good opportunities for training.

42. In 2002/03 the college was restructured. The role of the programme manager was expanded to include additional curriculum responsibilities. New managers receive line manager training. However, this has not yet resulted in effective management of the curriculum throughout the college. Although there are good examples, in some areas the standard of curriculum management is weak. For example, there is a lack of sharing of information and good practice across the ESOL provision. Arrangements for co-ordinating cross-college numeracy and literacy provision are new. They have yet to improve the efficiency of initial and diagnostic assessment. In health and social care, there has been slow progress in addressing weaknesses and the management of business studies is poor. Work-based learning in hairdressing has been poorly managed and few students have succeeded in completing their framework. Key skills are still not effectively co-ordinated across the college. The

need for improvement in management skills has been recognised by the college and is being addressed. Some changes in management practice have taken place recently.

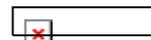
43. Some systems for collecting and analysing data are underdeveloped. Since the last inspection the college has replaced its central management information system. The system is effective in recording retention and pass rates for most courses, but not for work-based learning. Managers who have access to the central management information system have the authority to produce timely reports, but some lack confidence. Figures for attendance at lessons are collected manually at the end of each term. The college has only just put in place a computerised timetabling system to monitor room usage. Room utilisation data has been collected recently, but not yet fully analysed. Value added systems for monitoring students' progress in relation to prior achievement are underdeveloped. No destination analysis is carried out other than for HE.

44. The college effectively promotes equal opportunities and diversity. The equal opportunities policy was revised in 2002/03 to include the requirements of recent legislation. Staff, students and a community advisory group helped in its production. Reports are now produced to show the performance of different groups by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. The college does not publicise the reports, but they are monitored by the governing body. Statistics are general and are not analysed at the curriculum area or course level. The college has plans to improve the performance of some groups as a result of the analysis. A community advisory group supports the college on matters related to race and faith. In 2002/03, the college wrote an equal opportunities action plan incorporating clear targets. There has been good progress, but an analysis of the support equipment available for students has yet to be completed. All staff and governors have had training on equal opportunities. Staff recruitment and selection procedures have been revised. A detailed analysis of students' complaints is undertaken to investigate any equal opportunities issues. The college recently hosted a successful event to celebrate its community links. The college is responsive to the needs of a wide range of community groups.

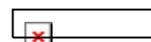
45. Staff and governors are fully involved in the self-assessment process. The chair of governors attends all of the moderation meetings. The report is well laid out and the process is well structured. Course team reports are moderated and are the foundation of area of learning reports. Inspectors identified some weaknesses which had not been noted by the college. The curriculum areas inspected did not fully coincide with the college's own areas of learning. However, some of the grades awarded by the college were judged by inspectors as too generous.

46. The college has performed well in meeting its recruitment targets. Financial management is appropriate and the college was considered financial category A at the time of inspection. Significant capital expenditure is planned. Governors carefully scrutinise the college accounts. The staffing budget is efficiently controlled centrally. Programme managers are responsible for consumables. Authorisation is needed for any purchases over £500. Applications for new courses are carefully scrutinised for cost implication. The viability of courses is monitored closely. Overall retention and pass rates are at or around the national averages for colleges of a similar type. The average group size is lower than the sector average. The college provides value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on GCSE courses in 2002/03
- responsive teaching for a diverse range of students
- good assessment practice
- very effective mathematics teaching
- good resources for science.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS science
- weak self-assessment and action planning at course level
- insufficient use of ILT
- inappropriate use of laboratories for teaching theory to large groups
- poor progression from GCE AS to GCE A-level courses.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses, mostly at levels 2 and 3. At intermediate level, there are GCSE courses in mathematics, double and single award science, chemistry, physics and biology. Mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and human biology are offered at GCE AS and A level. There is a small further mathematics group. The college offers science and mathematics modules as part of the access to HE course. In addition, mathematics and science courses at entry level 1 to GCSE level are offered as part of the college's ESOL programme. All provision is located at the Isleworth campus. There are approximately 390 enrolments in

mathematics and science. Approximately 66% of students are aged 16 to 18 and 17% are part time. Since the college raised the minimum entry level qualifications for mathematics and science courses in 2002/03, the overall number of students has fallen significantly. Many classes have a small number of students.

Achievement and standards

48. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory or better. On most advanced level courses, retention rates improved between 2000/01 and 2001/02 and are now at or above the national averages. In 2002/03, however, retention rates fell for GCE AS mathematics, biology and chemistry. Retention rates on intermediate courses also fell overall between 2000/01 and 2001/02. In 2002/03, the retention rates on all GCSE courses improved to around national averages or above. Overall, pass rates for intermediate level students are good. In 2002/03, GCSE physics, biology and mathematics had pass rates above the national average, but the pass rates for chemistry were below. At advanced level, pass rates are satisfactory on mathematics courses. However, in 2002/03, they were significantly below the national average for all other GCE AS and A-level courses. On GCE AS biology for example, they were 30 percentage points lower. On GCE AS physics and chemistry, pass rates were 28 and 35 percentage points, respectively, below the national averages. Progression between GCE AS and A-level courses is poor. The college does not participate in any nationally recognised scheme to evaluate value added.

49. In many lessons, students make good progress and contribute to the learning. For example, mathematics students often write their homework or calculations on the whiteboard for other students to discuss. Student questioning is usually searching and reveals an underlying understanding of the principles involved. Students work sensibly and safely in laboratory practical sessions, and rapidly develop necessary skills. For example, in GCSE chemistry, students were able to successfully undertake titration experiments and were confident in their use of chemical symbols and equations.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE physics	2	No. of starts	27	34	15
		% retention	96	65	100
		% pass rate	38	18	47
GCSE biology	2	No. of starts	31	43	18
		% retention	77	63	89
		% pass rate	63	33	56
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	143	189	137
		% retention	85	68	74
		% pass rate	34	51	46
GCSE chemistry	2	No. of starts	27	40	21
		% retention	89	73	95
		% pass rate	38	45	45
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	43	35	29
		% retention	70	83	76
		% pass rate	23	48	55
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	39	31	33
		% retention	79	87	82

		% pass rate	52	48	37
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

50. Teaching and learning in most lessons are satisfactory or better. Lessons are well planned and teachers prepare effectively. Learning outcomes are clearly identified, but not always clearly articulated to students. Learning materials are good. In mathematics, teachers ensure that tasks and questions are individually tailored to the needs of students. In the best lessons, there is exceptionally clear and patient explanation of complex concepts and ideas, and good checking of learning. There is effective consolidation of understanding by discussion, questioning, worked examples and exam questions. Students are attentive, although they do not always take notes. Attendance at lessons is unsatisfactory: some ten percentage points below the national average. In a minority of science classes the teaching methods used lack variety. There is insufficient use of ILT, despite all laboratories having networked computers. In too many theory sessions in laboratories, the layout of the room has a detrimental effect on teaching. There is insufficient scope for group activities and students' learning is inhibited.

51. Teachers are careful in their use of English and take good account of the cultural and ethnic diversity within groups. For example, there are course descriptors for mathematics in a number of languages. Teachers mostly give clear notes and handouts. There is consistently good use of whiteboards to spell difficult words and phrases. Schemes of work are altered to take account of ethnic celebrations and festivals, and to ensure that all students are able to complete the work.

