



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Newbury College

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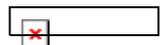
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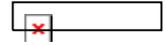
**Basic information about the college**



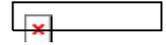
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Name of college:	Newbury College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Dr Anne Murdoch
Address of college:	Monks Lane Newbury West Berkshire RG14 7TD
Telephone number:	01635 845000
Fax number:	01635 845208
Chair of governors:	Tony Allen
Unique reference number:	130602
Name of reporting inspector:	Ela Piotrowska
Dates of inspection:	15-19 March 2004

## Part A: Summary



### Information about the college



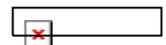
Newbury College is a general further education (FE) college. It relocated to a 40 acre green field site, as a private finance initiative pathfinder in September 2002. The college serves a predominantly rural area including Newbury, the growing town of Thatcham, west Berkshire and parts of Reading and north Hampshire.

The college is the only FE college in west Berkshire and is contracted by the LEA to provide most adult and community learning in the area through 52 centres. The college has developed four shop front information technology (IT) centres in partnership with other providers in the area. In 2003 it opened a business development unit in Newbury town centre. It offers courses in all areas of learning, although enrolments in agriculture and construction are low. Work-based learning is provided in a number of programme areas and the college offers entry to employment (E2E) provision. In 2002/03 the college enrolled 678 full-time students of whom 66% were aged 16 to 18 and 34% were 19 years old and over. It also enrolled 20,282 part-time student enrolments, of whom 49% were directly funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In 2001/02, 64% of all students were female and some 3% were from minority ethnic groups.

The college is located in an area characterised by significant levels of prosperity based on high incomes and low unemployment. Business services, wholesale and retail and public services are key industrial sectors, whilst manufacturing accounts for only 13% of employment in the area. The college is located in an area where staying-on rates for those aged 16 is below the Berkshire average. There are 10 secondary schools, all with sixth form provision and specialist status in the area, and progression to FE is low at 16%. Some 57% of pupils leaving school in west Berkshire achieve five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) grade A-C and west Berkshire has higher than average numbers of adults recorded as being qualified to level 3 and above. The proportions of adults with low literacy and numeracy are slightly below the regional and national averages at 19% and 18% respectively. According to the 2001 census, 2.7% of the local population is from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 7.9% nationally.

The college is mainly funded by Berkshire LSC. It has achieved interim centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) status. The college holds Investors in People (ILP) status and is in financial health group A.

### How effective is the college?



Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The overall quality of provision is inadequate: 3 of the 11 graded areas were unsatisfactory. The quality of provision is unsatisfactory in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, health, social care and public services, and visual and performing arts. The provision of work-based learning in engineering and business administration, and management

engineering, business administration, management and professional studies, information and communications technology (ICT), beauty and holistic therapy, literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and E2E, and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Provision in English, languages and humanities is also satisfactory, although an unsatisfactory contributory grade for humanities was awarded in this area.

***Key strengths***

- strong leadership of significant changes in the college
  
- strong governance
  
- good financial management
  
- high-quality accommodation and resources
  
- good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
  
- good work placements
  
- good community initiatives to widen participation.

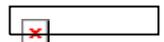
***What should be improved***

- retention rates
  
- pass rates
  
- management and pass rates in work-based learning
  
- quality of teaching and learning

- management, teaching and achievement of key skills
- assessment practice
- range of provision and progression opportunities
- room utilisation and timetabling
- staff development
- data use for planning and development
- curriculum management in many areas
- basic skills support in vocational areas
- use and monitoring of quality assurance to make improvements
- self-assessment and its role in securing improvement.

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**



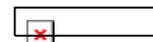
*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were*

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	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are improving in GCSE and advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) mathematics and adult achievement is good. There is much good teaching and students are well supported by helpful staff and good resources. The college offers a narrow range of courses, which restricts progression routes; recruitment to many courses is declining. Little use is made of ICT to enhance the teaching of mathematics or science courses.
Engineering	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Work-based learning contributory grade: <b>unsatisfactory.</b> Retention rate for college-based courses is generally good but poor for work-based programmes. Achievement is good or better for most engineering courses, but poor in work-based. Most teaching and learning is good or better. Resources are satisfactory. The management of the provision is satisfactory, with appropriate strategies in place to improve the provision. Equal opportunities practice is poor in the work-based provision.
Business, administration, management and professional	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Work-based learning contributory grade: <b>unsatisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates on most professional and management courses, but low pass rates on some full-time courses and work-based learning programmes. There is much imaginative teaching, but key skills provision is poor. Retention rate is good for 19+ programmes and improving on 16-18 programmes. Student and course review processes are of poor quality and management of work-based learning is weak.
Information and communications technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are high pass rates, but poor retention rates on most courses. Teachers use the good quality specialist resources to develop students' practical skills to a high level, but some theory teaching is unimaginative. Local employers provide good work experience opportunities for many students. The absence of an overall manager has resulted in poor co-ordination of many aspects of the ICT provision including systematic monitoring of students' progress and the sharing of good practice.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> There are good retention rates at levels 1 and 2 and high pass rates in sport. Pass rates in hospitality are low. In travel and practical sessions, teaching and learning are highly effective and strong industry links in sport and travel are used to enhance students' practical skills. There is much unsatisfactory teaching of additional qualifications in sport. In-class and tutorial support is inadequate. Management and quality assurance are inadequate.
Hair and beauty	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are good on the majority of programmes. Teaching and learning in theory lessons are good or better, but in practical workshops there is a lack of clients for students to practise their commercial skills and complete assessments. Professional standards are unsatisfactory on the majority of programmes. The resources are inadequate for the growing number of students.
Health and social care	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> There is slow completion of national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes and poor achievement on childcare courses. Counselling courses have high retention and pass rates. Lessons in childcare effectively link theory and practice and there is good use of ICT. There is good teamwork to implement strategies for improvement. The management of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

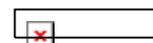
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Students' work, teaching and pass rates are unsatisfactory. There is good learning and personal support for students, but work is not monitored effectively. There are good resources and equipment in visual art and performing arts. The management of the area is weak.
English, languages and humanities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Contributory grade for humanities: <b>unsatisfactory.</b> Pass rates are generally high in English and languages, but below national averages in psychology and sociology. Retention rate is poor on a number of advanced level courses. There is some rich and varied teaching in English and languages and good skill development on access to higher education (HE). Individual support is good, but tutorial support for full-time students is ineffective. Quality assurance is weak.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A diverse range of programmes are designed to promote learning at pre-entry and entry levels. Learning support assistants are very effective. Comprehensive individual learning plans set realistic and challenging targets for students.
Literacy and numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and entry to employment	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There is good teaching, and particularly good support for students on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Good teamwork effectively widens participation. The management of cross-college support for literacy, numeracy and ESOL is unsatisfactory. Take-up by those identified as having literacy and numeracy needs is low.

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



Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Although the implementation of very significant changes has successfully taken place, there has been insufficient attention given to addressing significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning, decreasing enrolments and the limited range of provision, quality assurance and curriculum management. Retention rate at level 2 has been significantly below national averages for the last two years. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction and they are energetically working to develop a better management system across the college. Many developments are still at an early stage of implementation, although strategies to improve attendance are clearly working. Although most teaching is satisfactory or better, the profile of good or better teaching is below the national average for general FE colleges. The effectiveness of curriculum management varies and is inadequate in too many areas. Provision is unsatisfactory in three curriculum areas and in all work-based learning. The quality assurance arrangements are not yet sufficiently established to drive forward secure improvements. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical and the development plan is not specific and lacks measurable outcomes. Financial management is good but the college does not provide good value for money.

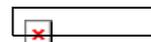
#### To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college plays an active role in widening participation and encouraging students back into education. It has developed

provide most adult and community learning in the area through a number of community venues. It works with a number of groups who experience significant barriers to learning. These include a wide range of literacy and numeracy initiatives and work with travellers. The college has developed an E2E programme and works with young people aged 14 to 16. Students speak positively about their experiences and a students' association works with college staff to improve facilities and communication, and ensure a more inclusive environment for students. The new well-resourced environment enhances students' learning. There is a strong network of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the college's response to the development of a basic skills strategy has been slow and currently there is little literacy and numeracy support for students on vocational courses. There is a small range of provision. The college has set up an equality, diversity and race relations committee to promote better awareness of equality and diversity throughout the college. Although data are collected and targets for disability and ethnicity have been set, there is little use of data for action planning and reviews of provision. The college has made a satisfactory response to the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Facilities for learners with restricted mobility are satisfactory. The college has yet to respond to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000.

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



The college provides some good support and guidance for students. Advice, guidance and personal support for students are managed well and students appreciate the accessible services. The additional learning needs of students are diagnosed accurately during induction. Good specialist support services are available to students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and students with physical or sensory needs. Effective partnership arrangements with local employers help to secure good work placements for students. The college works effectively with parents, carers and support agencies. There is insufficient provision of additional support in literacy, numeracy and language in curriculum areas. Take-up of literacy, numeracy and language support is poor. The college has only recently responded to the Skills for Life agenda and outlined a basic skills strategy. Tutorial arrangements are inadequate and student advisers have insufficient knowledge of subjects and qualifications to review progress and set targets. Many students receive good individual support with their coursework from subject tutors. Students value the pastoral support and development of social and life skills in individual tutorials. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored and there have been improvements in attendance on most courses.

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



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

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

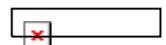
- friendly, approachable teachers and support staff
  
- being treated as an adult

- clean and tidy new building
- excellent IT and Internet resources
- bright and welcoming learning resource centre
- free bus service.

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

- the number of car parking spaces
- the allocation of rooms to avoid too many changes
- the inappropriateness of rooms for some lessons
- the speed of the network at the start of morning and afternoon sessions
- the lack of lockers
- the lack of quiet common room areas.

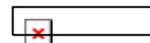
**Other information**



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

should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

## Part B: The college as a whole



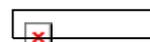
### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	60	30	10
19+ and WBL*	62	29	9
Learning 16-18	58	32	10
19+ and WBL*	65	28	7

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. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from Individualised Student Record returns for 2001, 2002 and 2003. All comparisons with national averages are made in relation to other general FE/Tertiary colleges. Pass rates for the three years 2001 to 2003 have considerably improved at level 1 and level 2 for adults, to significantly above the national average. In 2003 two thirds of adults who started on level 1 courses successfully completed them, a proportion which is 28% above the national average. For 16 to 18 year olds pass rates for levels 1 and 2 declined in 2002 to well below the national average but rose to just above the national average in 2003.

2. Over the period 2001/03, retention rates generally have improved steadily at level 1 for both adults and 16 to 18 year olds and are above the national average. However, on level 2 courses, retention rates for adults had significantly reduced to half the national average and for young people aged 16 to 18, to well below the national average in 2002. It improved slightly in 2003, but was still below the national average for both groups of learners. At level 3, retention rates for those aged 16 to 18 was below the national average between 2001/02 and rose to above the national average in 2003 for adults only. The combination of low retention rates together with low achievement on levels 2 and 3 programmes, has adversely affected the outcomes for significant numbers of those aged 16 to 18, as well as for adults. For instance, in 2003, over half the adult and 16 to 18 learners who started on level 2 courses did not complete the course successfully.

3. In 2003/2004, 2,690 student enrolments on individual qualifications have not been assigned a level, a significant reduction from 9200 enrolments in the previous year. This represents nearly one fifth of all the college's enrolments. About half of these enrolments are on computing courses. The rest are on diagnostic tests in literacy and numeracy and short non-accredited courses in literacy, or courses for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and courses in ESOL. Retention rates on these courses in 2003 were 51%, which is below the national average for short courses. Retention and pass rates on short courses have remained at about the national average for students aged 16 to 18, but below the national average for adults.

4. Enrolments across the college declined between 2001 and 2003 by 25% for both those aged 16 to 18 and adults. Decreases in enrolments have taken place in the programme areas of health and social care, English and languages, information communications technology, visual and performing arts and media and business administration and management. The most significant decreases, however, relate to the college's planned withdrawal from distance learning.

5. Generally, attendance and punctuality are improving. During the inspection the attendance rate at lessons was 77% and at the national average for similar colleges. Lateness to classes is dealt with effectively. A new system of tracking poor attendance and the use of electronic registers is having a positive effect on attendance monitoring in most areas.

6. In 2002/03, 20% of students progressed to HE. This is just below the national average of 22%. Most were on access to HE courses, foundation courses in art and design, and the national diploma in computing.

7. The standard of students' work is satisfactory in many areas and good in science and mathematics, engineering, English and modern foreign languages. In literacy and numeracy there is good development of a range of study, conversational and presentational skills and in lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities students achieve challenging personal goals and good standards of personal and social skills. Standards of work are unsatisfactory in visual and performing arts, and in beauty and holistic therapies practical skills are underdeveloped because of a lack of clients. Levels of unsatisfactory attainment are highest in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, visual and performing arts and humanities.

