



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

South Cheshire College

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Basic information about the college

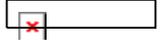


Name of college:	South Cheshire College
Type of college:	General further education / tertiary
Principal:	David Collins
Address of college:	Dane Bank Avenue Crewe Cheshire CW2 8AB
Telephone number:	01270 654 654
Fax number:	01270 651 515
Chair of governors:	Ken Lea
Unique reference number:	130619
Name of reporting inspector:	Ruth James

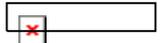
Dates of inspection:

2-13 February 2004

Part A: Summary



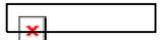
Information about the college



South Cheshire College is a tertiary college. It is located on a single campus situated in a residential area about one and a half miles from Crewe. The college is the sole provider of post-16 education in Crewe. In addition, it attracts students from throughout South and East Cheshire, notably Nantwich, Alsager, Middlewich, Sandbach and Congleton. The college also provides courses for adults throughout South Cheshire at a range of centres, including high street locations in Middlewich and Congleton. The college serves an immediate population of 112,000 in the local borough, which has a low unemployment rate. Crewe is an industrial and commercial centre with a strong manufacturing tradition in motor vehicles and rail engineering. Nantwich has a history of agricultural economy, but in recent years has diversified into high technology and service industries. The college offers courses in 12 of the 14 areas of learning funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Business administration, management and professional; information and communications technology (ICT); hospitality, sports, leisure and tourism; visual and performing arts and media; and humanities, are the largest areas. In 2001/02, there were 11,240 students on roll. Of these, 2,629 were aged 16 to 18 and 8,611 were aged 19 and over. Some 80% of students aged 16 to 18 and 11% of adult students were full time. Within the cohort of students aged 16 to 18, 49% of students were male and 51% female. Amongst adult students, 33% were male and 67% female. Approximately 1% of the student population were known to be of minority ethnic origin.

The college mission is: 'South Cheshire College promotes quality teaching and learning in a supportive environment. It aims to respond flexibly to the educational and training needs of its communities, anticipating, identifying and satisfying the needs efficiently and effectively.'

How effective is the college?



The quality of education and training was judged to be outstanding in ten of the inspected areas of learning; in three areas it was judged to be good. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- outstanding leadership

- excellent teaching and learning

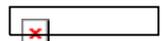
- high pass rates
- high retention rates for most courses
- very good accommodation and equipment in most curriculum areas
- outstanding support for students
- outstanding provision in the majority of curriculum areas
- wide range of enrichment opportunities
- good curriculum management
- excellent governance.

What should be improved

- retention rates on a minority of courses
- the impact of information and learning technology (ILT) on teaching and learning in some areas.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

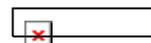


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. Physics contributory grade: outstanding . Retention rates for advanced subsidiary level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A-level) courses are high, but for vocational science courses, some retention rates are low. Pass rates for GCE A-level courses are high. There is much good and very good teaching and learning. Resources are good. Individual students' needs are well supported.
Construction	Good. Pass rates for most courses are high. There is much good and very good teaching, and students' written and practical work are of a high standard. Support for students is particularly good. Workshops are of high quality, but some classrooms are unsatisfactory. Some retention rates are low. Attendance is poor.
Engineering	Outstanding. Pass rates are high. Retention rates for a minority of courses are low. There is much good and very good teaching and learning, and students' skills development is good. Resources and ILT are used well. Support for students is excellent and curriculum management is effective.
Business	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates on most courses are high. There is much good and very good teaching. Support for students is very good. High-quality learning resources are used well. Course management is effective. Feedback on students' work is not sufficiently detailed.
Information and communications technology	Outstanding. There are high pass and retention rates for most courses. Much teaching and learning are very good or outstanding. Resources are excellent and support for students is very good. A wide range of courses is offered which matches local needs. The virtual learning environment is underdeveloped.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates for most courses are high. There is much very good and outstanding teaching. ILT is used innovatively, and specialist resources are excellent. Students are very well supported and progress is monitored rigorously. Retention rates are low for national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 catering.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Pass rates for many courses are high but retention rates are low for a minority of courses. Much teaching is good and students' written work is of a high standard. There are good first step learning opportunities. In many lessons, teaching is undemanding. There is insufficient attention to professional practice in salons.
Health, social care and public services	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are outstanding. Teaching is very good and key skills are developed effectively. Information technology (IT) is used well to develop students' confidence. Individual support is very good. Curriculum leadership is strong and effective.
Visual and performing arts and media	Outstanding. Pass rates are high for most courses. Teaching is very good. Practical work for media and performing arts is excellent. Resources are very good for performing arts, media and music. Support for students is excellent and curriculum management is

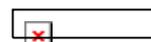
	particularly effective. There is too little emphasis on underpinning skills in design work.
Humanities	Outstanding. There are high pass and retention rates for most courses. Access to higher education (HE) courses for adults are successful. Much teaching is very good and outstanding, and the standard of students' work is high. Many resources are good and used well in teaching, but there is insufficient use of IT. Assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are particularly effective.
English and modern foreign languages	Outstanding. Modern foreign languages contributory grade: good. There are very high pass rates for the majority of courses. Most teaching is good or better, and there is very good development of analytical skills. Assessment is very effective in supporting students' progress. There are insufficient resources for modern foreign languages, restricting learning opportunities.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities	Outstanding. Students' achievements through vocationally based practical activities are excellent. Teaching is excellent and the curriculum is well structured. There are very good progression routes to employment. Management is excellent. Support for students is outstanding. Some accommodation for community-based courses is unsuitable.
Literacy and numeracy	Outstanding. Adult literacy and numeracy contributory grade: good. There is much good and very good teaching and learning in key skills, and pass rates for key skills are high. Literacy and numeracy support for students on full-time courses is outstanding. There is a broad range of adult provision in the community, but some aspects of its management and quality assurance are weak.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. Pass rates are high and at many levels are in the top 10% of colleges of a similar type. Most retention rates are also high. Teaching and learning are excellent. Almost 50% of lessons feature very good and outstanding teaching. Leadership is inspiring and staff are highly motivated and well informed. Curriculum management is very good. Governance is excellent. Governors, senior management and college managers monitor performance very closely. Strategic planning is linked to national, regional and local priorities. Extensive links with the local community, employers and schools are in place. Quality assurance and self-assessment are rigorous and effective. Financial management is very good and the college is in a strong position. The college provides excellent value for money.

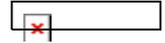
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college provides a welcoming and very supportive environment. There is a wide range of courses both on the main campus and within the community which meets most local needs. Access for people with restricted mobility is good. Excellent teaching and support enable many students from under-represented groups to succeed. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is

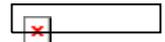
minority ethnic heritage is similar to that in the local population. Progress on meeting the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) is well advanced. All staff have received training. Some statistical analyses of equal opportunities data are undertaken and followed up.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is outstanding. Staff have created a culture which values support, and it is provided sensitively and unobtrusively. The range of services available is excellent. Very good information, advice and guidance are provided to ensure that students choose appropriate courses. Induction is well planned and effective. There is a thorough and accurate assessment of students' additional support needs. Excellent additional learning support is provided by learning support staff with a wide range of specialist skills. Support arrangements for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly effective. Careers guidance and advice on HE are comprehensive. Tutorial arrangements are very good and include group tutorials and individual reviews. Attendance and punctuality are monitored closely. Part-time students have access to a help desk in the evenings. Teachers provide much informal support both in and out of lessons.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- helpful, friendly, supportive teachers

- very good teaching

- good, sociable and adult atmosphere

- financial incentives to promote attendance

- excellent individual support

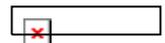
- very good facilities and resources

- good library
- excellent careers guidance, counselling and welfare services
- good access to computers.

What they feel could be improved

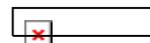
- teaching rooms, which are overheated
- high food prices, lack of healthy options and limited evening opening in food outlets
- insufficient social and recreational facilities
- the college requirements that AS-level students should study four subjects
- the high number of staff changes on some construction courses
- lack of lockers for storage.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



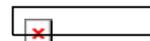
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	82	16	2
19+ and WBL*	89	11	0
Learning 16-18	80	18	2
19+ and WBL*	87	13	0

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

* work-based learning

Achievement and standards



16 to 18 year olds

1. During 2002/03, 91% of the 5,495 enrolments for students aged 16 to 18 were on long courses. Of these, 17% were at level 1, 20% at level 2 and 59% at level 3. At level 3, for long courses, overall retention rates are high. They were well above national averages in 2001 and 2002, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges, and were high again in 2003. Pass rates are also high. They have been at least 10% above national averages for each of the three years to 2002, placing the college in the top 10% of similar colleges for all three years, and were high again in 2003. At level 2, retention rates were broadly in line with national averages from 2001 to 2003 and pass rates were high. In 2002, the pass rate was 12% above the national average, placing the college in the top 10% of colleges. The pass rate improved further in 2003. At level 1, retention rates are broadly in line with national averages. Pass rates improved between 2001 and 2002 to well above national averages and the college was in the top 25% of colleges for level 1 pass rates in 2002. The pass rate fell by 6% in 2003, but remained above the national average. For short courses, retention rates were low in 2002 and 2003. Pass rates improved to well above national averages between 2001 and 2002, and rose by 13% in 2003 to 91%.

2. At AS level and GCE A level, both retention rates and pass rates are high and are consistently above national averages. For example, in 2001 and 2002, the overall pass rates were 11% and 9% above national averages, respectively, and retention rates were 6% above national averages. Data which compare students' attainment at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) with their performance at GCE A level show that, overall, GCE A-level students' achievements are in line with or better than would be expected on the basis of their GCSE grades. For individual subjects at GCE

A level, students achieve higher grades than would be expected in English language, business studies and ICT. For vocational courses, most overall pass and retention rates are high. Pass rates for key skills qualifications are high. For example, in 2003, almost all pass rates for communications, application of number and IT at all levels were at least 30% above the national averages.

3. Attendance during the inspection was 81%, which is just above the average for students aged 16 to 18 for similar colleges in 2002/03. Attendance is particularly high in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attendance in construction is low. Progression to further education (FE), HE and to employment is good.

4. Students are well motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their studies. The quality of their written work and practical skills is good. Students are attentive and participate effectively in group work and class discussions. In science, students develop good skills in logging data. The standard of students' practical brickwork in construction is high. Brickwork students have gained places in the top three in national competitions for many years, and some have represented the country in international competitions. Engineering students develop good practical workshop skills. Business students are confident in the use of business terminology. Advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) students discuss consumer protection law with confidence and apply it to topical cases. AS-level business students link theories of motivation to practical examples from their part-time jobs. ICT students make good progress and apply their newly acquired knowledge successfully. They demonstrate a range of good practical skills. Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel students acquire good research skills and develop communication, IT and numeracy skills, as well as relevant vocational skills. Health and social care students can use complex concepts and technical language in class discussion. Students' work in media and performing arts is excellent. Media students produce innovative and very technically accomplished films, including an excellent feature film. Students on drama courses have well-developed acting skills. Sociology students are able to apply different sociological theories appropriately. Humanities students ask perceptive questions and are keen to challenge traditional views and concepts. They develop presentation skills using software and poster presentations. Modern foreign languages students' written work demonstrates good use of idiom and the ability to use complex grammar with accuracy. Spanish students analyse the structure of the language and use this to help them to translate into fluent English. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities gain good practical skills for employment in catering, joinery, painting and decorating, brickwork and plastering. Students attending additional support lessons make very good improvements in social skills and personal skills as well as achieving well in literacy and numeracy.

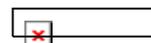
Adult learners

5. During 2002/03, 56% of the 8,816 enrolments for adult students were on short courses. Of the 3,918 enrolments for long courses, 36% were at level 1, 34% at level 2 and 21% at level 3. For short courses, retention rates are generally in line with national averages. The pass rate rose in 2003 to a high figure of 95%. The pass rate in 2002 was also well above the national average. For long level 1 courses, retention rates were high in 2001 and 2002, placing the college in the top 25% of similar colleges in 2001 and the top 10% in 2002. The retention rate fell by 7% in 2003, but remained well above the national average. Pass rates are also consistently high. They were well above national averages in 2001 and 2002, and rose by 14% in 2003 to 20% above the national average. At level 2, retention rates are high. They were well above national averages from 2001 to 2003, placing the college in the top 25% of colleges in 2001 and 2002. Pass rates rose significantly in 2002 and 2003 to well above national averages. For level 3 long courses, the overall retention rate was in line with national average in 2002 and rose by 6% in 2003. Pass rates are consistently well above national averages. In 2002, the college was in the top 10% of colleges and the pass rate rose by 5% in 2003. Progression from access courses to HE is very good, and many part-time students progress to higher level courses within the college. Overall attendance, at 81%, is higher than that typically found for adult students in similar colleges. Attendance is particularly high in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attendance is low in construction and English and modern foreign languages.