52. Resources for science are good. All teaching staff are well qualified. Most possess a basic teaching qualification, but many do not have recent industrial or scientific experience. A wide range of books and periodicals are available to students. Many of the texts are dated. Laboratories are clean, well maintained and well equipped. There are three well-qualified laboratory technicians. Good attention is given to health and safety. There is a separate microbiology area and a sufficient number of high-quality microscopes. Physics has a selection of new oscilloscopes and signal generators. Laboratories have good supplies of glassware and chemicals. There is insufficient display or celebration of students' achievements, and little to indicate that the science area is primarily for science.

53. Assessments are regular and frequent. Marking is fair, and the work required is appropriate to the subject, level and course. Comments are accurate, clear and encouraging. Tutors often give detailed written guidance on homework, where improvements are necessary. However, they are not as good at giving guidance for the more able students. Course handbooks contain clear and sensible assessment policies for GCE AS and A-level and GCSE students. Homework is regularly set and marks are used to inform the tutorial process. Teachers keep good records of assessments and individual marks. Individual tutors evaluate the preferred learning styles of their students. Students are encouraged to give feedback on their courses, but the results are not analysed across the curriculum area.

54. Tutorials are effective in guiding students and providing support. They are well planned and well attended. Documentation is standardised across the curriculum area. Tutorial records inform individual targets, performance monitoring and termly progress reviews. However, for both GCSE and GCE A-level students, review comments are often insufficiently detailed to enable improvement. The college has devised a target setting system for GCE A-level students based on GCSE scores. Individual students' progress is effectively monitored, but it is not possible to gauge the effectiveness of this approach.

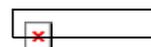
55. Support for students is good. All full-time students are assessed for learning support needs on entry to the college. Tutors are able to refer students to a range of college-wide support services including weekly drop-in science and maths workshops. Progress through these sessions is monitored and recorded as part of students' learning files. The college offers extra GCE A-level support and revision sessions in the Easter holidays. Course guides are clear and concise and

follow a standard format. They offer much advice on exam technique and past examination questions as well as progress monitoring documentation. There is a retention officer to monitor students' attendance and act in the event of absence.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers attend numerous relevant staff development events and have undergone examination board updating where appropriate. The curriculum team meets regularly. However, minutes of meetings rarely assign actions or deadlines to individuals. Communications are good. Timetabling is effective and there is good operational management of the curriculum area. Peer observation has been carried out on all teachers, but its scope is limited and it is not documented. Formal feedback is used as part of the appraisal process, but in some cases this is insufficiently detailed. All teachers self-assess their courses and agree targets with managers. However, too many course reviews lack detail. Targets for retention and pass rates are set, but too often there is little consideration of possible actions when they are not met. All teachers have access to management information. There is little formalised identification and spreading of good practice.

Business



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

Strengths

- effective pastoral support for students

- good assessment practice

- good opportunities for progression.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on most courses

- dull teaching

- poor punctuality and attendance

- o insufficient links with business.

Scope of provision

57. The college offers a range of courses from level 1 to level 4. Full-time courses include GCSE business, GCE AS and A-level business and accounting, BTEC first diploma in business, and BTEC national award and certificate in e-business. The majority of part-time courses are management and professional, such as the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) and the certificate in management. A range of short courses includes book-keeping, computerised accounting and business administration. There are currently 250 students enrolled on business courses: approximately 55% of these are full-time students aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

58. Pass rates are unsatisfactory on most courses. In 2002/03, pass rates were unsatisfactory on part-time book-keeping courses, computerised accounting short courses and GCE A-level business. Pass rates for the GCE AS business course and NVQ accounting are low. In 2002/03, pass rates on GCSE business were above the national average but only 41% of students completed the course.

59. Following a review of its course offer, the college no longer offers GNVQ intermediate or AVCE business. In 2001/02, pass and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate business were poor: only 9% of students achieved their qualification. Results in the same year for the AVCE double award in business were outstanding. The 13 students who started the course successfully completed it. Advanced vocational business courses have now been replaced by courses leading to BTEC national qualifications in e-business. In 2002/03, the retention rate on the one-year BTEC national award in e-business was at the national average for similar courses. This represents an overall improvement when compared to retention rates on college AVCE single awards in 2001/02. However, pass rates on this course are significantly below the national average for similar courses.

60. The quality of work produced by students is generally satisfactory, although some students lack good written communication skills. Students have developed high levels of confidence and are keen to contribute during lessons. On management and professional courses, students make good progress. They are effective in using management theories to solve problems that relate to their own jobs. Punctuality and attendance are unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons, students arrive late, sometimes in excess of half an hour. Consequently, lessons do not start promptly and teaching and learning are disrupted as latecomers arrive. Attendance on some courses is poor.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Book-keeping	1	No. of starts	69	43	68
		% retention	90	84	82
		% pass rate	58	61	64
GCSE business	2	No. of starts	*	*	17
		% retention	*	*	41
		% pass rate	*	*	43
BTEC national award in e-business	3	No. of starts	*	*	35
		% retention	*	*	77
		% pass rate	*	*	59

GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	*	*	41
		% retention	*	*	80
		% pass rate	*	*	45

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

61. Teaching and learning are only just satisfactory. There is insufficient good teaching that stimulates and enthuses students. In some lessons, teachers do not plan sufficiently for the needs of students of differing abilities. Often, activities are restricted to one or two tasks which are undertaken by all, resulting in the needs of more able students not being met. Teachers seldom modify their teaching methods to help students who are having difficulties. Many teachers fail to make sufficient checks on students' learning. In one lesson, a teacher frequently asked the class if they had all understood and took their silence as confirmation of their understanding. Some teachers are too ready to explain concepts instead of encouraging students to think for themselves. Their teaching methods are narrow in scope. Teachers often require students to carry out unimaginative learning activities; for example, note taking or reading to the class. In better lessons, the teaching and learning are carefully planned. Teachers adapt their approach to meet differing needs and students are engaged in challenging activities. Students are encouraged to extend their knowledge and understanding.

62. Resources are satisfactory, although some rooms are inappropriate for activities being carried out. For example, presentations take place in computer rooms and classrooms where filing cabinets block the view of the whiteboard. The college intranet is underdeveloped as a resource for students' research and for academic support. Teachers are well qualified and have relevant occupational experience. There are few opportunities for teachers to update their knowledge of the industry. Many teachers take part in relevant development activities and there is a mentoring system in place for new teachers.

63. On most courses, students' progress is assessed weekly and they receive clear feedback. Teachers make constructive comments on students' work to help them improve their performance. Target setting is effective and most students understand their short-term goals. Some tutors send work out to students by post during absences. Internal verification systems are effective and include rigorous evaluation of assignment briefs. Course calendars have clear target dates for submission of assignments on full-time courses.

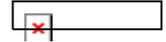
64. There are good routes for progression and students are able to move from accredited courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 to foundation degree level. There are plans to introduce entry level courses to extend the range of provision. Students enjoy their courses and grow in confidence, most are keen to progress to higher levels. There are insufficient links with business. Vocational enrichment opportunities for full-time students, such as visits, work experience placements or visiting speakers, are poor. Insufficient attention is given to the development of students' key skills. Attendance at key skills lessons is poor, and staff do not take the opportunity to promote the benefits of key skills to students.

65. Pre-course information and guidance are satisfactory. Students have access to career guidance and all full-time students take part in tutorial meetings. The majority of students speak of a high level of personal support provided by sympathetic and approachable tutors, which has a positive effect on their continued confidence and progress. Central initial assessment processes do not fully diagnose students' levels of ability in key skills.

