North East Surrey College of Technology

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	North East Surrey College of Technology
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Ron Pritchard
Address of college:	Reigate Road
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	Epsom
	Surrey
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Telephone number:	0208 394 3000
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Chair of governors:	David Smith
Unique reference number:	130822
Name of reporting inspector:	Barry Barrett-Mold
Dates of inspection:	22-26 November 2004

Part A: Summary
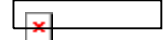
Information about the college
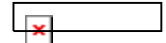
North East Surrey College of Technology is a large general further education (FE) college located in the Borough of Epsom and Ewell in outer, southwest London. The majority of the college's provision is provided at the main site in Ewell originally opened in 1953 with extensions and additions in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. The college also has `learning shops' providing information and communications technology (ICT) training, in Epsom, Leatherhead and Dorking. The college also provides higher education (HE) programmes, educational facilities in five local prisons and some community-based essential skills provision. In 2003/04, there were 15,121 students (4,558 full-time equivalents) enrolled at the college, 85% of these were enrolled on part-time courses. Some 85% of these full-time equivalent students were adults and 56% were female.

The college offers courses in 13 of the 14 areas of learning, although numbers in engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy and English are low. The largest numbers of full-time equivalent students are in ICT and construction being 28% and 20%, of the total college enrolments respectively. Work-based learning is in construction, care and amenity horticulture. However, total numbers are low at 142 apprentices. The majority of these (118) are in construction, the remainder are equally shared between care and amenity horticulture. In 2003/04, some 56% of enrolments were on courses at level 1, 26% at level 2, 10% at level 3 and 4% at level 4. The college has links with local schools and over 200 school pupils have attended vocational taster programmes.

Surrey has one of the highest levels of attendance at independent schools in the country. There are five secondary schools, with sixth forms, within a five mile radius of the college. The participation rate in Surrey, at 84%, reflects the range of available options and is one of the highest staying-on rates in full-time education at age 16 in the country. However, this rate falls just below the national average for young people aged 17 and 18. Some 22% of Nescot's students are of minority ethnic origin, which is significantly above the local average of 5.0%. The percentage of pupils in local schools achieving five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades A* to C is 59.4%, significantly above the national average of 52.9%.

The college's mission is encapsulated in the `Nescot Way' - `putting our students at the heart of everything we do' - `valuing everyone as individuals' - `and having high expectations of ourselves and our students'.

How effective is the college?
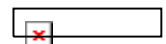
The provision at North East Surrey College of Technology is inadequate. Provision is unsatisfactory in 6 of the 11 curriculum areas inspected, satisfactory in 4 and good in 1. In addition, work-based learning in construction is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are also unsatisfactory. Overall achievements at all levels are unsatisfactory. The overall standard of teaching is below the

listed below.

Key strengths

- o good community provision in the learning shops

- o effective strategies to widen participation

- o broad range of provision

- o good provision in land-based programmes and music technology.

What should be improved

- o students' retention and pass rates

- o the quality of teaching and learning

- o the quality of provision in construction, business administration, sport, visual and performing arts and humanities

- o the arrangements for class cover

- o the range of programmes at level 1 and 2

- o the accessibility to literacy and numeracy support

- o the provision of key skills

- o quality assurance and the use of data.

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
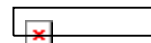
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Land-based programmes	**Good.** Students achieve high pass rates in the general examination in horticulture and the first diploma in animal care. There is much good teaching which links theory to practice, but there are insufficient teaching resources. There is very good pastoral support for students, but learning support is insufficiently integrated with vocational teaching. There are good strategies to widen participation which are well implemented and the management of the land-based curriculum is good.
Construction	**Unsatisfactory.** The contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory**. Success rates on electrical installation courses and completion rates of work-based learning frameworks are poor. Students on level 1 craft courses gain good skills and achieve well. There is much poor teaching, especially in theory lessons, however, practical teaching is often good. Resources to support teaching and assessment in plumbing are inadequate.
Business administration, management and professional	**Unsatisfactory.** There are poor pass rates in many programmes. Much of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Information technology (IT) resources are insufficiently used to support effective teaching. There is insufficient college planning of work experience and vocational enrichment for full-time students.
Information and communications technology	**Satisfactory.** There is particularly effective operational management in the learning shops, however, management of college-based courses is weak. Good teaching, combined with good assessment, leads to good achievement in the learning shops. On full-time courses, teaching does not ensure students learn at a rate according to their ability, there is insufficient support, particularly for literacy and numeracy, and students underachieve.
Sport, leisure and tourism	**Unsatisfactory.** Much teaching is unsatisfactory and the retention and pass rates on the sport courses are unsatisfactory and deteriorating. Attendance is unsatisfactory. There is poor support for new staff and poor quality assurance on sport programmes. There are good retention and pass rates on travel courses.
Health, social care and public services	**Satisfactory.** Retention and pass rates on full-time courses are good, but pass rates on some part-time courses are poor. The curriculum is particularly flexible and responsive to the needs of students and local employers, however, individual needs are not met sufficiently. Teaching, learning, resources and assessment are satisfactory.

	Leadership and management and the promotion of equality of opportunity are satisfactory, however, quality assurance procedures do not adequately ensure consistency across the area of learning or lead to continuing improvement.
Visual and performing arts and media	**Unsatisfactory.** There is much unsatisfactory teaching and a failure to successfully apply constructive, firm guidance in the assessment of students. There are low retention and pass rates on many courses. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are insufficiently effective on many subjects. The curriculum area management is weak and quality assurance is ineffective. Where there is good practice in music technology, it is not shared across the curriculum area.
Humanities	**Unsatisfactory.** Retention rates are poor and while some subjects have good pass rates many are unsatisfactory. There is some good teaching, but in some lessons learning is limited by poorly organised teaching and insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT). On the general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) programme, there is effective support for students and good monitoring of individual student performance, however, additional support for students with specific learning needs is limited. Self-assessment is ineffective.
English for speakers of other languages	**Satisfactory.** Teachers are skilled in providing challenging and communicative lessons that help students make good progress towards their learning goals. ICT is creatively used to enhance learning on the main college site. There are no vocational courses to support progression and there is insufficient support for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) students. Quality assurance procedures are insufficiently used to improve the programme.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	**Satisfactory.** The college offers a wide range of courses and options that provide a variety of opportunities for students. However, there is poor progression from the programmes on to vocational course or into employment. Teachers provide good personal and social support for students. There are insufficiently rigorous arrangements to assure the quality of the programmes.
Literacy and numeracy	**Unsatisfactory.** There are very poor pass rates in key skills. There is good use of vocationally related materials in many lessons and good individual support for literacy and numeracy students. There is unsatisfactory target setting in key skills lessons and inadequate identification of literacy and numeracy needs for level 3 students.

How well is the college led and managed?
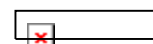
Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Financial management in the college is weak. Since the last inspection, retention and pass rates have improved, but have failed to keep pace with improvements in the national averages. Most retention and achievement rates are below the national averages. Six curriculum areas in this inspection have been judged as unsatisfactory compared to one in the last inspection in 2000. The college has been successful in widening participation and its learning shops, in particular, have been at the forefront of providing high-quality education and training in the community. A new management structure was introduced in March 2004. The quality of curriculum management is variable across the college. Quality assurance is weak. There are no policies in place that allocate responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure continuous improvement

performance.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?
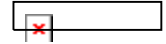
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college attracts students from a wide range of backgrounds including mental health service users, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, ex-offenders, disaffected young people and school pupils aged 14 to 16. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, at 22%, is four times higher than in the local population. All courses and a significant proportion of the college can be accessed independently by students with mobility difficulties. Staff have received training on disability issues, but not on race equality. The college complies with the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). A race equality policy and an implementation plan are in place, but the policy has not been fully implemented. Data have only recently been used to monitor students according to their ethnicity, gender or disability. Student awareness of equality issues is variable. The college has not done enough to improve the low numbers of male or female students in some curriculum areas. Teaching materials are not checked systematically in terms of equality of opportunity. Diverse cultures are celebrated through displays in common areas, such as the college reception.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?
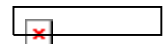
Support for students is satisfactory. Students receive clear and impartial advice through the college's advice and recruitment centre which is open in the evenings and on Saturday mornings. Regular open evenings and taster days enable students to make informed choices of programmes. Induction tutorials allow students aged 16 to 18 on full-time programmes to review choices, although not all are timely and comprehensive. Initial assessment of additional learning needs is well organised and its effectiveness is well monitored. All full-time students, on programmes up to and including level 2, undertake a literacy and numeracy diagnostic test, but students on level 3 courses are not routinely offered support. A new tutorial policy has recently been introduced, but its implementation is not consistent across the college. A punctuality policy is in place, but this has also not yet been consistently applied across all curriculum areas. There is a well-resourced careers area in the learning resources centre. Advice on applying to HE is widely available, but not all students are able to make their applications online. There are appropriate arrangements in place for financial support and for counselling services. The college has a designated person responsible for child protection matters, but its policy has yet to be formally adopted and disseminated to staff.

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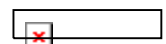
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the college

- o   friendly, helpful staff

- o gym and sports facilities

- o being treated like an adult

- o good teaching materials

- o opportunity to learn subjects for future career.

What they feel could be improved

- o notification of, and cover for staff absences

- o security and personal safety

- o slow college response to issues raised by students

- o expensive canteen food and the availability of hot food in the evening

- o limited, quiet social space

- o planning of teaching - organisation of assignments, conflicting deadlines unclear guidance, contradictory information

- o poor teaching equipment - no accessible computers, no paper in printers, no IT in lessons, restriction on virtual learning environment, insufficient practical tools, no textbooks

- o large groups.

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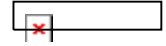
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The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

Part B: The college as a whole
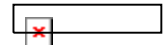
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	45	39	16
19+ and WBL*	77	18	5
Learning 16-18	46	37	17
19+ and WBL*	76	21	3

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards
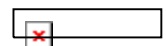
1. Pass rates at most levels and for most students of all ages have improved over the four-year period from 2000/01 to 2003/04, however, they are still below national averages. The rates of improvement have generally failed to keep pace with the improvements in the national averages. Overall success rates have also improved. Over the same period, retention rates have remained constant or have declined, especially for adult students, and continue to be well below national averages.

16 to 18 year olds

2. There are 1,651 full-time equivalent enrolments of students aged 16 to 18 which account for 36% of the total full-time equivalent enrolments for 2002/03, the most recent year for which audited data is available.

3. The college offers a wide range of courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18; 16% of full-time enrolments are on courses at level 3, 12% at level 2 and 8% at level 1.

4. Pass rates on level 3 courses are below the average for general FE colleges. Pass and retention rates on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) courses are low and the number of students who progress from AS level to GCE A level is low. The college's overall pass and retention rates at GCE A level have improved over recent years and are now similar to the national averages. The college's analysis of data, which compares the students' level of performance at GCE A level with that of GCSE, is in its infancy and tutors are not able to set realistic performance targets for their students. The college also offers a range of national diplomas, advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) and national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses at level 3. Pass and retention rates on these vocational programmes are significantly below national averages.

5. Overall pass rates at level 2 are in line with national averages. Most students study either for a GCSE or NVQ and results across the curriculum areas are variable. The pass rates for land-based and business NVQs and care general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are above the national averages, whereas the pass rates for NVQs in construction and GNVQs art and design are significantly below national averages. Retention rates show little indication of improvement overall and are still well below national averages.

6. The number of students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 programmes is low, some 4% of enrolments in 2002/03. Some 550 students are involved in a range of qualifications excluding NVQs. Pass and retention rates for these qualifications are well below the national averages. However, for the small number of students entered for an NVQ at level 1 pass and retention rates are significantly above the national average.

7. On average, about 350 students aged 16 to 18 took short course qualifications in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The success rates are 53%, 50% and 63%, respectively. These rates are well below the national average of 71% and are unsatisfactory. College data indicate an improvement close to the national average for 2004. Students have achieved very poor results in their key skill qualifications. In 2003, of the 1,208 students who started a key skill qualification, only 52 were successful. Of these, 40 achieved application of number at level 1, 11 achieved IT at level 2 and 1 student achieved communications at level 3.

Adult learners

8. Some 84% of the college's students are adults equating to 64% of the full-time equivalent numbers. The majority of these students, some 24%, are enrolled on level 1 courses, 10% on level 2, 8% on level 3 and a further 24% on level 4 and other courses.