6. Students work with enthusiasm and confidence in lessons and acquire sound theoretical knowledge and practical skills. In interior design, students produce good colour notebooks. Adult

literacy and numeracy students gain in confidence and self-esteem, as well as developing specific skills including spelling skills. Students on a website development course develop home pages, showing flair as well as technical competence. Creative writing students evaluate one another's poems and discuss the value of critical analysis.

Quality of education and training



7. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 264 lessons. Teaching and learning are excellent. For the college as a whole, 84% of observed lessons have good or better teaching and 82% have good or better learning. Almost half of the lessons are very good or outstanding and 12% are outstanding. All these figures are significantly better than the overall figures found by inspectors in colleges in 2002/03. In nine of the thirteen areas inspected, at least 80% of lessons have good or better teaching. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in ten of the thirteen curriculum areas. The highest proportions of very good and outstanding teaching are found in ICT; hospitality, sports, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; humanities; provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities; and literacy and numeracy. In all six areas, at least 50% of lessons have very good or outstanding teaching.

8. The teaching of adult students is slightly better than that of students aged 16 to 18. Overall, 89% of adult lessons feature good or better teaching and none have unsatisfactory teaching, compared with 82% having good or better teaching and 2% unsatisfactory teaching for students aged 16 to 18. For the college as a whole, a lower proportion of lessons at level 1 have good or better teaching compared with other levels, but this proportion is still well above that found nationally for level 1 teaching in colleges. Practical and mixed practical and theory lessons are better taught than theory lessons, but all include much good and very good teaching.

9. Teachers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and have high expectations of their students. The best teaching inspires students by engaging their full attention in exciting and productive learning. Students are lively, confident and responsive. They work well on their own and collaboratively. Teachers create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. They explain concepts and theories clearly. Lessons are well structured with clear objectives. Teachers successfully use a range of teaching methods to engage students and maintain pace and concentration. Teaching and learning build on students' prior knowledge, and teachers provide purpose and direction. Structured activities provide opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills and understanding. Probing and targeted questions are used very well to encourage good participation and to help students to develop ideas and skills. Learning is constantly checked and summarised well at the end of lessons. Many lessons contain specific strategies for differentiation. Extension exercises are provided for the more able students and extra support for the less able. Teachers provide challenges that enhance students' confidence, giving them a positive attitude towards their work. On vocational courses, teachers are adept at organising practical activities to enable students to develop their skills and competence quickly. Teachers generally make good use of data projectors and presentation software, which are used extensively and, in some instances, imaginatively. In some areas, teachers fail to exploit wider opportunities for incorporating IT in their teaching. A few lessons do not sufficiently challenge more able students or provide sufficient opportunities for developing higher level skills, such as evaluative skills.

10. Teaching staff are very well qualified and experienced. All have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. The college gives professional development a high priority and staff training is explicitly linked to the college's strategic plan. New staff are allocated a mentor and are well supported through a rigorous induction programme. Technical support staff are experienced and provide a very good service. The buildings are well maintained and most accommodation is of a high standard, providing a very good educational environment. Rooms are grouped into distinct specialist subject areas. The college has created a 'student street' which provides an excellent range of facilities for students in an adult atmosphere. Students' artwork and eye-catching photographs of

students are displayed throughout the college and contribute to a welcoming learning environment. Students with restricted mobility can access almost all areas of the college, and where there are restrictions, managers ensure that students can study their chosen subject elsewhere in the building. A few teaching rooms, especially in construction, are small, restricting the range of learning activities. Accommodation at some community venues is poor and does not provide a good learning environment. There is no kiln in one community venue where a pottery class is held.

Accommodation and resources at the Petty Pool site are very good and provide a high-quality learning environment for vulnerable students. Specialist resources are very good in most curriculum areas. Desks in health and social care classrooms are equipped with integrated computers to enable a wide range of activities to take place. Specialist resources in catering and media are very good. Some aspects of the resources in hairdressing and beauty therapy are unsatisfactory; for example, there are insufficient couches in beauty salons. The library has a wide range of texts, audio-visual resources and periodicals. There are sufficient study spaces for quiet study or group work. Up-to-date assistive technology is used very effectively to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, maximising their independence. IT resources are very good. Students have good access to reliable, networked computers throughout the college: in classrooms, in the main learning resources centre and in satellite learning resource centres located within curriculum areas. Most classrooms are equipped with digital projectors, televisions and overhead projectors, and a few rooms have electronic whiteboards. In some areas, for example, engineering and science, teachers make imaginative use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning. However, in other areas, the use of ILT is underdeveloped and has little impact on learning. The college has recently invested in a virtual learning environment. Limited progress has been made in developing this to provide wider learning opportunities for students.

11. Assessments are well planned, rigorously applied and fair. Students are well informed about the nature and timing of assessment. Assignments are clear and unambiguous. They contain information on grading and identify key skills opportunities. Most marked assignments are annotated with useful comments which help students to improve. Recording and monitoring of students' progress are thorough and effective in most areas. The progression of students from AS level to GCE A level is monitored within subjects, but there is insufficient analysis of overall progression. Individual learning plans are used well to guide students in their studies and to keep them fully informed and focused on their progress. Realistic and challenging targets are set and individual progress is monitored regularly and reviewed by both subject teachers and personal tutors. Students have a clear understanding of their targets and their current performance. Initial assessment on entry is comprehensive and effective in identifying students' literacy and numeracy needs. The results of initial assessment are used to plan individual additional support. Further diagnostic assessments are used effectively in planning teaching and learning within some curriculum areas. In most areas, internal verification is well managed and effective. There is a clear and comprehensive college policy. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are well informed about their sons' and daughters' progress through reports, parents' evenings and contact by letter or telephone.

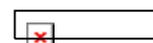
12. The college offers a very wide range of courses, which meets local needs. Courses are available from entry level or level 1 to level 3 in many areas, and there are very good progression opportunities. In a small number of curriculum areas, gaps in provision restrict opportunities. For example, there is no level 1 provision in travel and tourism. No work-based programmes are offered but the college works in partnership with a local training provider, based on the college campus, to ensure that local work-based training needs are met. Management of key skills is good and is well co-ordinated across curriculum areas. Most students have the opportunity to take a key skills qualification alongside their main programme of study. All AS-level, GCE A-level and AVCE courses are expected to provide opportunities to enable students to develop skills of either communication or application of number within their schemes of work. On many courses, good opportunities are provided to develop these skills, but on a minority of courses, the promotion of key skills is given insufficient priority.

13. The college has very good collaboration and partnership arrangements with local schools, local and national employers and the wider community. The schools liaison programme is comprehensive and is modified to suit the needs of individual school circumstances. There are innovative community and employer projects aimed at adults with learning difficulties who would normally find it difficult to re-engage with any form of learning. The training needs of local employers are well met. A well-established and highly successful annual 'primary' college gives young pupils an opportunity to

sample a range of activities. A 'secondary' college provides similar opportunities for older pupils. However, opportunities to further extend vocational opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 are underdeveloped. Students benefit from an extensive range of enrichment activities including external residential visits covering personal, academic and social issues, representative sport, keep fit, creative arts and many aspects of IT. The enrichment programme is flexible and enables students to pursue activities at times which fit around their timetabled lessons. All faculties have an external industry consultant and a senior lecturer for external liaison.

14. Support for students is outstanding. Staff have created a culture which values support and it is provided sensitively and unobtrusively. The range of services available is excellent and includes welfare and financial advice, a counselling service, health advice, careers and HE guidance, financial support and subsidised travel. Systems for providing financial support are supplemented by an 'earn as you learn' scheme providing part-time jobs in college. Career events, taster courses, open evenings and very high-quality publicity materials, both printed and electronic, provide information about courses and all aspects of college life. Good, impartial advice and guidance are provided at interviews and enrolment. Induction is well planned and effective in introducing students both to the college and to their chosen course. There is a thorough and accurate assessment of students' additional support needs. Excellent additional learning support is provided by learning support staff with a wide range of specialist skills. Additional learning support and a wide range of assistive technology are available to students in the learning resources centre. Support is provided both in lessons and through study skills workshops. Staff have clear responsibilities and very good working relationships both within college and with external agencies. There is good access to a wide range of state of the art adaptive technology resources and equipment. This includes specially adapted computers and equipment. The advance planning of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well and includes diagnostic and specialist assessments. Support arrangements are particularly effective in this area. These students have good access to speech therapy, social workers attend annual review meetings, and physiotherapy can be provided through effective links with community and health care agencies. Responsive, enthusiastic and dedicated careers staff provide an excellent service and students gain a sound understanding of all the options available to them, including progression to HE. There are comprehensive monitoring and reporting arrangements which enable managers to evaluate the impact of additional support on retention and pass rates. The college has an appropriate procedure for child protection issues, and a designated and appropriately trained member of staff and deputy. Tutorial arrangements are very good. All full-time students have weekly group tutorials and an individual review at least once each term. Progress is monitored, targets set and an individual learning plan completed. Attendance and punctuality are monitored closely through the electronic register system. Students identified as at risk of leaving their course or underperforming are given appropriate support, as necessary. Many are given specific workshop time with access to teachers on an individual basis and attendance at these workshops is monitored carefully. The system is robust and effective and clearly understood by students. Part-time students have good access to a help desk in the evenings, where advice is given with referral to support services, if needed. Support arrangements are also communicated effectively to part-time students through a telephone service.

Leadership and management



15. Leadership and management are outstanding. All weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been rectified. Pass rates are high and at many levels are in the top 10% of colleges of the same type. Most retention rates are also high. Teaching and learning are excellent. In almost 50% of lessons, teaching is very good or outstanding. The principal provides inspiring leadership. Staff are highly motivated and well informed. The senior management team works closely with the governors. There is a strong focus on raising achievement and retention rates and on supporting individual students. Student numbers have seen increasing growth. The college mission and values are communicated successfully to staff. Staff express confidence in the management and feel valued.

16. The three-year strategic plan is clear and well researched, linked into employment projections and labour supply figures, and takes into account national, regional and local strategies. Governors are fully involved in its development; staff are fully briefed. A yearly operational plan with clear objectives is developed from the strategic plan. Faculties then produce their own operational plans linked to the objectives. The college is very well managed. Organisational structure and roles are clear. Directors are responsible for the curriculum and support areas. Faculty management teams include heads of faculty, a quality manager and heads of curriculum. Each has a senior management team link who attends the monthly senior management meetings. Curriculum planning is thorough. Meetings review enrolments, retention rates and achievement against targets. The college sets a base level of 80% for pass and retention rates, but expects higher. Underperformance is quickly identified and actions are taken. The heads of faculty review progress termly with the principal. Courses are well managed and good teamwork exists. Staff performance is managed effectively. Staff have an annual appraisal which reviews teaching and learning observations, retention and pass rates, and achievement of personal targets. New targets are set and training needs are identified. All full-time teaching staff undertake appropriate industry updating every two years. Staff development plans are produced at faculty and college level. Training is evaluated thoroughly. New teaching staff are supported and are assigned a mentor. Recent staff development has yet to impact fully on the use of ILT in teaching.

17. Internal and external communications are very good. Communications within the college are outstanding. A well-structured electronic staff information system provides access to a wealth of information. Copies of the minutes of all meetings are available. All staff receive a copy of minutes of governors' meetings. The principal holds staff meetings twice each term for briefing and consultation. He also meets monthly with groups of staff from faculties. College managers are readily accessible and respond quickly. The principal regularly visits each area of the college. The college is well regarded by employers and the community and has built extensive links. A district 'profile' group meets termly to discuss local market intelligence and to share plans. The management information system is very effective. Student enrolment data are scanned to ensure that up-to-date and accurate data are immediately available. The student record system contains full details, including individual targets. Computerised registers allow checks on attendance and retention rates. Computerised timetables allow managers to identify staff and room usage. A wide range of standard reports is available. Staff have had appropriate training and both teachers and managers have access to relevant and useful data and information. A shortfall in initial recruitment this year was quickly identified. The college benchmarks its performance against that of other colleges to inform management decisions.

18. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and a culture of continuous improvement exists. A quality manager in each faculty monitors action plans arising from each course review. Effective actions are taken in faculties and cross college to improve attendance and retention rates. The self-assessment process is rigorous and self critical. All areas of the college produce reports and action plans. Governors and external advisers attend meetings to review the curriculum area self-assessment reports. Governors then present the report for their link area at the governors' development day. Curriculum area reports are broadly accurate. The analysis and use of value added data are not fully developed in all areas. A trained college team undertakes lesson observations which are carefully moderated. All staff have one graded lesson observation and one developmental observation each year. Franchise partners are included and audits take place to ensure compliance with procedures. There is insufficient use of subject specialists to observe lessons. The results of teaching and learning observations by the college were higher than those observed by inspectors. Sharing of good practice is widespread in the college, but some teachers in the community are not fully involved.

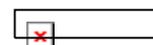
19. The college has a full range of policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities. Plans to meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and SENDA are well advanced. Staff have been trained but formal training for governors has yet to be arranged. An equal opportunities co-ordinator and the equal opportunities forum, which has external representatives, monitor progress and report to the senior management team. Statistical analyses are carried out on recruitment, retention rates and achievement, and the evaluation of the results of complaints has recently been introduced. External audits have been carried out on premises, policies and procedures, and resources. Publicity and marketing are checked for compliance and the promotion of equal opportunities. There is still under-representation of some groups in a few curriculum areas. Progress

has been made on recruiting staff from minority ethnic groups. Equal opportunities is included in induction and tutorials for full-time students.

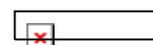
20. Governance is excellent. Governors are very well informed, carry out their duties very effectively, receive detailed reports and monitor the academic and financial performance of the college closely. There is a wide range of appropriate skills and the full-time clerk has legal qualifications. Students and staff are represented. Regular training is arranged. Governors are linked to curriculum areas, which most visit each year. Governors monitor their own performance against appropriate standards and an annual self-assessment takes place. Before governors are reappointed, an assessment of performance is made.

21. Arrangements for financial management are very thorough. Budgets are closely monitored. Expenditure is carefully controlled. Utilisation of staff and rooms is good. Clear risk management strategies are in place. Several major expenditure items have been reduced by competitive tendering. The college is part of a purchasing consortium. Benchmarks are used to check efficiency. The college is in a strong financial position and provides excellent value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

The contributory grade for physics is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high retention rates for all AS-level and GCE A-level courses

- high pass rates for GCE A-level courses

- good and very good teaching and learning

- good resources to support teaching and learning

- individual students' needs supported well.

Weaknesses

- some low retention rates for vocational science courses.

Scope of provision

22. The college offers a range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and further mathematics, mainly to full-time students aged 16 to 18. GCSE human biology and mathematics courses are available during the day and in the evenings. Vocational courses include the AVCE science, double award, and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate science. Adults are offered access to HE courses in science and mathematics. There are 156 students aged 16 to 18, the majority on full-time courses. Of the 271 adult students, 261 are part time.

Achievement and standards

23. Retention rates are consistently high for AS-level and GCE A-level courses and pass rates for GCE A-level courses are also high. Physics results are outstanding. In 2002 and 2003, retention rates of 97% and 100% and pass rates of 100% were achieved for GCE A-level physics. For AS-level physics, both pass and retention rates consistently exceed national averages. GCE A-level biology had very high pass and retention rates in 2002 and 2003. GCE A-level chemistry and mathematics courses also have high pass and retention rates. Pass rates for AS-level courses vary. Pass rates for AS-level biology are well above national averages, while pass rates for AS-level chemistry and mathematics are similar to national averages. Data which compare students' performance at GCSE with that at AS level and GCE A level show that, generally, students achieve results that would be expected on the basis of their GCSE qualifications. Pass rates at grades A* to C for GCSE mathematics are similar to national averages. The retention rate for GNVQ intermediate science was low in 2001 and 2002, but improved in 2003. The retention rate for AVCE science fell from a high figure in 2002 to 50% in 2003. Most pass rates for vocational science courses are high, but in 2003, the GNVQ intermediate pass rate fell to well below national average.

24. Progression to HE is good. A high proportion of GCE A-level students and half the AVCE students progressed to HE courses in 2003, with a significant proportion studying science-related degree subjects. Progression from intermediate GNVQ is also good, with the majority of successful students progressing to a higher level course within the college.

25. Students are well motivated. They are attentive, interested and confident to contribute in class. The quality of their written work is good. In science lessons, students are confident when doing practical work and develop very good practical skills, including logging data. They are fully aware of the health and safety issues in the laboratory. Most GCE A-level students show well-developed mathematical techniques and algebraic skills. Attendance is good, at 86%.

26.

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	151	179	150
		% retention	80	60	65
		% pass rate	34	37	38
AS-level biology and	3	No. of starts	57	58	53

human biology		% retention	86	83	79
		% pass rate	96	75	79
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	33	38	38
		% retention	88	82	89
		% pass rate	69	68	68
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	96	104	113
		% retention	82	86	81
		% pass rate	70	62	55
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	39	33	35
		% retention	100	88	94
		% pass rate	100	79	94
GCE A-level biology *	3	No. of starts	41	35	33
		% retention	73	97	100
		% pass rate	90	97	100
GCE A-level mathematics *	3	No. of starts	82	48	42
		% retention	63	92	98
		% pass rate	75	93	90
GCE A-level physics *	3	No. of starts	33	31	20
		% retention	64	97	100
		% pass rate	90	100	100

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

*** GCE A-level retention rate measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003**

Quality of education and training

27. Teaching and learning are good or very good, and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons are well structured and build on students' prior knowledge. In the best lessons, enthusiastic teachers use a variety of teaching methods and thoroughly check students' progress and understanding through carefully constructed questioning. In a mathematics lesson on the remainder theorem, the teacher continuously challenged the students and made links to other parts of the mathematics specification. In a physics lesson, the teacher introduced the concept of resistivity by getting the students to think about the factors that affect resistance. Students were able to suggest the correct dependence on area and length and then tested their theory in a well-organised practical session. Students are given opportunities to visit industrial sites and specialist university laboratories and to go on fieldwork to enhance their learning and practical skills.

28. Technical support is excellent and physical resources are good. Technicians prepare apparatus well for practical sessions. Teachers are well qualified and regularly update their knowledge. Many teachers use their knowledge as external examiners to assist colleagues, to help to improve the quality of students' performance in examinations. Laboratories and mathematics teaching rooms are equipped with data projectors and teachers use ICT in a variety of ways. Some subjects have produced their own materials and AVCE students have access to interactive exercises related to fieldwork. Physics students have access to notes and assignments on the physics intranet site. Teachers also use commercial software packages to help illustrate aspects of theory. For example, in one mathematics lesson on conservation of momentum, students observed collisions taking place and were able to easily recognise the differences between elastic and inelastic collisions.

29. Assessment is frequent and thorough. Homework is marked and returned promptly. Students receive helpful guidance and feedback from teachers. Individual target grades are set for each student, based on their GCSE grades, and marks on assessed work are compared with these targets. Monitoring of progress is thorough and students who do not meet their targets are supported through workshops. Students are well motivated to attain their target grades.

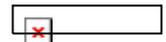
30. Advice given to prospective students is comprehensive and helpful. Students' individual needs are diagnosed during the induction process, and students are well supported in the classroom and through subject-specific workshops. GCE A-level students act as learning mentors for AS-level students. Careers guidance and help with HE applications are effective and are highly valued by students.

Leadership and management

31. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum manager effectively co-ordinates the work of the subject leaders. Communications are good. Subject teams meet regularly. Achievement data are analysed for module results as well as overall qualification results. Subject teachers have shared workrooms and value their frequent informal contacts with colleagues. Subject leaders meet to set targets based on previous performance and the college global targets. If a subject area does not meet its targets, an action plan is agreed and monitored. All staff are involved in the production of the self-assessment report. The process is rigorous and concentrates on actions to improve identified weaknesses. Analysis of value added data is underdeveloped. Equality and diversity are well promoted, particularly in tutorials. Teachers give particular attention to students for whom English is a second language. There are many examples of the sharing of good practice amongst teachers, both formally and informally. For example, staff who are skilled in the use of ICT in lessons share ideas and help other teachers to develop their skills. Appraisal includes a self-assessment by the teacher and lesson observation by a senior manager. Targets are set for performance improvement and for professional development.

32.

Construction



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- high standards of practical and written work

- good and very good teaching

- thorough recording of work-based evidence

- high-quality workshops
- particularly good support for students.

Weaknesses

- some low and declining retention rates
- poor attendance
- some unsatisfactory classrooms.

Scope of provision

33. The college offers an appropriate range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels. Courses include brickwork, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, and the national certificate and diploma in construction. Of the 233 students, 102 are aged 16 to 18 and 131 are aged 19 or over. Women account for 16% of students and people from minority ethnic backgrounds account for 3%. These figures are well above the national rates for the construction industry. Courses in plumbing are no longer offered.

Achievement and standards

34. Most courses have high pass rates. In 2003, five courses had 100% pass rates. These included foundation plumbing, the intermediate construction award and NVQ level 2 in bricklaying. The intermediate construction certificate had a pass rate of 92%. Many students with low prior attainment make good progress and achieve well. Retention rates for many courses declined in 2003, from well above national averages to figures around the national averages. Attendance is poor.

35. Students' practical and written work is of a high standard and on brickwork courses the standard is very high. Brickwork students have gained places in the top three in national competitions for many years and some have represented the country in international competitions. Students' workbooks and portfolios are well presented. National certificate and diploma students produce good coursework assignments.

36.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Foundation plumbing	1	No. of starts	*	15	24

		% retention	*	67	83
		% pass rate	*	70	100
Intermediate construction certificate	2	No. of starts	**	21	41
		% retention	**	86	30
		% pass rate	**	50	92
NVQ in bricklaying (1 and 2 year)	2	No. of starts	21	21	26
		% retention	43	76	50
		% pass rate	89	100	100
NVQ in wood occupations	2	No. of starts	15	17	25
		% retention	87	59	32
		% pass rate	92	100	63

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

** courses did not run

Quality of education and training

37. Much teaching is good and very good, particularly in practical lessons. Teachers set high standards, frequently checking their students' work and explaining carefully how it can be improved further. They routinely demand safe working practice. Teaching materials are well produced. In one lesson on the potential impact of construction on the natural environment, national diploma in construction students worked well individually and in small teams to identify the key elements of the natural environment. Individual students then searched the internet for information on aspects such as global warming and acid rain. Some students quickly found interesting sites that provided good data and informative graphics. This generated competition between students as they sought the best information to use in their assignments.

38. Teachers are adept at organising practical projects in workshops to enable students to develop their skills and competence quickly. One lesson on brickwork involved unemployed adults wishing to learn new skills. The teacher captivated the students while demonstrating expertly how to lay a brick wall corner so it was square on plan, level in each direction and with each course laid at the correct height and bond. Teachers and technicians work well together to support students by ensuring that they undertake tasks that take account of their different levels of ability and experience. In the minority of less-effective lessons, teachers do not identify how individual students' activity would be encouraged and managed, resulting in the teacher doing most of the work and students becoming inattentive. The teaching of key skills is effective.

39. Workshops are spacious, well equipped and provide good facilities that match real work situations for students to build or decorate components. There are good displays of students' work and achievement, and abundant health and safety notices. There is insufficient access to ICT facilities within the curriculum area. Some classrooms are poor. Teachers and technicians are well qualified and most have recent experience of industry. Some teachers are industry employers and others undertake a short period of industry updating every two years.

40. Assessment is well planned, rigorous and fair. Students know how and when they will be assessed. Most workbooks and assignments are thoroughly marked, with teachers providing clear comments to help students to improve their work. Occasionally, spelling errors are not corrected. Internal verification is effective. All full-time students have six-weekly reviews that involve the tutor and external training advisors. The recording of evidence of part-time employed students' skills and competence gained in the workplace is excellent. There is extensive use of photographic evidence and witness testimony. If an employer is unable to provide the necessary experience to suit course

requirements, alternative employers are sought to provide it. Full-time students negotiate weekly work plans with their teacher and individual progress is carefully monitored.