Leadership and management

66. Management of the area has been weak. There have been staffing problems that have impacted on students' achievement and retention rates. Many changes have now been introduced in team structure and management and new procedures have been put in place to monitor attendance. The self-assessment process fails to critically evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Action plans do not identify sufficiently rigorous and specific actions to address key weaknesses in teaching and learning. There is a lack of co-ordination and sharing of good practice across the curriculum area.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high and improving pass rates on the AVCE ICT single award course
- wide range of courses for students aged 16 to 18
- good progression from entry level to HE.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCSE IT, GCE AS computing and CLAIT
- poor attendance and punctuality
- much undemanding and uninspiring teaching
- outdated computer software
- few opportunities for commercial computing experience for students.

Scope of provision

67. The college's ICT and engineering departments jointly manage computing courses. Courses for students aged 16 to 18 range from entry level to level 3. These include an entry level course in ICT, GNVQ foundation and intermediate ICT, AVCE ICT single and conversion to double awards, GCE AS and A-level ICT and a diploma in computer applications as part of the City and Guilds 7261 programme. Part-time courses that are offered include an OCN accredited IT skills certificate and the A+ technician's certificate at level 2. There are 351 full-time student and 209 part-time students on computing courses. Most of the full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and most part-time students are aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

68. Pass rates on AVCE single award ICT, City and Guilds 7261 diploma in computer applications and certificate in computer technology courses have remained above the national average for 2001/02 and 2002/03. However, on GCE AS computing, GCSE IT, City and Guilds certificate in computer applications, and CLAIT courses, pass rates are low. Pass rates on GCE AS computing courses have declined significantly over a three-year period. Students' attendance and punctuality are poor. The average attendance at lessons is 69%: well below the national average.

69. The quality of work contained in most students' portfolios is at a standard appropriate to the level of their course. Students are generally attentive, ready to answer questions and participate effectively in group work and discussions. Many students apply the theory they learn to solving problems. In most lessons, students show a satisfactory understanding of relevant concepts and can use the college computer system with confidence. Most are competent when using the Internet as a research tool.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	21	48	80
		% retention	48	75	69
		% pass rate	50	75	75
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	90	75	75
		% retention	70	77	75
		% pass rate	48	62	68
GCSE IT	2	No. of starts	39	58	59
		% retention	90	76	64
		% pass rate	69	14	8
AVCE ICT single award	3	No. of starts	96	109	77
		% retention	76	78	84
		% pass rate	42	72	71
AVCE ICT conversion to double award	3	No. of starts	*	42	60
		% retention	*	98	87
		% pass rate	*	90	83
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	40	79	17
		% retention	80	87	82
		% pass rate	66	43	21

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

** course did not run*

Quality of education and training

70. A significant proportion of teaching is satisfactory, but there is insufficient good teaching. In one good lesson at intermediate level, the students designed a website for their curriculum vitae, using a web authoring tool. Through good lesson management, the teacher was able to individually support students of differing abilities. Students made good progress and worked at their own speed. During an ICT tutorial, two students worked collaboratively. They successfully installed and tested a new device that enabled two computers to interact. This was a good and realistic exercise for student technicians that simulated a computer industry environment. In the poorer lessons, teaching is uninteresting, undemanding and lacking in variety; teachers make no attempt to check on students' learning or understanding. In one weak lesson, students spent most of their time copying from overhead transparencies. The majority of lessons make little use of data projection equipment or resources stored on a shared network drive. Teachers have very few strategies to ensure that the learning needs of the weaker or more able students are adequately addressed. Many weaker students are clearly confused in lessons and the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. Theory lessons are taught in computer rooms. This is often inappropriate and restricts teaching methods. Students' key skills are not properly developed. Teaching does not sufficiently take account of ICT course requirements. Students' assessed work is not effectively used to contribute to their key skills portfolios.

71. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. Computer rooms are equipped with modern workstations. There is sufficient space between machines for students to work comfortably. Technician support is satisfactory. Some of the computer software most frequently used by students is outdated. At break times, teachers do not have sufficient access to a desktop or laptop computer to prepare their lessons. There are too few data projectors available for teachers to use in lessons. A network drive that is shared by staff and students is underutilised for both teaching and learning. There is no college intranet. Little use is being made of the college's virtual learning environment, which is still being piloted. There is good availability of computers for students to use outside of timetabled lessons. The library is well stocked with computing books and suitable journals.

72. Most teachers mark students' work satisfactorily and provide helpful comments. Internal verification practices are thorough. There is good student progression between courses levels, and to HE. Approximately 75% of students who successfully complete a course each year continue to a higher level. Students following vocational courses have insufficient exposure to commercial computing experiences. There is no work experience and few visits or visiting lecturers. The department has been responsive and provided a range of courses for local employers. The college has only recently been funded to develop a CoVE in ICT.

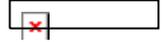
73. Full-time students are initially assessed to identify their level of key skills and any learning support needs. Where appropriate, learning support assistants provide good classroom support for entry and foundation groups. The learning support needs of students in these groups are well met. The induction programme is well planned and students speak highly of the freshers' fair. Full-time students have weekly group tutorials. These sessions are satisfactory and are used to cover both pastoral and curriculum activities. Students' work is adequately tracked, but there is little monitoring of progress. Targets set for individual students are mostly weak. For example, they do not include precise measures of expected progress, attendance and punctuality. Students are generally unaware of how well they are doing. Health and safety issues are not adequately explained to students. Many students are unaware of safe working practices when using computers.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. There are regular curriculum team meetings that are well minuted. Course teams produce evaluative reviews. The agreed action plans are well monitored. Reviews are used as the basis of the ICT self-assessment report. There has been insufficient progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in teaching and learning. The allocation of responsibilities, for example, the co-ordination of course units, is effective. Course teams are involved in setting targets for enrolment, retention and pass rates. Part-time teachers are

well supported. New teachers are initially allocated a full-time teacher as a mentor. Part-time teachers are invited to attend meetings and take part in staff development activities.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on beauty therapy level 3 and media make-up courses

- high-quality specialist make-up and hairdressing courses

- wide range of provision with good progression

- extensive range of enrichment activities

- good teaching in beauty and holistic therapy.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on the hairdressing level 2 programme

- inadequate client base for hairdressing students

- weak target setting

- poor attendance and punctuality

- poor management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses. The provision includes courses in hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies, fashion, theatre, media make-up and a national diploma in design (media make-up). Full-time courses range from entry to advanced level. Part-time courses include holistic therapy courses and NVQs in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. The college also offers a modern apprenticeship programme in hairdressing and taster courses one day a week for pupils attending local schools. In response to local demand, courses in braiding and weaving Afro-Caribbean hair and Indian hair and bridal make-up are also offered. There are 505 students, 55% of whom are following part-time courses and 26% of whom are full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are 43 foundation and 2 advanced modern apprentices. Some 38% of students are from minority ethnic groups and 6% are male.

Achievement and standards

76. A large proportion of students complete and pass beauty therapy level 3 courses. In 2002/03, the retention rate and pass rate were 94% and 100%, respectively: well above the national averages. Retention rates are high on the national diploma in design (media make-up). Retention and pass rates on NVQ hairdressing at level 1 are at the national average. There are poor pass rates for work-based learning. In the past four years, of the 166 learners who started a foundation modern apprenticeship programme, 21 passed solely the NVQ qualification and another 10 achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. Attendance in lessons is poor, at 67%: some seven percentage points below the national average. Students' punctuality is also often poor.