9. Overall pass rates have improved over the period 2000/03, with the exception of level 3 which has declined from above the national average to below, and now places the college in the bottom 10% of similar colleges. However, the improvements at level 1 and 2 still leave pass rates significantly below the national figures and place the college in the bottom 15% of colleges. The exception to these pass rates is for level 3 GCE A-level and AS-level qualifications where adult students outperform the students aged 16 to 18 by some 20 percentage points. Many adults who come to college do so with few qualifications and therefore follow courses at entry level and level 1. A large proportion of these enrol at the college's learning shops in local community centres to follow ICT programmes. Pass rates are high and many successful students progress to level 2 courses. Overall pass rates at level 1 have improved over the period 2000 to 2003, but are still well below the national averages. College data indicate further improvements close to national averages for 2004.

10. Retention rates for adults are declining at levels 2 and 3 and for short courses with values significantly below the national figures. At level 1, retention rates have remained stable, but below national figures. The only area to show improved retention rates are high level courses, where the rate has improved to well above the national average.

11. Pass rates on apprenticeship programmes are very poor. Apprenticeships are offered in construction, care and amenity horticulture. However, total numbers are low, at 142 apprentices. The majority of these, 118, are in construction, the remainder are equally shared between care and amenity horticulture. Since 2001, only six construction apprentices have completed all aspects of their framework. There have been no framework achievements in horticulture or care. Overall success rates for NVQs are below national averages. Learners who successfully complete NVQs in the workplace often fail to obtain qualifications in key skills.

12. The level of students' attainment in many lessons is low. Students' performance in lessons in construction, business administration, sport and travel and visual and performing arts is below the levels expected. In contrast, part-time students in land-based programmes and ICT, full-time students in music technology and students on ESOL programmes all demonstrate good skill acquisition and work competently and confidently. Craft skills students in construction acquire good practical skills and demonstrate levels of skill comparable with those in the workplace.

13. The overall level of attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was 79%, which is in line with the average as reported in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2002/03, and improved from the 71% reported at the last Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspection of the college in January 2000.

Quality of education and training
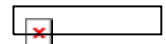
14. Overall, the standards of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In the 198 lessons observed, 59% of teaching is good or better, which is lower than the national average. The percentage of good or better learning at 59% is also below the national average. The proportion of less than satisfactory teaching and learning overall, each at 11%, is higher than the national average. Teaching was most effective in ESOL, ICT, and land-based provision. Teaching was least effective in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; business administration, management and professional; literacy and numeracy; and construction where the proportion of good or better teaching was low. A high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching were found in six areas of learning including; hospitality, sports, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; business administration, management and professional and; construction.

15. There is a marked difference between the proportion of good or better teaching for students aged 16 to 18 and for those aged 19 and over, at 45% and 80%, respectively.

16. In the best lessons, teachers involve students in a range of relevant learning activities. Teaching is planned effectively and activities motivate students well. In ESOL lessons, teachers make good use of students' initial assessment. For example, they set about rectifying grammatical errors, identified during assessment, when developing written language skills. In the community-based learning shops, ICT is taught well with good use of questioning to check learning and ensure that good momentum is maintained throughout. Students are routinely set demanding, but achievable tasks including problem solving. The integration of theory and practice is a particular strength in land-based provision. In one lesson, the teacher used a lively and fluent mix of theory and practical teaching methods when demonstrating how to dig a trench. Weak classroom management and the lack of effective strategies for dealing with disruptive students are characteristics of some unsatisfactory lessons in visual and performing arts and media. Lesson plans are not always used in business and strategies for testing learning or understanding in lessons are not always in place. In construction theory lessons, lesson planning and preparation are frequently unsatisfactory. High

noise levels in some lessons disrupt learning. There is too little involvement of students in lessons and learning is not checked sufficiently. Unsatisfactory aspects of teaching in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel include a lack of subject knowledge, poor attention to safe working practices, ineffective instruction and inadequate lesson planning.

17. Unsatisfactory aspects of lessons observed include lessons which are often dull, lack imagination, contain overly long expositions by the teacher and contain insufficient checking of learning. Preparation and planning are inadequate; students are often passive and they do not learn enough in relation to their ability. Lessons lack sufficient momentum to maintain students' interest and progress.

18. There are sufficient staff, accommodation and equipment to promote student achievement and learning. Some curriculum areas make use of those resources and manage their operation and development better than others. The teaching and vocational qualifications of most of the full-time and part-time staff are good. The majority of staff have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. There are, however, an unacceptably high number of permanent staff who are neither qualified nor working towards a teaching qualification. There is a flexible and responsive approach to staff development in the college, incorporated within a staff development plan. Eight advanced practitioners actively support staff development needs in their curriculum areas. A well-prepared teacher training toolkit is also available to new staff, although formal internal teacher training has been delayed through shortage of staff in this section. A number of teaching staff have only a short period of service which has had an adverse impact on teaching and learning in some areas, notably construction and sport. The college makes a significantly higher usage of teaching by permanent staff than colleges in general. In most curriculum areas, teaching staff have satisfactory levels of technical and learning support.

19. There is a good, well-equipped and resourced learning resources centre which is clearly valued by both staff and students. Specialist subject librarians provide the centre manager with active support for both students and staff across all curriculum areas. Centre opening hours provide satisfactory access for students on full-time and part-time courses. The college has a small enthusiastic team developing a variety of innovative projects within a virtual learning environment, but the facility is not yet fully utilised by the majority of teaching staff.

20. There are satisfactory ICT facilities throughout many of the teaching and learning resource areas and very good facilities within the Centre for Vocational Excellence (CoVE) established for ICT. Across the college, there are good supplies of personal computers for students with one computer for every three full-time equivalent students. In the business and management curriculum area, however, there has been insufficient updating of computer hardware and software and insufficient attention paid to technical support and peripheral supplies.

21. The original college buildings are in reasonable condition and have been satisfactorily maintained and decorated. Most classrooms are well furnished and well decorated, although in some areas of learning, students complained of many room changes and unsympathetic timetabling. There have been several new additions to the building stock including the learning resource centre, construction workshops, a visual and performing arts block, sports hall and nursery. The college has also recently purchased an adjoining sports ground and pavilion which, together with the land used to farm domestic animals, provides an extensive site. There is a new well-equipped nursery providing crèche facilities for students, staff and members of the general public with children under school age. Students needing crèche places for their children have priority.

22. Assessment and monitoring of student progress are not satisfactory in all areas. Most full-time students and some part-time students have an initial assessment that is used to select an appropriate course and level, to identify learning and support needs and to plan learning. In a number of curriculum areas, information is collected on preferred learning styles, but that information is not always fully utilised in planning and conducting lessons. Learning plans are satisfactory and effective learning support is made available to most of those students at level 2 and below whose needs are identified. Students at level 3 are required to select additional support themselves, but there is insufficient monitoring of this process by tutorial staff to ensure that the support is universally adopted.

23. Assessment practice is satisfactory, although there are some pockets as in construction where this is in need of improvement. In particular, work-based onsite assessment in construction is ineffective and infrequent. In better performing areas, assessment is used to monitor progress and the tutorial system is utilised to review and target student progress. Assignment briefs give clear guidance to students about the standards of work to be achieved, although there are areas, as in sport, where improvements need to be made. An increasing number of key skills assignments are being contextualised to be more relevant to the curriculum area in which they are being produced. The approach to key skills assessment has been improved over recent months, but has yet to make a significant difference to students' overall achievements.

24. In most curriculum areas, internal verification is planned and carried out regularly, but in some areas practices are not sufficiently standardised. In a number of areas, the sampling strategy concentrates on sampling candidates, but not the assessment methods. Whilst a number of curriculum areas report good feedback on student assessment, others report feedback that is insufficient to achieve improvements. There are some delays in returning assessed work to distance learning candidates in health and social care.

25. There is little systematic collection of assessment and verification data or analysis of student performance in many curriculum areas. However, those with an immediate interest in student progress, such as parents and employers, are promptly informed with relevant information at regular intervals.

26. The college's response to the needs of local students is satisfactory. Over the years, the college has built up an extensive network of contacts with over 800 employers who take advantage of its provision both at the college and in the workplace. In response to demand in the care and construction industries, the college has been flexible in its development of provision. It provides training to employers in care, who are often unable to release staff to train at a college, through a distance learning scheme. It has responded to the needs of a local National Health Service (NHS) trust by developing a pre-NVQ course in basic skills and ESOL. The college's attempts to attract new employers do not always meet with success. In March 2004, invitations were sent out to some 600 businesses to a professional open evening, 3% of businesses responded. A similar event was repeated in June 2004 the response rate was again 3%.from 550 invitations.

27. The college has taken IT learning into the community through its learning shops in Epsom, Leatherhead and Dorking. These have proved to be very successful both in terms of the number of students using the facilities and their retention rate and successful completion of courses.

28. The college has been reasonably successful in its attempts to widen participation. It now offers a greater range on programmes at entry and level 1 notably in horticulture, animal care and areas of construction. However, some areas, such as business and performing arts, still lack such provision and there are no vocational opportunities in ESOL programmes. The college has also developed a `Skills for Working Life' programme for young people, a course for adults with learning difficulties and another for adults with mental health problems.

29. The college has developed, through a number of partnerships and community projects, links with a number of different minority ethnic groups and its proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, at 22%, is nearly four times higher than in the local community.

30. The school links programme has been extended and there are now some 197 young people aged 14 to 16 taking part in either the school links course for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils or the Increased Flexibility (IF) project in which pupils from 6 Surrey schools take part. Some 16 young people aged under 16, who are not in full-time education for a variety of reasons, follow an alternative education programme.

31. The college does not have a discrete key skills policy. They are dealt with in the Skills for Life Strategy. Generally, key skills are not well integrated into the curriculum. There are examples of good practice such as in land-based programmes and music technology, but in other areas opportunities for the development of these skills are not routinely identified within teaching sessions.

There is no single pattern for the delivery of key skills. In some areas, they are taught by curriculum staff, in others by a mix of curriculum staff and staff from the Skills for Life team. In other areas, this team delivers all the key skills. Whilst such a model is not necessarily a barrier to learning, it does require a tight monitoring process to control quality which is not yet in place. A forum, recently established to oversee issues of quality, does not include representatives of the teaching staff from each curriculum area.

32. Enrichment activities exist in a number of curriculum areas, such as sport, media and humanities, but these activities are not co-ordinated or brought together in such a way which would allow students across the whole college to benefit from all the various activities.

33. The college's response to social education and inclusion is satisfactory. Staff have received appropriate SENDA training. All curriculum areas are accessible to those with restricted mobility. However, it has not fully implemented its racial equality policy and does not use data to monitor the recruitment and progression of groups of students by ethnicity, disability of gender.

34. Advice and guidance are provided through an advice and recruitment centre. The manager and a team of a four recruitment officers provide impartial advice in the centre which has appropriate accommodation for interviews with students and is open in the evenings until 7.00pm and on Saturday mornings between 10.00am and 2.00pm. Staff are experienced and all are working towards appropriate qualifications. Details of courses are provided on well-produced course leaflets which are available on request in languages other than English. College policies are also distributed through the centre to existing students. However, these are mainly addressed to staff rather than students and not all are available on request. Arrangements for the interviewing of applicants vary across the different curriculum areas. In some areas, such as GCE A levels and construction, the recruiting officers conduct the interviews. In other areas, interviews are carried out by both recruiting officers and teaching staff. In performing arts, only the teaching staff conduct interviews. The college holds Matrix accreditation for advice and guidance for adults.

35. Support for students is organised into three teams: learning support assistants; learning support tutors; and student services. A disability co-ordinator and a youth worker have recently been appointed. Staff hold relevant qualifications and attend staff development training. The area is well managed. Initial assessment screening for literacy and numeracy and other additional learning support needs such as dyslexia, is carried out for many full-time and some part-time students. In 2003/04, nearly 400 students received support for a variety of needs including dyslexia and other conditions. Students whose literacy and/or numeracy skills are identified as being more than one level below that required for their course are automatically offered support. However, this only applies to courses up to and including level 2. Those applying for level 3 programmes are not routinely offered support. Curriculum inspectors found instances of groups on level 3 courses where a significant number of students had level 1 skills and yet were not receiving help to develop those skills. Support staff produced useful group profiles, based on the screening, for all full-time students. In the past, this initial assessment was carried out at induction, but this year those applying for level 2 programmes took the assessment at enrolment. It is planned to extend this practice to all levels from 2005 and to develop pre-enrolment screening. The accommodation now dedicated to student services is good. The effect of support on student retention rates is closely monitored and last year some 94% of students aged 16 to 18 who received support were retained on their programmes.

36. The college has recently introduced a new tutorial policy. It identifies a minimum entitlement for students of an induction tutorial followed by three review tutorials including an exit tutorial. However, there is no minimum content requirement for group tutorials and the frequency of these tutorials varies considerably across areas. Whilst curriculum inspectors found some effective use of group tutorials, they also found tutorials where content was insufficiently comprehensive and records were poor. In individual tutorials, both good and poor practice was found, sometimes, as in the case of health and care, within the same curriculum area. Generally, arrangements for induction are satisfactory and students feel well supported by their tutors.