8. Key skills have very low pass rates. In 2003, of 653 students who started the courses, 542 completed; an 83% retention rate; of these, 110 students entered key skills tests in application of number, communications and IT. The majority were at levels 2 and 3 and most in application of number and IT. Only nine students completed a key skills portfolio and passed; 80 students sat the external test and passed but only 3% achieved the full award.

9. The college has very recently implemented a value added system to predict students' target grades based on their previous attainments, but only for students on AS-level and general certificate of education (GCE ) A2 programmes. This information is not used to set or monitor minimum target grades on an on-going basis. Over three years, students on the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) travel and tourism, art and design and media courses, GCE A2 film studies, sociology, psychology, art and design courses and those on AS-level art and design, film studies and Spanish had not made the progress indicated by their GCSE grades. Students on GCE A2 English literature, AS-level English language and AVCE business had made good progress. Data on prior attainment are not used for target setting for other groups of students. The college is unable to make reliable judgements about the impact of programmes of study, tutorials and additional support on students' achievements.

### **16 to 18 year olds**

10. In 2002, the pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 1 were at 5% below the national average. Pass rates on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation programmes are well below the national average at 24% but NVQ level 1 courses were 24% above the national average.

11. For the three years 1999/00 to 2001/02, pass rates on long level 2 courses have remained at least 7% below the national average. In 2002 the overall GNVQ pass rates at level 2 were 24% below the average. GCSE results have been good; in 2003 the results in English and mathematics were above the national average. AS-level and GCE A-level pass rates have been low over the three years, with the pass rates on advanced GNVQ courses at 15% below the national average.

12. Retention rates are generally improving and in 2002 were mostly at, or around, the national average in level 1 courses but below the national average at levels 2 and 3. Retention rates on GNVQ and NVQ courses have remained above the national average over the three-year period to 2002. Retention rates on GCSE mathematics and English courses have been in decline and are significantly below the average for 2003. The rate for English language was 11% below the national average. Retention rates on GNVQ advanced courses and NVQ level 3 are above the national average while AS-level and GCE A-level course programmes had low retention rates.

### **Adult learners**

13. The pass rates for adults at level 1 in 2002 were very good, at 14% above the average. At level 2, pass rates have declined significantly to 34% below the national average in 2002. Pass rates on GCSE courses were low, at 13% below the average. For AS-level and GCE A-level qualifications, pass rates have remained at above the average for a three-year period. The pass rates across GNVQ and Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) are low and below the average, while pass rates on NVQ programmes have improved to 14% above the average.

14. At level 1, retention rates in 2002 rose to 14% above the national average. Retention rates on level 2 courses have been significantly below the national average for the last three years at 34%, below average for 2002, except for GCSE, GNVQ and BTEC programmes, which have remained above national averages for 2001 and 2002. At level 3, retention rates have been variable. AS-level and GCE A-level courses generally had low retention rates. Although the numbers of students taking NVQ courses increased in 2002, the overall retention rate was 11% below the national average.

15. The college offers work-based learning in engineering, business administration, management and professional, and childcare. Achievement of frameworks is very low. In 2002 there were 36 learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme and 73 learners on the advanced level programme. Only three engineering apprentices were successful overall in achieving the full award. In childcare, progress towards the NVQ and key skills work is very slow. Of those enrolled on the Free to Learn programme in October 2003, 58% have been identified as making slow progress by external assessors. The six modern apprentices enrolled in childcare in September 2003 have only completed one unit.

16. The college has recently started an E2E contract for the training of unemployed clients with literacy and numeracy needs, in preparation for employment. The primary purpose of this training is to enable clients to secure sustainable jobs. In 2003, of the 27 clients who started their training in September, only 8 are currently on the programme; over half have stopped attending and only 2 students progressed to a job or to higher level courses in FE and training.

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



17. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 204 lessons. Of these, teaching is good or better in 61%, satisfactory in 29% and unsatisfactory in 9%. In only 15% of all the lessons observed is teaching excellent or very good. The teaching in 62% of lessons for adults is good or better compared with 60% of lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Overall, the level of good or better teaching is lower than the average level of 65% in general FE colleges inspected in 2001/02. The

some significant weaknesses in teaching in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, visual and performing arts and humanities. There is a difference in the effectiveness of teaching at different levels. Good teaching is more prevalent at level 3; level 2 students experienced the largest amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

18. The best teaching is on courses in science and mathematics, engineering, business administration and management, and literacy, numeracy and ESOL. In the most effective lessons teaching is well organized, informative and energetic; there is a range of interesting and imaginative activities, and teachers use vocationally relevant material and relate theory to practical work. Teachers effectively use questions to check students' progress and extend their thinking. In many lessons teachers use independent learning technology very effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Students are encouraged to develop good oral skills and contribute their ideas, and they are challenged to develop their ideas fully. Students are enthusiastic about their learning and work well together. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons.

19. In many lessons teachers do not set students activities that are demanding enough and in the weakest, use too narrow a range of methods, over-direct learning and rely too much on note-taking. They fail to give students sufficient opportunities to formulate their own answers and do not adequately check their understanding and learning. There is insufficient identification of individual learning needs and support for literacy, numeracy and language needs in vocational areas is inadequate.

20. The co-ordination and teaching of key skills are unsatisfactory. Pass rates are poor and well below the national average in all key skills. The policy for key skills has been revised. However, to date, insufficient priority has been given to its implementation. The college has recently appointed a new co-ordinator for key skills. Initial assessment of key skills of all full-time learners takes place. The results are not taken into account in planning the key skills curriculum. Staff teaching key skills are not always sufficiently experienced or knowledgeable to motivate the students. Many students do not understand the relevance of key skills, as it is not made a central part of their main course of study. Little training in key skills for work-based learners takes place.

21. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced in most curriculum areas. Some 95% of full-time and fractional staff and 57% of sessional staff hold teaching qualifications. Many staff keep in touch with current industrial and commercial practices but very little of this is through formalised arrangements for secondment or work shadowing. Recent improvements have been made to induction and staff training but these are yet to be implemented in full. Much staff development responds to staff interests and is not sufficiently linked to the outcomes of appraisal and teaching and learning observations. A small amount of staff training has taken place on the Race Relations Amendment Act and SENDA. Inadequate technical support exists in the motor vehicle, catering and beauty therapy areas. The college has had difficulty in recruiting teachers in basic skills and IT and has not yet appointed staff to key cross-college roles in quality management and staff development.

22. The college opened its new building in September 2002. It is the result of one of the first private finance initiative projects in the FE sector. This provides high-quality general and specialist accommodation and equipment. The CoVE in business and finance has received extra IT equipment and interactive whiteboards have been provided in many areas. All computers have Internet capability, including those in open access areas for general use. However, logging on to most computers is slow in the early morning and afternoon sessions. The learning resource centre is bright, airy and welcoming and has a good stock of materials for students' use. It contains 47 computers, 80 study spaces, a video room, a quiet room and an area set aside for small children. It is open for more than 12 hours a day between Monday and Thursday. It is increasingly booked by classes because of shortages of accommodation or access to computers. More than one third of its stock is over 15 years old.

23. People with restricted mobility have very good access to the car park and all parts of the building. Facilities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good both at the main site and in community centres. The home economics area of the independent living facility has adjustable height worktops containing electrical and water services. The student services area is self-contained and is located near to the main entrance for easy access. Some of the specialist

rooms are too small. The beauty therapy salons are inadequate to meet demand and do not have adequate storage. The film studios are well equipped but lack of space inhibits the full use of the facilities. Room utilisation and timetabling are not managed efficiently. Room changes are made frequently and without notice. Lessons are not evenly distributed across the week and this leads to congestion and the under-use of some rooms.

24. Assessment practice varies considerably across the college. Clear, prompt and informative feedback to students takes place in hospitality and literacy and numeracy courses. However, in humanities and ESOL the feedback is too vague and general. The assessment policies and procedures are comprehensive and provide forms and templates for college-wide use. These are in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies. Thorough and full internal verification takes place in engineering but the verification procedures are not implemented thoroughly in all areas. Health and social care staff are not qualified to verify internally, and the process is weak in visual and performing arts and too informal on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In other areas internal verification is left until late in the year and so is not used to improve learning. External verifier reports are monitored thoroughly by senior managers. Actions are taken to address the issues and these are recorded. Assessments are set and recorded rigorously in science and mathematics. In engineering and computing assessments are checked by other staff before being issued to students. Work-based assessment is satisfactory in engineering and in business. However, assessment and internal verification in the business area have been delayed due to staff illness and the shortage of other appropriately qualified staff.

25. Initial assessments are effective and students' learning support needs are diagnosed. Screening includes assessment of literacy and numeracy, dyslexia and learning styles.

26. The results of assessment are not always used to place students accurately and provide appropriate support in vocational areas. The entry qualifications of students are often modest and many are placed on level 2 courses with insufficient support. Monitoring of students' progress is mainly satisfactory but students in ICT are not always made aware of their progress and development. Twice a year the college provides parents with reports on full-time students' progress to coincide with parents' evenings. A parents' welcome evening is also held early in the year.

27. The college provides a narrow range of courses in most curriculum areas. There is insufficient provision particularly in science, health and social care, mathematics and humanities. The college has been successful in increasing adult enrolments on part-time day and evening courses and many take place in local community settings. The ICT centres attract older learners, and one-to-one literacy and numeracy provision attracts adult learners who are reluctant to attend courses in college. Special provision is provided for travellers. Literacy and numeracy provision is provided on employers' premises. The college has good links with local employers. Good work placements are organised in engineering, business, ICT and health and social care. This is particularly beneficial in work preparation courses. The college works well with local special schools to provide appropriate courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. A small number of students aged 16 to 18 attending school take part-time AS-level and GCE A2 courses that their schools cannot provide.

28. The college provides few progression opportunities for students. There is particularly poor progression from AS level to GCE A level. The proportion of students entering HE is low at 20%.

29. A wide range of enrichment opportunities are held once a week. These include sport, yoga, music, nail art, graphics and a popular film club. Attendance was strong in the early part of the year but has recently decreased.

30. The college provides good support and guidance for students. There is a range of good information including an informative internet website, open days with taster days and interviews with subject teachers. Induction prepares students adequately for their studies, although students have little recall of their induction.

31. The college is particularly responsive to the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is well-organised support, effective use of learning support assistants, who work

well with subject tutors, and good relationships with local employers who provide good support in work placements. Partnerships with support agencies are effective. There are good links with other education providers, schools, universities, and agencies such as social services, housing, health and other support organisations. Individual learning needs are diagnosed accurately and specialist support is good. There is good individual support for students with dyslexia and 54 students are receiving support in the current year. A number of students with identified needs, for example dyslexia, refuse support. Laptops are provided. Practical support for students with mobility and sensory difficulties is good. Seven rooms have fixed hearing loops and portable systems are available. Specialist software assists learning for the visually impaired. Access for wheelchair users is good. There are adjustable IT tables and worktops in the home economics areas.

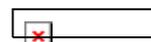
32. There is insufficient provision of additional support in literacy, numeracy and language across the college. The strategy for basic skills has only recently been developed. There is insufficient evaluation of the impact of learning support on retention and pass rates. On foundation and some level 1 and 2 courses, additional learning support is provided in one-to-one sessions and by in-class support assistants. In some areas, for example, in business, literacy and numeracy and courses for students with learning difficulties, there is good team working and effective use of learning support assistants. They attend the monthly curriculum meetings. In others areas it is ineffective. In these cases learning support assistants are not given sufficiently clear tasks by the subject tutor. Some learning support assistants are not involved in any planning and they do not keep records. There are 166 students across the college receiving some form of additional support. This is insufficient for the number of students identified as having additional learning needs. Although assessment and individual support are offered to the many adults on part-time day and evening courses, the opportunity is rarely taken up.

33. Tutorial arrangements are inadequate. A new team of student advisers leads a comprehensive group tutorial system based on a common scheme of work. The new scheme was introduced in September 2003. These advisers also work with students individually on a rota basis so that each student's progress is reviewed once every five weeks. Although the new system is being used by most staff, communication issues still exist in some areas. Subject teachers do not always inform the student adviser of the student's progress and the student advisers are not subject specialists. Consequently, some of these reviews and action plans are too vague, general and lack coherence. The majority of students do not value their group tutorial although they appreciate the pastoral support and development of social and life skills in one-to-one tutorials.

34. Student attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Electronic registers are used by an attendance officer, and student advisers follow up absence promptly. Parents and carers are involved in supporting 'at risk' students. There has been improvement in attendance on most courses.