77. The standards of students' work are generally satisfactory and are high on some courses. For example, in a specialist make-up session, students demonstrated good problem solving skills and well-developed technical ability. However, the speed at which some hairdressing students develop their practical skills is slow. In general, there are not enough clients attending the salons for students to practice on. At the new skills centre in Feltham, for example, in one three-hour practical hairdressing class, there was only 1 client for a class of 12 students.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	1	No. of starts	20	28	43
		% retention	95	75	91
		% pass rate	89	86	90
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	34	38	34
		% retention	59	58	85
		% pass rate	95	91	69
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	143	128	126
		% retention	65	51	56
		% pass rate	65	72	77
Anatomy / physiology and body massage	3	No. of starts	65	85	16
		% retention	78	74	94
		% pass rate	75	63	60

National diploma in design (media make-up)	3	No. of starts	17	21	27
		% retention	76	71	78
		% pass rate	85	93	90
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	3	No. of starts	15	18	18
		% retention	93	89	94
		% pass rate	71	94	100

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

Quality of education and training

78. The teaching in beauty and holistic therapies lessons is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a range of learning activities that challenge students. In the best sessions, teachers effectively use group work to tackle and solve problems. Commercial standards and timings are successfully applied to replicate industry pressure. Students are very professional and maintain a corporate image. Teachers demonstrate high standards of professionalism and have good industry experience. Some still work as practitioners in the industry. However, some of the teaching in practical hairdressing lessons lacks variety and is often dull. In these lessons, the students are often passive and lack motivation. The characteristics of these lessons include lengthy explanations by the teacher and a narrow range of activities. There is little or no development of students' independent learning skills. Students make slow progress in developing key skills. Teachers have developed assignments designed to capture key skills evidence. However, these are not linked to what students are actually doing on their hairdressing and beauty courses.

79. Good learning resources are available for the teaching of hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. The salons are well equipped at both college sites. The hair and beauty reception area has a computerised till. Learners are encouraged to use the software on the computer to develop their IT skills. The sterilizing equipment is appropriate and teachers use it effectively to promote good practice. Some teaching rooms are well resourced. The learning and resources centre holds a wide range of computer discs, current textbooks and industry periodicals.

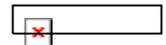
80. Arrangements for finding alternative activities for students when hairdressing clients do not arrive for their appointment are poor. Most students are required to work on practice dummies rather than real people. This has a negative impact on students' progress and limits the opportunities for them to be assessed. The monitoring of students on beauty and holistic therapy courses is good. Work-based learners are assessed mainly at the college skills centre or at their work placement. However, there are insufficient work-based assessors. Good opportunities to assess students in the workplace are regularly lost. For example, some learners had not been assessed either on-the-job or off-the-job for three months. Work-based learners' progress is poorly monitored and recorded. Progress reviews take place in the workplace; however, reviews are generally infrequent and four learners had not been reviewed for six months. Target setting is often weak. Students are given short-term goals that are broad and are not sufficiently detailed. For example, a target to achieve a whole unit of the NVQ without identifying particular tasks is unhelpful. Most students are unclear about the targets they have been set and are unsure when they are likely to achieve them. Students are not sufficiently involved in the planning of their learning.

81. There is a wide range of provision and many students progress between levels of qualification. Students can progress by following courses offered from entry level through to higher national diploma level or through the work-based route to employment. The college successfully offers a range of specialist courses tailored to meet local needs. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. Students take part in competitions and trade exhibitions and have their work featured in trade journals. The college has good links with major hairdressing and beauty manufacturers and this has resulted in students taking part in a national trade fair. Support for students is mostly good. Students are initially assessed at the start of their course. Those with an identified need receive support from specialist staff. In one lesson, a student was required to attend learning support when they should be attending a vocational lesson.

Leadership and management

82. Overall leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory, but they are poor for work-based learning. There has been good development of the provision and learning resources. The salon at the skills centre provides good opportunities for school pupils aged 14 to 16 to take taster courses in hairdressing. Teams meet regularly and teachers are involved in writing the area's self-assessment report. However, there has been insufficient progress in improving teaching, assessment opportunities, target setting, student punctuality and the monitoring of progress. Pass rates on work-based learning programmes have remained poor for the last four years. There is insufficient promotion of the provision to men. Across the broad range of courses offered in hairdressing, holistic therapy and beauty therapy, only 6% of students are male. The team are aware of many of these deficiencies. Recently, new teachers have been appointed and improved systems devised. However, it is too early to judge the impact of the changes.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on childcare courses

- good support for students

- good preparation for working in the care sector.

Weaknesses

- poor pass and retention rates on level 3 health and social care courses in 2002/03

- unsatisfactory development of students' key skills

- ineffective strategies to resolve staffing problems.

Scope of provision

83. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in health, care, counselling and public services. The health provision includes an entry to care programme and a level 1 OCN course

in health and childcare. At level 2, the college offers GNVQ intermediate in health and social care, NVQ care and a certificate in dental nursing. The AVCE double award in health and social care and NVQ caring for children and young people are available at advanced level.

84. The range of courses in early years and childcare is more restricted. The provision includes a CACHE certificate in childcare and education at level 2 and NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education. In addition, the BTEC first diploma and national award in public services and certificate courses in counselling are offered. There are approximately 120 full-time and 295 part-time students on courses. Full-time students are mainly aged 16 to 18. The majority of part-time students are adults.

Achievement and standards

85. Pass rates are high on the CACHE certificate and the diploma in childcare and education. There are low retention and pass rates on advanced health and social care courses. Retention rates have declined on GNVQ intermediate health and social care. Retention rates on the certificate in counselling are good. At the time of the inspection, the proportion of students retained on most courses had increased.

86. Students are very motivated and behave well in lessons. Standards of students' assessed work and NVQ portfolios are high and their class notes are well organised. Students are well prepared for working in the care and early years sectors. The development of students' key skills at levels 2 and 3 is unsatisfactory. Students view key skills as irrelevant. Attendance at key skills lessons is poor. Skills acquired by students in their vocational studies are not used as evidence for key skills qualifications.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	29	***	20
		% retention	59	***	85
		% pass rate	65	***	100
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	41	36	23
		% retention	80	86	92
		% pass rate	91	100	67
Access to nursing and paramedical studies	3	No. of starts	****	37	36
		% retention	****	89	81
		% pass rate	****	82	90
AVCE health and social care (double award) **	3	No. of starts	15	20	22
		% retention	67	95	64
		% pass rate	30	5*	57

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

* data unreliable

** GNVQ advanced health and social care in 2001; course changed to AVCE in 2002

*** fewer than 15 starters enrolled

**** course did not run

Quality of education and training

87. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, care is taken to ensure that the needs of individual students are met. In one well-structured childcare lesson, students were able to explore the use of malleable materials, toys and games as tools to promote learning with young children. In another lesson, several students who had never previously handled oublik (cornflower mixed with a little water) were able to explore its unique properties at first hand. Students learned through experience. The teacher carefully questioned the students and helped them make effective links between their own learning and child development theory. In the lessons that are not as good, poor organisation and planning of students' involvement means that many students are not sufficiently challenged.

88. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They use their vocational experience well in their teaching. However, staff absences and shortages have disrupted students' progress. Classrooms are generally well suited to teaching methods used and practical rooms are appropriately resourced for practical work. There are no computers in classrooms and access to learning resources in the learning resource centre during lessons is limited. There are few opportunities for students to carry out research using ICT.

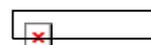
89. Teachers mark students' work carefully. They give clear guidance to help students improve. The monitoring and recording of students' progress on NVQ courses are well organised and are clear to students, assessors and verifiers. Theory is linked effectively to practice in assignments, which meet awarding body requirements.