37. A new punctuality policy has recently been introduced to try to improve attendance rates. Those who arrive late are required to complete a form. Penalties for absence are not uniformly applied across curriculum areas. The number of absences that triggers a letter of concern varies from three

to five. Students are clear about the procedure to follow if they are not well enough to attend college, but some expressed resentment at having to phone each day when they are unwell for a number of days.

38. There are satisfactory resources for careers advice. A full-time advisor is based in the learning resource centre. Accommodation is well planned with space for confidential meetings. There is a good range of up-to-date written materials and good access to on-line support and guidance. There is satisfactory advice and support for those making applications to HE, but whether students can make use of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service's online application system depends on the curriculum area in which they are studying. Those who can apply online enjoy the benefit of being able to track their application at all stages whilst others can not. Last year, some 76% of students who applied to university gained a place.

39. The process whereby students can apply for financial help has been improved. The turn-around time for applications is now two weeks. An appropriate appeals procedure is in place. A full-time counsellor is available to students and staff between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

Leadership and management
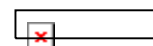
40. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have not been fully addressed and too little attention has been paid to the improvement of teaching and learning. The college has made progress in developing its management information system, although many improvements have only been readily available to staff since September 2003. Strategies to use this information for improvement are at an early stage of development. Financial management is weak. Since the last inspection, retention and pass rates in all areas except level 1 programmes for students aged 16 to 18 have declined with respect to the national averages. Six curriculum areas in this inspection have been judged as unsatisfactory compared to one in the last inspection in 2000. The college has been successful in widening participation and its learning shops, in particular, have been at the forefront of providing high-quality education and training in the community. A new management structure was introduced in March 2004.

41. The college produces a three-year rolling development plan based on identified strengths and weaknesses and in response to national and local priorities. The plan is detailed and identifies 10 broad strategic aims to reflect the national educational agenda and the learning needs of the local community. The links between the strategic aims and the operational plans of each directorate are tenuous and do not indicate measurable targets for improvement. The college has plans approved to extend its construction craft accommodation for plastering courses. It has recently purchased neighbouring sports grounds and is applying for a grant to develop an all weather pitch. Further, longer-term plans are in place to improve the facilities and accommodation for programmes in beauty therapy, land-based courses and the sixth form centre. Achievement of targets agreed with the local LSC over the last three years has been inconsistent. The financial health of the college and the management of resources are weak. The college fails to provide good value for money.

42. The management structure was substantially revised during 2004. All managers now have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The changes in the structure were implemented smoothly, both staff and managers understand the new structure and it provides a sound framework for the future work of the college. Senior managers work well as a team. The college has engaged the services of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership to provide management training for all curriculum managers. It is too early to assess the impact of these changes on students. Teaching and learning are managed through three directorates where the authority and accountability is delegated to curriculum managers. Curriculum management is inconsistent across the college. Where it is good, as in the land-based provision, there is effective teamwork and regular monitoring of performance against targets with a colour coded system to highlight areas of concern. Where curriculum management is unsatisfactory, as in business and construction, there is ineffective communication

and action points for improvement are not set or followed through. In business, there is an ineffective strategy for dealing with staff absences. The monitoring of additional learning support is unsatisfactory. The management of key skills is weak. Overall attendance during the period of the inspection was 79%, but this masks large differences between the highest attendance in land-based provision and ICT, and the lowest in travel and tourism, and sports.

43. Quality assurance is weak. Procedures are in use and have been reviewed during the last year for self-assessment and course reviews, however, there are no policies in place that allocate responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure continuous improvement in teaching and learning. Course reviews are carried out annually and are linked to self-assessment and a development plan to address identified weaknesses. The quality, style and content of course reviews are variable across the college. In the learning shops, the course reviews are good. In a recent review, poor performance in the mandatory module at level 1 was identified. Staff looked at the module and developed a `help folder' and a workshop to support students on this module. In the less satisfactory reviews, there is little mention of teaching and learning; strengths claimed are the norm in the sector and the evidence base used to form the judgement is lacking. This does not provide managers with accurate information about strengths and weaknesses on which to base strategies for improvement. There are college procedures for internal verification, external verification, assessment, homework and student attendance in addition to the policies for punctuality and tutorials, but these are implemented inconsistently across the college. The college self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous in identifying key strengths and weaknesses for maintaining continuous improvement.

44. The lesson observation scheme is weak and managers have failed to pay sufficient attention to the need to improve teaching and learning. The lesson observation programme covers both full-time and part-time teachers. In 2003/04, 54% of full-time staff were observed. Grades given to many internal observations significantly overstate the strengths relating to teaching and learning. Observers graded 89.5% of teaching and learning as good or better. Feedback to teachers provides insufficient guidance for improvement. The lesson observation process was extremely cumbersome and time consuming. The college recognised this and has revised the lesson observation programme. Observations under the revised programme have been trialled in one area, but progress is too slow to raise standards in the classroom. The learning shops have introduced their own programme of peer observations in addition to the formal college process and this has had a very positive effect on raising the quality of teaching and learning here. The appraisal system takes the form of a job review and staff development interview; it covers all staff, but lacks rigour. It is focused on individual development and does not adequately consider the quality of performance of staff. In 2003/04, only 81% of full-time staff were appraised. Development needs identified during the job review and staff development interview are usually met, but there is no routine evaluation of the impact of training and development on teaching and learning.

45. The college has a committed governing body with a good range of relevant skills and experience. Governors are clear about the strategic direction of the college. There is a committee structure in place which monitors college activities. However, the governors have not received sufficiently detailed information on areas of underachievement. Governors have an appropriate level of knowledge of the college curriculum and have links to curriculum areas that help them in their understanding of the curriculum. The format for presentation of financial information to the governors is complex and reduces the ability of all governors to participate in making financial decisions. This has been recognised by the governors and plans have been made to address this issue. Clerking arrangements are effective. Minutes of board meetings are well presented and provide a clear view of the discussions, actions taken and resolutions made.

46. The management information system is improving. The system can provide an appropriate range of relevant reports. However, this is not being used effectively by all staff. Currently, the detailed information available from these reports is not fully or effectively used to identify issues in relation to course development.

47. There is a commitment at all levels to widening participation and promoting learning to all who wish to benefit from it. The college has a multi-faith prayer room and is active in celebrating religious festivals and providing staff with relevant information. The college has an equality and diversity policy, a race equality policy and a race equality action plan complying with its statutory

requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act part 4 and the Race Relations (amendment) Act. All staff have undertaken staff development on disability. Training on the Race Relations (amendment) Act is planned for the near future. The child protection policy has not been formally adopted or circulated to staff and no formal links have been established with the local area child protection committee. The college has commissioned an accessibility audit of its facilities. There is very little critical analysis of data on attendance, retention and pass rates by gender, age, disability and ethnicity by managers and course teams to identify areas where provision is limited or underperforming. The college has a satisfactory complaints procedure and complaints are dealt with appropriately in line with these procedures.

48. The college works well with its partner schools in developing and providing courses for young people aged 14 to 16 with over 150 attending college course in 2003/04. This is particularly successful in construction, horticulture and care. Relationships with the local community, employers and partner schools are good. The learning shops provide a valuable community location for students to take the first steps back into education and training and to support students who do not feel able to study a formal setting. The management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas
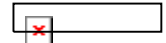
Land-based programmes
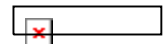
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in general examination in horticulture and first diploma in animal care

- much good teaching links theory to practice

- very good pastoral support

- good implementation of strategies to widen participation.

Weaknesses

- insufficient teaching resources

o   insufficient integration of learning support with vocational training.

Scope of provision

49. The college offers full-time and part-time courses from entry level to level 3 in horticulture and animal care. There are 165 students on full-time programmes, of which 128 are students aged 16 to 18 and 37 are aged over 19. Some 280 students are on part-time courses, of which 254 are aged over 19. Full-time programmes include first diplomas, national diplomas and the entry level skills for working life. Part-time and evening programmes include the practical certificate in gardening, the general examination, diploma and advanced certificate in horticulture and NVQ amenity horticulture. Attendance on these courses ranges from a few hours to two days a week over one or two years.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates on the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) general examination in horticulture and the first diploma in animal care are good. Pass rates on all other major courses are in line with national averages.

51. Students are well motivated and develop good practical skills through their coursework. They display good levels of professionalism and take pride in their practical work. The standards of students' written work are good. They gain a good understanding of the progression opportunities available to them through contact with lecturers who have good industry experience. Students are ambitious and articulate and talk with confidence about the practical skills and confidence they have acquired.

52. Retention rates on major courses are at or around the national average. Retention rates are good in the general examination in horticulture and national diploma in animal management. There are clear procedures for dealing with lateness and for following-up poor attendance. The college is aware of the lower levels of retention rates on some skills for working life courses and on the first diploma in animal care and have recently established procedures to identify and support `at risk' students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in land-based programmes, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Skills for working life certificate	entry	No. of starts	*	9	10
		% retention	*	88	75
		% pass rate	*	100	100
NVQ animal care	1	No. of starts	12	15	16
		% retention	83	87	87
		% pass rate	90	92	100
Practical certificate in gardening 1 year	1	No. of starts	97	38	12
		% retention	80	89	100
		% pass rate	53	59	82
First diploma in animal care 1 year	2	No. of starts	34	30	27
		% retention	79	77	74
		% pass rate	56	87	90

General examination in horticulture 2 year	2	No. of starts	10	18	22
		% retention	90	78	86
		% pass rate	33	70	81
National diploma animal management	3	No. of starts	23	22	33
		% retention	43	73	79
		% pass rate	75	81	84

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

53. There is much good teaching that carefully links theory to practice. Lessons are planned to integrate theory and practical teaching in manageable segments. Some good practical demonstrations are followed by the opportunity for students to practise skills. There is effective use of questioning to develop understanding. Students carry out real practical tasks to reinforce the theory they have been taught. Where practicable, students are encouraged to draw and reflect on their own experience. This helps students to apply unfamiliar theory to familiar practice.

54. Lecturers have good subject knowledge and infect students with their enthusiasm. They are respected by students and in the better lessons this enables very effective group management and encourages an active learning environment. Students arrive promptly and move briskly between theoretical and practical tasks. They are well briefed and remain focused on their tasks. In weaker lessons, there is less variety in teaching methods used and there is greater reliance on supervised practical tasks. Explanations lack fluency and have a narrow range and depth. Classroom management in some lessons is weak.

55. The levels of teaching and vocational qualifications of full-time and part-time staff are good and staff development is used to keep staff up to date in their vocational area. In some lessons support staff provide additional help for entry and level 1 students. However, cover arrangements for staff sickness and other absences are informal and inadequate.

56. There is a good range of small, domestic, farm and exotic animals in the animal care centre. They provide good practical experience for students. However, there is considerable demand and the centre needs careful management to avoid over-caring for the animals. Students comment that they would like to spend more time on practical work in the centre.

57. The horticulture department has glass houses, a demonstration area, green houses and a small nursery and sales area. These provide satisfactory opportunities for students to practise skills such as hard and soft landscaping, tree planting, setting out and pond-making. The college grounds are not used well for practical training. There is little involvement of students in larger-scale design or maintenance projects. The grounds do not reflect a professional horticultural working environment.

58. Assessment and monitoring of student progress are satisfactory. Full-time students undergo an initial assessment that is used to select course level, identify learning and support needs and plan learning. Initial assessment for part-time adult students is less detailed. Learning plans are satisfactory and there is good communication of information about student support needs to tutors who use this information to plan lessons. Assessment meets awarding body standards. Assignment briefs give clear guidance to students about the standards of work needed to achieve. Key skills assignments are contextualised to be of relevance to horticulture and animal care students.

59. Internal verification of assessment is planned and carried out regularly. A sampling strategy for assessors and candidates is in place. However complete coverage of units and assessment methods is not considered and some units are not sampled. Teachers feedback comments on

compilation of portfolios, but there is less developmental feedback on assessment practice.

60. There is a broad range of courses offering opportunities for students from entry level to level 3. The courses at entry level and level 1 have been promoted as part of the college agenda to widen participation. There are increasing links with schools to promote courses. There is some good progression to higher level courses, for example, students who joined first diploma courses progressing to Higher National Diploma (HND) courses or RHS general students progressing to RHS advanced courses. Courses are also structured to enable mature students to make lateral progression, for example, by enrolling for a course module and then building up modules to complete full qualifications.