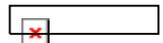
41. Support for students is particularly good. Induction and careers guidance are well organised. Students are very well inducted to the college and courses. They receive a six-weekly review and external training advisors regularly attend. There is a thorough and effective initial assessment and diagnosis of individual learning needs, and staff provide very helpful and sensitive personal support. Additional learning support tutors help students in theory lessons well.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good overall. Staff are highly motivated and are well supported by managers. There are effective course meetings that are minuted well. Staff are well informed and contribute eagerly to improving the provision. Teachers work well as a team. Both strategic and operational management are well organised and follow college priorities. The self-assessment process is thorough, but quality assurance arrangements have not been fully effective in addressing low attendance, declining retention rates and staff shortages on the national certificate and diploma courses. The co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training is very good. There is insufficient sharing of good practice and the induction, support and training given to newly qualified teachers does not always enable them to deal effectively with challenging students.

43.

Engineering



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- very good skills development

- good and very good teaching and learning

- effective use of ILT in teaching

- very good resources

- excellent support for students

- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for minority of courses.

Scope of provision

44. The college offers a wide range of courses. Full-time courses include the first and national diplomas in engineering, AVCE and higher level courses in both mechanical and electrical engineering. Part-time courses include mechanical and production engineering competencies and fabrication and welding. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in electronics. Other courses are offered in computer-aided design, programmable logic controllers and welding, to suit the needs of students in the local community. There are 106 full-time students and 153 part-time students.

Achievement and standards

45. There are high pass rates for most courses. For example, on the GNVQ foundation engineering course, pass rates were 100% in 2002 and 2003. In 2003, pass rates on the first diploma and AVCE double award courses were 95% and 100%, respectively. However, retention rates on a minority of courses are below the national averages. These include first diploma, computer-aided design and AS-level electronics.

46. Students develop very good practical skills in the college workshops and produce written work to a high standard in theory classes and assignments. They are well motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their studies. Key skills for full-time students are closely integrated into their main programme of study. Students make good progress. National diploma students work towards an additional qualification in computer-aided design alongside their main programme of study. Motor vehicle students use their theory workbooks to good effect. Their work is neat, detailed and thorough.

47.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate engineering/first diploma in engineering	2	No. of starts	27	15	33
		% retention	48	80	61
		% pass rate	85	75	95
City and Guilds 4351-01 computer-aided draughting and design using AutoCAD	2	No. of starts	*	31	58
		% retention	*	77	66
		% pass rate	*	100	89
Introductory welding skills	2	No. of starts	15	18	*
		% retention	87	100	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*
GNVQ advanced	3	No. of starts	63	33	24

engineering / AVCE engineering (double award)		% retention	73	42	92
		% pass rate	98	79	100
AS-level electronics	3	No. of starts	16	18	**
		% retention	94	83	**
		% pass rate	27	67	**

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

* **course did not run**

** **fewer than 15 starters enrolled**

Quality of education and training

48. There is much good and very good teaching and learning, and no unsatisfactory teaching. Planning documentation is detailed and is used effectively by teachers during lessons. A wide range of teaching methods is used, and teachers successfully motivate students and maintain their interest. Methods include group exercises, technical assignments and classroom debate. In theory lessons, students demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding. In practical lessons, motor vehicle students demonstrate good use of specialist tools to service steering and suspension systems. There are good relationships between teachers and students in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. There is good use of ICT for teaching and learning. For example, teachers demonstrate the correct operation of programmable logic controller programmes, show electronic circuit simulation and make imaginative use of software presentations. Teachers offer useful and interesting website addresses to assist students with their research. Computer-based resources are used effectively for learning and good use is made of Internet research.

49. Classrooms and laboratories are well equipped and well maintained. Many have good ICT facilities with engineering applications software including AutoCAD. AS-level electronics students have good, accurate test equipment. Some industry-standard equipment in classrooms is used well in lessons to support theoretical concepts, and a wide range of components is used as visual aids. The motor vehicle workshop has a very wide range of equipment and tooling, but there are no modern vehicles. Teachers are well qualified. Most have a relevant qualification in engineering and a teaching qualification. Staff training, including industrial updating, is effective.

50. Assessment is effective. Students' progress is closely monitored and tracked using detailed records. The planning of assessment is good, with an appropriate balance of assignments throughout the year. Written assignments are annotated with teacher comments, which are supportive and constructive and help students to improve their work.

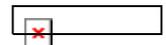
51. Students receive excellent support from teachers and personal tutors. Advice and guidance are given in a sensitive and constructive manner. Where the results of initial assessment identify an individual need extensive support is available. Students with additional learning needs are well supported through an effective network of teachers, mentors and specialist staff. Support may also include additional mathematics lessons which are available to first diploma students, for example. The pastoral curriculum is well taught. It includes topics such as career planning, health issues, equal opportunities, personal finance, and health and safety. Applications to HE and work experience are also covered well. Individual tutorials are effective and progress and attendance are reviewed carefully. Measurable and achievable targets are set through individual learning plans and actions are agreed within a time scale. Individual learning plans are regularly updated. Most students have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities issues.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are good. Teachers and support staff understand their roles and responsibilities and curriculum management is effective. Communication between managers and

staff is excellent, and there is a very strong team ethos. Good practice is shared. Staff are mutually supportive and have pride in the department. Teachers have good opportunities to contribute to the self-assessment report, which is broadly accurate. Quality assurance arrangements are effective and courses are regularly reviewed to ensure relevance. Performance is monitored and evaluated. Where weaknesses are identified, actions are taken to secure improvement. For example, on the AVCE engineering course, retention rates improved from 42% to 92% over a three-year period, with a pass rate of 100% in 2003. There are good support arrangements for the mentoring of new staff. Managers implement the college equal opportunity policy and provide staff with training in equal opportunities issues. Managers make good use of the effective links with schools, a training provider, employers and a consultative group.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for most courses

- high retention rates for most courses

- good and very good teaching

- excellent use of resources to support learning

- very good support for students

- effective course management.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently detailed feedback on students' written work.

Scope of provision

53. The college offers a range of full-time courses including GNVQ business at foundation and

intermediate level, NVQ business administration at levels 2 and 3 and AVCE business. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in business studies and in economics. Management and professional courses are available for full-time and part-time students. These include Association of Accounting Technician (AAT) foundation, intermediate and technician level, NVQ management at levels 3 and 4 and higher national certificate in business and management. There are 157 students aged 16 to 18, most of whom are full time, and 334 adult students who are mainly part time.

Achievement and standards

54. Pass rates for most courses are high and are consistently above the national average. For example, the pass rates for the GCE A-level business course were 100% in 2002 and 2003. For GNVQ foundation and AVCE double award courses, pass rates of over 90% have been achieved for the three years to 2003; over 20% above national averages. Pass rates in 2002 and 2003 were also high for GNVQ intermediate. Pass rates on the AAT accountancy courses at levels 2, 3 and 4 were above national averages for the three years 2001 to 2003. Many retention rates are also high. For the GNVQ foundation and AVCE courses, retention rates have exceeded the national averages by more than 10% for each of the three years to 2003. Retention rates were also high in 2003 for GNVQ intermediate and for the AAT NVQ level 3 accounting course, the rate was 97%, compared with a national average of 80%.

55. The standard of students' work is very good. Students are confident in the use of business terminology. In an AVCE lesson on consumer protection, students discussed the complexities of the law and were able to apply it to topical cases. Students are encouraged to draw on their experiences from their part-time employment and to use this to apply theory to practice. In an AS-level business studies lesson, students linked theories of motivation to practical examples from their part-time jobs. Many students take additional qualifications. For example, AVCE and AAT students take the Institute of Leisure Management team leader award, and some business students study computerised accounts in addition to their main qualification. Students' progression to FE or HE and to employment is good.

56.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation business	1	No. of starts	16	15	18
		% retention	94	87	88
		% pass rate	100	92	93
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	19	33	18
		% retention	79	73	83
		% pass rate	53	88	93
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	53	45	19
		% retention	72	58	84
		% pass rate	84	73	88
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	50	48	46
		% retention	72	73	80
		% pass rate	75	91	92
GNVQ advanced business / AVCE business (double award)	3	No. of starts	84	73	46
		% retention	86	67	74
		% pass rate	99	90	94

GCE A-level business studies *	3	No. of starts	44	51	60
		% retention	66	94	90
		% pass rate	97	100	100

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

*** GCE A-level retention rate measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003**

Quality of education and training

57. A very high proportion of teaching is good or better. Teaching is very well planned and all courses have detailed and thorough schemes of work. Teachers have an excellent rapport with students, resulting in a high level of motivation. Teachers have high expectations of students. They are experienced at encouraging and eliciting responses, particularly from weaker students. In a large GNVQ intermediate class on personal finance, the teacher skilfully managed a question and answer session, gaining much effective participation by students. Students are actively engaged in lessons and teachers praise them appropriately for their contributions in class. Data projectors are used extensively and, in some instances, imaginatively. In an AVCE lesson, the use of on-line exercises linked to company websites kept students focussed and interested. In an AVCE lesson on career planning, students accessed job opportunities on websites and matched their personal profiles to the jobs using an on-line exercise. Students work productively in groups and independently. In a GCE A-level business studies lesson, students worked in small groups on the implications of privatisation and confidently presented their findings to the class. In many lessons, extension tasks are available to meet the needs of more able students. For example, an AAT accounting class was given a number of graded exercises on recording payments, allowing the more able students to progress at their own pace. Teachers use an excellent range of high-quality learning materials, such as recent case studies and topical exercises. For example, in a certificate in personnel practice lesson, students worked on a case study centred on organisational issues arising from the merger of two local software companies.

58. Staff are well qualified and many have recent industrial experience. All staff undertake a commercial updating placement every two years. This is reflected in the teaching, which is highly relevant and up-to-date with current business practice. Links with local businesses are good. Each course has two external consultants from local companies who assist in a variety of ways, such as arranging student visits to the company and visiting speakers.

59. Work is set and marked regularly and is returned promptly. However, there is no clear assessment policy and written work has insufficiently detailed feedback. In some cases, there is no annotation of the students' work and a lack of clear guidance explaining how students can improve their grades.

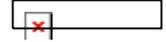
60. Specialist support is excellent and is integrated effectively into classroom teaching. In a GNVQ foundation lesson, two support tutors and the teacher worked effectively as a team to provide high-quality support for students. In a tutorial session, the signage tutor teaches students sign language to enable them to communicate with a fellow student with a hearing impairment. On many courses, students are set target grades based on their GCSE profiles and their performance is closely monitored through tutorials.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Teachers work well together as a team and have high expectations of students. Curriculum planning is detailed and thorough, and course management is very good. Documentation is detailed and comprehensive and very well presented. Curriculum managers regularly review the provision to ensure that it provides student with the most appropriate options. Meetings are regular and effective. All minutes are posted to the intranet and are accessible to all staff. Course teams

closely monitor retention rates, attendance and achievement, and effective action is taken to deal with these issues.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates and retention rates for most courses

- very good and outstanding teaching and learning

- excellent resources to support teaching and learning

- wide range of provision matched well to local needs

- very good support for students

- effective management of the curriculum area.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped virtual learning environment.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at various levels. Full-time courses include NVQ office technology at levels 2 and 3, GNVQ intermediate ICT, first and national diplomas, AS-level and GCE A-level courses in computing and ICT, and a higher national diploma in computing. There are many part-time courses at community venues including introductory image manipulation, Internet activities, home accounts and word processing, and students completing these courses may progress to new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), CLAIT plus, European computer driving license (ECDL) and ECDL advanced courses. Part-time courses at the main campus also include computer installation and maintenance, networking and programming, and higher national certificate in computing. There are 279 students aged 16 to 18 and 683 students

aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

63. Pass rates on most courses are consistently high. For example, for CLAIT, ECDL, GNVQ intermediate ICT, AS-level ICT and AVCE ICT courses, pass rates were high in 2002 and in 2003 were at least 15% above the national averages. These courses have also had high retention rates, which in 2003 were well above the national averages. GCE A-level ICT had a 100% pass rate in 2003 and a retention rate of 90%.

64. Many students' assignment work on courses at all levels is of a high standard. Students demonstrate good practical skills and use the Internet effectively for research. Project work is well planned and documented. Most students are attentive, are ready to answer questions and participate effectively in group work and class discussions. Students make good progress and apply newly acquired knowledge successfully. In one lesson, students extended their knowledge and skills in both spreadsheet techniques and mathematical applications. In another lesson, students successfully demonstrated research skills, decision making, computing techniques and a knowledge of input, processing and output, websites and HTML, emailing and file management, all within one activity. On a website development course, some home pages being developed display flair as well as technical competence.