35. There are good arrangements for careers, welfare, counselling, finance and general support. Pastoral support for students is good. Students appreciate the personal support they receive from subject tutors and support services staff.

## **Leadership and management**



36. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The college has undergone a substantial change programme since the previous inspection in 1998. A new principal took up post in September 2001 and has provided strong leadership of the substantial changes. The immediate priority was the successful completion of a pathfinder private finance initiative arrangement, relocating the college from its previous town centre site to a purpose built building on a 40 acre green field site. There has been a comprehensive reorganisation of senior, middle and course management and much clearer lines of accountability have been introduced. However, there are key

interim managers. Although the implementation of very significant changes has taken place successfully, there has been insufficient attention to addressing significant weaknesses in retention rates, pass rates, the quality of teaching and learning, decreasing enrolments and the small range of provision, quality assurance and curriculum management. Overall, the profile of good or better teaching is below the national average for general FE colleges. The college has introduced a range of measures to address weaknesses and is energetically pursuing an improvement agenda. However, many of these are yet to be thoroughly assimilated and established in everyday practice.

37. Senior management provides a clear strategic direction, which is well communicated to staff through regular meetings, forums and a recently introduced staff newsletter. Senior managers and governors have a good and realistic understanding of the challenges faced by the college. Governance is good. Governors know the college well and have a clear strategic vision. The college has five key strategic drivers that focus on widening participation, the 14 to 19 agenda, employer engagement, quality improvement and growth. The governors have recently revised the mission statement to reflect the college's increased focus on employer engagement. Presentations from a range of college managers help to keep the governors informed about college and curriculum developments. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and specialist knowledge to their role in committees. Governors have an effective contact with college departments through the Adopt a Governor scheme.

38. Quality assurance arrangements are not yet sufficiently established. Since September 2003, managers, together with an external consultant, have put considerable effort into the development and implementation of the new quality assurance framework. The revised procedures put a greater focus on improving the link between lesson observations, the course review process and the self-assessment report. In 6 of the 11 areas inspected inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report grade. However, the self-assessment report does not provide clear evidence to support the judgments made. It is insufficiently evaluative or self-critical. The actions in the development plan are not sufficiently specific, lacking measurable outcomes or timescales for achievements. Many staff do not yet thoroughly understand their role in self-assessment. Grades awarded through internal lesson observations were broadly in line with those awarded by inspectors.

39. The college has significantly developed its management information system. For example, the introduction of web-based registers enables the better monitoring of attendance. The availability of management information is increasing with staff having on-line access from any computer on the main site. Staff training has supported the introduction of the new system, but not all staff are fully confident in the use of the management information system. There is insufficient use of data in course planning and review. There is a centralised system for the allocation of accommodation but there are still too many examples of disrupting lessons through room changes and inappropriate room allocation.

40. The college has a clear commitment to raise pass rates. This is showing some signs of success and overall pass rates have improved. However, there are significantly low retention rates for all students at level 2 and level 3, for young people aged 16 to 18. Around 50% of those students on level 2 courses did not complete their courses successfully. Although over the last 3 years there has been a 25% decline in the total number of students enrolling, in 2003/04 enrolments have started to increase. Achievement in work-based learning is poor and the achievement of key skills is particularly weak.

41. The effectiveness of curriculum management varies widely across the college and is inadequate in too many areas. In five areas of learning curriculum management is unsatisfactory. Work-based learning is not well managed in engineering or business. On E2E there are few vocational pathways or work experience placements available for students. There is too little provision at levels 1 and 2 in some areas and insufficient progression opportunities in others. For example, only GCSE intermediate mathematics is offered at level 2 and there is no level 1 or 2 full-time provision in health and social care. Although the college is putting significant effort into improving key skills, the teaching, assessment and management of key skills is inadequate.

42. Management of cross college basic skills support is inadequate. The college's response to the Skills for Life agenda has been slow and a cross-college basic skills strategy has only recently been

developed. There are increasing numbers of students with lower levels of attainment on entry. Currently there are insufficient levels of support for these students on level 1 and particularly on level 2 courses. The take-up of literacy and numeracy support is very low and the college has few strategies to address this weakness.

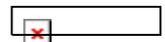
43. There is insufficient management of staff performance. Individual target setting is not well developed. The staff appraisal system has been in operation for a number of years. It operates on a two-yearly cycle and has insufficient evaluation of the achievement of previous targets and objectives. Links to strategic objectives are not explicit within the process. Until September 2003 lesson observation data was not used as a basis for appraisals. The lesson observation scheme introduced in September 2003 is a significant improvement on the previous system. A team of staff have undertaken training in observation techniques and there is external moderation of the process. Access to staff development is for the most part satisfactory, although there has been insufficient formal training in equality and diversity.

44. The college has a good range of effective partnership arrangements. It works closely with local industry and community groups. For example, in collaboration with another local college, an IT centre is run within a local supermarket. The college is working with local schools to develop increased flexibility programmes for students aged 14 to 16. Links are being developed with two local colleges for the joint provision of some of the curriculum. Two foundation degrees are being developed with a local university. Courses for adults are effectively provided in collaboration with the LEA in a number of local community centres.

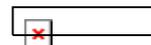
45. The college's promotion of equality and diversity is improving, although until recently progress has been slow. There is an equality and diversity committee with members drawn from senior and middle managers of curriculum and support sections. The function of the committee is to ensure compliance with equality of opportunity, race relations and disability legislation and the promotion of equality and diversity to staff and students. In November 2003 the equality of opportunity policy was updated and diversity and race relations policies and procedures were introduced covering discrimination, harassment, widening participation and inclusive learning, and celebrating diversity. Targets have been set for participation of students with disabilities and from minority ethnic communities. An access audit of the college has shown that, while the college meets the basic requirements of SENDA, further areas for improvement have been identified. For example, there is no tactile signage or use of audible signals in lifts or toilet facilities. Staff are not sufficiently aware of issues of equality and diversity and little formal training has been undertaken. While equality of opportunity is included in induction, students have poor recall and little understanding of the issues. In one observed lesson, some totally inappropriate imagery on a computer screen went unchallenged by the teacher.

46. Financial management is good. The college is category A status. Prior to its move the college had operating surpluses in the preceding three years. Costs associated with the move led to forecasts of operating deficits for four years following the move. There has been underachievement of unit targets in 2001/02 and 2002/03. The 2003/04 unit target has been rebased. The primary reasons for the underachievement have been identified and a business action plan developed with cost reductions, strategies to develop new curriculum, and the improvement of retention rates and pass rates central to the plan. There is close monitoring of the plan by the senior management team and governors. Budgets are tightly controlled centrally, with consumable and part-time staff budgets delegated to section managers. The college recognises that class sizes are small and with retention rates below national averages at levels 2 and 3 the college does not provide good value for money.

## **Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas**



## Science and mathematics



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

### **Strengths**

- much good teaching
- good retention rates for AS-level biology
- good use of accommodation and technical support.

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient progression opportunities
- little use of ICT in science and mathematics
- small range of provision.

### **Scope of provision**

47. The college offers full-time courses in science and mathematics at intermediate and advanced levels at the Newbury site. GCSE mathematics evening classes are also offered at the college and at a school in Tilehurst. Students can choose AS-level and GCE A-level courses in mathematics, biology and environmental science. Very small classes in AS-level physics and chemistry have led the college to discontinue with this provision. GCSE mathematics, statistics and biology are offered at level 2. Students re-sitting GCSE mathematics are expected to have a grade D; those with lower grades normally study a numeracy qualification first. The access to HE programme includes courses in mathematics, science and biology. There are 163 students currently studying mathematics and science; of these 103 are aged 16 to 18 and 60 are part-time adult students.

### **Achievement and standards**

48. Achievement is good for the very small number of students who completed GCE A-level science courses in 2002 and 2003. In the past three years there have been some low pass and retention rates on AS-level courses in mathematics, physics and chemistry. For example, the pass rates in AS-level mathematics have been consistently low at 24%, 33% and 41% respectively. The retention rate is good for AS-level biology and pass rates are close to the national average. The proportion of

students gaining high grades on GCE A-level courses is low. Progression rates from AS level to GCE A level and from GCE A level to university are poor. Pass rates have improved since 2001 on GCSE mathematics courses and were 10% above the national average in 2003. The pass rate for adults on this course has risen from 20% to 57% over the last three years, but for students aged 16 to 18 it has fallen over the same period, with only 18% achieving A to C grades in 2003. The retention rate for GCSE biology has fallen since 2001, but the pass rate has remained close to the national average. Value added analysis shows that most GCE A-level students achieve results better than would be expected on the basis of their GCSE qualifications. Pass and retention rates on the biology access course are high. Attendance at some GCSE classes is poor.

49. Students work well in lessons and are usually interested and attentive. The quality of their written work is good. In science lessons students are confident when doing practical work. Many students produce good coursework and do well in tests. The standard of work produced by adult students is good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	89	123	121
		% retention	75	76	69
		% pass rate	24	35	49
GCSE biology	2	No. of starts	*	19	19
		% retention	*	74	53
		% pass rate	*	29	40
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	19	16	23
		% retention	89	56	74
		% pass rate	24	33	41
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	*	18	21
		% retention	*	94	86
		% pass rate	*	59	72

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

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

***Quality of education and training***

50. In mathematics and science all teaching is satisfactory and much is good or better. Most lessons are well organised and planned although some schemes of work lack detail. In the best lessons the teaching is bright and lively and learning is good, but in others the teaching is over directed and relies too much on note taking.

51. Students work keenly and confidently in the laboratory and good attention is paid to health and safety requirements. In an access to HE class on rates of reaction, the students used well-produced instruction sheets and worked quickly and sensibly, maintaining their interest and enthusiasm throughout. In many lessons teachers questioned students effectively to check their progress and understanding and to challenge and extend their thinking. Teachers encourage students to develop their answers fully. In a GCSE mathematics lesson on graphs the teacher gave clear and careful explanations, emphasising the techniques needed for examination success. The teachers set high standards and expected the same from the students who responded accordingly.

52. Teachers make little use of ICT in science and mathematics lessons. Desktop projectors and interactive whiteboards are not fitted in any of the laboratories or mathematics classrooms. Little use is made of computers or graphical calculators to help learning in mathematics and science. The teaching staff are well qualified, experienced and relate well to students, giving strong support to those who need it. Students appreciate the good resources found in the bright, airy laboratories and the learning centre. Equipment is generally of a high standard and mathematics and science rooms are modern, well furnished and clean. Posters and interesting information is displayed on the walls. Wheelchair access to classrooms is good. Technical staff work effectively as a team and provide good support, equipment for practical lessons, and ensure health and safety regulations are met.

53. GCE A-level and GCSE students are assessed regularly and subject teachers maintain accurate records of their progress. Recently appointed student advisers monitor achievement at GCE A level and GCSE. Predicted grades are based on GCSE scores. However, there is insufficient communication between teachers and student advisers. Most teachers provide constructive and encouraging feedback on students' work.

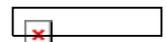
54. There is a limited range of provision in science and mathematics. No vocational science courses are available. There is a narrow range of full-time science and mathematics courses and some provision has been discontinued because of small numbers.

55. Science and mathematics courses have helpful booklets that ensure students are well informed about the requirements and demands of the programme at the beginning of their course. Diagnostic testing on entry using Searchlight is used to identify learner support needs. Not all students take up the support offered. In mathematics the students are further assessed on their algebraic skills.

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

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good progress has been made in addressing weaknesses in teaching identified at the last inspection. Mathematics and science courses are well-organised and regular minuted section meetings are held. Courses are reviewed and targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates are set. The reviews fail to identify clear strengths and weaknesses and lack detail on how to secure improvements. The small number of staff teaching each subject and the way staff are spread across different sections of the college inhibits the sharing of good practice. Strategies to address the low pass and retention rates and the declining number of students on science and mathematics courses are not well established. The small class sizes give poor value for money.

### **Engineering**



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

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

### ***Strengths***

- outstanding retention and pass rates on the computer-aided design (CAD) course
  
- high retention and pass rates on national certificate courses

- very good standards of students' work in national certificate engineering programmes
  
- good teaching on the level 1 full-time motor vehicle course, national certificate engineering and City and Guilds (C&G) CAD courses
  
- good teamwork to improve the provision.

***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates in motor vehicle and electrical and electronic progression awards, and motor vehicle foundation studies
  
- low retention and pass rates in work-based programmes
  
- uninspiring teaching in motor vehicle theory lessons
  
- poor attention to equal opportunities in work-based provision.

***Scope of provision***

57. The engineering team offers engineering courses from level 1 to higher national certificate. Full-time provision provides opportunities for students to gain a level 1 award in motor vehicle studies, and progression to modern apprenticeships. Part-time students can study the national certificate in mechanical or electronics engineering or vocational courses to support apprenticeships. Other students participate in electronic servicing, engineering operation, engineering production, maintenance, design, technical services or CAD.