61. Links with employers and community groups have improved and these are now well used as part of the curriculum. Assignment briefs for work experiences are well organised and encourage students to make the most of their practical work. Students frequently refer to work experience in lessons.

62. There is very good support for students. Staff gather useful information about the students' support needs and this information is effectively shared amongst teachers. In some entry and level 1 lessons support staff provide discrete support for students. They are attentive to students' progress and quick to provide assistance where this is needed. There is satisfactory communication with parents where this is appropriate and there are examples where staff and parents have worked together to improve attendance or performance. Staff know their students well and take a great interest in their welfare. Students value this support highly.

63. There is insufficient integration of learning support with vocational training. The department includes staff with good key skills and learning support experience. Some progress has been made in implementing key skills and literacy and numeracy skills teaching for students at entry level and level 1. There is a lack of understanding of key skills and literacy and numeracy amongst vocational teaching staff. Lesson plans do not make use of opportunities for students to practise these skills in the context of vocational training. In addition, the recent emphasis on increasing recruitment to entry level and level 1 courses means that some students require more support for the broader skills such as work and social skills, behavioural issues and attitude problems. Some vocational staff lack the techniques to support the development of these skills amongst their students.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are good in the land-based curriculum area. The curriculum area was restructured six months ago and the curriculum manager promoted within the team. The post of programme manager is currently shared between two acting programme managers. There are 15 full-time lecturers, 3 fractional and 2 part-time tutors. There is particularly effective communication between team members, supported by regular and frequent team meetings and good informal communications. Appraisals for all full-time staff have been carried out in the last six months. Staff hold or are working towards teaching qualifications and attend a good variety of professional updating. Quality assurance is good. The curriculum and programme managers work closely with their teams and students. They have a good grasp of what is working well and are able to spot problems quickly. The curriculum manager regularly monitors performance information and uses a colour code system to highlight areas of concern. The system complements the main college management information system. Lesson observations have taken place and the self-assessment report was broadly accurate in its findings. The curriculum area offers a safe environment in which students feel welcome. However, there is little formal promotion of equal opportunities and the profile of equality and diversity issues in training is low.

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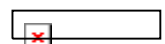
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Work-based learning contributory grade is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- o   high pass rates on level 1 craft courses

- o   very good development of practical skills

- o   much good practical teaching

- o   wide range of provision with good progression routes.

Weaknesses

- o   low success rates on electrical installation courses

- o   poor achievement of apprenticeship frameworks

- o   poor theory teaching

- o   insufficient plumbing resources

- o   inadequate review and assessment of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

65. The college offers construction courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels including craft, building services, technician and apprenticeship programmes. Training and assessment for the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and a number of other local work-based learning providers are also provided on a subcontracting basis. Courses are provided with a range of attendance patterns including full-time, block and part-time day release, evening only and flexible attendance to cater for the individual needs of the students. At the time of the inspection,

there were 1,308 students on construction programmes, 400 are aged 16 to 18, and 908 are aged 19 or over. Of these, 322 are full-time students and 986 are part-time day-release and evening-only students, of which 118 are work-based learners. In addition, the department has links with local schools and provides taster sessions to enable young people aged 14 to 16 to sample construction education and training. A number of full cost recovery courses are also provided primarily for accredited certification scheme gas qualifications.

Achievement and standards

66. Pass rates on level 1 craft courses are high. On basic skills courses in carpentry and joinery, plastering and bricklaying, achievement is well above the national averages. The pass rate for the intermediate construction award in wood occupations is also high, with a pass rate of 96% in 2003/04 compared with the national average of 46%. Pass rates on NVQ plumbing programmes have been consistently higher than the national averages and retention rates are satisfactory. However, on foundation plumbing courses, retention and pass rates are low and are well below the national averages.

67. Success rates for students on parts one and two of electrical installation courses are low. They are well below the national averages for both retention and pass rates. There has been little significant improvement in retention and pass rates on electrical installation courses over the last three years.

68. Achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is poor. For example, of the 23 foundation apprentices who started in 2001/02, 12 were retained at the end of the planned duration of their framework, but only 3 completed all aspects of the framework. A further seven achieved the requirements of the NVQ. Of the four advanced apprentices who started in 2001/02, none was retained. The pass rates for key skills show a steady improvement, but are still poor. For example, the achievement in communication level 1 rose by 8% to 33% between 2001/02 and 2002/03.

69. Students' practical work on craft courses is of a high standard. Students are competently and confidently able to use hand tools and show good awareness of health and safety. In plastering, for example, first-year students accurately measured, marked, cut and fixed plaster boards to ceilings and stud partition walls. Also in plastering, students produce very high-quality decorative plaster moulds and mouldings comparable with good industrial standards. In carpentry and joinery, students produce clean and strong woodwork joints that meet industrial standards. Bricklaying students construct high-quality walls in stretcher bond that are within the specified dimensional tolerances.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 6081 basic bricklaying skills	1	No. of starts	44	51	93
		% retention	61	67	83
		% pass rate	85	71	97
City and Guilds 6111 basic carpentry and joinery skills	1	No. of starts	62	73	35
		% retention	68	86	69
		% pass rate	22	86	83
Certificate in plumbing	1	No. of starts	33	61	72
		% retention	52	66	78
		% pass rate	20	48	39
Intermediate construction award (wood occupations)	2	No. of starts	*	135	174
		% retention	*	78	84
		% pass rate	*	43	96

City and Guilds 2360-06 electrical installation part 1	2	No. of starts	23	34	126
		% retention	61	59	66
		% pass rate	57	10	48
City and Guilds 2360-08 electrical installation part 2	3	No. of starts	41	48	47
		% retention	76	54	76
		% pass rate	32	27	31
National certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	26	30	18
		% retention	46	37	78
		% pass rate	90	18	54

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

70. Practical teaching on craft courses is good. Teachers effectively pass on practical skills and develop students' confidence and competence. Practical demonstrations are effective and allow students the opportunity to view different techniques and methods used to complete tasks. Teaching sessions are well structured and productive. Good working relationships are developed between the teacher and students. Teachers effectively draw upon their own experiences and relate student practical activity well to industry practices. Students are well supported in the majority of practical sessions and teachers provide effective one-to-one support and guidance when required. In the workplace, learners are able to apply effectively the knowledge and skills that they are developing through the off-the-job training.

71. Theory teaching is poor. The teaching is dull and uninspiring. Lesson planning is ineffective and little differentiated learning takes place. Teachers do not make sufficient use of ILT and do not employ a range of teaching methods to make the learning experience more meaningful. A significant number of theory lessons are unsatisfactory or worse. In these lessons, students are not sufficiently challenged and teachers fail to motivate or enthuse them. For example, in one lesson, the teacher spoke far too much, taught at too slow a pace and failed to use the whiteboard for purposes of illustration. There was no use of questioning, no discussion and no supply of handouts. The students thus became demotivated and lost interest completely.

72. There are insufficient resources in plumbing. Workshops do not meet awarding body assessment requirements. The development of these resources has been continuing for some time, but progress towards their completion is slow. There are not enough qualified assessors in some areas including work-based learning. For example, in plumbing, students attended to complete assessment activities, but no assessors were available. Resources in plastering are inadequate; however, the college has recognised this and a new building to house this provision is planned. In other curriculum areas, resources are generally satisfactory. There are instances when workshops are overcrowded which results in a shortage of hand tools.

73. Assessment of skills and knowledge are satisfactory in most curriculum areas. Paper-based monitoring and tracking systems are completed and regularly updated. Students' portfolios of evidence contain some good examples of photographs and witness statements. The feedback provided to students on assessed work is not always sufficiently detailed and gives little indication of required improvements. On-site assessment for work-based learners is inadequate. It is given infrequently and has been carried out by staff who are not occupationally competent. Some learners have had no on-site assessments in the last eight months.

74. There is a wide range of provision with good progression routes, and there are many examples of students progressing from level 1 to level 3. School-link programmes are effective and productive.

They give school pupils a good insight into a range of construction occupations. Some school pupils have progressed on to the mainstream courses.

75. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Students have induction programmes and undergo initial assessment. Learning support is provided in the classroom environment for students requiring it. The development and standard of students' language, literacy and numeracy skills are appropriate for the level of course they are on. However, individual learning plans, tutorials and progress reviews for work-based learners are underdeveloped and do not set meaningful targets that extend the students' learning.

Leadership and management

76. Curriculum leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The monthly team meetings are guided by an appropriate agenda and are well attended. However, formal minutes are not always recorded and actions not always set or followed through. There is an over reliance on memorising what occurs at these meetings. Staff are not regularly provided with data on retention and pass rates for their areas. They do not systematically use data to predict trends, set targets or plan for continuous improvement. The self-assessment report, whilst identifying some strengths and weaknesses, is not sufficiently robust or self-critical.

77. The management of work-based learning is also unsatisfactory. On-site reviews and assessments are inadequate. There is poor setting of realistic measurable targets. A new service level agreement has been recently put in place to formalise the responsibilities of the curriculum area and the worked-based team. However, not all sections of this agreement are adhered to. For example, on-site reviews and assessments do not take place regularly as stipulated by the agreement. In addition, the frequency of some reviews fall outside the contractual requirements of the local LSCs.

Business administration, management and professional
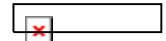
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- o   good learning support for GNVQ foundation students.

Weaknesses

- o   low pass rates in many programmes

- o   unsatisfactory teaching

- o   unsatisfactory IT resources for effective teaching

o   insufficient enrichment experiences for full-time students.

Scope of provision

78. The area of learning provides a range of full-time and part-time courses from level 1 to level 4. They include AS-level and GCE A2 courses in accounts, business and law. Full-time vocational courses are offered in business foundation, intermediate business, AVCE in business, legal secretarial courses at levels 2 and 3 and a level 2 course in administration. Part-time professional courses are available in accounting at foundation, intermediate and technician levels and parts 1 to 3 of the ACCA. Other programmes include an advanced certificate in marketing and a professional development certificate in management. A programme of short courses includes keyboard skills and legal and medical text processing There are currently 369 full-time and 351 part-time students on programmes. There are 9 full-time and 18 part-time staff supporting students.

Achievement and standards

79. There are poor pass rates on many programmes. On the level 2 full-time programme in business, the pass rate for the year 2001/02 was 26% and 56% for the year 2002/03. On the AVCE business double award, the pass rate for 2003/04 was 50%. This was 24% below the national average. On the AS level course, the pass rate for 2003/04 was 52%, which was 24% below the national average. On the level 2 Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) accounting programme, achievement was above the national average for the year 2002/03, but below for the years 2001/02 and 2003/04. At AAT level 3, achievement is below the national figure for the two years 2002/03 and 2003/04. On the advanced certificate in marketing, the pass rate for the year 2002/03 was 29% below the national average. The certificate in administration in the year 2002/03 was 26% below the national average.

80. On the level 1 full-time business programme, the retention rate has improved from 67% in 2002/03 to 100% in 2003/04. The pass rate on this programme has also improved over the same period from 75% to 100%

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, management and professional, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ accounting AAT	2	No. of starts	45	43	42
		% retention	67	72	81
		% pass rate	73	84	74
Certificate for legal secretaries	2	No. of starts	13	26	17
		% retention	92	65	94
		% pass rate	92	100	88
GNVQ intermediate in business	2	No. of starts	33	28	18
		% retention	70	57	72
		% pass rate	26	56	69
AVCE business double award	3	No. of starts	13	11	15
		% retention	38	45	53
		% pass rate	80	80	50
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	49	37	48

		% retention	80	73	65
		% pass rate	77	67	52
NVQ accounting AAT	3	No. of starts	52	37	28
		% retention	83	84	100
		% pass rate	63	42	50

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

81. Some teaching is unsatisfactory. In these lessons, teaching is dull and lacks imagination and variety. There is poor preparation and in some cases there is little planning. Classrooms are often crowded with inadequate IT equipment. Some lessons make too few demands of students and there is little differentiation. There is insufficient testing of learning. Many teachers have no record of student progress. In many lessons, there is a lack of teaching strategies and materials to deal with the range of students' learning needs in lessons. In some lessons, teachers take scant notice of poor punctuality, although it can disrupt lessons. Not all lessons start at the scheduled time.

82. Although many lessons are satisfactory, there is an over reliance on a workshop environment with students working on test papers or exercises. There is not enough direct teaching and variety. As a result, teaching is often satisfactory, but mundane. In the minority of better lessons, teachers work hard to engage students with a range of different and relevant learning activities. Here, effective use is made of case studies and group work and students are encouraged to apply concepts to realistic business situations. Some good and imaginative lessons are individual and lively. In these lessons, students are involved and learning clearly takes place. These lessons are carefully prepared and include clear objectives that are shared with the students. In lessons for adults, good use is made of students' work experience as a course resource.