65.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
CLAIT / certificate for IT users (new CLAIT) (short)	1	No. of starts	572	323	64
		% retention	94	91	91
		% pass rate	72	72	91
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	52	53	30
		% retention	87	79	87
		% pass rate	82	86	85
ECDL (one year)	2	No. of starts	278	489	549
		% retention	94	90	83
		% pass rate	58	79	92
NVQ using IT	2	No. of starts	22	34	27
		% retention	77	85	67
		% pass rate	94	86	72
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	86	76	87
		% retention	83	91	90
		% pass rate	93	94	90
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	*	42	40
		% retention	*	83	90
		% pass rate	*	91	100
GNVQ advanced /	3	No. of starts	64	85	71

award)		% pass rate	95	86	96
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

66. Teaching and learning are excellent. All teaching is good or better. Teaching is well planned and most lessons contain specific strategies for differentiation. Extension exercises are provided for the brighter students and extra support for the less able. Lessons are full of variety and teachers use questioning effectively to involve all students and to check understanding. Teachers display sound vocational knowledge and skills. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Humour and lively discussion are used frequently and effectively, capturing and maintaining students' interest. Data projectors are used well to demonstrate techniques in software packages and in programming, and resources are made available to the students on a shared network drive. The virtual learning environment is underdeveloped.

67. There are excellent resources to support teaching and learning. All rooms are spacious and are well equipped with networked computers, whiteboards, overhead projectors and fixed data projectors, and most have a television and video. Interesting posters and examples of students' work are on display. Staff are appropriately qualified. All have some recent commercial experience. Teachers undertake some relevant industrial experience every two years. Technician support is very good. In addition to the college-wide technicians, there are two dedicated technicians, one of whom also teaches and supports other teachers. The local learning resource centre provides good access to computers outside lessons and is well used.

68. Assessment practices are good. Assignment briefs are well designed and feedback on marked work contains helpful comments which explain how students can improve their performance. Internal verification practices are sound. There is a clear set of policies and procedures in place. Students' progress is carefully monitored during the regular individual tutorials. Individual learning plans and progress tracking sheets are used effectively with all part-time students. Plans document specific learning goals and progress towards achieving them.

69. The wide range of provision is well matched to local needs. Many part-time students progress from one course to another. There are centres in several local towns which provide opportunities for those who find it difficult to travel. The work experience programme is comprehensive. All students on full-time vocational courses see the application of ICT and develop their career aspirations. A high percentage of full-time students return to college for a higher level course. All vocational students undertake integrated assignments in which key skills are embedded. Students are able to gain a qualification such as CLAIT or the ECDL in addition to their main qualification.

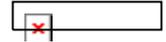
70. There is very good support for students. Additional learning needs are identified pre-entry, or on entry, by screening. A high proportion of students identified as needing additional support take up the support offered and achieve their qualifications. Regular individual tutorials are well structured and cover academic, social and personal issues. Learning support staff or technicians are used effectively in some lessons, particularly where there are large classes, students with additional learning needs, or where groups are dismantling or building computers. Individual support given to students during lessons is very effective.

Leadership and management

71. Leadership and management are very good. Curriculum and course development are well planned and well managed. Managers, teachers on all sites, technicians and support staff communicate effectively. Teachers have a graded lesson observation and a developmental observation every year. In developmental observations, teachers are encouraged to develop their use of new teaching techniques and resources. Teachers willingly share good practice on a regular

basis. They make use of the shared network drive, internal staff development and the regular and frequent course team meetings for this purpose. Staff are involved in the process of self-assessment and in curriculum development. Minutes of meetings show that actions to resolve problems have required completion dates and are monitored at subsequent meetings. All computing staff maintain the currency of their skills by undertaking at least five days' work experience every two years. Annual appraisals include the identification of staff development needs. These are valued by teachers.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- excellent retention and pass rates for most courses

- much very good and outstanding teaching

- innovative use of ILT

- excellent range of specialist resources

- very high levels of support for students

- rigorous monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates and declining numbers on NVQ level 2 catering.

Scope of provision

72. The college offers a broad range of hospitality, sport and travel courses from entry level through to higher national diploma. Progression to higher level courses is excellent. Most of the 450 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Over 200 part-time adult students are enrolled, mainly on leisure courses at community high schools. Relatively few adults are enrolled on tourism or hospitality courses. No level 1 provision is available in travel and tourism. Full-time students are able to take a

range of additional industry-relevant qualifications such as Association of British Travel Agents' certificate (ABTAC), NVQ travel services, community sports leaders award, Spanish, food hygiene certificate and welcome host.

Achievement and standards

73. Most pass and retention rates are high. The AVCE travel and tourism double award course had pass rates of 100% in 2002 and 2003, and retention rates well above national averages. The pass rate for the first diploma was also 100% in 2003. The national diploma in science (sports studies) and the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course both had pass and retention rates well above national averages for the three years to 2003. NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking also had a high retention rate in 2003 and a pass rate of 100%. Retention rates for NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking were below national averages in 2002 and 2003.

74. Students are highly motivated and their punctuality and attendance are very good. They make thoughtful and measured contributions in class, have good research skills and consistently produce work of a high standard. Students work confidently either independently or in groups. All students develop communication, IT and numeracy skills. Progression to HE from the sports courses and the AVCE travel and tourism course is excellent. Tourism and hospitality courses provide excellent progression to employment.

75.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	30	50	35
		% retention	90	66	94
		% pass rate	44	100	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	19	39	41
		% retention	79	85	80
		% pass rate	93	85	91
First diploma in science (sports studies)	2	No. of starts	32	20	24
		% retention	72	90	75
		% pass rate	78	78	100
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	32	48	35
		% retention	81	63	69
		% pass rate	58	97	78
National licensee's certificate examination	2	No. of starts	142	266	400
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	94	95	94
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism / AVCE travel and tourism (double award)	3	No. of starts	90	66	56
		% retention	78	74	71
		% pass rate	93	100	100
National diploma in science (sports studies)	3	No. of starts	47	57	42
		% retention	74	77	75
		% pass rate	97	93	93

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

Quality of education and training

76. Teaching is very good and sometimes outstanding in both theory and practical lessons. No teaching is less than satisfactory. Teachers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and have high expectations. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers have individual pen portraits of students' prior attainment, preferred learning style and expected achievements. Probing and targeted questions are used very well and help students to develop ideas and skills. In a few lessons, the more able students are not challenged sufficiently. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of exciting methods to place the learning in a relevant business context. For example, in a numeracy lesson, the teacher used a video of a train journey and a software presentation to develop the students' understanding of graphs. In another session, students produced industry-standard welcome packs as part of an assignment based around the work of overseas resort representatives. In an adult catering lesson, students enjoyed participating in a number of interactive exercises on preparing and handling dough. The students then evaluated the bread produced.

77. Excellent use of ILT supports students' learning across all courses. For example, students are able to access computers in practical hospitality lessons to refer to recipes, check on cooking methods and view on-screen digital photographs that explain difficult culinary skills. In one lesson, a chicken was depicted in various stages of jointing. Theory lessons on travel courses regularly use digital projectors to make subjects such as travel geography more stimulating and interactive. Drop-in workshops are available where students can access websites and software relevant to their assignments.

78. The college has a range of excellent specialist facilities which are used to promote students' learning. A well-equipped fitness suite enables sports studies students to complete physiology and fitness assignments. The commercial travel agency is used to give tourism students opportunities to complete assessments for their NVQ travel services course. The public restaurants and kitchens allow hospitality students at all levels the opportunity to cook, prepare and serve food in a realistic environment. Cabin crew students are taught in a classroom converted to a mock aircraft cabin.

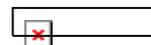
79. Assessment of students' work is fair and accurate. Feedback on students' assignments and practical tasks is clear and identifies specific areas for improvement. Feedback includes reference to individual target grades and subject teachers monitor progress against these targets closely.

80. Support for students is excellent. Students value the assistance they receive from staff, particularly through the well-structured tutorial system. Induction is thorough and helps students to settle into college life. All students are screened at induction for additional support needs. During 2002/03, over one hundred students received support in developing numeracy or literacy skills, which enabled them to successfully complete their courses.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are very good. Roles and responsibilities are clear and there is a real commitment by staff to improving students' achievement. Clear procedures are used to deal with students' discipline and non-attendance. An effective course review process includes student representation and has resulted in many improvements. The review process is appropriately focused on raising standards and improving teaching. All teachers are observed twice each year and the findings are used to inform the faculty staff development plan. Observations are also discussed during an annual appraisal. The self-assessment process is rigorous and thorough, but the report does not acknowledge the weakness of poor retention rates on NVQ level 2 catering. Equality of opportunity is given a high profile and is integrated into schemes of work and lesson plans. The checklist for one-to-one tutorials promotes discussion of diversity issues. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety across the curriculum area. Management information is very good and is used well by teachers and managers.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- many high pass rates

- good teaching

- good first-step learning opportunities

- high standards of written work.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on a minority of courses

- undemanding teaching in many lessons

- insufficient attention to professional practice.

Scope of provision

82. The college offers a satisfactory range of courses including NVQ hairdressing at levels 1 to 3, beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3 and the national diploma in beauty therapy. Entry level courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy provide good first-step opportunities for students as an introduction to the specialisms. There are also full-time and part-time courses in aromatherapy, nail art, body massage and reflexology. A few courses in holistic therapies are available in the community. There are 117 full-time students aged 16 to 18, and 102 full-time adults. Of the part-time students, 207 are adults and 33 are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates are high for many courses. The national diploma in beauty therapy had excellent

pass rates of 100% for each of the three years 2001 to 2003. Retention rates for this course are also above national averages. The diplomas in aromatherapy and reflexology, and the body massage certificate course also have consistently high pass rates. Some retention rates are low, and some courses with high pass rates have low retention rates. NVQ hairdressing level 1 had retention rates well below national averages in 2001 and 2003, when pass rates were above national averages. For NVQ hairdressing at level 2, pass rates were 100% and 98% in 2002 and 2003, respectively, but the retention rate was low in 2002. It improved in 2003. The two-year NVQ beauty therapy course at level 2 has had consistently low retention rates for the three years 2001 to 2003. In 2002, the pass rate was 100% but the retention rate was less than 20%. In 2003, the retention rate improved to 41% but remained significantly below the national average of 52%. At level 3, the NVQ in beauty therapy has low pass and retention rates.

84. Students' written work is of a high standard. Most assignments are detailed, comprehensive and well illustrated. Students make effective use of ICT, for example, through the use of scanned images. Work shows a good understanding of anatomy and physiology, where appropriate. Progress towards completion of portfolios is slow. Standards of practical work are satisfactory in most areas. Some hairdressing students demonstrate good skills, particularly in dressing and finishing hair. Beauty therapy students perform good manicures and facial treatments. Holistic therapy students show good skills in aromatherapy massage. Overall attendance is satisfactory, but punctuality is poor. Progression from NVQ level 2 to level 3 in hairdressing is good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	1	No. of starts	47	30	19
		% retention	60	77	58
		% pass rate	93	87	91
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	54	45	85
		% retention	48	40	59
		% pass rate	69	100	98
NVQ beauty therapy (two year)	2	No. of starts	28	16	17
		% retention	43	19	41
		% pass rate	50	100	100
National diploma in beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	16	16	24
		% retention	63	75	71
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	41	40	19
		% retention	93	78	95
		% pass rate	97	94	100
Body massage certificate	3	No. of starts	31	41	38
		% retention	87	83	84
		% pass rate	81	91	100

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

Quality of education and training

85. Much teaching is good. In the best lessons, teachers are well organised and use focused question and answer techniques to engage the students. Some lessons have differentiated activities

which are used with a variety of teaching and learning methods. In one case, a teacher organised a very effective group lesson which helped the students to understand the different aspects of a hairdressing treatment. In poorer lessons, students spend too long working on each other, or begin working on clients too late in their course. Little sharing of learning takes place and insufficient use is made of clients. Many lessons fail to stimulate and fully engage students. In theory lessons, students are not always encouraged to participate sufficiently. Teaching methods used do not stretch and challenge students. There is little use of ILT.