90. Students receive good pre-course advice and guidance. Handbooks and materials are distributed at the beginning of their course. They are clearly written and ensure students are well informed about assignments and assessments. Support for students is good and personal tutors are effective. Recently, teachers have paid particular attention to improving students' attendance and retention rates. Students who are at risk of leaving receive additional support. Lateness and non-attendance are challenged. Targets for improvement are used effectively to motivate students during their individual reviews.

Leadership and management

91. Course teams work effectively together and meet regularly. Minutes are clear and agreed actions are monitored carefully. Informal communication between course teams is good. There are good and well-planned opportunities for staff development and professional updating. There are good links with care and early years employers and a customised NVQ care course has recently been developed. These are used effectively to ensure that students have appropriate work experience placements and assessment opportunities in the workplace. Strategies to stop the decline in childcare course numbers have not yet been fully developed. Staff absence and shortages as well as problems in staff recruitment have impacted adversely on students' learning. Although managers have identified these problems, no effective plans have been put in place to rectify the situation.

Art, design and media



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

Strengths

- high and improving pass rates for practical craft skills, foundation diploma in art and BTEC national diploma in media

- very good teaching on entry level courses

- good specialist accommodation for art and design

- good progression

- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ intermediate media

- poor punctuality and attendance

- insufficient use of ILT in teaching

- inadequate facilities for media.

Scope of provision

92. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time visual arts and media courses from entry to advanced level. These include an entry level course in creative arts and BTEC first diploma and GNVQ intermediate courses in both design and media. There are also courses in media, multimedia and a wide range of art and design pathways at national diploma level. In addition, there is an access to HE course, a foundation diploma in art and a number of part-time courses such as ceramics, photography and interior design. Courses attract students from very diverse backgrounds. There are currently 145 students aged 16 to 18 year and 42 adults on full-time courses in art and media. There are approximately 73 adult students on part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

93. Pass rates are good and improving on most art and design courses. For example, pass rates on GNVQ intermediate art and practical craft skills courses have both improved significantly over the last three years. Pass rates on the foundation diploma course rose to 100% in 2002/03. Pass rates on the national diploma in media have been at 100% for the last two years. On GNVQ intermediate media, the pass rate has remained poor and is currently 17 percentage points below the national average. Pass rates on GCE AS media have declined to around the national average. Retention

rates on most courses are improving. For example, on the national diploma in media and the foundation diploma in art, retention rates have improved to above national averages. The retention rate on the practical craft skills course is unsatisfactory. Attendance at lessons is generally poor: well below the national average, at 66%. Poor punctuality on media production courses limits the quality of group work.

94. Art and design students demonstrate good drawing skills and are able to work effectively across a wide range of media and materials. Three-dimensional (3D) work is of a high standard and displays a wide range of experimental techniques. Film studies students produce essays that demonstrate good levels of analysis and critical awareness. Multimedia students have developed a website as a means of displaying their coursework.

A sample of retention and pass rates in art, design and media, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Practical craft skills	1	No. of starts	84	71	56
		% retention	74	75	70
		% pass rate	45	72	95
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	20	18	*
		% retention	65	61	*
		% pass rate	38	55	*
GNVQ intermediate media	2	No. of starts	19	28	18
		% retention	58	932	89
		% pass rate	45	42	56
GCE AS media	3	No. of starts	21	17	20
		% retention	81	71	90
		% pass rate	94	83	78
National diploma in media	3	No. of starts	20	27	*
		% retention	55	70	*
		% pass rate	73	100	*
Foundation diploma in art and design	3	No. of starts	29	38	17
		% retention	83	92	100
		% pass rate	88	89	100

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

95. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Lessons are generally well planned to meet the needs of students. In the best lessons, teachers set challenging assignments and are able to effectively monitor and support students' progress. For example, in an audio lesson on the national diploma in multimedia, students were encouraged to use log sheets in order to set and evaluate individual targets whilst engaged in learning complex software. In another lesson, GNVQ intermediate art students were actively engaged in developing complex ideas through practical problem solving in ceramics. Their work was based upon first-hand research sketched during educational visits linked to a gothic theme that also provided a context for work in other lessons. 3D workshop sessions enable good experimentation and manipulation of media and materials. In one lesson, students were

engaged in developing innovative solutions to a project requiring them to make 'bags' to be worn on the body in response to initial visual research into fruit.

96. Teaching is very good on entry level courses. For example, students in one group tackled the concept of discrimination in the workplace through a series of very well-planned and well-structured exercises. This included the production of a magazine problem page incorporating a photo story and accompanying letters. The process effectively integrated the use of literacy skills with technical skill development.

97. In the poorer lessons, teachers make insufficient use of ILT. For example, in lessons utilising computers, students had difficulty following software demonstrations whilst crowded around a small computer screen. Some media production work is limited by insufficiently documented production planning. Teachers failed to produce sufficient handouts to support the learning of technical skills.

98. Teachers are well qualified in their vocational areas. Part-time and agency teachers contribute current professional skills which enhance students' learning. Specialist accommodation for art and design is good. Workshops for print, photography, ceramics and three-dimensional design are well equipped and well maintained. They provide a very good working environment for students. Students also have access to a dedicated computer workshop with specialist software. Video production accommodation in the media centre is cramped, with too few editing workstations. This inhibits successful teaching and learning.

99. Art and design courses make good use of log books to record assessments. Feedback is positive and comments help students to improve on their performance. All students are initially assessed for literacy skills to enable learning support to be effectively targeted. Additional learning support for entry level and level 1 students is comprehensive.

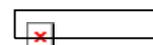
100. A well-planned course structure offers good opportunities for progression. Many students progress to a wide range of FE and HE courses. For example, in 2001/02, 12 out of 14 GNVQ intermediate media students progressed to level 3 courses in media and music, whilst 18 out of 20 national diploma in art students progressed to HE.

101. Support for students is good and tutorials are effective. Poor attendance and punctuality is a recognised problem. However, tutors work effectively with student services staff to support students identified as being at risk of leaving. There is a good programme of external visits. Recently, art students have been able to develop their contextual understanding and practical work through visits to the Tate Modern, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum. Media students have a residential trip to Devon; they also benefit from visiting speakers from industry. There is a trip to Lisbon planned for next year.

Leadership and management

102. The area is well managed. Self-assessment is systematic and accurately identifies areas for improvement. Teachers are actively involved in quality assurance procedures. The area is currently reviewing its course offer in response to issues arising out of self-assessment. For example, there are well-advanced plans to replace GNVQ intermediate art with BTEC first diploma and a new introductory course in order to provide a more coherent programme at levels 1 and 2.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- good teaching and purposeful learning
- good contributions by students in most classes
- high pass rates for GCE AS and A-level psychology, GCSE sociology and access to HE courses in 2002/03
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low recent pass rates for GCE AS law and sociology
- poor attendance in many classes
- insufficiently rigorous quality assurance.

Scope of provision

103. Courses include GCE AS and A levels in law, psychology, sociology, and GCE AS in history. In addition, there are access to HE courses and GCSE courses in psychology and sociology. During recent years, the college has reduced the range of humanities GCE A-level courses. For example, government and politics, geography, and general studies have been removed from the offer. There are 203 students following courses. Most are full time and are aged 16 to 18. A small number of part-time adult students follow courses at GCE AS and A level, or take the access to HE course over two years.