83. IT resources are poor. In many classrooms, the computers are outdated and in some cases do not work. Software is not to a commercial standard and is often not as good as the software that students have at home. Many classrooms have too few computers for its students who are required to use them. There is a shortage of printing facilities and at times, a lack of printing paper. Some rooms are too small for their class sizes and as a result are overcrowded. Lecturers are not able to circulate easily to monitor students' work.

84. Staff are adequately qualified and many have recently updated their qualifications. Many staff in the vocational area have good industrial experience. Library facilities are satisfactory with a good range of business books, journals, CDs and videos. Students have good Internet access.

85. Assessment, including initial assessment, is satisfactory. All full-time students complete an initial assessment of numeracy and literacy skills. The results of initial assessment are used to inform individual learning plans and to identify learning needs and support. An appropriate range of methods are used to assess student progress. On level 3 programmes, the quality of written feedback to students is variable and does not always sufficiently indicate paths to improvement. Internal verification is ongoing and meets awarding body requirements.

86. There are insufficient enrichment activities for full-time students. The college staff are insufficiently involved in obtaining work experience for students. Most students have to arrange their own work experience and many are unable to do so. In some cases, students on legal secretarial courses have been unable to get work in legal offices and have gained work in a general office. There have been visits to a nearby fun park and a visit to France to encourage group work and organisational skills. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in college sporting activities.

87. All legal secretaries have to undertake AS level in law, which they find very difficult. There has

been no attempt to find a more viable alternative. There is only one foundation programme with 11 students. The range of accounting programmes is good and offers a choice of professional programmes ranging from level 2 to 4. In cases where students are found to be struggling on academic courses, there is insufficient opportunity for them to transfer to the same level of vocational programme. There is insufficient integration of key skills on business programmes. In many lessons, opportunities to develop and integrate key skills are not identified. On the level 2 business programme, the test results for key skills are poor.

88. While there is good learning support for level 1 business students, the support is generally satisfactory in other levels and programmes. This has enabled students with support needs to progress to level 2 programmes. Systems are in the developmental stage, but there is positive evidence that student support needs have been met and have been an important factor in enabling students to progress from level 1 to level 2 programmes. It is possible to track students from the September 2003 intake in terms of the support needs identified, support provided and outcome in terms of completing the target qualification and progressing to the next level of course.

89. In addition, there are positive indications of further good support systems being developed, such as the learning support team with has links to each curriculum area. A clear process for identifying learning support needs is in place and staff involved in learning support have appropriate qualifications. However, there are still a number of gaps in the provision such as a learning support worker not being replaced for a term. The support for part-time students is incomplete and inconsistent. Full-time students complete an initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills. This information is recorded on an individual learning plan and a report of any support needs identified is sent to the curriculum manager. Some progress has been made towards the screening for support needs of part-time students, but this area is as yet underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

90. Leadership and management of the area of learning are unsatisfactory. Central college management initiatives have very little impact at the operational level.

91. A new management structure, introduced with effect from March 2004, has had insufficient time to impact positively on programmes. Strategies for the identification and sharing of good practice are insufficiently developed. Management has been slow to respond to problems of access to insufficient IT facilities which were identified in student feedback and in programme reviews. Programme review procedures are weak and frequently overstate the situation, for example, the observation of teaching which overgrades teacher performance. Staff appraisal processes are satisfactory and are closely linked to staff development.

Information and communications technology
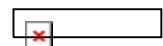
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

> o   good achievement on part-time courses

> o   very good teaching on part-time courses

- o very good assessment planning in learning shops

- o excellent operational management of learning shops.

Weaknesses

- o poor achievement on GNVQ intermediate and AS-level computing

- o insufficiently demanding teaching on full-time courses

- o insufficient literacy and numeracy support for full-time students

- o weak management of college-based courses.

Scope of provision

92. The provision includes full-time courses at AS level, AVCE, GNVQ at both foundation and intermediate level. Part-time courses for adults at the main college site include CISCO and network courses. There are 130 full-time and 43 part-time adult students at the main college. Almost all the full-time students are aged 16 to 18. The main college site also houses the proposed ICT CoVE. However, most of the ICT provision is for adults studying part time at one of the three learning shops located centrally in surrounding towns. The learning shops have 2,132 part-time adult students and 26 students aged 16 to 18. These are taking City and Guilds 7262 at levels 1 and 2 and attend both formal classes and workshops.

Achievement and standards

93. Pass rates on part-time adult courses at learning shops are good and significantly above national averages, as are retention rates. Pass rates on many college-based full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 are low compared with national averages. There are very good pass rates on the GNVQ foundation courses that commenced in 2002/03 and more recently on the AVCE double award. Retention rates on full-time college-based courses are about or significantly below national averages.

94. The standards of students' work on full-time courses, both in class and resulting from assignments, are satisfactory. Their progress during courses is adequate and many continue to the next level. However, class work at learning shops is particularly good. Adult students at these centres are well motivated and have a strong commitment to complete their courses and achieve the appropriate qualification. Progress of students at the learning shops is good and attainment is above average. Many of these adult students have no previous knowledge or experience of computers, but develop good ICT skills.

95. Attendance and punctuality of full-time students are satisfactory. Staff carefully monitor this. Attendance targets set by staff are effectively reviewed at tutorials. Adult attendance and punctuality at learning shops are very good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 7262 short part-time modular	1	No. of starts	*	2,543	3,423
		% retention	*	53	57
		% pass rate	*	88	91
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	*	16	17
		% retention	*	63	76
		% pass rate	*	100	100
City and Guilds 7262 short part-time modular	2	No. of starts	*	98	296
		% retention	*	52	62
		% pass rate	*	90	90
GNVQ IT intermediate	2	No. of starts	57	52	38
		% retention	49	67	49
		% pass rate	68	77	47
AVCE double award ICT	3	No. of starts	60	64	22
		% retention	68	63	65
		% pass rate	80	78	100
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	29	14	18
		% retention	71	71	39
		% pass rate	60	40	71

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

96. Teaching and learning are very good on part-time courses. In the learning shops, teachers encourage and support students well; they are very good at identifying the needs of students and intervene well to solve problems. For example, one teacher joined in the friendly banter between two students discussing a difficulty with binary database fields and, though an appropriate mixture of questioning and example, ensured that both students had a good understanding of the topic. Students rapidly increase their understanding of their course content, often from a starting point of no knowledge at all. They regularly return to take further qualifications. They understand what they are doing and are able to put their skills into practice at home and at work. For instance, one student used her knowledge of spreadsheets to record, calculate and apportion costs for a group holiday. The confidence of students in using IT applications increases significantly. They are encouraged to participate fully and make good use of their time in the classroom.

97. Teaching on full-time courses is satisfactory, but often does not extend students sufficiently to promote effective learning. Teachers show knowledge, technical competence and up-to-date expertise at a level consistent with effective teaching of the course. Teachers usually plan effectively with clear objectives that all students understand, but they do not always share these objectives formally with their students. However, in a significant number of students the work set is too easy and the rate of working too slow. For example, in one AVCE lesson, students were asked to design

an invoice using a word processor rather than a spreadsheet and then given too much time to complete the task.

98. The best lessons are planned and structured well and used a variety of methods to maintain students' interest and ensure that all students understood new topics. In these lessons, students work with interest and perseverance and make good progress. On one part-time SQL programming course, the teacher asked students to perform a procedure which he knew would not work; the resulting discussion of the problem extended students knowledge well. Some less effective lessons make few demands of students, in others, students work too slowly. These lessons often start well with a clear explanation of the topic, but the rate of learning slows once students start to work individually. In an AS-level computing lesson, after a sound introduction to data flow diagrams, many students chatted about things unrelated to the topic and only worked when a teacher was in the vicinity.

99. Overall, resources are satisfactory. Across the whole provision, there are sufficient up-to-date computers to meet course requirements. Teaching accommodation on the college site is satisfactory. The newly refurbished classrooms are particularly well furnished and lit. Other classrooms are satisfactory, but rooms are too small for the largest groups. Two of the three learning shops are cramped with very little spare room, pillars mask the view of data projectors and there is little room for students to get up and take a break from their workstations. Rooms have poor ventilation.

100. Assessment is satisfactory. Throughout the college, assessment is used to monitor the progress of all students and inform individual students about how they are performing and how they might develop further. This is facilitated through the tutorial system on full-time courses, and through the regular review process on part-time provision. For all students, achievements towards learning goals and qualifications are recorded and accredited. Assessment is very good in the learning shops; students are encouraged to undergo a regular review of their work and teachers intervene to ensure a review is arranged if students do not respond within a reasonable time. Tests, such as the pre-assessment activity are used well both to give a good measurement of students' attainment and to plan the students' future work effectively.

101. The range of courses is adequate, but students on vocational courses lack work experience opportunities. This limits students' judgements on future career paths. Visits to local employers are not arranged to provide information about types of employment or to build links with local companies. In 2003, the college was awarded funding to develop a CoVE. It is making good progress in achieving its targets in its business plan. The centre is able to use the range of vocational courses already available in ICT at level 3 and is developing some further courses for national and local organisations. The industry-standard networking equipment will support the courses. There are sufficient numbers of well-qualified teachers with appropriate experience. The provision fulfils many of the CoVE criteria.

102. Support, advice and guidance are satisfactory. However, students needing help with literacy and numeracy receive insufficient support. On level 3 courses, no additional learning support is routinely provided. At other levels, learning support is not available in many lessons. Key skills arrangements are unclear. They are integrated into vocational courses, but students are still asked to complete second assessments and also work on additional worksheets. A weeklong induction, which includes welfare issues, is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

103. Operational management within the learning shops is excellent. The curriculum manager of the learning shops has significant line management responsibilities including managing the largest shop, overseeing two other shops and the supervision of two peripatetic staff. Learning shop staff have clear personal objectives, which are well set and effectively reviewed annually. This has contributed to improving the quality of provision. There have been many exceptionally good initiatives including peer observations by colleagues from different learning shops. This promotes quality assurance and provides a valuable vehicle for the sharing of good practice. However, observations do not sufficiently link teaching and learning, but the awarded grades are accurate. Internal

communications within and between shops are very effective. The sharing of good practice between the college and the learning shops is poor. The learning shops do not have access to the college intranet.

104. Management of the ICT provision within the college is weak. Internal communications are poor. Meetings of curriculum managers take place, but the curriculum manager of the largest ICT provision does not attend regularly. Staff who are not ICT specialists undertake lesson observations, but focus on documentation and procedures rather than on the quality of teaching and learning. Line managers do not routinely receive copies of the results of the observations. Course evaluations are based on student satisfaction surveys, but fail to take account of outcomes based on data. Staff appraisals are held, but there are insufficient opportunities for staff to attend available courses. Quality assurance systems do not check that some essential policies are implemented. Equal opportunity issues are satisfactory. There are some access problems for wheelchair users at the learning shops.

Sport, leisure and tourism
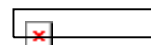
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- o   good and improving retention and pass rates on travel courses.

Weaknesses

- o   unsatisfactory and deteriorating retention and pass rates on sport courses

- o   much poor teaching

- o   poor quality assurance.

Scope of provision

105. The college provides a range of courses in sport and travel from foundation to advanced level and progression to higher levels. There are full-time courses in travel and tourism, sport, exercise and fitness and a part-time football coaching certificate that was not running at the time of inspection. One third of the full-time provision is in travel and tourism.

106. At the time of inspection, there were 333 students, 294 full-time students and 39 part-time students who study courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in both travel and sport. There are 294 students who are aged 16 to 18, 111 are of minority ethnic origin and 18 have disabilities. There are curriculum managers for both travel and sport who are supported by three full-time travel staff, four full-time sport staff and a number of part-time and fractional contract staff.

Achievement and standards

107. Retention and pass rates are good and improving on travel courses. The retention rate is well above the national average for the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course and is good on the AVCE (double award) in travel and tourism. The pass rates on the GNVQ and the AVCE (double award) in travel and tourism are well above the national average.

108. Pass and retention rates on sport courses are unsatisfactory and deteriorating. The pass rate on the first diploma in sport is poor and has declined to 22% below the national average. The AS-level sports, games and recreation pass rate is also poor, having fallen to 44% as compared with 100% success in 2001/02. The retention rates on the first diploma in sport and the AS-level sports, games and recreation are poor. The first diploma retention rate is 27% below the national average and the AS-level sport, games and recreation is 40% below the national average.