86. Overall resources are satisfactory. There is a wide range of products and materials for students' use. In some lessons, there are too few clients to ensure maximum learning opportunities for students. Teaching materials are not all standardised but most are of high quality. One of the three hairdressing salons meets industry standards, the others are satisfactory. Two beauty salons need updating. There is insufficient professional sterilising equipment. The holistic therapies salon is particularly small and has insufficient cubicles to allow clients privacy to undress. There are not enough couches for the number of students in some lessons. Some of the beauty therapy resources do not reflect current commercial practice. Although there is good promotion of health and safety, some aspects of professional practice need attention. For example, waste bins and clients' clothes are stored on the tops of trolleys in beauty therapy, and coats and bags are left on the floor in hairdressing salons.

87. Assessment is planned and completed satisfactorily in practical sessions. Students receive helpful feedback following assessment and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own assessment planning. Written work is assessed well and students are given good developmental feedback on how to improve their work. Many students make slow progress. Across the range of provision, many students have not successfully completed sufficient aspects of their chosen qualification. Some students who are three-quarters of the way through a two-year course have not completed any whole units of their award. Some staff and students are unable to state the precise progress students have made so far. There is no single approach used to track students' progress. Some examples have been recently developed by individual teachers and students, but there is no systematic tracking method currently in place. Teachers complete a good review of students' progress during individual tutorials, but this is not a useful tool to track assessment. Standardisation meetings held as part of the internal verification process are not yet used to moderate samples of students' written work, but overall internal verification is satisfactory.

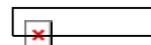
88. Hairdressing students participate in competitions which are judged by local employers. Local employers also give demonstrations. Some students do not undertake work experience and the college has recently appointed a placement co-ordinator to further develop work experience opportunities. There is no level 1 provision in beauty therapy, which limits progression opportunities from entry level. No barbering courses are offered and male students are under-represented in hairdressing.

89. Students are supported well. Following diagnostic testing, students are offered appropriate support within lessons or additional time with specialist teachers to help them with their particular needs. Learning mentors work with the staff team to provide appropriate support for students who are struggling in theory lessons. Guidance and support on recruitment and induction are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

90. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is strong teamwork, and examples of sharing good practice in vocational skills. Although there are regular formal meetings, much communication is informal. In some cases, the monitoring of students' progress is hampered by an approach which is not systematic, particularly when students attend on flexible timetables. Teachers complete professional development at least in line with the awarding body requirements. The self-assessment report acknowledges many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, but in some cases the strengths claimed were normal expectations. Course reviews are adequate; however, there is little critical analysis and evaluation of the curriculum to help planning for particular courses.

Health, social care and public services



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on the national diploma in health studies and NVQ early years care and education at level 3

- high pass rates on full-time childcare courses

- very good teaching

- effective use of IT to develop students' confidence

- very good individual support for students

- good development of key skills

- strong and effective curriculum leadership.

Weaknesses

- there are no key weaknesses.

Scope of provision

91. The college offers a wide range of courses both for students aged 16 to 18 and for adult students. These include entry level in childcare, GNVQ foundation health and social care, Northern College of Further Education (NCFE) entry to the uniformed services, first and national diplomas in care, AVCE health and social care, and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate and diploma in child care and education. There are also NVQ courses in advice and guidance, care and early years care and education at levels 2 and 3. Counselling courses are

offered from foundation to diploma levels 3 and 4. There are almost 400 students across the full-time and part-time courses, nearly half of whom are adult students.

Achievement and standards

92. Pass rates are consistently high on all courses; well above the national averages, even when these are high, as with the CACHE certificate and diploma. The national diploma in science (health studies) and the NVQ early years care and education at levels 2 and 3 have consistently high retention and pass rates. Pass rates improved each year between 2001 and 2003. In 2003, the retention rate for the GNVQ foundation course fell.

93. In lessons, students of all ages work with enthusiasm and confidence to acquire sound theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Full-time students work on key skills alongside their vocational course, and their development and use of IT has increased their confidence in their own ability to study independently and present their work to a high, professional standard. Attendance is good. Students in many lessons show confidence in the use of complex concepts and technical language in class discussion, and students on level 1 and level 2 courses show confidence and accuracy in their knowledge of vocational topics.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	21	22	23
		% retention	62	82	48
		% pass rate	100	94	100
Certificate in child care and education	2	No. of starts	21	*	18
		% retention	90	*	61
		% pass rate	95	*	91
NVQ early years care and education	2	No. of starts	35	23	70
		% retention	89	70	87
		% pass rate	100	100	98
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	21	51	39
		% retention	95	98	87
		% pass rate	100	92	100
GNVQ advanced / AVCE health and social care (double award)	3	No. of starts	33	27	41
		% retention	70	44	71
		% pass rate	91	75	86
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	16	27	15
		% retention	50	83	73
		% pass rate	88	95	100
National diploma in science (health studies)	3	No. of starts	18	17	15
		% retention	72	94	93
		% pass rate	92	100	93

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

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

94. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well structured with clear objectives which are shared with students. Teachers make effective use of a range of teaching methods to engage students with different learning styles and maintain pace and concentration. Students are motivated, enthusiastic and participate well in lessons. They are encouraged to contribute and to value the contribution of others, sharing their ideas, views and solutions to problems set. The best lessons enable the student to take responsibility for their own learning and participate in the assessment process through peer assessment. In level 1 and 2 lessons students are provided with challenges that enhance their confidence, giving them a positive attitude towards their work. In a few level 3 lessons, students are not provided with sufficient challenge to develop evaluative skills. Good use is made of ICT in teaching and learning.

95. Accommodation is very good. Counselling courses have a purpose-designed counselling area, while care students have a learning resource centre with open-access computer facilities. Many classrooms have computers housed in study desks to allow for multiple uses. All rooms are equipped with data projectors. Students' use of IT facilities for research and presentation in class, as well as in assignments, enhances their learning and enables them to better develop their key skills. The library has a small and up-to-date book stock. All teaching staff have relevant vocational backgrounds and professional qualifications. Full-time staff are required to spend five days each year work shadowing or undertaking investigative visits to vocational work settings such as care or early years education providers.

96. Assessment is rigorous, and there is an effective internal standardisation system. Staff have regular training and their practice is thoroughly monitored. Assignments are clear and detailed. Feedback is timely. Internal moderation processes are rigorous. Students' progress is thoroughly monitored. Students are given constructive feedback and there are numerous opportunities for them to check their progress with the teachers or review their agreed action plans for completing coursework to an appropriate standard, both through regular tutorials and at set times in lessons.

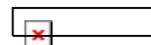
97. Students are supported very effectively. All full-time students undertake initial assessment. The results are used to plan lessons and to plan any additional support to meet individual needs. This may be provided in or out of lessons. Study support is also available for students of all abilities on a drop-in basis. Course teams and the central learning support service work closely together to monitor the impact of additional support. All students have an individual learning plan. Students aged 16 to 18 are set achievement targets based on their GCSE grades. Through the tutorial process, detailed individual action plans are developed and are reviewed regularly. Subject teachers provide excellent support in lessons.

Leadership and management

98. Leadership and management are excellent. There is strong and effective leadership and courses are well managed. Each course team works closely to deliver the course, monitor students' progress and maintain and improve quality. The faculty quality manager monitors relevant data and meets course teams, as well as managing internal lesson observations. Teachers have two observations each year, one of which is graded and considered in appraisal. A second observation focuses on development and staff are encouraged to introduce something innovative into their teaching. Good use is made of management information data. Managers at all levels have access to it and actively use it to inform decisions and plan change. Curriculum planning is directly informed by the effective use of performance data. Course teams meet regularly to review students' progress and quality issues and to discuss improvement measures. Minutes of meetings are stored centrally on the computer-based staff information system. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and of a uniformly high standard. Staff have regular development and are kept well informed by frequent college and faculty meetings. There are occasional examples of failure to identify staff development needs where courses operate from different college faculties. The co-ordination of health and social care courses across the college needs to be strengthened to ensure that students' work placements remain coherently managed.

99.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- excellent practical work by students on national diploma courses in media and performing arts

- high pass rates for most courses

- excellent teaching on media and performing arts courses

- very good teaching of art and design

- very good resources for performing arts, media and music

- excellent support for students

- particularly effective management.

Weaknesses

- too little emphasis on underpinning skills in design work.

Scope of provision

100. A very wide range of courses is offered. Level 1 courses include photography, audio-visual techniques and dance. At level 2, there are courses in media techniques, interior design and art and design, GNVQ intermediate media, and first diplomas in design and performing arts. Desktop publishing, photography and life drawing are also available at level 2. At level 3, AS-level and GCE A-level courses are available in art and design, dance, drama and theatre studies, film studies, media, music and photography. National diploma courses are offered in design crafts, fine art, media

and performing arts. Foundation studies art and design is also offered. A wide variety of short community learning courses is available, including life drawing, crafts and guitar workshop. There are limited opportunities for adult returners in performing arts and media.

101. There are 247 full-time students aged 16 to 18, 52 full-time adult students, 15 part-time students aged 16 to 18 and 111 part-time adult students.

Achievement and standards

102. Pass rates are high on many courses. They consistently exceed the national averages on first diploma and national diploma in performing arts courses, AS-level photography, AS-level film studies, national diplomas in art subjects and GNVQ intermediate media. Many courses had 100% pass rates in 2003. Retention rates are also high on most courses, particularly on level 2 and level 3 media courses. Overall, there is good progression.

103. Students' work in media and performing arts is excellent. Students learn practical skills and techniques quickly and apply them with confidence. On GNVQ and national diploma media courses, students produce innovative and very technically accomplished films, including an excellent feature film. Students on drama courses have well-developed acting skills. Many students on the national diploma in media have modest prior achievements but develop good skills. On art and design courses, most work is good. Adult interior design students produce good colour notebooks. However, some design work is limited, with too much emphasis on process rather than exploration of ideas. Many design sheets and sketchbooks contain too much writing and too little drawing and ideas exploration.

104.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate media communications and production	2	No. of starts	18	16	*
		% retention	89	94	*
		% pass rate	81	100	*
First diploma in performing arts	2	No. of starts	21	24	22
		% retention	95	83	73
		% pass rate	90	85	100
AS-level photography	3	No. of starts	21	49	83
		% retention	81	86	82
		% pass rate	100	100	96
AS-level art subjects	3	No. of starts	48	65	71
		% retention	63	82	82
		% pass rate	80	77	79
AS-level film studies	3	No. of starts	28	24	34
		% retention	88	89	82
		% pass rate	100	100	100
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	31	31	44
		% retention	71	81	70
		% pass rate	100	92	100

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

Quality of education and training

105. Teaching is very good overall and in media and performing arts it is excellent. Lessons are well planned and objectives are explained clearly to students. On GNVQ intermediate media, students are taught film, radio and sound editing to professional standards. They learn to use contemporary software well. On performing arts courses, the development of students' practical acting and technical skills are supported by careful one-to-one guidance, as well as group exercises. Varied teaching techniques are used, including the study of video and audio examples, lectures and small-group exercises. Art and design students are encouraged to explore their work with the whole group. There is good use of ILT in art theory, both in contextual studies lessons and to present others' work. There is insufficient use of ILT in media teaching. Very good use has been made of additional short qualifications in art and design to enrich the students' learning experience.

106. Resources for media, performing arts and music are excellent, and for art and design they are good. All staff have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Many staff have industrial experience or postgraduate qualifications. All staff are allowed up to five days biennially for subject updating. In recent years, this has included working in film production, in a music studio and with a painter in the Netherlands. Accommodation for drama and dance students is excellent, with a large, purpose built theatre and dance and rehearsal rooms. Facilities for media students are very good, with an industrial-grade television studio and an audio recording suite. Library facilities and the local learning resource centre are very good. Accommodation for art theory classes is inappropriate. Facilities in the three-dimensional (3D) media studio are cramped, with large groups of students being taught in a small room.

107. Assessment is very good on performing arts and media and some art and design courses. Excellent verbal feedback is given to AS-level and GCE A-level dance and music students, which is supportive but properly critical. Most students receive helpful written feedback. On some art and design courses, feedback has insufficient evaluative judgements on concepts and ideas and concentrates too much on techniques and processes.

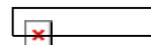
108. Guidance and support are excellent. All full-time students attend both individual and group tutorials and receive very helpful advice and support. Learning support is readily available, both in class and within central services. Students with dyslexia receive good, unobtrusive support. All students are aware of their individual targets and many strive to achieve a higher grade. Individual learning plans are used well and are taken seriously by students in planning their goals.