Achievement and standards

104. Pass rates are high on GCSE sociology, GCE AS and A-level psychology and access to HE. The pass rate on GCE AS psychology in 2002/03 was 15 percentage points above the national average, and at GCE A level it was 100%. Pass rates for GCE AS sociology and law were well below the national average in 2002/03. The proportion of high grades awarded at GCE A level is smaller than the national average for most courses. Over the last four years, retention rates on most courses have improved, sometimes very substantially. For example, on the access to HE course, the retention rate improved from 68% in 2001/02 to 82% in 2002/03.

105. Most students' work is enthusiastically written and demonstrates good subject knowledge and understanding. However, some assignments do not address the tasks set directly enough, and in some work there are basic and persistent errors of expression. Students' contributions in class often demonstrate a wide range of ideas and a high level of understanding. Many students are able to

articulate their thoughts confidently and clearly. Attendance is poor in many lessons, notably on access to HE courses. The number of students who progress from GCE AS to A level was low in each of the last three years. Less than half of those who complete GCE AS courses proceed to the relevant GCE A level at the college.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	*	19	20
		% retention	*	58	70
		% pass rate	*	82	61
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	**	25	22
		% retention	**	68	82
		% pass rate	**	59	78
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	22	22	26
		% retention	77	82	77
		% pass rate	76	83	60
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	39	28	25
		% retention	67	61	60
		% pass rate	81	82	87
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	25	36	35
		% retention	76	81	80
		% pass rate	63	83	64

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

106. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers and students work well together. Lessons are planned to ensure that learning is well supported and purposeful. There are clear aims and objectives, which are usually shared with students. In most classes, teaching style and activity are varied. Students often work in groups and use these opportunities well. In a sociology lesson, students worked successfully together to formulate their own ideas about the value and purpose of education. During a law lesson, the teacher helped students to improve their understanding of the legal requirements for an act of theft by asking them to examine a series of memorable case studies in pairs. Teachers are often successful in stimulating students' interest. In two psychology lessons, students' understanding of short-term memory was enhanced by taking recognised memory tests and considering the outcomes. In a history lesson for adults, the teacher skilfully linked two modules of the course by using a photocopied article. In a minority of lessons, teachers dominate, and for long periods students have limited opportunities to contribute. In these lessons, there is insufficient use of differentiation to ensure that all students work productively.

107. Teachers are very experienced and well qualified. On most pieces of work, they write comments which are full and helpful. However, sometimes key messages about how work could be improved are not stated clearly enough. Classrooms provide pleasant working environments, especially where they have some sense of subject identity. The learning resource centre is well stocked for all humanities subjects, although some book stock is out of date. Students have good

access to computers.

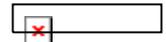
108. Tutors know their students well and understand the individual problems they experience. They give valued support to their students and give time unstintingly for this. The tutorial programme includes whole-group sessions which match the needs of students as they progress through their courses. GCE A-level students have useful sessions on HE, including one on the financial issues they may face.

109. Individual tutorials for access to HE, GCE AS and A level and GCSE students include regular structured reviews of their progress. Reviews for GCE AS and A-level students make effective use of target grades based on their GCSE grades. Progress is measured against these, and individual action plans are produced. The value of this is sometimes limited by the generality of comments and some individual targets that cannot be measured effectively. Individual tutorials are also used well to help students make choices about progression opportunities.

Leadership and management

110. Course management is generally good. Managers support staff well and help them to develop their expertise through regular reviews and professional development. Communication between curriculum managers and tutors is good. However, the self-assessment process and strategic planning lack rigour. Minutes of meetings reflect a pre-occupation with practical organisation. Self-assessment reports are too descriptive and lack analysis. Some important issues are not sufficiently addressed. Small class sizes do not provide value for money.

English and English as a foreign language



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on English courses

- much inspirational teaching in EFL

- wide range of EFL provision that meets students' needs.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention paid to differing students' abilities on English courses

- poor enrichment opportunities on English courses

- o unsatisfactory management of communication key skills at levels 2 and 3.

Scope of provision

111. The college provides an appropriate range of English and EFL courses, based at its Isleworth site. These include GCE AS and A2 courses in English language and literature. GCSE courses are provided, including a cross-college group for students who wish to retake the exam. Key skills communication is offered at levels 2 and 3 as part of the English provision for vocational students. A wide range of qualifications and levels is offered in EFL. There are approximately 170 students following courses in the curriculum area, excluding key skills.

Achievement and standards

112. Retention and pass rates on English courses are good. There is a 100% retention rate for GCE A level. Pass rates are at or above national average on most courses. GCSE pass rates have improved and are now significantly above the national average. The retention rate on GCSE courses fell between 2000/01 and 2002/03, but was still above national average in 2002/03. On GCE AS and A-level courses, a very small proportion of students achieve high grades. In 2002/03, most key skills students were not enrolled on their course or able to achieve target accreditation within the year 2002/03. However, 12 students were enrolled for key skills and passed a literacy exam and 30 portfolios were carried forward to 2003/04.

113. Students' work is at an appropriate standard. However, some class work in key skills does not extend students' abilities and is poor in content and presentation. The attendance rate during inspection week was satisfactory, at 77%. There are low numbers in many classes. Attendance in key skills sessions was often below 50%. Lateness for English courses is appropriately challenged and unauthorised absences followed up promptly.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and English as a foreign language, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	148	174	157
		% retention	89	83	75
		% pass rate	55	54	76
Key skills communications	2	No. of starts	40	100	*
		% retention	63	95	*
		% pass rate	20	46	*
EFL first certificate (short)	2	No. of starts	47	58	54
		% retention	94	86	85
		% pass rate	61	86	54
EFL first certificate	2	No. of starts	46	47	19
		% retention	67	89	89
		% pass rate	68	74	71
GCE AS language and literature	3	No. of starts	41	47	34
		% retention	78	81	85

		% pass rate	59	71	86
GCE A-level language and literature	3	No. of starts	**	15	17
		% retention	**	100	100
		% pass rate	**	87	94

Source: ISR (2000 and 2002), college (2002-03)

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 students enrolled (students entered for Edexcel certificate in adult literacy not key skills communication)

Quality of education and training

114. Most teachers carefully plan and prepare their lessons. On EFL courses, there is much inspirational teaching. For example, in one EFL elementary lesson, a mime game was effectively and imaginatively used to build storytelling skills and fluency with past tense verbs. Students responded with enthusiasm and achieved a high standard of grammatical accuracy and appropriate vocabulary for their level. In a number of English level 3 classes, the more advanced learners demonstrated a good oral understanding of literary devices and linguistic variety. However, many lacked appropriate study skills and note taking was poor. In a level 2 key skills communication lesson, a postcard-writing task failed to provide students with the appropriate language and was of little relevance to the vocational programme that students were studying. Insufficient attention is paid to differing students' abilities on English courses. In group discussions, less able students were often ignored. For example, in a GCSE lesson, a student was left sitting to one side of small-group work for 40 minutes before the teacher realised that he did not have a copy of the set text which was essential for the task. Work set by the teacher is often aimed at the average ability of the group and fails to stretch more able students.

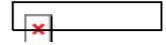
115. Most teachers are well qualified and have appropriate experience. Erratic staffing patterns in the first term of 2002/03 had a negative impact on students' motivation and progress, particularly in key skills. Good teaching methodology is effectively shared, particularly in EFL. There is insufficient use of ILT. For example, in one group, poorly photocopied and outdated black and white images were used for a discussion. Although students have satisfactory access to computing facilities, there is inadequate integration of IT in lessons and few assignments are word processed. Nonetheless, students value computing facilities, which they use effectively for research purposes.