109. Attendance is unsatisfactory and adversely affecting achievement. Attendance at lessons is 65%. In travel lessons, attendance is unsatisfactory, particularly in the level 1 programme. In sport, attendance is improving as a result of changes to programme policy, but is still unsatisfactory. There is a new system for monitoring attendance and punctuality and those who are at risk are now discussed as a regular agenda item at team meetings. It is too early to see the impact of the changes in policy on retention and pass rates. The standard of students' work is satisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First diploma in science sport	2	No. of starts	38	40	41
		% retention	95	83	46
		% pass rate	83	88	58
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	13	19	15
		% retention	69	74	93
		% pass rate	67	71	93
National diploma in applied science sport	3	No. of starts	32	49	46
		% retention	66	45	54
		% pass rate	81	86	64
AVCE (double award) travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	24	31	26
		% retention	42	29	65
		% pass rate	10	67	94
AS-level sport games and recreation	3	No. of starts	25	18	23
		% retention	72	72	39
		% pass rate	100	54	44

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

110. Most college teaching is unsatisfactory. Lessons are not sufficiently demanding to maintain the interests of students and many students lose concentration. Teachers have a good rapport with students, however, in many lessons activities are inadequately planned for the needs of individual students and do not challenge the most or least able. Some lesson plans account for individual learning styles, but this is rare and there is no requirement for students to demonstrate the higher level thinking skills of analysis and evaluation. Learning is often passive and students are not

required to apply their knowledge to different contexts. Some teachers lack adequate subject knowledge and lesson planning is often inadequate. Lesson objectives are difficult to measure and achieve, activities are poorly defined and badly timed. Handouts and visual information are often bland and unimaginative. There is very little use of the experience of the students in lessons to help explain key points and little use is made of contemporary illustrations or examples.

111. The marking of work on sports programmes is inadequate. There is a lack of guidance to students about what they have to do and feedback from teachers does not sufficiently help students to improve. Work set and marked on the travel programmes is satisfactory and the assessment systems are good. Internal verification is satisfactory. There is student progression to higher programmes and employment in sport and travel, but it is very limited.

112. A number of staff do not have teaching qualifications or are newly qualified. There is a mentoring system to support new staff, but it is ineffective. New staff have not been observed and their preparation for teaching has focused on lesson planning and administration, not classroom practice. All staff are occupationally or vocationally qualified.

113. Classroom accommodation is satisfactory; most rooms have adequate equipment to support teaching and sufficient tables and chairs for the groups of students. Onsite sports facilities are satisfactory and students get good use from the sports hall, college gym and playing fields.

114. All students receive an induction programme, which includes assessment that identifies where support is needed. The results of diagnostic assessment are used to support students, but attendance is voluntary and many students who need support do not take it up. There is no classroom-based support for students identified with a particular need on sport or travel programmes. Targets are set and agreed at each student's first tutorial. The targets are insufficiently focused on academic success and lack the rigour to ensure progress. There are insufficient formal reviews to monitor student progress.

Leadership and management

115. Leadership and management are ineffective and unsatisfactory. There is a new curriculum management team in sport. Internal communication in both sport and travel are satisfactory, with regular team meetings to discuss students' progress and monitor performance. However, communications with other curriculum areas and cross-college functions are inadequate. Staff feel isolated and out of touch with senior management.

116. The use of data in the self-assessment report and development plan is inadequate. Some course reviews in travel and sport do not use data effectively and are over reliant on descriptive narrative. In some course reviews, there is no use of national benchmarking data. A number of travel quality files have no self-assessment reports and a number of different formats are used for the reports. The development plan targets are difficult to measure and monitoring responsibilities are often unclear or incomplete.

117. Teacher observation is ineffective. There have been no observations of any staff since February 2004, when four lessons were observed by a consultant. The consultant's report is highly critical of some elements of teaching and learning. While meeting minutes recognised the need for action in relation to the consultant's report, no action has been taken.

118. Curriculum staff do not recognise their responsibility to monitor and promote equality of opportunity and believed that this was something that is dealt with through cross-college quality assurance practices including teacher observation and internal verification, where schemes of work, lesson plans and assessment materials are reviewed.

Health, social care and public services
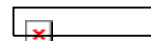
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   very good retention rates on GNVQ intermediate and CACHE diploma in childcare and education

- o   high pass rates on most full-time courses

- o   particularly flexible and responsive curriculum.

Weaknesses

- o   poor pass rates on first aid at work

- o   inadequate meeting of individual learning needs

- o   inadequate quality assurance.

Scope of provision

119. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses including health, social care, counselling, early years, first aid and adult care at levels 2 to 4. Some 143 students attend college on a full-time basis. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Some 195 students aged 19 and over study on a part-time basis. Distance learning courses are taken by 402 students, 295 of whom are enrolled on level 1 certificates in health and safety. Of the remaining distance learners, 62 study NVQ level 2 in adult care and 20 study at level 3. The college provides childcare courses to school pupils aged 14 to 16.

Achievement and standards

120. Pass rates on most full-time courses are high. Many pass rates have been at or significantly above national averages for the past three years. These include 100% pass rates on level 2 in care and levels 2 and 3 early years in 2002 and 2003. Retention rates on the intermediate GNVQ and CACHE diploma in childcare and education are high. Retention rates on all other full-time courses are at least satisfactory. Retention rates on first aid at work courses are high, but pass rates are low. Distance learning NVQs have been running for 15 months and students have not yet completed their programme.

121. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Students apply theory to practice effectively and

they have well-developed oral skills. However, some work at level 3 is insufficiently detailed. Most students organise and present information competently and their portfolios are in good order. Students have good practical skills and are able to work independently. Progression to further study and employment is satisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and public services, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First aid at work (short)	1	No. of starts	110	75	90
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	79	67	81
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	*	15	19
		% retention	*	80	95
		% pass rate	*	100	94
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	30	23	37
		% retention	80	83	78
		% pass rate	100	100	79
Certificate in counselling concepts (short)	2	No. of starts	**	47	43
		% retention	**	96	100
		% pass rate	**	71	77
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	22	17	26
		% retention	55	76	46
		% pass rate	92	77	92
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	51	47	45
		% retention	65	62	76
		% pass rate	100	100	82

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

122. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan carefully and use well-designed handouts. Previous learning is reviewed skilfully. Teachers use their vocational experience well to illustrate points and provide realistic scenarios, for example, in mental health and hospital play. In one lesson about asthma, students worked very effectively in groups discussing a physiological model of what happens during an attack and how patients are best treated. Students readily shared events from placements and personal experiences. The teacher skilfully led students to draw important conclusions. Some large groups are particularly well managed and motivated by interesting activities. Students learn about effective communication with enthusiasm. In weaker lessons, planning is poor, with little identification of what students will be doing and insufficient assessment of their learning. In these lessons, teaching lacks focus, students do not learn according to their ability; they are passive and inattentive.

123. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and have a good range of highly

relevant vocational experience. However, key skills IT and numeracy have been delayed because of insufficient specialist staff. The learning resources centre has an extensive range of textbooks. There is a shortage of computers for some groups in IT lessons.

124. Work experience is well organised for early years students, but not as well developed for healthcare students. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, although a small number of rooms are cramped. Group work and the ability of the tutor to give individual support is hindered. In childcare, some excellent displays of students' work stimulate interest and demonstrate good creative skills.

125. Assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment adequately identifies individuals' needs in literacy, language and numeracy. Assessment of students' work is fair and accurate, but a significant proportion of level 3 early years care students fail to reach pass grades on assignments and many have to repeat the assessment. Teachers' comments are thorough in confirming what students have achieved, but some feedback fails to indicate how students could improve their quality of work. The return of marked work has been slow to some distance learners. NVQ assessors write detailed notes when observing candidates' practice, but they do not explain the full range of assessment methods to all candidates. Not all candidates are observed frequently enough in the workplace. There is insufficient critical sampling of evidence during internal verification.

126. The curriculum is particularly flexible and responsive to employers' and students' needs. Flexible arrangements enable a wide range of students to take courses which improve their skills, knowledge and employment prospects. Courses are offered at the college and in the community through traditional and distance learning routes. Assessors meet students in locations convenient to students in order to review their progress. Courses leading to qualifications in early years and childminding take place on Saturdays. The thoughtfully designed curriculum allows students on levels 2 and 3 care and early years courses to achieve relevant additional qualifications in first aid, basic food hygiene and a further certificate in cookery. Students are helped to study at a high level by taking particularly specialised professional development courses at level 4 in special needs, counselling, care management and hospital play. Pupils from five schools attend lessons in early years care and education as part of the well-organised schools links provision.

127. Students' individual learning needs are not sufficiently met. Teachers are aware of students' needs, but do not use the information well in planning teaching and learning. Not all teachers have training and experience in supporting students' additional learning needs. Learning support assistants provide satisfactory general guidance in lessons, but there is too little planning of targeted support for individuals. Support for students completing portfolios for key skills level 2 in communication is inadequate.

128. Tutorial support is carefully planned, but target setting is not always effective. Tutors regularly review students' attendance and progress and give pastoral support.

Leadership and management

129. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication within courses is good and the organisation of courses is satisfactory. Induction for new staff is thorough.

130. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily promoted. Subject content includes reference to the needs of various cultural groups, particularly in childcare lessons, with extensive knowledge of festivals demonstrated in displays produced by students. However, teachers do not plan sufficiently how they will ensure mutual understanding and respect within lessons.

131. Quality assurance is inadequate. Reports of teaching observations do not systematically identify areas for improvement and there is a tendency to grade normal practices as strengths. Tutorial practices do not ensure that all students experience effective support. College lesson plans and schemes of work vary in how satisfactorily they record what students will be doing and how their achievement of objectives will be measured. Self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous in clearly identifying key strengths and weaknesses. The internal verification system is underdeveloped.

Visual and performing arts and media
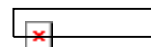
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- o   strong provision in music technology

- o   good accommodation and equipment.

Weaknesses

- o   poor pass rates on most courses

- o   much unsatisfactory teaching

- o   unsatisfactory development of students' abilities

- o   poor student punctuality

- o   very weak curriculum management.

Scope of provision

132. Some 457 students take a range of full-time courses at levels 2 and 3 in visual and performing arts and media. National diplomas are offered in design, media production, multimedia, music technology and performing arts. There are GCSE, AS-level and GCE A2 courses in art and design, dance, drama, film studies, photography and media studies. First diplomas are offered in design, media, and performing arts. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 19. There are around equal numbers of male and female students and 28% of students are from minority ethnic groups which is significantly above the average for the college and is also significantly above that for the local population.

Achievement and standards

133. Pass rates are poor on most courses. Retention rates are significantly below national averages. The retention rates in AS-level art has declined from 18% to 25% below the national average between 2002 and 2004. In 2004, the retention rate on the national diploma in media was 22%. Pass rates are also low. The pass rate in AS-level media was 38% below the national average in 2002 and 26% below in 2004. AS-level drama, AS-level dance and a number of other major courses have pass rates which are below national averages. Key skills achievement is unsatisfactory. Students have poor rates of attendance and punctuality. Students were late by between 5 and 30 minutes in each lesson observed during inspection. Music technology and drama students produce work of a good standard. Music technology students work confidently with advanced software applications and create consistently high standard music products and practical work. Excellent photographs were produced by national diploma design first-year students which illustrated the alphabet using the natural and built environment as the source. However, the majority of completed practical assignments demonstrate that students' skills are not being sufficiently developed. Most students make insufficient progress when compared with their previous attainment.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate media	2	No. of starts	16	28	29
		% retention	56	64	79
		% pass rate	78	72	65
AS-level art (photography)	3	No. of starts	47	41	43
		% retention	60	56	53
		% pass rate	75	78	70
AS-level media	3	No. of starts	64	51	42
		% retention	73	65	52
		% pass rate	51	55	64
AS-level film	3	No. of starts	29	30	30
		% retention	83	97	87
		% pass rate	96	93	96
AS-level dance	3	No. of starts	10	20	20
		% retention	60	80	70
		% pass rate	67	63	64
National diploma drama/performing arts	3	No. of starts	14	23*	31*
		% retention	43	65	84
		% pass rate	100	80	65
National diploma media	3	No. of starts	49	49	32
		% retention	51	27	22
		% pass rate	68	77	57

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* national diploma performing arts 2003, 2004

Quality of education and training

134. There is much unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is often poorly prepared and planned and

learning outcomes are not adequately identified. The results of initial assessment are not used to plan teaching strategies for students with different abilities. Lessons often lack sufficient momentum to keep students motivated and to ensure they learn at an appropriate rate, according to their ability, throughout the lesson. Classroom management is weak. Disruptive or inattentive students are not dealt with effectively. Teaching and learning at the beginning of lessons are often disrupted due to poor punctuality. Latecomers frequently miss key information and are unable to participate fully in the remainder of the lesson. Excessive use is made of questioning the whole group rather than directing questions to individual students. A few students answer questions and dominate discussions whilst many others fail to participate.