Leadership and management

109. Leadership and management are very good. Relationships between all managers and staff are good. Communications within the faculty are good, with regular bulletins and meetings which part-time staff attend. Good use is made of faculty meetings which include topical issues such as dealing with bullying. There is a supportive appraisal system and guidance on improving teaching is included in appraisal. The system of internal lesson observation is excellent, and teachers have two lessons observed each year. Good internal staff training is provided on course management and methods of assessment. Teachers are supported in their professional development and this includes financial support for professional courses. They are also allocated time each year to update and improve their skills. Good use is made of management information to set targets and to monitor value added. The self-inspection report is rigorous, with highly appropriate targets and very good action planning. On occasions, full-time qualifications have been changed to improve retention rates; for example, the national diploma in fine art is now offered instead of AVCE art and design. The internal lesson observation grades reflect the overall position, but there is no breakdown into different areas within the curriculum. Resources are deployed effectively and equipment is updated regularly.

110.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- high retention rates

- successful access provision

- high standards of students' work

- much very good and outstanding teaching

- high-quality resources effectively used in many lessons

- particularly effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT to enhance students' learning.

Scope of provision

111. Courses offered include a range of AS-level and GCE A-level subjects including psychology, law, sociology, history, geography, and government and politics. These are principally offered to full-time students aged 16 to 18. A few subjects are offered to adults in the evening. Access to HE courses for adult students offer different pathways through a range of subject options. There are 120 full-time and 10 part-time adult access students.

Achievement and standards

112. Pass rates and the proportion of students gaining high grades are high for GCE A-level courses. AS-level pass rates are consistently high for psychology and sociology and at the national average for law, history, and government and politics. At AS level, the proportion of students gaining high grades has been above national averages on most courses. In most subjects students achieve their expected grades. Retention rates for AS-level and GCE A-level courses are good. For the access to HE course, the retention rate improved significantly in 2003 to equal the high pass rate.

113. The standard of most students' work is high. Students are enthusiastic and demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding. GCE A-level sociology students are able to apply different sociological theories learnt on the AS-level course to current work on crime and deviance. Many students, in particular in law and government and politics lessons, ask perceptive questions and are keen to challenge traditional views and concepts. Students are well prepared to undertake research which leads to high standards in their coursework. Where teachers emphasise the development of communication skills, students make rapid progress. In a GCE A-level government and politics lesson, students presented research on the powers of the American president effectively using software and poster presentations. GCE A-level and access to HE students are ambitious and many progress successfully to HE. Attendance is good.

114.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	134	180	195
		% retention	81	86	83
		% pass rate	87	82	84
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	48	66	58
		% retention	92	91	82
		% pass rate	75	90	77
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	74	102	132
		% retention	82	87	82
		% pass rate	100	63	69
GCE A-level psychology *	3	No. of starts	83	68	78
		% retention	75	97	96
		% pass rate	76	94	92
GCE A-level law *	3	No. of starts	30	48	42
		% retention	70	94	95
		% pass rate	90	98	95
GCE A-level sociology *	3	No. of starts	27	34	39
		% retention	67	100	97
		% pass rate	94	100	95
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	74	81	87
		% retention	62	65	90
		% pass rate	89	92	92

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

*** GCE A level retention rate measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003**

Quality of education and training

115. Teaching is excellent overall. In the best lessons, students are well motivated and work well either on their own or collaboratively. The best teaching inspires students by engaging their full attention in exciting and productive learning. The pace is brisk and much material is covered. In an access to HE lesson involving making presentations, students followed the teacher's example by practising what they had learned about body language. Students' confidence increased markedly as they demonstrated the ability to stand and speak in front of other students. Courses are planned carefully, with lessons which give students purpose and direction. New learning begins after careful consolidation. Learning is constantly checked and well summarised at the end of lessons. Teachers explain concepts and theories clearly, eliciting appropriate examples and providing well-structured activities to increase understanding. Psychology students improve their research skills through the critical scrutiny of the rest of the class. High-quality resources are used to stimulate interest, guide learning and develop skills. In a history lesson, students enjoyed using resources which included photographs and pen portraits of ordinary people who worked on Stalin's collective farms. Using imaginary interviews, the students worked towards the production of a balanced documentary based on conflicting evidence. Teachers make frequent references to the criteria used for assessment in examinations. Occasionally, teachers fail to ensure that activities are suited to the needs of the most able students. Students benefit from their teachers' use of high-quality presentations, but they do not have sufficient opportunities to use IT to enhance their own learning. Teachers generally fail to exploit wider opportunities for incorporating IT in their teaching.

116. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Spacious, comfortably furnished classrooms are well equipped. Students have the use of a local learning resource centre as well as the library. The book stock is well suited to students' needs. Students have access to up-to-date computers, which they use mainly for presenting their work and searching the Internet. There are insufficient well-developed materials on the virtual learning environment for students to pursue independent or collaborative work.

117. Assessment and monitoring of students' work are strong. Students know when and how they will be assessed. Regular homework is marked according to the criteria set by awarding bodies and returned promptly. Teachers' constructive comments enable students to improve their work. Realistic but challenging targets are set for all students, and individual progress is regularly monitored and reviewed by subject teachers and tutors. Students have a clear understanding of both their targets and their current performance.

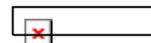
118. Students' learning support needs are carefully assessed. Most students take advantage of the support offered, and most of these go on to achieve their qualifications. Tutorial support for full-time students is very good. Tutors are attentive to the needs of individual students. There is a well-planned tutorial programme that provides for students' academic oversight and their wider personal development. Teachers undertake careful monitoring of students' attendance and respond quickly to non-attendance or to underperformance. Students have access to good advice and guidance when they plan future courses of study or employment. Access to HE students, in particular, are well supported by an extensive range of college services offering financial and welfare advice, counselling and learning support.

Leadership and management

119. Leadership and management are very good. Managers provide a clear direction and a vision which is shared by staff. There are clear lines of responsibility which are understood by all staff. Curriculum management is very effective and results in high pass and retention rates, very good teaching, high standards of students' work and strong support and guidance for individual students. There is detailed planning of the curriculum and clear, comprehensive documentation. Managers have improved recruitment and initial advice and guidance procedures to ensure that students are enrolled on appropriate courses. Managers ensure that there is thorough assessment and monitoring of students' performance against target grades. Staff work well as a team. Common

policies are consistently implemented. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, but there is insufficient analysis of value added data, teaching and learning, particularly in terms of the use of ILT. The internal lesson observation profile awarded more high grades than inspectors.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Contributory grade for modern foreign languages is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- very high pass rates on the majority of courses

- very good development of analytical skills

- most teaching good or better

- very effective use of assessment to support students' progress.

Weaknesses

- insufficient modern foreign language resources, restricting learning opportunities.

Scope of provision

120. There is a broad range of courses in English and modern foreign languages. These include AS-level and GCE A-level courses in English language, English literature, French, German, and Spanish, which are mainly offered to full-time students aged 16 to 18. GCSE courses include English, French and Spanish. Open College modules are offered in French, German, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Welsh and creative writing. These provide good opportunities for additional accreditation for full-time students and they are also available to part-time students. Evening classes are offered at the main college site and at a variety of locations in the community. There are 210 full-time students aged 16 to 18, of whom about two-thirds study English and one-third, foreign languages. Most of the 534 adult students are studying foreign languages.

Achievement and standards

121. Pass rates for most AS-level and GCE A-level courses are high. The proportions of students attaining high grades are also consistently above national averages. Retention rates for AS-level and

GCE A-level courses are also high for most subjects. For GCSE English language, pass rates at grades A* to C are consistently high, but retention rates were below national averages for two out of the three years 2001 to 2003.

122. Students develop very good technical and analytical skills. AS-level and GCE A-level English language and English literature students produce well-constructed written arguments, supported effectively by textual references, and GCSE students make good use of quotations within their written work. Modern foreign languages students' written work demonstrates good use of idiom and the ability to use complex grammar with accuracy. There is a very strong emphasis during lessons on technical and specialist terminology and students use this with confidence. Students are encouraged to explore ideas and regularly take part in genuine, intellectual debate. In a creative writing lesson, there was some excellent analysis as students evaluated one another's poems and discussed the value of this type of critical analysis. AS-level Spanish students studying a complex text analysed the structure of the language and identified links with language which was more familiar to them. This enabled them successfully to translate a difficult passage into fluent English.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Open College French 2	1	No. of starts	29	23	19
		% retention	76	87	84
		% pass rate	32	80	81
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	59	78	64
		% retention	61	73	64
		% pass rate	72	84	78
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	85	100	92
		% retention	84	77	76
		% pass rate	92	97	96
AS-level French language	3	No. of starts	30	29	23
		% retention	63	83	91
		% pass rate	95	96	100
GCE A-level English language *	3	No. of starts	54	70	58
		% retention	76	94	97
		% pass rate	95	100	98
GCE A-level English literature *	3	No. of starts	68	48	54
		% retention	75	98	93
		% pass rate	94	100	98
GCE A-level French language *	3	No. of starts	26	16	19
		% retention	65	100	89
		% pass rate	94	100	100

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

* GCE A-level retention rate measured over two years in 2001 and over one year in 2002 and 2003

Quality of education and training

123. Teaching is very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and students are lively, confident and responsive. In a GCSE English lesson, students were studying George Orwell's *1984*. A real sense of the teacher's love of the subject was conveyed to the students, who demonstrated a high degree of interest, unusual at this level, asking questions, and making spontaneous contributions. Teaching is well planned and includes structured activities, providing opportunities for the development of a range of skills. Effective questioning probes students' understanding and encourages them to achieve their full potential.

124. In the minority of less-effective lessons in foreign languages, teachers lead many of the activities and do not allow students sufficient opportunities to work independently. Some activities last too long and students lose concentration. Where modern foreign languages groups are small, students do not have enough opportunity to learn from one another.

125. Resources available to support learning are good overall. Teaching rooms are attractively decorated with subject-related materials and students' work. They are well equipped with computers and data projectors, though the use of these is not fully developed. There is a very wide range of English literature texts and subject-related booklets available. This includes a wide range of plays and poetry books. Videos include dramatisations of Jane Austen's novels and a broad selection of Shakespearean plays, accompanied by study notes. Students make good use of ILT outside lessons on English courses, and there are lesson notes, presentations and study skills materials on the college intranet.

126. Three full-time French, German and Spanish foreign language assistants provide good additional support to students. There are insufficient foreign language resources, such as magazines and audio or video materials, which restricts opportunities for independent learning. Some languages materials are available on the college intranet, but there are few language-specific resources for German or Spanish.

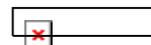
127. Assessment is very strong. Students' work is marked in detail, with guidance explaining how they can improve. Students are regularly reminded to include quotations and specialist or technical language. In modern foreign languages, a common assignment feedback sheet is used. This identifies strengths and areas for improvement against each of the assessment criteria. Clear reference is also made to target grades, and these are used very effectively to encourage students to reach their potential. Standardisation meetings take place in English and new staff have a subject mentor to ensure that standards are consistent. In almost all lessons, there are explicit, frequent references to the requirements of the examination, and these are strengthened further in English rooms through displays.

128. The range of courses is appropriate. All students in the college can study for an additional qualification in a language. There are links with local schools and subject 'taster' sessions in the college. Enrichment opportunities for English students include regular theatre visits, and students studying French and German have the opportunity to visit Paris and Berlin. Students value the support they receive from staff.

Leadership and management

129. Leadership and management are good. Lines of responsibility are clear. Newly qualified teachers have a subject mentor. There are effective communications between the curriculum area manager and the co-ordinator of part-time community languages programmes. Subject-specific teams have regular, productive monthly meetings. Minutes of meetings identify teaching and learning issues, including resources and staff development, and schemes of work. Meetings are also held termly for modern foreign languages staff teaching in the community. Careful monitoring takes place of students' progress, retention rates and achievement data. All staff, including part-time staff, contribute to the self-assessment process. There is insufficient detailed analysis of teaching and learning in the self-assessment report, and there are no specific actions identified which will help the area to improve. The grades awarded in internal lesson observations are higher than those awarded during inspection.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities



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

Strengths

- very good and outstanding teaching

- very well-structured curriculum

- very good progression routes to employment

- excellent management

- outstanding support for all students.