116. The marking of homework is generally to a high standard. However, there is insufficient monitoring of students' written class work. Students often call out correct oral responses, but the written version often contains too many uncorrected errors. Overall, there is a wide range of EFL provision that meets students' needs. Students from a wide range of ethnic groups receive good pastoral support. However, subject-specific enrichment activities, for example, theatre trips, have not been offered on English courses in the last two years. Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory. In EFL, the initial assessment process is fast, appropriate and accurate. Punctuality and attendance are monitored closely and unexplained absences are followed up quickly.

Leadership and management

117. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teams meet regularly and good practice is effectively shared within subject areas. Part-time teachers are paid to attend team meetings and training. However, the management of the communication key skills programme at levels 2 and 3 is unsatisfactory. Managers have failed to address the poor and unsatisfactory teaching in this curriculum area and the unacceptable outcomes. Poor attendance and persistent lateness of students are continuing problems. There is insufficient communication between key skills and vocational staff.

English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates of students entered for national accreditation
- good progress of students to higher level courses
- good teaching on adult programmes
- wide range of college-based and community franchise provision
- effective and comprehensive initial assessment
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- much uninspiring and dull teaching on programmes for students aged 16 to 18
- poor learning resources
- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- insufficient sharing of information and good practice.

Scope of provision

118. The college offers full-time and part-time courses at all levels from entry to level 2. Courses vary in length. The provision includes assessment sessions, part-time courses and full-time courses. There is a vocational ESOL programme where adults can follow foundation level qualifications. A small number of New Deal clients join courses. The majority of adult ESOL students follow a modular programme for 4 to 16 hours a week. Some courses are provided in local schools and community centres through franchise arrangements. Students aged 16 to 18 can choose from a range of full-time vocational pathways. These are designed to enable progression to mainstream programmes. School pupils aged 14 to 16 can take part in this provision, if appropriate.

119. All courses follow the national curriculum framework and adult ESOL core curriculum. There are over 802 adult students enrolled on discrete ESOL provision and 209 students aged 16 to 18. Students are working towards Pitmans and Edexcel entry level vocational qualifications. There are 341 students following courses offered as part of the franchised provision.

Achievement and standards

120. The pass rates for students entered for externally accreditation qualifications are high. For example, the pass rate for Pitmans English elementary qualification in 2001/02 was 90%, compared with a national average of 64%. Retention rates are generally satisfactory. In 2001/02, on college certificate courses the rates was 81% for short courses and 67% on long programmes. There are good opportunities for students to progress to higher levels within the ESOL programme. More able students are encouraged to progress faster. Many students explore vocational opportunities through a range of related courses. Some students with little or no English are supported by a volunteer home tuition service. The progression of students from this provision to either franchise or college provision is good. For instance, a half of these students progressed in 2002/03 as compared with 37% of all students aged 16 to 18 and 18% of adults. Progression to higher level ESOL provision is good. Students' attendance is generally good. Most students on franchise courses progress but very few have yet transferred to college-based provision.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English for speakers of other languages, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Pitmans basic (long)	Entry 1	No. of starts	45	37	29
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	64	71	48
Pitmans elementary (long)	Entry 2	No. of starts	30	29	46
		% retention	97	100	100
		% pass rate	79	90	80
Preliminary English test	Entry 3	No. of starts	45	46	72
		% retention	93	100	92
		% pass rate	67	76	68

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

Quality of education and training

121. Teaching and learning are generally good. There is much good teaching on the adult provision. Teaching on provision for students aged 16 to 18 is satisfactory, but much is dull and uninspiring. However, there is some unsatisfactory teaching on both the adult provision and the provision for students age 16 to 18. In the better lessons, teachers use subjects and activities that are of interest to the student. They create situations where students can develop their ideas in English and exchange views through debate. On entry level 1 and 2 courses, teachers carefully introduce new vocabulary and grammar patterns to students using visual aids. They provide many opportunities for

students to develop their speaking and listening skills through group and paired activities. The most successful lessons are well prepared and teachers set the students clear objectives. Students' progress is assessed by using role play and group activities and by asking questions.

122. Weaker lessons are not planned thoroughly and lesson objectives are not made clear to students. Teachers often speak too quickly and give students confusing instructions. The topics covered in some of these sessions do not always stimulate students or relate to their immediate needs. In less effective lessons, students spend long periods copying information they do not understand. Often, they are hurried through activities that are not adapted to the ability of the group. There is an over-reliance on repeating phrases without sufficient checking. Handouts often have too much text. Much of the poorer teaching is focused on whole-class activities and insufficient attention is paid to individual students' needs. In one adult lesson, work was set at an inappropriate level. Students struggled to complete the written task and made little progress. The teacher did not review the work covered in the lesson. Work not completed in class was set for homework.

123. Teaching resources are sometimes poor. Many worksheets are poorly copied and are too complex. They include reading material that is inappropriate for many students. There is limited access to resources that would support learning. These include textbooks, dictionaries and other teaching materials. In one numeracy class there were not enough rulers and tape measures. The lack of resources compounded the confusion over the difference between metric and imperial measures. Students have poor access to ICT during lessons. However, there are timetabled sessions within IT learning centres. In these sessions, more independent students make good use of appropriate computer software. Others use the Internet search skills to collect information for their project assignments. In general, classrooms do not provide a stimulating environment for learning.

124. Initial assessment of students is effective and thorough. As a result, students are placed on the course at the correct level. The process takes account of their previous educational experiences, skills and knowledge, family circumstances and aspirations. Students are set broad aims that are mapped against the national curriculum. However, few individual targets and personal learning goals are formally recorded. Students' half-termly reviews are used to monitor attendance, punctuality, completion of homework and contributions in class. The progress that students are making is recorded in an individual learning plan. However, the process is not standardised and there is an inconsistent use of the individual learning plan. Reviews do not focus sufficiently on the needs of the individual. On full-time courses, students receive constructive feedback on assignments and project work. Teachers make positive suggestions on how students can further develop their language and study skills.

125. The courses offered as part of the college's franchise arrangements are mostly effective. ESOL provision is now offered in the workplace. ESOL students who follow mainstream courses can receive extra support. Some courses are held at various times of the day and evening to meet adult students' work and family commitments. Students aged 16 to 18 can have their reading, writing, speaking and listening and grammatical accuracy tested externally. They can also take tests in maths and IT at appropriate skill levels. Adult students on part-time courses can gain college certificates or other externally accredited qualifications.

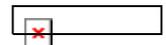
126. Personal support for students is good. The provision of pastoral care, financial support and liaison with external agencies is good. There is an effective induction programme, which addresses issues of equal opportunity and racial equality as well as expectations and responsibilities. Students on full-time courses receive a clear, simply written course handbook. It contains information on where to go for help and advice on a range of issues, including details of the college second-hand clothes shop. There is a full-time retention officer who works with students aged 16 to 18. Full-time students regularly attend group and individual tutorials. In the better group tutorials, discussion groups are linked to classroom activity and follow a range of pertinent issues including arranged marriages. Full-time students following vocational modules receive additional ESOL support during lessons.

Leadership and management

127. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but some aspects of the overall co-ordination are

poor. Courses for students aged 16 to 18 and general language support are the responsibility of the same department, but the adult provision is managed elsewhere. This results in poor sharing of good practice and missed opportunities to build on the skills and knowledge of experienced staff across the provision. The core curriculum has been successfully introduced. However, the monitoring process and the sharing of outcomes with students are often poor. Teachers and students are not always clear about the purpose of review documentation. The management and co-ordination of outreach provision is good. A new curriculum for ESOL based on national standards has been successfully introduced. Full-time, agency and franchise staff are observed. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college lesson observation profile. Some weaknesses identified in the last inspection have not yet been addressed.