135. In the best lessons, students are well motivated by good teaching. They are confident and articulate. In a lesson on acting performance, students constructively criticised each others' performance and gave valuable advice on vocal performance levels. Clear and helpful handouts are used in media, music technology and some design lessons which encourage students to research topics and further develop their knowledge and understanding.

136. There is strong provision in music technology. Music staff are very good role models and provide good support for students. Teachers motivate individuals energetically whilst successfully controlling the whole group. Teachers structure the use of time well and provide help for individual students which is timely and effective. Assignment setting and review procedures in music technology are of a high standard. Students in this subject area take responsibility for updating their achievements against the performance criteria for the qualification, in a computer-based diary. Very well-planned and prepared materials are used for teaching and learning in music technology. A college-devised software programme helps staff to respond to music technology students' learning styles effectively. Key skills are well integrated with music technology. All key skills components have been successfully integrated and assessed in a practical subject assignment. Music technology and multimedia are equipped with extensive and up-to-date hardware and software.

137. There is a good rehearsal studio for dance and a purpose-built theatre. Accommodation in art and design is light, airy and well lit, but there is inadequate storage space for work in progress. Media classrooms are large and equipped with appropriate projection equipment. Restricted access to music technology and multimedia specialist areas outside taught time reduces students' opportunities to further develop their work. Staff have relevant vocational expertise and specialist qualifications. Many arts and media staff work professionally in industry.

138. Much formative assessment, monitoring and reviews of student progress are insufficiently effective at helping students to improve appropriately. Constructive, firm guidance to ensure students complete work on time and improve, is not provided effectively. Target setting lacks sufficient rigour. Students are not encouraged enough to take responsibility for their own progress. Many acting assignment briefs are carefully written and guide students well through the development processes of performance.

139. There is a satisfactory range of courses and levels across the curriculum area. External enrichment activities are too limited.

140. Additional learning support is not always provided effectively. A learning support assistant is routinely allocated to each first-year group of the diploma programmes, irrespective of student needs. All level 3 students identified as needing additional support are required to self-refer in order to obtain help. Learning support assistants are not always present in lessons to which they have been allocated. Many teachers do not use information identified about students' learning styles, during teaching.

Leadership and management

141. Leadership and management are poor. Data are used to help identify weaknesses, but many remedial actions are not implemented effectively. Significant problems relating to staff retention and absence rates have not been rectified. These issues adversely affect students' learning. Staff development and the induction and training of new staff is unsatisfactory. The number and rigour of

lesson observations and feedback to improve the standard of teaching is inadequate and do not provide sufficient information, for managers, to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom. Good practice is not shared.

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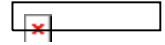
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- o   good assessment practices help monitor student progress

- o   good support improves learning for GCE A2 students.

Weaknesses

- o   low retention rates in many subjects

- o   limited use of IT to support teaching

- o   insufficiently rigorous quality assurance

- o   insufficient language support for students.

Scope of provision

142. The college offers AS-level and GCE A2 courses in eight subjects in humanities including geography, psychology, sociology, history, law communication studies, general studies and citizenship. Most students are aged 16 to 18. There are 275 students at AS level and 85 on GCE A2 courses. The largest subject groups are psychology and sociology. Courses are full time although a small number of part-time students aged 19 and over join AS-level and GCE A2 subjects offered in the full-time programme. An access to HE programme is offered for adult students on a full-time or part-time basis. There are 73 full-time students following access courses over one year and 21 part-time students on a two-year programme.

Achievement and standards

143. Retention rates are low in many subjects. In most AS-level subjects, they have remained below

national averages for the last three years, while in GCE A2 subjects they have been close to national averages during this period. On the access to HE programme, retention rates are low, although they have remained close to a low national average.

144. Pass rates have fluctuated over the last three years. There are some good pass rates in GCE A2 subjects, with 100% pass rates in 2004 in communication studies, history and sociology. In AS-level subjects, there have been some poor pass rates, with rates well below national averages in 2004 in geography, psychology and sociology. High-grade passes are below national averages in most subjects. Pass rates on the access to HE programme are low and have remained below national averages for the period for the last three years. All students are expected to undertake at least key skills in IT at level 2 if they have not previously attained any level 2 key skills. In practice, only a small number register for assessment and only a few students receive accreditation in any key skill.

145. Students achieve good standards of work in geography, psychology and communications studies. However, in access sociology subjects, students' attainment is unsatisfactory and teaching does not enable students to learn effectively.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	19	25	17
		% retention	84	84	65
		% pass rate	94	71	91
GCE A2 history	3	No. of starts	12	14	15
		% retention	92	100	93
		% pass rate	100	93	100
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	48	45	42
		% retention	71	64	71
		% pass rate	53	76	63
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	63	41	40
		% retention	73	59	65
		% pass rate	67	54	73
GCE A2 sociology	3	No. of starts	18	25	9
		% retention	78	92	89
		% pass rate	86	83	100
Access to HE (1 year)	3	No. of starts	37	60	48
		% retention	59	65	65
		% pass rate	50	59	52

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

146. Teaching and learning are effective in many lessons. In good lessons, students participate actively and are interested and committed to learning. For example, in a psychology lesson, students studying memory participated in a series of simple memory tests. They linked theory and practice effectively by comparing the outcomes of each of the tests to the theories being discussed.

147. In many lessons, students are encouraged to develop their communication and analytical skills and to work collaboratively. In a communication studies lesson, students studying group dynamics were split into groups and given an unusual, but clear task to discuss. Some students acted as observers and accurately noted the roles adopted by each student in the group. They compared those roles to a model of group dynamics and made sound judgments about the relevance of that model.

148. In a minority of lessons, teaching is poorly planned and students do not learn to a satisfactory standard. Lesson planning does not include a sufficient variety of activities to hold students' interest. In weaker lessons, group tasks lack clear structure and students are unsure of what is expected of them. Lesson materials are sometimes poorly organised, leading to confusion amongst students.

149. Schemes of work are thorough. Most lessons are accompanied by high-quality written materials. Subject and unit booklets support lesson activities effectively and provide students with well-organised study materials.

150. Staff are well qualified and undertake regular staff development. Classrooms are light and suitably furnished. There is too little IT equipment for teaching and learning in classrooms with only one computer available across the area. There is insufficient use of IT in lessons. A minority of subjects have student materials and activities available on the college intranet. There is too limited use of IT to encourage independent study in most subjects.

151. Assessment procedures are good. Assessment is used effectively to monitor and review students' performance. AS-level and GCE A2 students have frequent formal progress reviews. Assessment schedules are detailed and assessment measures performance and reinforces learning. On all courses, teachers provide detailed feedback to students on their assessed work, indicating how they can improve their performance. Target grades are identified for each subject, based on students' GCSE scores. These are updated through performance grades, reflecting students' achievements. Underachieving students, or those with poor attendance or punctuality, undergo an additional review to which parents are invited. These result in short-term targets being identified for students.

152. Access to HE programmes are offered flexibly on a full-time or part-time basis. However, students with family responsibilities are often late for lessons. Students have a good choice of pathways and option modules.

153. In many subjects, including geography, history, law and the access programmes, students benefit from a range of enrichment activities which include field trips, theatre visits, and conferences.

154. Tutorial support is well organised for GCE A2 students. Tutors liaise closely with subject teachers to exchange information about students' performance. Absences and poor punctuality are now monitored closely. Tutorial arrangements for access students are insufficiently structured and target setting and review are not formally undertaken.

155. All students have an initial assessment to identify literacy, language and numeracy needs at induction. A small, but increasing number of students have language support needs. Additional support for level 3 students is restricted and most of these students do not receive the language support they require.

Leadership and management

156. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Quality assurance is not sufficiently rigorous and self-assessment has had little impact in improving weaknesses such as low retention and pass rates. A new management structure has clarified roles and responsibilities and improved communication between staff.

157. The self-assessment report does not involve all staff in its preparation and it is not fully understood by them all. Although many strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified, some

significant strengths and weaknesses are not included. In some cases, unreliable judgments are made through using unclear management information. No clear data on how well students progress relative to their previous attainment have been available for two years. Judgements about how effectively the AS-level and GCE A2 programmes meet students' needs are not well evidenced. Some weaknesses do not result in appropriate actions and there is an insufficient focus on raising standards of teaching and learning. Staff job review interviews and the lesson observation scheme have not rectified weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

158. Many students are from diverse backgrounds. Many lessons are planned to include materials about other cultures and opportunities are taken to value diversity.

English for speakers of other languages
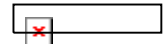
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o   good attainment

- o   good teaching of language skills

- o   creative use of ICT resources on the main college site.

Weaknesses

- o   narrow range of ESOL courses

- o   insufficient support for ESOL students

- o   insufficiently robust quality assurance procedures.

Scope of provision

159. The college provision for ESOL includes 26 courses from pre-entry to level 2. Students attend one or more courses for between 2 and 10.5 hours each week. Courses take place mainly at a shared adult education centre in Epsom and on the main college site. There is one evening course held at a secondary school. At the time of inspection there were 219 students enrolled on the ESOL programme. The majority of students are aged over 19. Two IT for ESOL courses and two pre-entry

literacy courses are provided on the main site. Some 28 students on main college courses are receiving ESOL support in the learning resource centre.

Achievement and standards

160. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory. Entries to ESOL examinations have increased from 27 in 2002/03 to 164 in 2003/04. In 2003/04, pass and retention rates were at or near the national average. Students not taking external examinations work towards internal accreditation.

161. Students make good progress towards their learning goals. They are developing their skills and knowledge of English in speaking, listening, reading and writing to a good standard. Students are developing their understanding of topics such as leisure and language at work and their awareness of formal and informal language and grammatical structures well. Work done is carefully recorded in the learning plan. Student attainment is good across the programme. Students on the ESOL IT courses develop good IT skills as well as language. However, the rate of progress made by students on the courses is not monitored and there is no system for monitoring progression to work or further study.

162. There is poor attendance in some lessons, and there is no formal system for following-up non-attendance, though teachers investigate attendance problems informally.

Quality of education and training

163. Teaching and learning are good. Students demonstrate good learning and achieve lesson objectives. They are able, for example, to explain how to use a simple recipe to a friend, to find information in reference materials and to use different question forms correctly. There is good teaching of the full range of language skills. Teachers are skilled at enabling students to develop this range. They help students to develop their own language awareness and ability to discuss and correct their own errors, thus promoting good language learning. In the best lessons, good planning, language analysis and use of materials lead to good or very good learning of oral and written language. Activities are demanding and communicative, and learning is frequently checked in a range of ways, for example, by observing pair work. Individual work is set according to each student's needs and differentiation is planned and recorded in the lesson plan. Grammar is clearly explained and practised through interesting communicative activities such as quizzes. In one lesson, the teacher had a checklist of the grammar errors most commonly revealed in the initial assessments and included these in the scheme of work. Reading and writing activities are managed so that students are actively communicating with each other through well-designed spelling games and other appropriate techniques, including effective learning through working well together.

164. Accommodation is satisfactory, though noise from the next room in one lesson in the learning resource centre made it difficult to hear the teacher at times. Paper teaching resources are satisfactory. There is a subject librarian with specific responsibility for ESOL and for resources to support English as a foreign language. All ESOL teachers have relevant qualifications and have attended useful staff development to update their skills.

165. ICT is used creatively in teaching and learning. In a lesson for students with very low levels of literacy, very good use of software was made to support learning. The teacher used a translation website to help students understand texts in English and used a visual language programme very effectively to help students understand what they were reading and writing. Helpful multilingual software and support is available in the open access area of the learning resource centre and students often make good use of it. In ESOL IT, there is good integration of ICT and language skills.

166. Assessment is satisfactory. There is frequent checking of learning and clear feedback to students in lessons. Techniques such as pair work, role play, written exercises, peer correction and oral questioning further reinforce learning and assist students to develop their learning. The quality of information in progress reviews is variable. A minority of files contain good progress reviews, but the small steps of learning towards targets are often not shown, grammar and spelling needs revealed through initial assessment are not usually reflected in targets in students' individual

learning plans. Detailed steps towards learning targets to address those needs are usually not shown.

167. There is an insufficient range of ESOL courses. Provision covers pre-entry to level 2. There are literacy and IT lessons for ESOL students, but there is no ESOL provision in the workplace and only one course is held in the community, although there have been more in the past. There has been no systematic analysis of local needs to establish the ESOL programme. There are no initiatives to facilitate progression to further study within the college or to work, such as taster courses, embedded ESOL, or ESOL vocational courses.