58. At the time of inspection there were 19 students on full-time engineering courses and 194 part-time students. There are five female students on engineering programmes, but none on work-based programmes. In work-based learning, 56 students are taking a modern apprenticeship or work-based NVQ's in a range of engineering disciplines including motor vehicle and production engineering. Of these, 42 students are taking foundation modern apprenticeships, eight learners are on advanced modern apprentice programmes and six are taking NVQs at level 2 or 3.

59. As part of the increased flexibility programmes there are 23 students attending school link programmes. Two students are working towards the NVQ in performing engineering operations and 21 students are following the awarding body consortium foundation certificate in motor vehicle.

### **Achievement and standards**

60. Retention and pass rates are outstanding on CAD courses and from 2000 to 2003 national certificate retention rates have been high. Retention rates on the NVQ 3 vehicle mechanical and electronic systems course is high. However, enrolment numbers and pass rates have declined and recent pass rates are below national averages. Pass rates on motor vehicle and electrical and electronic progression awards and motor vehicle foundation studies are low.

61. Retention and pass rates for modern apprentices and NVQ students is low. For the 1999/2000 and 2000/01 intake of advanced modern apprentices, retention was 36% and 29% respectively, while the pass rates were 0% and 6%, respectively. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices fell from 54% in 2000/01 to 7% in 2001/02. No foundation modern apprentice achieved the framework from the 2001/02 intake. Retention rates of NVQ students fell to 14% in 2000/01 with no students achieving their qualification in that year. A few students achieve their framework requirements late. Most apprentices have not passed the key skills element of their framework.

62. Students' work in national certificate engineering programmes is of a high standard with many students achieving distinction and merit grades. The self-assessment report does not celebrate the good standard of students' work in this area. The standard of work produced by other students is satisfactory. However, attainment in a few lessons is unsatisfactory and the standards expected on the course at this time are low. Work-based students' portfolios at all levels are to a satisfactory standard and show appropriate progression. Attendance in lessons is good and has improved in the current year. Average attendance on courses during inspection was high at 85%.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
City and Guilds 6956 motor vehicle progression award	1	No. of starts	*	17	*
		% retention	*	76	*
		% pass rate	*	0	*
Motor vehicle studies foundation	1	No. of starts	22	39	*
		% retention	82	49	*
		% pass rate	39	11	*
City and Guilds 4351-01 computer-aided draughting and design	1	No. of starts	36	23	16
		% retention	100	74	100
		% pass rate	100	88	100
City and Guilds 6958 E and E progression award	2	No. of starts	**	17	*
		% retention	**	76	*
		% pass rate	**	46	*
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	41	42	22
		% retention	80	86	73
		% pass rate	91	72	100
NVQ3 vehicle mechanical and electronic systems	3	No. of starts	15	33	*
		% retention	100	94	*
		% pass rate	87	71	*

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

\* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

*\*\*course did not run*

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

63. Much teaching is good or better, particularly in practical elements of the level 1 full time motor vehicle, national certificate and C&G computer aided design courses. Effective use is made of live vehicles for the diagnosis of gearbox and clutch faults and for pre-MOT checks. Key skills IT and communications teaching is vocationally relevant. ICT is used well to help learning in CAD and electronics lessons. Most lessons have detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. In some electronic engineering lessons, complex computer programs are used to simulate electronic circuitry. Clear explanations of topics are given and most teachers use questions effectively to test students' understanding. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching and learning methods in theory lessons for motor vehicle students; lessons are dull and uninspiring with insufficient opportunities for students to formulate their own answers to directed questions. In one practical lesson observed there was no technician support and as a result the teacher spent time issuing tools and equipment. This reduced the time available for practical demonstrations and for helping students with their tasks.

64. Good specialist facilities are available in engineering. Students work on modern computers equipped with industrial-standard software in mechanical and electronic engineering. Classrooms have modern furniture and suitable teaching aids. Interactive whiteboards are used to good effect. Students access the Internet for research into properties of materials to inform decision making for product re-design. Teachers and assessors are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their duties. Resources in the electronics laboratory and engineering workshops are satisfactory. The motor vehicle workshop contains a range of vehicles, some of which are old. Specialist equipment is to a good standard but some hand tools are worn and ineffective. Many students benefit from working on real vehicles during their motor vehicle practical lessons.

65. Good arrangements for the internal verification of assessment are in place. Assessment decisions for students' assignments are accurate. Good feedback is given to students, stating what has been done well and what students need to do to improve. Opportunities exist in assignments for students to achieve high grades in national programmes. Tracking systems are effectively used in national certificate programmes to monitor students' achievement. Tracking of work-based progress is adequate using a recently installed software package. Assessment by direct observation in the workplace is satisfactory. The assessments are fair and thoroughly supported by good questioning on health and safety and on learners' basic knowledge of tasks being undertaken. Both students and employers are provided with good opportunities for feedback, which is used to improve students' performance. For example, feedback may result in students being moved to different areas of workshops, assigned specific tasks and more closely supported in the process of evidence collection so that they can complete their NVQ.

66. Full-time motor vehicle students benefit from two periods of work experience in their first year of study during which they are able to relate theory to practice. Some 23 students are attending school link programmes in engineering as part of the increased flexibility programmes. Most of these students are following the awarding body consortium foundation certificate in motor vehicle studies.

67. Full-time motor vehicle students are offered a good range of support in the pastoral curriculum covering subjects concerning smoking, drugs, sexual health, body image, money management, letter writing and team building. All students are assessed, during induction, for their additional learning needs and support. In 2002/03, 17 students were identified as in need of additional support. Arrangements include individual support for literacy and numeracy, more regular reviews for work-based students and support during key skills lessons. One modern apprentice, who was having difficulties reading from the whiteboard, was referred to an optometrist. As a result the apprentice has received corrective advice and is now able to participate fully in lessons.

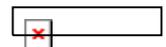
### **Leadership and management**

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The area is well led and a strategy to improve students' attendance has been successfully implemented on most courses. College- based courses

are well managed and quality assurance, including a lesson observation programme, is effective. Good team-work has significantly contributed to improvements in provision. Staff, including work-based assessors and verifiers, meet regularly and thoroughly discuss all aspects of programme planning. The development plan for the area has a clear focus on the experience of the student.

69. There is insufficient clarity about the roles and responsibilities of staff on work-based motor vehicle programmes. Staff are not clear about how key skills are to be developed for work-based students and achievement of apprenticeship frameworks in engineering is low. During induction, work-based students are introduced to equal opportunities. Students do not recall in any detail how this was covered. Student reviews do not reinforce equal opportunities and students' understanding of equal opportunities is poor. Staff have not had any formal training in equality of opportunity.

### **Business, management and professional**



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

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

#### ***Strengths***

- good retention rates for students aged 19 and over
  
- high pass rates on accounting and management NVQs and AVCE part award
  
- very effective and imaginative use of commercial experience and information and learning technology (ILT) in learning
  
- good, well-resourced learning environment
  
- good individual support for students.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on AVCE double award, e-business and modern apprenticeship frameworks
  
- inadequate key skills provision

- insufficient provision at levels 1 and 2
  
- lack of rigour in course reviews
  
- inadequate management of work-based learning.

***Scope of provision***

70. The college provides a comprehensive range of full-time and part-time courses, from foundation level to advanced and higher levels, which is responsive to local requirements. There are full-time courses in business, administration and accounting. Students are able to progress from foundation to advanced levels using various modes of study. Specialist part-time courses include marketing, facilities management, general management and supervisory courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 111 full-time and 539 part-time students. Of the full-time students, 99 are aged 16 to 18. Part-time students are predominantly aged over 19. Part-time students can attend on day release, during the evening or a combination of the two. A few students are on distance learning courses and a small number of young people aged 14 to 16 from local schools are on work experience in college for one day a week to acquire office skills. There are 23 learners on work-based programmes, following apprenticeships in accounting and administration. The college is working towards being recognised as a CoVE in management and financial studies.

***Achievement and standards***

71. The retention rate of adult students is good, at around 10% above the national average. Retention rate is satisfactory for the 16 to 18 age-range and is improving. Attendance and punctuality is also improving on full-time programmes through greater monitoring and support. During the inspection attendance averaged at 84%.

72. There are high pass rates on accounting, management and the AVCE part awards. Pass rates are low on AVCE double awards and e-business, although they are showing signs of improvement. Achievement and retention rates on modern apprenticeship programmes are low. Of the 79 who have started the programme since 2001, only 12 have completed the framework and 23 are still in learning. Achievement of key skills is low on full-time courses and for work-based learning.

73. Work produced by many students is good. Students on professional courses produce high-quality projects, which result in changes being implemented in their workplaces. However, not all projects are presented in an appropriate business format. Administration NVQ portfolios contain much high-quality evidence from the workplace and are well-presented and organised. Attainment is low in the e-business course, which is a combination of various certificated courses. Some students have inadequate literacy and numeracy skills and find it difficult to respond to the demands of their courses. Most of these students receive high levels of additional support. The value-added system used for AVCE courses indicates that students are improving on their predicted grades. However, the system is not used for target setting in student reviews or by individual subject teachers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
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Certificate in text progressing	1	No. of starts	63	51	20
		% retention	68	65	100
		% pass rate	67	67	45
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	42	41	27
		% retention	81	90	89
		% pass rate	88	89	79
AVCE business one year and pre-cursors	3	No. of starts	19	24	42
		% retention	95	75	93
		% pass rate	72	72	90
NVQ accounting (one year)	3	No. of starts	50	46	31
		% retention	86	91	97
		% pass rate	77	81	67
NVQ management	4	No. of starts	33	30	15
		% retention	97	100	93
		% pass rate	75	70	86
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	35	19	22
		% retention	91	68	95
		% pass rate	16	100	86

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

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

74. The best lessons are well prepared and make good use of students' experiences. In many lessons activities are imaginative and challenging. For example on the e-business course, students arranged an event for 30 parents and staff, incorporating planning, organisation, meetings, researching various countries and preparing displays. Students used financial skills to manage a budget for refreshments. AVCE students worked for several months on a project to promote the use of environmentally friendly products such as kettles and light bulbs on a local housing estate. This involved meetings with partner organisations such as the local authority as well as local residents and a final presentation of their findings to the partner organisations. The few weak lessons lack structure. New material is poorly presented and does not help to improve students' understanding. In these lessons there is insufficient checking of students' knowledge and learning. Some part-time teachers' board-work is illegible.

75. There is poor teaching of key skills on most courses. Key skills lessons for full-time students are often poorly planned and taught by teachers who have no specific expertise in the subject. Modern apprentices are set assignments that do not take into account their NVQ work. They receive little help to prepare them for external tests. Some work-based learners are unaware of key skills requirements when they start their course and evidence collection is started late.

76. The learning environment is good. Classrooms are well resourced and teachers and students make extensive use of ILT, including effective use of digital projectors, interactive whiteboards, computers and the Internet. However, some new and part-time staff have not been trained and lack confidence in using these resources. A good range of teaching resources includes well-designed worksheets, magazines, journals and on-line resources. Students are able to view notes for lessons they have missed through the college internet website. Teachers are generally well qualified and experienced. Most staff have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. Most have current commercial experience, which they use enliven lessons, and they also incorporate current world events into their lesson planning.

77. Assessment and internal verification is satisfactory. There is on-going assessment on AVCE courses and professional courses. On work-based learning, there is insufficient use of work-based evidence in accounting NVQ portfolios, and many learners have not been visited in the workplace for several months because of staff absence. Assessment of administration NVQs was also delayed because of staff absence. Individual learning plans for apprentices are not always updated regularly and reviews are sometimes late. There is insufficient monitoring of students to show their overall progress. Employers are not sufficiently involved in reviews of work-based learners.

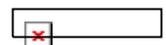
78. Most students are guided onto appropriate courses but in a few cases poor advice is given to adult students who are placed on the wrong level of course. Numbers are low and declining on many courses, and there is insufficient provision at levels 1 and 2. The college is currently addressing this and has already achieved accreditation for a number of new courses to meet the changing needs of employers and students. In response to student needs, the curriculum in marketing is changing from external examinations to continuous assessment. There is a wide range of work experience for full-time students, which greatly enriches their experience and often results in job offers. However, teachers do not visit students in the workplace and learning opportunities are missed.