Literacy, numeracy and entry to employment



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

Contributory grade for entry to employment is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good teaching on pre-access and E2E courses

- wide range of courses for students aged 15 to 19 and adults

- good participation of students in lessons

- effective literacy and numeracy support for students on entry level and level 1 courses.

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on the needs of individuals within group activities

- insufficient access to ILT in lessons

- slow identification of literacy and numeracy support needs

- weak short-term target setting for E2E students.

Scope of provision

128. There are 165 students on discrete literacy and numeracy courses. The college also offers literacy and numeracy support as part of a pre-access course for 21 adult students and a pre-vocational education course for 17 students aged 16 to 18. A total of 177 students are on entry level courses. These courses in ICT, health and social care and creative arts have integrated literacy and numeracy support. Learning support is also an integral component of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Additional support for literacy and numeracy is provided in a study skills centre on an individual basis or in small groups. Currently, 101 students are receiving this type of additional support either on the college's main site or at its skills centre at Feltham. There is a fresh start course for 36 students of compulsory school age, who attend college instead of school, and the new E2E course for 55 students.

Achievement and standards

129. Students' achievements are satisfactory. It is not possible to judge trends in pass and retention rates as the college has changed from the previous external qualifications to the new national tests for literacy and numeracy. Students participate well in lessons. Adult students are articulate and make good contributions. The standard of students' oral work in E2E lessons is good. Students are well motivated and work hard in lessons. Students make good progress. They work well together and help each other. In 2002/03, retention rates were low at entry level on most externally accredited courses in literacy and numeracy. Previously, students received college certificates for attending and completing courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy, numeracy and entry to employment, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 3792 certificate in adult numeracy	Entry	No. of starts	*	*	40
		% retention	*	*	68
		% pass rate	*	*	81
City and Guilds 3792 certificate in adult literacy	Entry	No. of starts	*	*	77
		% retention	*	*	68
		% pass rate	*	*	100
Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) certificate in adult numeracy	Entry	No. of starts	*	*	124
		% retention	*	*	98
		% pass rate	*	*	76
Edexcel certificate in adult literacy	1	No. of starts	*	*	50
		% retention	*	*	98
		% pass rate	*	*	100
AQA certificate in adult numeracy	1	No. of starts	*	*	101
		% retention	*	*	74
		% pass rate	*	*	44
City and Guilds 3750	1	No. of starts	101	23	*

numeracy	% retention	90	70	*
	% pass rate	46	94	*

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

130. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. On E2E and the pre-access course, teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons, teachers use stimulating and relevant activities to motivate and engage students. For example, in one lesson, students developed their letter-writing skills and self-confidence through an activity based on letters of application. They learnt about layout and content as well as being encouraged to think positively about themselves. In another lesson, students learnt about essay writing by writing articles for a student magazine. Others developed their numeracy skills through activities related to payslips and personal banking. In the most successful lessons, teachers understand and take account of students' individual needs. However, in many lessons, teachers' primary focus is on group activities. The same teaching methods and materials are used irrespective of individual students' abilities. More able students are not sufficiently challenged. They finish tasks quickly and then wait for other students to catch up before they can progress.

131. Resources are satisfactory. A dedicated team of appropriately qualified teachers works well together. All full-time teachers have attended training related to the new core curriculum. There is no access to computers in general-purpose classrooms to support students' learning.

132. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are unsatisfactory. The college has appropriate initial assessment tools. However, in the current academic year, their use for students on level 2 and 3 courses has been very slow and ineffective. Initial screening for students on entry level and level 1 courses took place very early, but diagnostic assessment has yet to be completed. This has resulted in the setting of general targets rather than specific targets for individual students. Formal reviews of students' progress have been delayed. Short-term target setting for students on the E2E course is weak. Targets are either too general or they use language that is not easy to understand.

133. There is a wide range of courses to meet students' needs. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace is being developed. The college offers no literacy and numeracy courses in community venues as part of a collaborative agreement with the local adult education service. On the pre-vocational education course and discrete courses for students with learning difficulties, teachers make effective use of work placement, trips and conservation activities to extend students' skills and knowledge. There is a wide range of vocational options for students on the E2E course and they benefit from literacy and numeracy lessons.

134. Guidance and support for students at entry level and level 1 are good. Literacy and numeracy support is well integrated on entry level courses in health and social care, creative arts and ICT. The support students receive from their specialist literacy or numeracy tutor enhances their progress. The number of students requiring support on these courses is increasing. Literacy and numeracy is effectively integrated into discrete pre-entry and entry level courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pastoral support for students on discrete courses is good.

135. For students on level 2 and 3 courses, the process for identifying needs and allocating appropriate support is unsatisfactory. The time taken to initially assess all of the groups is very slow. Some students in need of literacy and numeracy support do not receive it. ESOL students following GCSE and GCE AS and A-level courses do receive support.

Leadership and management

136. The management of discrete literacy and numeracy courses is good. Subject teams work well together. Challenging targets for retention and achievement are set at course level and course teams are aware of them. Communication between the literacy and numeracy and learning support teams is effective. Teachers and tutors feel they are able to influence and inform the policy-making process. Management of E2E is effective. The arrangements for the management and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the college are new. However, the changes have as yet failed to impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of initial and diagnostic assessment. Inspectors broadly agreed with the self-assessment report, but some strengths were overstated and some weaknesses omitted.

Part D: College data

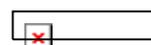
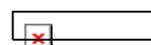


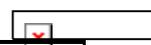
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2001/02



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	28	18
2	32	18
3	26	14
4/5	0	3
Other	14	47
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2001/02



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	534	514	8
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	118	689	7
Business administration, management and professional	262	917	10
Information and communications technology	531	677	10
Retailing, customer service and	0	39	0

transportation			
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	152	384	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	323	445	6
Health, social care and public services	115	748	7
Visual and performing arts and media	435	335	6
Humanities	148	141	2
English, languages and communication	257	328	5
Foundation programmes	1,127	3,146	35
Total	4,002	8,363	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
		1	Starters excluding transfers	786	562	706	1,111
	Retention rate (%)	89	79	83	84	80	87
	National average (%)	74	75	75	70	73	74
	Pass rate (%)	57	57	74	61	48	75
	National average (%)	64	64	66	65	68	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	2,057	999	1,025	1,361	917	975
	Retention rate (%)	72	76	71	78	73	74
	National average (%)	69	70	70	70	70	69
	Pass rate (%)	58	58	70	59	67	74
	National average (%)	66	67	68	65	65	69
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,218	1,403	868	1,092	1,076	789
	Retention rate (%)	65	70	80	71	71	80
	National average (%)	62	67	75	67	67	70

	Pass rate (%)	60	56	67	58	54	68
	National average (%)	69	70	73	63	65	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	36	34	16
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	81	44	75
	National average (%)	*	*	*	66	65	70
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	29	15	12
	National average (%)	*	*	*	14	47	33

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

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000 to 2002: College ISR.

** fewer than 15 starters enrolled*

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)	56	39	5	59
Level 2 (intermediate)	53	38	9	58
Level 1 (foundation)	68	32	0	22
Other sessions	57	30	13	47
Totals	57	36	7	186