Weaknesses

- some unsuitable accommodation for community-based courses.

Scope of provision

130. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at several locations. There is a well-structured curriculum which provides progression opportunities for all students. There are 50 full-time students and 25 part-time students on the main campus, where entry level courses are provided. Students can choose from seven vocational options. They study literacy, numeracy, IT, independence and social skills, in addition to external qualifications in their chosen vocational pathway. The Petty Pool College, a franchised provision, offers a more protected environment for students who are vulnerable or who have complex needs; the 69 full-time students have a similar range of vocational options and can also study land based and small animal care. The community-based provision in 6 centres enables 49 adults with severe learning difficulties and mental health needs to take a wide range of individually tailored part-time courses which promote independence and citizenship. Enrichment opportunities are provided through tutorials and additional vocational options.

Achievement and standards

131. Students' achievements are very good and in practical activities they are excellent. Students on

the 'skills for working life' course attain particularly well in vocational settings. Students on the small animal care and land-based pathways at the Petty Pool College gain high-level practical skills for employment through their work on the college's farm. Entry level students on the catering pathway at the main campus develop the skills needed to run one of the college restaurants. Students on the production pathway gain skills in joinery, painting and decorating, brickwork and plastering in workshops where they work alongside mainstream students. Some students attain higher level vocational units at NVQ level 1, in addition to entry level qualifications. Attainment for many life skills students is high when accommodation is suitable for learning domestic and self-care skills, such as in the kitchen at the Petty Pool College. In one very good lesson, students cooked microwave meals with minimal support. However, lack of vocational provision for students on the retail pathway prevents higher levels of attainment. Adults learning in community settings do not achieve as well when accommodation is unsuitable. The attainment of adults in a pottery class is depressed because they do not have access to a kiln or appropriate working surfaces.

132.

Quality of education and training

133. Most teaching is very good or outstanding, and no teaching is less than good. Schemes of work are well structured and include literacy and numeracy targets which are differentiated in meticulous detail. Lessons are very well planned. In the best lessons, students learn and achieve at the appropriate level. In one group tutorial, the teacher used the computer to word process students' verbal responses projected on to a large screen. In a literacy lesson the teacher projected a photograph of the students taken in a previous lesson to help them recall prior learning. In a life skills cookery lesson, students with severe learning difficulties all learned to be more independent, within their own capabilities. In one lively IT lesson, the teacher used several teaching methods to ensure that the needs of students with different learning styles were met.

134. Full-time staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Core team staff have completed training in the adult core curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning is very much enhanced by the mix of vocationally qualified teachers and those with experience in working with students with learning difficulties. Part-time staff working in adult community settings have appropriate vocational qualifications and either have or are working towards teaching qualifications. Accommodation and physical resources at the main campus and at the Petty Pool site are very good, but some of the community venues are poor. Record keeping is exemplary. Internal verification is robust. Students' timetables contain images and pictorial clues and for students with poor literacy skills, photographs of lecturers are included to remind students of the structure of each day.

135. Initial assessment is comprehensive and informs high-quality individual learning plans. These are used effectively to plan lessons and focus teaching on individual needs. Progress towards achievement of individual targets is formally monitored in twice-yearly multi-disciplinary review meetings, and in weekly small-group and individual tutorials. Learning is led by the individual learning plans, which ensures that all students learn relevant social and life skills on which vocational skills can then be built. Assessment is imaginative and does not rely too much on paper-based recording. Where worksheets are used, they are of a very high quality and include clear language, images, photographs and symbols to provide cues for reading and spelling. In all lessons, learning is assessed using photographs, teacher observations and witness statements. In one lesson, a digital photograph of students at work had been captioned with questions to check students' underpinning knowledge.

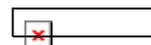
136. Support for students is outstanding. It is delivered through a culture which values the dignity and status of students. Support is tailored to meet a wide range of needs. A group of students have regular speech therapy as part of their timetable, and one student has physiotherapy at lunch time. Learning mentors are well qualified and experienced. Excellent use is made of adaptive technology which promotes independence. Specialist counselling is available for sensitive issues. One-to-one tutorials are available on request, on a daily basis, to deal with personal or academic issues, and there is regular contact with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

137. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a clear vision for the programme area. The self-assessment report is rigorous and includes a detailed development plan for continuous improvement. The curriculum manager responsible for the provision at the main campus works effectively in collaboration with the chief executive of The Petty Pool Trust and with key staff involved in adult community provision. There are very good links with a wide range of external agencies which are used productively. Social and health care workers and Connexions advisors attend annual reviews. There are rigorous quality assurance systems in place and lesson planning and recording of students' achievements is of a consistently high standard across the provision. Teaching teams meet regularly and discuss teaching and learning issues, curriculum planning and students' progress. There is effective communication between core staff and vocational teachers, which ensures that personal tutors can respond quickly to issues causing concern. There is an inclusive culture in the college as a whole, and staff work well to raise awareness and work closely with vocational staff who demonstrate confidence and skills in teaching students with learning difficulties. The use of the college management information system to formally record students' achievements is underdeveloped. Managers have not addressed all issues relating to physical resources at community venues.

138.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Contributory grade for adult literacy and numeracy is good (grade 2)

Strengths

- high pass rates for key skills

- good and very good teaching and learning in key skills

- outstanding support for learning on full-time courses

- wide range of adult provision in the community.

Weaknesses

- weak aspects of management of adult community provision.

Scope of provision

139. The college offers a range of discrete literacy and numeracy courses to 190 part-time adult students in a range of local community venues in Crewe, Sandbach, Middlewich and Congleton. Basic skills courses are also offered in the workplace for employees at a local factory. Accredited and non-accredited family learning takes place in local primary and secondary schools, and 60 adult students are enrolled on these courses. All students aged 16 to 18 are provided with the opportunity to study key skills in communication and application of number at level 1 or level 2. Learning support for literacy and numeracy is offered to all college students identified as needing it, through both individual support workshops and in-class support. In-class support is provided for 62 courses. Full-time students on entry level vocational programmes attend literacy and numeracy lessons as part of their course of study.

Achievement and standards

140. Most pass rates are very good. At key skills level 1, the pass rate for communication has been significantly above the national average for the three years to 2003. For application of number, the pass rate was well above the national average for two out of the three years to 2003. Students' achievements on discrete literacy and numeracy courses are good, and improving. In 2002 and 2003, pass rates for spelling skills were 100%. Students attending additional support lessons make very good improvements in social skills and personal skills as well as achieving well in literacy and numeracy. Adult students gain in confidence and self-esteem, whilst students receiving support in key skills lessons take a high level of responsibility for their own learning and make very good progress in working together in groups.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Key skills communication	1	No. of starts	142	73	120
		% retention	87	79	71
		% pass rate	63	59	69
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	268	64	67
		% retention	70	52	61
		% pass rate	61	6	68
Spelling skills	1	No. of starts	265	257	161
		% retention	100	100	99
		% pass rate	92	100	100
Basic literacy (one year and short)	1	No. of starts	161	194	37
		% retention	80	83	86
		% pass rate	47	82	100
Key skills communication	2	No. of starts	416	216	345
		% retention	87	79	82
		% pass rate	58	83	69
Key skills application of number	2	No. of starts	375	188	280
		% retention	84	65	78
		% pass rate	53	80	63

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

Quality of education and training

141. Teaching and learning are very good. Key skills lessons are particularly well planned. The pace is lively and skills are linked effectively to the vocational area. Students are motivated and enthusiastic and work productively. A wide variety of teaching methods is used. Learning mentors play an integral part in each lesson. Assignments are linked to key skills lessons, with topics and themes relevant to the students' vocational area. There is very good access to ICT within the college. In a communication lesson, students evaluated their own presentations. They identified that use of a software presentation package had helped them to organise their ideas and deliver a clear message.

142. Discrete programmes for adults in the community have a base in the central library. Classrooms there are well resourced and teachers use a variety of approaches and materials to engage students. In one lesson, the teacher selected real advertisements to illustrate persuasive writing. She used a data projector to show well-prepared slides of colourful advertisements and to focus in on particular parts of the text to explore adjectives and figurative language. The lively discussion was reinforced by work on high-quality worksheets. Adult literacy and numeracy classes take place in schools, community centres and shopping malls. Some classes meet the needs of particular groups, including the travellers' community. Family learning is based in local primary schools. The college also works in partnership with local employers. Very good teaching and learning were observed in an aluminium smelting factory. Employees are supported to attend lessons for literacy using IT, during their shifts or as overtime. The small group of men and women were totally absorbed in the activity of using publishing software to make a greetings card. The uninspiring environment did not deter them and they worked collaboratively, making suggestions and helping each other.

143. The majority of staff hold teaching qualifications and staff development programmes have been effective in contributing to improvements in teaching and learning. Most teachers have had recent, relevant training in teaching basic skills. However, not all subject-specific development needs are adequately addressed.

144. Initial assessment is effective in identifying students' literacy and numeracy needs on entry, and appropriate support is provided. The results of diagnostic assessment are used effectively in the planning of teaching and learning. All students have an individual learning plan. There are regular individual reviews. Some students on discrete literacy and numeracy courses in the community do not have appropriate individual targets.

145. Teachers provide clear and constructive comments on students' work that helps them to improve.

146. Additional support is outstanding and enables students to achieve very well in key skills and in other areas of learning. Support is delivered in a sensitive and flexible way, taking account of preferred learning styles. Staff plan together to meet the needs of students with different abilities. Support staff prepare adapted materials and provide pastoral support.

147. Support is good for adult essential skills students. Trained volunteers establish good relationships with students and teachers. Staff based in different areas within the college work well together; communication between these staff is very good. Staff value diversity and treat others equally and with respect. Additional support enables students to make exceptionally good progress in achieving demanding learning goals and moving on to more advanced courses.

Leadership and management

148. Leadership and management are good. Managers encourage staff to work in a flexible and creative way to provide literacy and numeracy support to meet the needs of students. Staff development and appraisal are efficiently managed. Staff teams are loyal, caring, dedicated and committed. There is a positive culture, with mutual sharing of good practice. Additional support for literacy and numeracy in lessons is organised effectively and helps students to achieve well. The effectiveness of literacy and numeracy additional support is monitored rigorously to measure its impact. The self-assessment report is largely accurate but it does not have sufficient analysis of

community-based literacy and numeracy courses for adults. Quality assurance has not identified staff development needs in this area. Some teachers lack a sufficient level of subject knowledge to respond flexibly to students' needs and this restricts opportunities to extend students' learning. Equality of opportunity has a high profile and is promoted effectively.

149.

Part D: College data

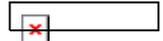
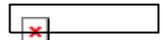


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	13	25
2	24	18
3	49	12
4/5	1	5
Other	14	41
Total*	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

** figures have been rounded and may not total 100%*

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%) *
Science and mathematics	817	202	5
Land-based provision	0	12	0
Construction	163	253	4
Engineering, technology and manufacture	185	302	5
Business administration, management and professional	451	1,950	11
Information and communications technology	967	2,501	15
Retailing, customer service and	32	210	1

transportation			
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	661	768	12
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	192	466	6
Health, social care and public services	350	913	8
Visual and performing arts and media	664	1,717	10
Humanities	1,326	2,023	10
English, languages and communication	721	533	5
Foundation programmes	420	834	7
Other/unknown	0	23	0
Total	6,949	12,707	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	695	518	842	1,324	1,465	1,400
	Retention rate %	78	80	76	79	86	79
	National average %	75	76	*	69	70	*
	Pass rate %	60	80	74	74	77	91
	National average %	69	71	*	68	71	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	836	785	990	1,391	1,416	1,327
	Retention rate %	73	70	68	81	79	78
	National average %	70	72	*	68	68	*
	Pass rate %	75	83	86	68	78	87
	National average %	69	71	*	68	72	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,843	2,874	2,958	1,018	848	829
	Retention rate %	79	85	85	75	73	79
	National average %	71	77	*	68	70	*
	Pass rate %	90	89	89	73	85	90

	National average %	77	79	*	69	72	*
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Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. *National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.*

2. *College rates for 2000/01 to 2002/03: College ISR.*

** no national averages available for 2002/03 at time of publication*

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)	83	16	1	132
Level 2 (intermediate)	89	11	0	62
Level 1 (foundation)	71	26	3	35
Other sessions	89	9	3	35
Totals	84	15	1	264

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