79. Students are provided with good individual support. A comprehensive induction programme includes initial assessment that identifies support needs in key skills, ESOL and additional learning needs. Learning support is good for identified needs. Some students receive effective one-to-one support in the learning resources centre and others attend group sessions for additional support in numeracy and literacy. Teachers and learning support assistants work well as a team, and there is good planning to ensure that students receive effective individual support within lessons. Tutorial support is good. Attendance and punctuality are monitored rigorously. Students who are at risk of failing are identified and extra support is organised for them. The tutorial system has yet to have an impact on pass rates. There is insufficient liaison between the student advisers and the subject tutors when reviewing overall progress.

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

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Students receive good teaching and support and retention and pass rates are good on many courses. However, there has been a high turnover of staff and timetables are not adequately communicated to students. Although quality assurance has improved since the last inspection, course reviews still lack rigour and there is little analysis of issues or use of data to improve provision. Documentation is not always completed fully and there is weak target setting and action planning. There is a new process for monitoring course reviews, although it is too early to judge its impact. There is inadequate management of work-based learning. Employers would like more information about the off-the-job training so they can link it with their own training. They are not fully informed of their responsibilities at the start of the programme and do not understand the modern apprentice framework. The self-assessment report identified most of the weaknesses found by the inspectors and action is already underway to address them.

### **Information and communication technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most courses
  
- good development of practical skills

- good specialist resources to help teaching and learning
  
- effective links with employers to widen participation and enhance employability.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates on most courses
  
- unimaginative teaching of theory
  
- poor monitoring of students' progress
  
- weak management of the curriculum.

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

81. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in ICT at various levels, ranging from basic introductory courses to HE programmes. Courses for full-time students are held at the main campus and include a GCSE in ICT and a BTEC first diploma in IT systems support at level 2. Courses at level 3 include AS level and GCE A level in ICT, an AVCE single award in ICT, a C&G certificate in IT systems, a national diploma for IT practitioners and a higher national diploma for IT practitioners.

82. Courses for part-time students are held at the main college and at four sites in the community. These range from entry level to level 3 and include the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and C&G e-qualifications. Currently 87 students, mostly aged 16 to 18, are on full-time courses and 1,379 adult students attend part-time courses.

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

83. Most courses have high pass rates, and on several courses they are 20 to 30% above national averages. Retention rates are low on most courses. Only the one year Basic IT, the one year C&G start IT, the two year C&G information processing certificate and the AVCE single award in ICT have high retention and pass rates. There have been few changes in these statistics for several years. Absence monitoring is sound and average attendance in lessons observed was good at 81%. During the inspection students were punctual to lessons.

84. Most students demonstrate a good understanding of the basic concepts of computing, are competent in the use of software packages and there is good development of practical skills. C&G students have produced well-designed web pages. Others can identify and rectify common faults found in computers and one group is creating an effective display showing the different components

of a computer. Students develop the skills necessary to work effectively on their own and are conscientious during lessons. Students support each other and contribute readily to classroom activities.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 4248 start IT - short	1	No. of starts	*	21	18
		% retention	*	76	44
		% pass rate	*	75	100
City and Guilds 7261 information processing certificate (two year)	1	No. of starts	*	68	59
		% retention	*	84	59
		% pass rate	*	46	60
ECDL - one year	2	No. of starts	435	500	355
		% retention	48	38	61
		% pass rate	77	96	61
ECDL - two year	2	No. of starts	105	561	459
		% retention	34	29	45
		% pass rate	89	99	98
AVCE ICT - single award	3	No. of starts	*	21	23
		% retention	*	90	96
		% pass rate	*	100	95
National diploma for IT practitioners	3	No. of starts	35	25	31
		% retention	74	40	39
		% pass rate	62	80	100

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

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

85. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. In the best lessons, teachers effectively plan lessons for mixed-ability groups and use ILT facilities effectively. Material presented in lessons is made available to students on the network or through 'smartgroups' on the Internet. Students' practical skills are well developed. Teachers give students good one-to-one tuition, and encourage critical analysis. However, some theory lessons are dull. Teaching methods are not sufficiently varied and do not sufficiently challenge the more able students nor offer adequate support to the weaker students. Some lesson plans are inadequately prepared. One teacher had identical lesson plans for ten different lessons. At the main college site, learning support assistants in basic IT lessons have carefully defined roles and provide effective support for students. Higher national diploma (HND) computing students provide technical help informally to students on lower level courses, though not all teachers are aware of this help. Beginners in the drop-in centres are sometimes less well supported.

86. The ICT provision is very well resourced with good, networked workstations. Most computer rooms have scanners, colour printers and well-used interactive whiteboards. However, the room dedicated to computer systems is too small for a full class and other rooms are poorly designed or cramped. Most centres have very good accommodation with bright, spacious computer suites. Some

of the software is outdated and one centre uses two different versions of an operating system, thus confusing students. One centre is inaccessible by students with restricted mobility.

87. While students on the main site use workstations in a learning resource centre, students in the community centres are unaware of this facility. The library has a moderate supply of useful and up-to-date books on ICT but there are insufficient computer magazines. Staff are well qualified and experienced.

88. Assessment practices vary in effectiveness and there is poor monitoring of students' progress. One section records assignment grades on the college network giving a clear picture of students' progress that can be viewed by staff and students. Others have paper-based systems and some students are unclear of their progress. There is insufficient use of assessment to improve learning and an absence of a centrally organised recording system to monitor the progress of students. Only one centre has good progress records with regular reviews.

89. Some tutors have insufficient subject knowledge to set appropriate targets. Most internal verification practices are satisfactory and assignment briefs are checked by teaching teams before being issued. External verifier reports indicate some poor marking.

90. Links with industry are good. These help to widen participation and support the development of employment skills. Students are offered work experience, visit companies and benefit from the input of guest speakers. One firm sponsors equipment and offers valuable work placements. There is sponsored training for employees of one major employer. Two of the centres work in partnership with another provider and one centre is a pilot scheme for a major supermarket. The college provides an appropriate range of ICT courses to meet the needs of learners and local employers. However, most students are unaware of courses offered elsewhere in the college. Many part-time students progress to courses at a higher level in the centres but rarely progress to the main site. The college has links with specialist counsellors who visit the centres on a regular basis providing guidance about employment.

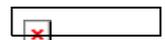
91. Support and guidance is good during lessons. Teachers provide effective support for students with additional needs, including giving help in their own free time. Marking of initial screening tests is sometimes too slow to be effective and there is inadequate initial assessment in some centres. Tutorials organised by a team of pastoral tutors provide a good opportunity to develop social and life skills but students do not value these. Part-time students in the centres are offered support sessions but these are not always taken up.

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

92. Management is unsatisfactory, although the five individual sections manage their own ICT courses satisfactorily. Quality assurance lacks rigour and consistency of implementation across the sections. There is poor communication between staff across centres, teachers are unaware of what other ICT courses are offered outside their centre and there is no sharing of good practice. Appraisals of staff have just been introduced and have not yet had an impact in the quality of teaching and learning. There is insufficient specialist staff-development.

93. The timetabling procedures are poor with inadequate cover for absent teachers, frequent room changes and some inappropriate allocation of rooms. ICT teachers are often not consulted about changes to software on the network and some application packages are poorly managed. The self-assessment report does not identify the most significant weaknesses and the development plan lacks targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and have time scales.

### **Hospitality, sport and recreation and travel**



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

***Strengths***

- high retention on levels 1 and 2
  
- high pass rates in sport
  
- well-planned and highly effective teaching and learning in travel and practical skills sessions
  
- strong industry links in sport and travel.

***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates in hospitality
  
- much unsatisfactory teaching of additional qualifications in sport and catering
  
- insufficient opportunity for catering students to enhance skills in a realistic work environment
  
- inadequate tutorial support
  
- ineffective use of in-class support to improve learning for students
  
- inadequate management and quality assurance.

***Scope of provision***

94. The hospitality, sports and travel studies department provides a small range of full-time and part-time courses. There are 44 full-time and 18 part-time students in the area. The largest part of the

provision is in hospitality with 20 full-time and 14 part-time students. Sport and travel have 24 full-time and 4 part-time students.

95. Hospitality courses are based on NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 food preparation and service awards. The sport course provides level 1 sports and recreation and travel at level 3 AVCE. There are a good range of additional qualifications including foundation hygiene, community sports leader award (CSLA), Duke of Edinburgh, YMCA fitness awards and ABTA travel agents certificate (ABTAC) and advanced ABTA tour operators certificate (ABTOC).

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

96. Retention rates are high on levels 1 and 2 catering and sport courses and well above national averages. There are consistently high pass rates in sport. However, pass rates are low on level 3 leisure and recreation and catering courses, and level 3 travel students have poor achievement relative to their prior attainment. Additional vocational qualification achievements are at, or above, the national averages with the exception of key skills, which has no achievements in the previous year and currently little evidence of in year attainment.

97. Standards of students' work in travel and sport are good. Students use IT effectively to present assignments and are able to use witness statements, photographs and audio recording of evidence for research. Students' oral skills are good. In one lesson students used a variety of resources such as brochures and tour guides to select information on a tourist destination and presented an effective description at a welcome meeting.

98. In sports and recreation, students' portfolios are well organised and presented. In another lesson, students correctly used muscle terminology to instruct clients on the importance of warming up exercises to prevent injury.

99. In catering, students' work is satisfactory but there is little use of additional evidence in portfolios such as photographs and recipes. In a kitchen restaurant production session students demonstrated good interpersonal skills in meeting and greeting customers and taking orders for food. The food production students demonstrated levels of attainment below that expected at this point in their programme; for example, one student asked for assistance in coring an apple. Progression from level to level, and to industry related jobs, is low, only 2 students in the past two years have progressed to HE. Attendance in lessons observed was 74% and below the national average.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sport and recreation and travel, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	11	16	11
		% retention	82	75	91
		% pass rate	67	83	60
NVQ sports recreation and allied occupations	1	No. of starts	10	10	14
		% retention	70	100	93
		% pass rate	14	100	85
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	23	12	14
		% retention	74	67	86
		% pass rate	82	63	67
NVQ sports recreation and allied occupations	2	No. of starts	*	42	11
		% retention	*	19	81
		% pass rate	*	100	100

AVCE double award travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	*	18	5
		% retention	*	56	100
		% pass rate	*	80	80
AVCE single award leisure and recreation	3	No. of starts	*	3	9
		% retention	*	33	67
		% pass rate	*	0	60

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

\*course did not run

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

100. In travel and in sport and catering practical skills lessons, highly effective teaching and learning meets individual students' needs. In an air ticketing session on the subject of open tickets, more able students were used effectively to support their fellow students and evaluate common mistakes. In the assistant trainers' circuit award, the link between theory and practice was effectively demonstrated by students in a cool-down stretching exercise. Catering students at three ability levels cooked the same dish with increasing levels of difficulty using a convenience sauce, a convenience stock, and then making the dish from scratch using complex ingredients.

101. A high proportion of teaching of additional qualifications in sport and catering is unsatisfactory. In a Duke of Edinburgh award session on planning an expedition, students were not effectively monitored by the support assistant and did not achieve their learning objectives. The lesson was poorly planned and lacked suitable challenge for the most able and support for those who needed assistance. In catering, most theory sessions have no identified realistic outcomes. For example, a group of students working together to plan the menu and design the posters for a St Patrick's Day event had achieved little the previous week and spent most of the time inappropriately discussing the type of music for the event. Poor use is made of support assistants in lessons to guide and monitor student learning. In one lesson students were not challenged by teaching staff on inappropriate images on their screen savers, which were projected on the interactive white board.

102. Resources are of a professional standard. All staff are well qualified with good vocational experience and they regularly up-date their competence by working in industry. Catering has good quality specialist facilities. However, there are few opportunities for catering students to develop their competence in the realistic work environment. Students only work in the restaurant on a three-weekly basis. There are an insufficient number of customers for students to experience realistic working experiences.

103. The assessment and monitoring of students' work is satisfactory. Regular assessment takes place and records of students' progress are up-to-date. However, key skills assessments are not sufficiently regular and do not enable students to obtain an accurate record of their achievements. Internal verification arrangements are planned and effective feedback is provided to students on their work.

104. Well established, strong partnerships in travel and sport effectively support students' practical skills development, provide good work experience and help students prepare for a commercial environment. Assessments for NVQ sport take place on work placements in local leisure centres. The requirements for the community sports leader award requirements are met through strong links with two schools. Travel students complete a work placement and visits to the world travel market and Birmingham airport. A major holiday company supports assignment work for the AVCE qualification. The range of provision in sport and travel is too narrow to enable students to progress to other courses. However, curriculum developments are taking place and are due to have an impact on the range of provision later in the year. There is an adequate range of additional vocational qualifications.

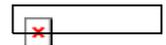
105. Students on catering and sport courses have identified appropriate learning goals and receive in-class learning support based on the needs identified in the initial assessment. However, the quality of the in-class support is poor. It does not take account of individual learning needs and records of students' achievement of their learning goals are not used as a basis for further learning. Tutorial support is inadequate. The process of target setting and action planning is insufficient to support short-term improvement: targets are not related to the overall progression of the students and do not support the achievement of qualifications.

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

106. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Quality assurance is inadequate. There is inadequate support for new staff, or staff in new roles, and insufficient staff awareness of issues of equality of opportunity. In catering there is a lack of curriculum planning to enable progression for all students and there are insufficient numbers of staff to teach the full curriculum. The course reviews lack rigour and the development plans lack targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and have appropriate time scales. The self-assessment report was insufficiently self-critical and failed to identify key weaknesses in the area.

107. Good practice in the curriculum is not effectively shared.

### **Beauty and holistic therapy**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most programmes
  
- good teaching and learning in theory lessons
  
- effective group tutorials
  
- good enrichment and additional qualifications.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- unsatisfactory retention rates on beauty therapy level 2
  
- inadequate resources

- insufficient take-up and support for literacy and numeracy needs
  
- unsatisfactory curriculum management.

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

108. The college offers a range of qualifications in beauty holistic therapies and beauty sciences. The beauty provision is situated at the main site in Newbury. There are two purpose-built beauty salons and a reception area. The section offers full-time and part-time programmes in beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3, and level 3 holistic therapy. There is also a full-time beauty science diploma. There are 105 full-time beauty therapy students and a further 218 studying a range of part-time qualifications in beauty therapy. Just 1% of students is male and none is of ethnic origin. 17 learners have been identified as having additional support needs. The college has good links with four local employers. The section works with local schools for disadvantaged learners.

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

109. There are improving pass rate on NVQ beauty therapy level 2. In 2002/03, the pass rate was 94% and above the national average of 89%. Beauty therapy level 3 has a high pass rate and a high retention rate. Part-time programmes in reflexology and holistic therapy have high pass rates over the last two years. The retention rate significantly fell on the beauty therapy level 2 course in 2003 and is low. Body massage has a retention rate above the national average. The diploma in advanced nail techniques has maintained high retention rates over the last two years.

110. Students' written work is of a good standard and most assignments are completed using a good standard of word processing skills. Students' practical work is less good. There is a lack of clients on which students can practice a variety of beauty treatments. Students do not get sufficient opportunity to develop the technical skills needed for the industry. Insufficient emphasis is given to ensuring that students' professional standards are at a level expected in the beauty industry. Dress code is not to the standard expected in the industry and there were bags and student belongings on and around the beauty beds, which gave the salons an unprofessional appearance.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in beauty and holistic therapy, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	22	29	27
		% retention	73	93	67
		% pass rate	75	89	94
Advanced nail treatments diploma	2	No. of starts	*	21	32
		% retention	*	100	97
		% pass rate	*	81	94
Indian head massage diploma (one year)	3	No. of starts	34	28	28
		% retention	79	93	81
		% pass rate	81	88	86
Indian head massage	3	No. of starts	**	23	20

diploma	% retention	**	87	85
	% pass rate	**	75	100

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

\*course did not run

\*\*fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

111. There is good or better teaching in theory lessons. In one lesson for beauty therapy level 3, the teacher used the interactive white board to engage students in a question and answer session on revision techniques on anatomy and physiology. The students worked productively in pairs using a hand-out for discussion. The teacher allowed time for the students to answer questions and all students participated actively in the discussion. The students were able to relate theory to their practical work. In a beauty science lesson the students were inspired by their teacher, who had planned a practical lesson on the research of lipsticks. The lesson was challenging and offered students the opportunity to investigate the chemical properties of a lipstick and how they could change the colour to suit their requirements. The students worked productively in small groups. They were able to analyse and evaluate their finished product. The students enjoyed this lesson and made progress beyond their expected learning outcomes. The majority of beauty therapy practical lessons were satisfactory. The lack of clients limits opportunities for students to develop commercial skills. In a practical class for NVQ level 2 the students worked in pairs on a variety of beauty treatments but there was only one client available. This is a regular occurrence in most of the practical lessons. The students carry out assessments on each other and do not have sufficiently wide experience of different skin types.

112. Resources are inadequate. The size of the beauty salons is inappropriate for the growing provision. Salons are overcrowded and can only accommodate eight students at a time. Group tutorials are taught in a science laboratory and one lesson on nail techniques was held in a theory classroom. There are good quality retail products for students to use and sell to clients. There is a part-time technician who observes and trains the students on reception skills but there is no technical cover for the second salon and for the evening classes. All teaching staff have appropriate and relevant teaching qualifications.

113. All students are informed of assessment requirements at induction. They are assessed on their practical skills on an individual basis. All students have an individual record, which is up-dated on a regular basis. There is regular internal verification and teachers and assessors meet to share good practice and standardize the quality of work. External verification reports are satisfactory. However, actions to improve students' professional standards have not been taken. Students' written work is not always fully evaluated and teachers do not give students sufficient information about their individual progress.

114. A good range of enrichment and additional qualifications are provided. Full-time students have the opportunity to attend college-organised trips to hairdressing and beauty shows and exhibitions. There is no level 1 for full-time beauty students who wish to progress onto higher level programmes in beauty; nor is this level available for pupils who wish to choose beauty for their options at key stage 4. The area works with young students on pathway programmes. However, there is no level 1 for these pupils and they are placed on level 2 qualifications, which they do not complete.

115. Group tutorials are effective and well planned. Students are offered good vocational and pastoral support and students have access to regular one-to-one tutorials with a learning adviser. However, learning advisers do not have vocational knowledge and this limits the vocational aspects of these sessions. All learners are offered a diagnostic assessment at induction and complete a learning styles questionnaire. There is good support for students with specific learning needs, including dyslexia, and students are able to obtain additional equipment and help to support their

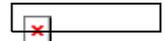
participation in lessons. However, there is insufficient support for literacy and numeracy needs. Individual learners can have one-to-one support out of the classroom but this is not always taken up. Where support is taken students make good progress and stay on their programme. Part-time students are not offered initial assessment although support is available, if requested.

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

116. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Action plans fail to set rigorous targets to ensure improvements in quality assurance. Lesson observations in the curriculum area have been insufficiently self-critical, particularly in judgements of practical teaching.

117. Data management is poor and not used sufficiently to monitor retention and pass rates. Students complain that room and timetable changes disrupt their studies. Key skills lessons and teaching staff have been changed on a regular basis. These have had a negative impact on students' motivation to complete their key skills. Staff development is good and the college effectively supports teachers to gain professional and additional qualifications.

### **Health and Social Care**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good retention and pass rates on counselling courses
  
- good link of theory and practice in childcare lessons
  
- good use of ICT in lessons
  
- good teamwork to implement improvement strategies.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- slow completion of NVQ
  
- poor completion on diploma in childcare
  
- poor planning and achievement of key skills

- o insufficient management of the curriculum.

### **Scope of provision**

118. There are 228 students in health social care and public services. Full time courses include the certificate and diploma in child care and education with 47 students, AVCE in health and social care with 16 students and the first diploma in public services with 15 students. The provision for care courses is limited with declining numbers on level 3 and there is no level 2. Part-time courses in early years include the levels 2 and 3 Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma in playwork. There are 101 students on NVQs and modern apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 in early years and care. Other provision includes the advanced diploma and certificate in counselling with 26 students and a range of short courses by distance learning on safe handling of medicines, infection control, effective personal development and other related topics.

### **Achievement and standards**

119. Retention and pass rates on counselling courses are high. Retention rates for the past 3 years have been on or above national averages. Pass rates have been 100%. AVCE students have high retention and pass rates on their main qualification with 100% pass rates in 2003 but no achievement of AS levels, which are an integral part of the course. Of the current AVCE cohort 30% passed an external assessment in January 2004. On the diploma in child care and education there have been declining retention rates, though in-year retention rate is 100%, and pass rates have declined by 20% to below the national average in 2003. There was no key skill achievement in 2003. NVQ students have made slow progress in completing their awards. Modern apprentices who started in September 2003 have completed one unit out of a possible four units. Standards of work are satisfactory in students' assignments and portfolios. Student displays in childcare are of a high standard combining colour, texture and practical skills. Attendance is satisfactory.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and public services, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	10	12	13*
		% retention	100	100	84
		% pass rates	90	92	100
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	**	4	9
		% retention	**	75	89
		% pass rate	**	100	100
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	15	5	18
		% retention	100	100	61
		% pass rate	93	80	64

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

\* college data

\*\*course did not run

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

120. Teaching is satisfactory, although the proportion of good or better grades are below the national average for teaching in this area. In childcare lessons good links are made between theory and practice. For example, students compared the application of the Childrens' Act to practice in their individual workplace. In the best lessons planning is good and identifies the needs of individual students. Weaker lessons lack structure and in a counselling lesson students were given little guidance to help them complete activities. Inappropriate comments by healthcare students went unchallenged. There is little integration of key skills and many opportunities are lost to meet key skill requirements. Key skill lessons are satisfactory but started late in the year and have yet to make close links with the core subjects. Many lessons incorporate a good range of relevant activities such as a simulated 'circle time' with the childcare students developing a story as experienced in primary school.

121. The use of ICT in lessons was particularly good. Public services students researched the driving theory examination and undertook an on-line assessment. Childcare students used a website to access activities for children which they analysed and linked to appropriate areas of learning within the national curriculum. Other ICT based activities included in-class use of laptops to produce leaflets for parents. Off-the-job training for NVQ students is satisfactory. College-based lessons effectively developed the students' knowledge and understanding. The lack of work-based assessors has led to limited training in the workplace and slow progress in undertaking observations of students.

122. Classrooms for the majority of lessons are good. However, lessons on communications and childcare were held in a physics laboratory. Resources for childcare are good. The learning resource centre has a satisfactory range of books and periodicals. A children's book corner provides a realistic setting for childcare students. However, there are few resources that specifically promote diversity. Staff are appropriately qualified vocationally, but the majority are very new to the college and to teaching. Some lack formal teaching or assessor qualifications. The number of internal verifiers and moderators is insufficient to meet demand. Additional experienced staff are employed on a part-time basis to provide support in course development and assessment.

123. Students undertake initial assessment and results are used in lesson planning. However, there is no formal initial assessment for part-time students and individual needs are only slowly identified. Written feedback to students is satisfactory. Lack of qualified internal verifiers has led to delays in returning assignments. Internal verification on public services is very thorough.

124. The public services course has a good range of additional qualifications, including the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme that incorporates canoeing, orienteering, cycling and overnight expeditions. The students are thoroughly planning the silver award expedition as a canoe trip down the Thames, staying overnight at camp sites. The college enrichment programme is not available to all students. Health care courses have declining numbers and no level 2 course. Links with local employers are satisfactory but are limited in their range. The public service course has a good range of visits with the uniformed services including the army, navy and Royal Air Force as well as the local police. Good sports facilities are available off site. Arrangements for work experience on childcare courses are satisfactory.

125. Support from student advisers is satisfactory. Advisers do not have full insight into placements or course content. The group tutorial session is centrally devised and addresses relevant topics. These do not refer to current areas of study in health and childcare and there is duplication and insufficient challenge on topics already studied, for example HIV/AIDS or smoking. Students' progress and attendance are regularly monitored. Full reviews are undertaken each term and reports shared with students, tutors and parents.

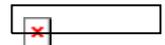
### ***Leadership and management***

126. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The curriculum area's self-assessment report lacks rigour in analysing data and setting targets. However, strategies have been recently implemented to improve retention and pass rates, and at the time of the inspection there were improvements mid-year in retention rates on childcare courses. These improvements are recent and have yet to be evaluated. The introduction of the certificate in child education has allowed more

careful placing of students on an appropriate level. Changes to the healthcare full-time offer are to be introduced to counter poor recruitment but there is little market research to support the decision.

127. Regular meetings are held for course and section teams but a lack of accurate and reliable data hampers detailed discussion and target setting. Standardisation is carried out regularly. The tutors in childcare, health and social care have all been recently appointed. New staff have not had a college induction programme. There is a heavy workload for full-time staff undertaking essential assessor and teaching qualifications as well as running and developing courses. Management of work-based learning is weak and NVQ completion rates are poor. Equality and diversity is implicitly but not overtly addressed. The area employs a visually impaired tutor but there are no Braille signs in the college and appropriate support is limited.

## Visual and performing arts



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

### **Strengths**

- high retention rates on AS-level fine art, foundation art and design, AS-level film studies and AVCE media
  
- good accommodation and resources
  
- good learning and personal support for students.

### **Weaknesses**

- low pass rates on AS-level media, AS-level fine art, national diploma performing arts and key skills
  
- poor standard of student work on full-time courses
  
- uninspiring teaching in art
  
- inadequate monitoring of student work on full-time courses

- o weak curriculum management.

### **Scope of provision**

128. There are 78 students on full-time courses in art, media and performing arts. AS levels and GCE A levels in art, film and media recruit well with 117 students. There are a small number of part-time students on art and craft courses. The range of courses is small and mainly recruits 16 to 18 year old students at level 3. Level 2 courses offered in previous years have failed to recruit sufficient numbers to run. Further expansion of level 2 courses is being planned.

### **Achievement and standards**

129. There is good a retention rate on AS-level fine art, national diploma foundation, AS-level film studies and AVCE media, although the retention rate on the national diploma in performing arts has deteriorated and is now well below the national average. Key skills are not assessed or monitored in art. No students passed the examination in media and performing arts last year. There is no reference to students' prior attainments in target setting or monitoring students' progress.

130. Attainment on the full-time art courses is low and students were unable to express themselves visually or verbally using appropriate language. Graphic students were unable to deal with visual communication in a creative manner.

131. Performing art students in the second year have underdeveloped skills, and cannot undertake activities that would normally be expected at this stage of the courses. There is a general lack of creative autonomy expected in the second year of study and students in both art and performing arts rely heavily on teachers to direct their activities. The standard of students' sketchbooks and portfolio work in art is generally unsophisticated and lacks originality. The standard of technical skills is low in photography, graphics and fashion. Part-time adult access work is good and students in the community work at an advanced standard in upholstery, floristry and machine embroidery. A part-time upholstery student has won a nationally offered medal for excellence.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
GCSE photography (art studies/fine arts)	2	No. of starts	7	21	31
		% retention	86	81	58
		% pass rate	67	88	89
City and Guilds progression award in photography	2	No. of starts	*	53	73
		% retention	*	79	75
		% pass rate	*	2	65
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	25	35	41
		% retention	96	86	80
		% pass rate	75	73	76
National diploma performing arts (aggregation of the national diplomas in dance, drama and technical theatre)	3	No. of starts	*	20	26
		% retention	*	95	38
		% pass rate	*	53	80

Diploma in foundation studies (art and design) one year	3	No. of starts	*	8	16
		% retention	*	100	94
		% pass rate	*	75	93

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

\*course did not run

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

132. There is good teaching on the part-time adult courses and on media. In a media lesson students were analysing media products using video, posters and adverts. The lesson was energetic and well planned and the teacher explained genre and narrative in an interesting and informative way. Teaching on full-time art courses is poor. Lessons are not planned, have little structure and questioning is not used to check students' understanding or to promote learning. Fashion is offered as a pathway, but the lack of a qualified fashion teacher has impoverished the student experience of the subject. There is a lack of observational drawing in students' work. Life drawing is only taught for one week. Students are not using drawing as a tool to explore ideas. Drama performance skills are not well developed either in improvised or scripted performances. Students do not use their voices well to project to an audience and do not develop tension and dramatic texture in their performances. However, students in dance work well together; they are supportive of each other and have good performance skills; they use good physical expression and work well in ensemble pieces. Students in both performing arts and visual art have not acquired some basic professional and academic practices. For example, some second-year students rely on the teacher to bring pens to a lesson, do not wear appropriate footwear for a dance and bring drinks into class. In a darkroom students were handling chemicals dangerously. Classes are generally small, group dynamics are limited and there is little sharing of ideas and practice.

133. Accommodation and resources are good. The art studios have flexible working spaces, good lighting and are well equipped although some are carpeted. The workshops for three-dimensional work, ceramics, and print are good but there are no facilities for fashion. There are good facilities for art and media and good use of IT in these areas. Resources are well used; in a performing arts lesson on acting in silent films, students were able to use a range of digital sound and video equipment to create a film and then watch the unedited films in order to evaluate their progress. Media students have access to good digital resources for audio and video work. The radio studio is well used and includes a weekly broadcast to the public spaces in the college. There is a lack of access to studios and workshops for students outside taught hours and some rooms are unavailable during exam time. There is a poor range of books in the library, with no books on fashion illustration and only a few books on interior design.

134. Monitoring of students' learning on full-time courses is poor. For example, in a photography class, 9 out of 11 students were working in the library on their projects but there was no indication in the lesson plan of their targets for the session. There are significant variations in the use and format of individual learning plans. Student's progress on the courses is monitored and targets are set for students. However, targets set by student advisers are general and do not contain completion dates, and subject staff are not involved in setting them. Students are not adequately familiarised with the requirements of the awarding body. Internal verification is effective on media and performing arts courses and students on performing arts courses receive comprehensive and constructive feedback. Students in GCE A-level and AS-level media and film do not receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Assessments are fair but there is no written feedback is given to students to help them improve their performance.

135. Students are encouraged to undertake relevant work experience. For example, some media students work at the local radio station and art students have undertaken a commission to provide artwork for a local restaurant. Art students were involved in a local art network 'artiste on the street 2003' and local artists are encouraged to exhibit their work in the college alongside students work. There are few links with schools and enrolment is low. There are few progression opportunities

between community and college courses.

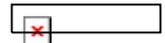
136. Students receive good support including personal support. Tutorial support provided by student advisers encourages students' motivation and monitors attendance. Students' individual needs are well catered for in performing arts. Support for students with learning difficulties is well integrated with the lessons.

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

137. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The management of the programme area is divided between two curriculum managers: the manager of visual arts, media and performing arts and the manager for the community. There is a lack of curriculum planning and target setting for staff. Actions identified in teaching observations are not monitored and staff development is not linked to the college's strategic objectives.

138. The community courses are satisfactorily managed, but there is no curriculum planning to identify progression opportunities. The art foundation course offers fashion as a pathway but there are no resources to teach it effectively. Minutes of team meetings and course reviews do not include effective action plans and they are not monitored effectively to assess their impact on the students' experience. No specific targets for retention and pass rates are set for the arts curriculum.

## **English, languages and humanities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates and high grades in AS-level English language and English literature, and GCE A-level English.
  
- rich and varied teaching activities in English and modern foreign languages
  
- good skill development in access to HE
  
- good resources to promote learning
  
- very effective curriculum support for individual students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor pass rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology
  
- poor retention rates in AS-level English, GCE A-level English language and literature and GCE A-level psychology
  
- inadequate monitoring of students' academic progress in psychology and sociology
  
- ineffective tutorial support for full-time students
  
- lack of rigour in self-assessment and quality assurance.

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

139. The English, language and communications department offers GCSE and GCE A-level and AS-level courses in English, modern foreign languages and Cambridge certificate courses for students whose first language is not English. The Cambridge certificate courses were not inspected because of the very small number of students involved. Humanities was included in the inspection of this area and awarded a contributory grade. There are currently 185 enrolments on English programmes, 174 in humanities and 138 on modern foreign languages. AS levels and GCE A levels are mainly studied by 16 to 18 year old full-time students. Provision in modern foreign languages is mainly at level 1 and level 2 and is taken up by adult learners studying part time in the evenings. GCSE courses are offered in Russian and Spanish. There is very little provision at level 3 in modern foreign languages. AS-level Spanish is offered but take up is very low. There are 20 students on an access to HE programme, 11 of whom are following the humanities and social science pathway.

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

140. There are high pass rates and high grades in AS-level English language, AS-level English literature and GCE A-level English literature. Student achievement is better than expected based on performance at GCSE. However, retention rates and progression from AS level to GCE A Level are poor and student numbers are low. Pass rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology are below national averages and there is poor progression from AS-level sociology to GCE A level. Recruitment on the access to HE course in humanities is in decline and there is poor progression into HE. In AS-level Spanish, pass rates are in line with national averages for those who complete the course. Students who complete the level 1 and 2 open college network (OCN) courses in modern foreign languages generally achieve the qualification. Key Skills achievement is poor. Attendance is below the national average.

141. Standards achieved in the lessons observed, in students' files and in their marked work are satisfactory or better. GCE A-level English students can analyse language and text effectively. Modern language students can understand and respond in the language they are learning with a good degree of accuracy, in speech and in writing.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	27	30	24
		% retention	65	77	67
		% pass rate	50	65	75
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	60	78	63
		% retention	77	67	83
		% pass rate	70	54	50
GCSE English literature	2	No. of starts	27	34	52
		% retention	70	53	79
		% pass rate	79	61	51
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	12	19	18
		% retention	67	74	67
		% pass rate	88	100	100
GCE A2 English language and literature (Evening adult one year)	3	No. of starts	*	16	17
		% retention	*	56	82
		% pass rate	*	89	93
Access to HE (humanities and social science)	3	No. of starts	33	41	27
		% retention	82	73	81
		% pass rate	89	67	68
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	19	22	23
		% retention	68	68	74
		% pass rate	69	73	94
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	22	26	33
		% retention	55	65	76
		% pass rate	33	76	68
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	20	18	25
		% retention	55	56	52
		% pass rate	36	60	69

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

\*course did not run

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

142. Teaching is generally satisfactory or better. In the most effective lessons, teachers share their enthusiasm for their subjects with the students. They use a wide range of methods and activities to stimulate learning. Lessons are carefully planned to meet students' needs. Students are encouraged to participate in discussion and are developing good oral skills in English and languages. Advanced level English students are developing the appropriate skills of literary criticism and most have good knowledge and understanding of their set texts. Language students and can use technical terminology to analyse language in different contexts. In an English lesson students successfully consolidated their knowledge and understanding of language frameworks, identifying key features of grammar, vocabulary and spoken English. Teachers use authentic and relevant language materials in languages to contextualise the learning and to create a cultural dimension. In an Italian class for

adult learners, the teacher used authentic street maps of Rome to practise asking and giving directions. Most teachers involve students fully in their learning through work in pairs or groups and individual research. Adult learners in languages are highly motivated. Many have business or social connections with the foreign country. They use their personal experience to underpin their learning in the classroom. In less effective lessons there is insufficient monitoring of students' progress. Explanations are not sufficiently clear and the pace of learning is slow. In GCE psychology, the range of teaching methods is too narrow. In humanities the key skills of AS-level and GCE A-level students are not being developed systematically and there is insufficient opportunity for students to gain accreditation.

143. Resources are good. Staff are well qualified subject specialists. Learning is enhanced through effective use of television, video, audio and visual resources. In a sociology lesson, students improved their understanding of theoretical perspectives through the analysis of photographic evidence. The learning resource centre has a good range of books and other materials to help students' learning. Many students make effective use of computers for research and coursework. Materials are shared by teachers and adapted to meet the needs of specific language teaching. There is a good variety of stimulating course related material on display. Students benefit from theatre visits, conferences and trips abroad.

144. Assessment procedures and practices are sound in English and languages but variable in humanities. In psychology and sociology there is a lack of detailed feedback to learners. In English and languages, work is marked regularly and returned promptly. In most cases there are helpful comments to enable students to improve the standard of their work. In humanities spelling, punctuation and grammar are not systematically corrected and moderation is unsatisfactory. In English and languages there is good assessment of knowledge and understanding in most lessons through effective question and answer and close monitoring of written work.

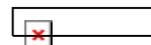
145. Alongside the range of English courses, accredited language provision is mainly at levels 1 and 2. For students whose first language is not English, the college offers a small programme of Cambridge Certificate courses at level 2 and 3. Many of the students are foreign language assistants in local schools. In humanities there is a narrow range of provision and limited choice of subjects for those aged 16 to 18. There are enrichment opportunities for students through theatre visits and conferences and a trip to Germany is planned for language students.

146. Individual academic support for full-time and part-time students in English and languages is good. Subject teachers help students with assignments or assessments. Support in humanities is unsatisfactory. There are no formal mechanisms to review progress and set targets in subject areas. In English and humanities there is insufficient liaison between subject tutors and student advisers to enable effective guidance and student placement on courses. While monitoring of individual progress at course level is satisfactory in English, tutorial support is not effective. Individual learning plans do not identify key strengths and weaknesses. Target setting and action planning is inadequate.

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

147. Leadership and management are good in modern foreign languages, satisfactory in English and unsatisfactory in humanities. Modern foreign languages work is managed effectively and efficiently. Part-time lecturers have good opportunities to engage in professional training. There is an effective system of lesson observation, which identifies key strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. Course review is adequate but targets are not sufficiently specific and measurable. There is, in addition, a lack of monitoring to assess progress. In English, teachers meet with the section manager to discuss and plan curriculum development. Course management is satisfactory but lack of managerial responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning has led to variable quality in the overall provision. Self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous. There is insufficient identification of strengths and weaknesses and a lack of effective strategy to bring about improvement. Quality assurance of tutorial provision and the monitoring of student progress are not sufficiently thorough. In humanities there is no thorough analysis of performance at course level. Failing courses are not sufficiently monitored and supported by managers. Team meetings do not focus on improving performance.

## **Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good achievement of individual learning goals
  
- good range of practical activities
  
- effective learning support assistants
  
- good relationships with external agencies to widen work opportunities.

### ***Weaknesses***

- lack of progression onto mainstream programmes
  
- inadequate access to specialist IT equipment
  
- little sharing of good practice.

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

148. The college offers a broad range of programmes for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Flexible attendance patterns provide programmes for students with severe, moderate and mild learning difficulties, and for disaffected young people. The college also provides 'Choices', a programme for students with mental health needs. There is a wide range of community venues. Students are able to undertake a period of work experience with an extensive range of local employers or in one of three supported work placements. Students' achievement is measured against individual learning targets identified as a result of an initial assessment. Students on foundation level programmes take external qualifications in life skills and work preparation.

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

149. Retention and pass rates are high across most programmes. In 2002/03, the retention and pass rates for the life skills college certificate were in excess of 90%. Learners make good progress on all programmes. Some 85% of learners from the life skills programmes progressed onto higher-level programmes within the provision. In 2003, 75% of students from the work preparation programme progressed onto higher-level programmes and 25% progressed into employment. However, there is a lack of progression onto main-stream programmes. None of the students from the foundation programmes infill into main-stream courses to undertake units or modules. A small number progress onto main-stream programmes.

150. Learners achieve challenging personal goals and good use is made of practical activities to develop personal and social skills. Punctuality and attendance are good and learners on all programmes are motivated to learn and do well. During the inspection the average attendance was 84%. The coursework on all programmes is of a good standard in relation to the students learning goals.

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

151. Teaching was satisfactory or better in most lessons. Materials are produced at a suitable level and there is a good range of practical activities. Many lessons are activity based and relate to the student's individual learning goals. Teachers are supportive and encourage the student to move at a pace that will help achieve their full potential. Students feel valued and supported. In the 'Choices' programme for students with mental health needs, teachers create an atmosphere that ensures the students feel confident to learn new skills and rediscover their self-esteem. In a tutorial students were encouraged to identify their personal strengths and qualities and prepare an action plan for career progression. In weaker lessons teachers failed to involve the students in the work and there was little development of their skills.

152. Most schemes of work demonstrate good differentiation of learning tasks to take account of the differing needs of students and clearly identify the role of learning support assistants during class activities. Detailed lesson plans record individual learning methods for all students. In a life skills session activity sheets were at three different levels of ability and linked to practical work and assessment of the module. This practice enables all students to participate at an appropriate level of ability.

153. Access to specialist IT is inadequate. The lack of touch screens, large keyboards and other specialist equipment restricts students' progress. Although most students are encouraged to use existing IT equipment to develop their communication and motor skills, tasks are often completed by staff as students are unable to manually operate the equipment. Accommodation is of good quality and includes specialist facilities for personal care. Practical facilities enable students to experience realistic life skills in preparation for work or independent living.

154. Initial assessment determines the level and suitability of the programme and forms the basis of the student's individual learning plan. Comprehensive individual learning plans identify student targets and in most lessons form the basis for learning and clearly identify the resources to be used. All learning plans are realistic and challenging. Individual learning plans for all students are regularly reviewed by teachers, learning support assistants, students and other relevant agencies.

155. Learning support assistants provide lecturers with invaluable help in lessons. All programmes in foundation, 'Choices' and life skills have learning support assistants. There are good links between teaching staff and the assistants. Support assistants attend staff meetings and take an active part in recording and reviewing the students' learning goals. Learning support assistants are well managed and effectively deployed. The post of learning support mentor has increased the effectiveness of the provision. Students speak highly of the support they receive. All learning support assistants have considerable practicable experience of working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

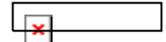
156. Good relationships with external agencies widen work opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good links with a large number of employers provide realistic work

placements for students on foundation-level programmes. The college and employers work together to provide a safe and supportive environment and closely monitor the experience of students. A number of projects provide sheltered work experience for students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities and bridge the gap between college and supported open work placements.

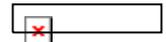
### ***Leadership and management***

157. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Tutors work well together and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to student success and achievement. Both academic and support staff attend regular team meetings and student reviews. Data are discussed at team meetings but there is little analysis to identify trends and use the data to improve the learning experience. The sharing of good practice is limited to informal links. There is little exchange of ideas and good practice in the curriculum area, to promote more effective practice across the whole college. Teaching staff have a wide range of experience and skills in their work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These are not sufficiently used across the college and, in particular, have not been used effectively in the college's response to SENDA and the Skills for Life agenda.

### **Literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and entry to employment**



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



### ***Strengths***

- good teaching to meet individual learning needs
  
- particularly good support for students to overcome barriers to learning on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses
  
- very good teamwork in literacy, numeracy and ESOL to widen participation.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low take-up of literacy and numeracy support
  
- unsatisfactory management of cross college literacy, numeracy and language support

- o inadequate E2E programme.

### **Scope of provision**

158. The essential skills section has responsibility for courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, basic computer skills for basic skills students, basic skills for work delivered at the workplace and basic skills in the community. Courses take place in a range of community settings including church halls, schools and a scout hut. The section also manages cross-college literacy, numeracy and language provision at entry level, level 1 and additional support. The E2E programme currently has eight students developing job skills, literacy, numeracy, IT, cooking and vocational skills. There are currently 294 students on these courses. Most courses are short and enable students to join at any time during the day and evening. The additional needs of students in vocational areas are supported through one-to-one sessions or through in-class support, by support tutors or learning support assistants. All full-time and many part-time students are screened on entry to identify basic skills needs.

### **Achievement and standards**

159. In literacy, numeracy and ESOL, retention and pass rates in 2001 and 2002 were low. There has been an improvement in the numbers of students entered for externally accredited courses such as the certificate in adult literacy and numeracy. There has been a significant improvement in retention and pass rates on these accredited programmes. Most students make good progress in achieving the learning goals identified in their individual learning plans. Goals are linked to realistic and achievable short-term targets. For example, in ESOL, entry-level students are able to achieve short-term goals, such as recognising and responding to simple greetings, giving personal information and recognising and understanding social signs. However, a minority of targets are too general.

160. Students' portfolios and working files are of a good standard. Students develop confidence and gain a broad range of study, conversational and presentation skills. Students are well motivated and participate actively during lessons. Attendance of students in basic skills classes during inspection was satisfactory at 69%.

161. On the E2E programme, retention and progression rates to employment, FE and training are unsatisfactory. Of the 27 learners starting the programme, only two have progressed to employment or FE and 17 have left without a positive outcome. Poor attendance at most lessons limits group work and students' progress.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
City and Guilds certificate in adult literacy	E and levels 1 and 2	No. of starts	*	6	42
		% retention	*	100	88
		% pass rate	*	83	86
City and Guilds certificate in adult numeracy	E and levels 1 and 2	No. of starts	*	10	28
		% retention	*	90	99
		% pass rate	*	83	96
City and Guilds	E and level	No. of starts	15	3	*

(numberpower)		% pass rate	7	100	*
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

\*course did not run

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

162. Most teaching and learning is satisfactory or better. The best sessions are well planned, clearly linked to the national standards and identify individual and group learning targets.

163. Learning is well managed and mentors and volunteers work effectively with individual students. Teachers take good account of a wide range of abilities and different learning styles and learning materials are usually relevant to students' needs and interests. In an ESOL lesson, grocery product packaging was used in a realistic way to develop language skills for every day life. In the weaker lessons, tutors are over-dependent on using worksheets for skills development and do not create enough opportunities for students to practise the skills in meaningful, everyday contexts. In a few lessons, students were not sufficiently challenged, nor were other students able to understand the requirements of the planned activity. In a few lessons, some students were over-dependent on volunteers for help with tasks and were not encouraged to develop independent learning skills.

164. Classrooms at the college are well furnished and equipped with a range of ICT teaching aids but few were observed in use. In community settings, laptop computers are used effectively to support development of literacy and numeracy skills. Some community locations are cramped and not suitable for learning. Mentors working in such locations are provided with a kit of basic resources for their personal use. The lack of a base room for E2E students and frequent moves throughout the day disrupt learning, attendance and retention rates. IT and digital resources are used effectively in E2E to help learning.

165. Most teaching staff have suitable general teaching qualifications. Two tutors have gained the specialist level 4 literacy qualification. The section actively recruits volunteer tutors to provide support in literacy and numeracy courses. ESOL staff lack specialist qualifications and currently there is no accredited training programme available for staff.

166. The variety of screening, initial and diagnostic tools has an impact on the consistency of students' experience of literacy and numeracy support. However, generally, following an initial assessment, teachers effectively use diagnostic assessment over a number of sessions, to negotiate the individual learning plan and target setting. In ESOL, initial assessment is satisfactory. Regular assessment is recorded and used to support monitoring and evaluation of progress.

167. Literacy and numeracy teachers sample work regularly to moderate standards and most students' written work is regularly marked with constructive comments on how to improve. However, in some cases lessons feedback is not written at all or is minimal. In ESOL some written feedback lacks sufficient detail to enable learners to make improvements.

168. The college provides a wide range of courses in community locations and in workplaces. However, there is little provision to meet specific needs and the computer courses offered do not integrate literacy and numeracy within lessons. There are few links between courses and vocational programmes at the college. There are few opportunities for students from ESOL courses to progress onto higher levels. There is inadequate access for E2E students to vocational options across the college and students are not able to develop employability and vocationally relevant skills. Only two of the current students have placements.

169. There is particularly good individual support for students in literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Many students have experienced significant barriers to learning. In one lesson there were four students with varying additional needs including dyslexia, autistic spectrum and epilepsy; a volunteer and a learning support assistant worked alongside the teacher to ensure that good support

helped students to meet their individual needs. The 'Basics across the Board' project provides one-to-one mentoring for students who find access to any provision difficult. Students appreciate the support they are offered by volunteers and teachers.

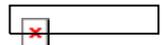
170. There is very low take-up of literacy and numeracy support in vocational areas across the college. Of 850 students on college courses screened for literacy and numeracy needs, 279 were identified with support needs. Only 78 have taken up the support. Some students, although identified through screening, have only taken up the support several months after starting their course.

**Leadership and management**

171. Leadership and management of cross-college literacy, numeracy and ESOL support are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of basic skills support within vocational courses. Learning support assistant in classes do not specifically support students' literacy and numeracy needs on vocational courses. The college has yet to develop a coherent basic skills strategy. There is insufficient management of the new E2E programme, poor planning, an inappropriate curriculum and low retention rates and progression rates for students.

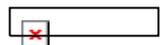
172. Leadership and management of literacy, numeracy and ESOL are good and based on very effective teamwork. Good practice is shared at meetings and staff development sessions. Part-time staff, mentors and volunteers, including those who work in community centres, feel well supported and informed. In ESOL there is an energetic response to the mentoring of new part-time staff during their first and second year of teaching. The team has developed externally funded projects to develop workplace provision and widen participation alongside developing staff capacity for this work.

**Part D: College data**



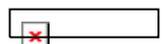
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03**

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	33	22
2	34	20
3	20	7
4/5	0	1
Other	13	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



*Source: provided by the college in spring 2004*

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



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	421	258	3
Land-based provision	23	545	3
Construction	22	168	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	305	538	4
Business administration, management and professional	224	773	5
Information and communication technology	449	3,331	17
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	79	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	222	2,176	11
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	410	550	4
Health, social care and public services	262	1,017	6
Visual and performing arts and media	322	4,298	20
Humanities	162	428	3
English, languages and communication	521	2,187	12
Foundation programmes	484	1,938	11
Others/Unknown	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,827</b>	<b>18,286</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the college in 2004

**Table 3: Retention and pass rates**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	301	349	325	2,266	2,137	2,159
	Retention rate %	76	78	87	69	83	82
	National average %	75	76	76	69	70	70
	Pass rate %	71	63	76	70	83	94
	National average %	69	71	71	68	71	71

<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	433	503	622	1,455	2,631	1,909
	Retention rate %	70	61	65	55	34	56
	National average %	70	72	72	68	68	68
	Pass rate %	59	68	72	68	84	85
	National average %	69	71	71	68	72	72
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	537	543	549	833	891	751
	Retention rate %	65	71	74	75	66	77
	National average %	71	77	77	68	70	70
	Pass rate %	62	69	73	65	71	83
	National average %	77	79	79	69	72	72
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	139	111	127
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	86	91	87
	National average %	**	**	**	67	67	67
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	47	64	73
	National average %	**	**	**	55	56	56

*Note: summary of retention and pass rates for the last three years by age and level of course, compared with 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 Pass Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

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

\* fewer than 15 students enrolled

\*\* data unavailable

**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)	24	10	3	75
Level 2 (intermediate)	13	8	3	48
Level 1 (foundation)	18	8	3	61

Other sessions	6	3	1	20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>204</b>

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