168. Support for students on ESOL courses is unsatisfactory. There is no formal induction process and no formal advice and guidance to support ESOL students' progression to further study or work and there are no enrichment activities.

Leadership and management

169. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new programme manager has been in post since September 2004 and is currently implementing new systems such as lesson observation, initial assessment and entry to new skills for life qualifications. Communications between staff in the skills for life area are good and the standard of teaching is good.

170. Quality assurance procedures are insufficiently robust. Few observations of teaching have so far been carried out. Staff development is not securely planned on the basis of need. No student satisfaction survey was carried out with ESOL students and there is no information on how students would like the programme to be improved or any analysis of how they viewed the teaching and learning. No separate course review was carried out for ESOL in 2003/04. Action plans do not contain sufficient use of data or use of a sufficient range of evidence to improve the programme.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
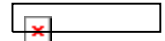
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

> o   high pass rate on essential skills award programme

> o   extensive range of courses and options

> o   good personal and social support.

Weaknesses

> o   poor progression on to vocational courses or employment

     o   insufficiently robust quality assurance.

Scope of provision

171. There are 82 students, all of whom are aged 19 and over, studying part time on a wide range of courses leading towards the Mencap essential skills award or Open College qualifications. They include computer skills, drama, film and television, mosaics, cookery, healthy living and independent living skills. Students come primarily from a range of local care homes, community housing, supported housing and parental housing. Students attend college for between 2 hours and 22 hours a week. The majority of students have moderate learning difficulties, although a few have more complex difficulties. There are a small number of students with visual, hearing or physical difficulties.

Achievement and standards

172. There are high pass rates on the essential skills award. In 2004, the pass rate was 88% and in 2003 pass rates ranged from 78% in drama to 100% for independent living. Students' work is of an appropriate standard. Students achieve well against their individual learning plans. There is good achievement of personal and social skills.

173. Achievement is celebrated. There is an annual awards event for students to which parents, carers and friends are invited. Drama and film students have an Oscars ceremony. Students' work is attractively displayed in corridors and some classrooms. The students' colourful mosaics are displayed across the entire college in prime locations such as the entrance area.

174. Attendance is good.

Quality of education and training

175. In all lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. All lessons have lesson plans which outline generic group targets and, in the better lessons, individual specific targets. In an arts and crafts lesson, individual targets to learn the names of colours, to listen carefully to instructions, or to put on an apron without assistance were clearly and effectively enforced and assessed. Good use is made of students' experiences to encourage the development of speaking and listening skills. In a healthy living lesson, all students were involved in a good discussion about breakfast cereals. Students improved their understanding of healthy options and how to make choices. The lesson finished with students appropriately making and tasting porridge. Students are often praised by tutors in lessons and encouraged to try more difficult activities.

176. All students have an initial assessment which leads to the production of an individual learning plan. Plans contain personal, social and behavioural targets as well as, in the better plans, individual curriculum-related targets. In a minority of lessons, targets are insufficiently specific.

177. In the better lessons, there is good momentum with a variety of activities and all students are fully involved at all times. In a music lesson, students made musical instruments from jars, tins and cardboard boxes. They learnt to recognise different sounds and suggested making alterations to their instruments to change the sounds produced. There is some lively and energetic teaching. In a mosaic workshop lesson, students took part in an imaginative and lively stock-taking exercise. Students developed skills in both numeracy and observation.

178. Tutors use clear language and give precise instructions in easy-to-follow steps. However, tasks are not always sufficiently demanding for more able students and they do not always make productive use of their time. In a minority of lessons, support workers are overly supportive and inhibit students from fully developing their own skills.

179. There is good linked activity between courses. In a computer lesson, students devised recipes for omelettes using Widgit symbols for those with reading difficulties. Students then used the recipes when cooking in a later lesson.

180. Accommodation is satisfactory. Base rooms exist for arts and crafts, cookery and independent living. Accommodation is shared for music and drama and computing. Six computers have Widgit symbols. There are good displays for visual stimulation in arts and crafts. Events and photographs are also displayed. Other rooms are bare and lack sufficient visual displays. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.

181. Tutors review student progress regularly and feed back to students, parents and carers appropriately. Tracking systems are relatively new and are underdeveloped, but they are helpful for monitoring students' progress in generic areas. Portfolios contain relevant documentation and records of students' work.

182. There is a good range of provision with nationally recognised accreditation. The essential skills award framework offers students a choice of 15 to 20 courses. Provision is discrete. There is no community-based provision nor sufficient progression within college on to mainstream basic skills or vocational programmes. There are links with agencies within the area, but too few students progress to employment, voluntary or community service. Some students remain too long in discrete provision.

183. Personal and social support are good. Learning support assistants work well as part of the team to give good support to students on an individual basis. However, in a minority of lessons, students receive too much help and fail to develop their skills fully.

184. Group tutorials take place regularly and students are able to comment on their courses and general college issues.

Leadership and management

185. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear and well co-ordinated focus on course development. Communication between staff is frequent and regular team meetings are held, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice across the area. There are no formal links with other curriculum areas to discuss progression for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Staff development is good.

186. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Few lesson observations have taken place and internal grading is much higher than grades awarded during inspection. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical and does not contain enough clear and detailed action points. Normal practices are recorded as strengths. The development plan lacks detail. Internal verification is not robust and actions taken to deal with issues raised during external moderation lack a sense of urgency. Written materials do not reflect best practice in celebrating diversity.

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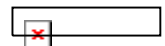
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good use of vocationally related materials in many lessons

o   good individual support for literacy and numeracy students.

Weaknesses

o   poor achievement in key skills

o   inadequate target setting in key skills lessons

o   insufficient identification of literacy and numeracy needs at level 3.

Scope of provision

187. The college offers literacy, numeracy and language courses to full-time and part-time students. Courses range from entry level to level 2 and key skills in communication and application of number. Full-time students study key skills in addition to their main course. Part-time courses in literacy and numeracy range from entry level to level 2 and are mainly taken by students aged 19 and over. The college offers a range of full-time and short programmes to adults on the main college site, at community venues and in the workplace. There are 762 students enrolled on courses, of whom 612 are aged 16 to 18 and 150 are adults. There are an additional 14 students enrolled on work-based learning programmes. Additional support in literacy and numeracy is available to students on all college courses. There are 227 students currently receiving additional learning support in literacy, numeracy and dyslexia.

Achievement and standards

188. Achievement of key skills qualifications is poor. They have been very low over the last three years at levels 1 and 2. Full achievement of key skills communication at levels 1 and 2 for 2004 was 5% and 0%, respectively. Pass rates for application of number in 2004 at levels 1 and 2 were 1% and 15%, respectively. There is some recent improvement in partial achievement through the completion of portfolios, but too few students are entered for key skills tests, the national literacy and numeracy tests at levels 1 or 2 or for entry level literacy and numeracy qualifications.

189. Pass rates on non-accredited literacy and numeracy courses for adults are good. There is 100% pass rate on short, 20-hour programmes. Retention rates in key skills and adult literacy and numeracy lessons are satisfactory or better.

190. Attainment on most literacy and numeracy courses is satisfactory. Students' work compiled in folders is of at least a satisfactory standard. Many students achieve the learning outcomes stated in lesson plans. However, in a minority of key skills lessons, there is unsatisfactory achievement of literacy and numeracy targets outlined in students' individual learning plans.

191. Progression by students taking literacy and numeracy on to other courses or into employment is satisfactory. Two students taking a course which develops literacy skills creatively through the medium of nail art in the community, have progressed on to a full-time NVQ beauty therapy course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy and numeracy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Key skills application of number level 1	1	No. of starts	173	223	*
		% retention	77	82	68
		% pass rate	31	3	1
Key skills communication level 1 (1 year)	1	No. of starts	146	166	*
		% retention	82	84	71
		% pass rate	20	9	5
Key skills application of number level 2	2	No. of starts	294	351	*
		% retention	57	80	74
		% pass rate	4	0	15
Key skills communication level 2	2	No. of starts	298	429	*
		% retention	57	81	72
		% pass rate	3	9	0

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

***data unreliable**

Quality of education and training

192. Most lessons are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers pay thorough attention to the vocational and leisure interests of students. For example, in a construction craft trades key skills lesson, students successfully developed their number skills by undertaking an exercise to calculate the number of screws needed to plasterboard a ceiling. They then began to develop scale drawings of ceilings.

193. In weaker lessons, there is insufficient attention given to the individual needs of students. In some cases, students are all working on the same tasks and worksheets, irrespective of their individual needs, abilities and interests. For example, in one lesson all students were focusing on adjectives, although one clearly indicated that he needed and wanted to work on improving spelling.

194. Questioning techniques are used satisfactorily to promote discussion and understanding in many lessons. Teachers respond well to strong views and questions from students. In weaker lessons, there is insufficient checking of students' individual understanding.

195. In many lessons, learning support is at least satisfactory. Course teachers and learning support teachers often work closely to develop useful lesson plans. Informal and formal planning meetings are held to share information about assignments and to ensure that activities are relevant. Some learning support assistants demonstrate good support techniques by using different strategies and questioning students to enable them to identify correct answers.

196. Good use is made of vocationally related resources in many lessons. New key skills assignments successfully integrate key skills and vocational skills. Many students attend the well-equipped learning resource centre, although accommodation and resources at other locations are not of such a high standard. There are some good instances of students using ICT, for example, in investigating file-sharing on the Internet to support a business assignment.

197. Literacy and numeracy teachers are encouraged to take the new literacy and numeracy specialist qualifications at level 4, but there is no clear staff development programme for literacy and

numeracy teachers, learning support assistants or volunteers. Some teachers and learning support assistants have been placed inappropriately on the level 4 course. There is insufficient specific staff development for vocational tutors and assessment of their own literacy and numeracy needs is too limited.

198. The use of diagnostic assessment in setting literacy and numeracy targets in key skills lessons is unsatisfactory. Targets are insufficiently developed and in many key skills lessons students do not have individual learning plans. Most students undergo an initial assessment, but the results are not always used to support students effectively in their programmes.

199. There is effective individual literacy and numeracy support for students in the learning resource centre. Students' literacy and numeracy targets are accurately identified and carefully monitored. Students receive good personal support from teachers. However, the literacy and numeracy needs of students on level 3 courses are not systematically or adequately identified and addressed.

200. There have been innovative programmes to extend participation, for example, literacy and numeracy have been offered through the medium of courses such as nail art. The college has established a good working relationship with a sheltered employer Remploy and offers provision at a range of levels to suit the needs of workers. There is an insufficient range of qualifications available to meet the needs of adult students. There are few suitable courses for part-time students to progress on to in the community.

Leadership and management

201. Cross-college management of key skills is very weak. There has been too little remedial action to address the failure of key skills strategies and improve pass rates over the past three years.

202. The management of literacy and numeracy programmes and of literacy and numeracy learning support is satisfactory overall. There is effective communication between managers and staff and a reasonably accurate analysis of developmental needs within the self-assessment report.

203. Policies are in place to support equality of opportunity and students are supported appropriately in lessons. Learning materials and displays reflect cultural diversity. Information relating to significant days of celebration in a variety of cultures each month are displayed prominently across the college site. Posters and other display materials reflect the student cohort.

204. Outcomes from the observation system feed into staff appraisal. However, the present system is inflexible and produces insufficiently detailed and informative judgements to be helpful in raising standards.
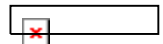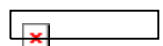
Part D: College data

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

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	26	68
2	34	13

|		
3	30	6
4/5	1	5
Other	9	8
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: provided by the college in spring 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2002/03

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	664	453	3
Land-based provision	151	300	1
Construction	741	1,598	7
Engineering, technology and manufacture	37	266	1
Business administration, management and professional	322	1,178	4
Information and communication technology	1,134	19,476	61
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	413	565	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	14	159	1
Health, social care and public services	260	1,597	5
Visual and performing arts and media	465	222	2
Humanities	319	420	2
English, languages and communication	787	280	3
Foundation programmes	305	946	4
Other/Unknown	44	25	3
Total	**5,612**	**27,460**	**100**

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement
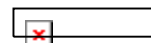
| Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	352	437	569	1,354	1,014	819
	Retention rate %	76	76	67	52	69	76
	National average %	75	76	76	70	71	71
	Pass rate %	70	78	69	53	74	58
	National average %	67	69	73	68	70	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	745	731	590	746	848	776
	Retention rate %	63	72	69	61	66	72
	National average %	70	71	71	68	68	67
	Pass rate %	69	64	72	69	67	60
	National average %	68	70	73	67	71	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,683	1,311	1,182	747	550	582
	Retention rate %	63	68	68	67	73	60
	National average %	70	77	77	68	70	69
	Pass rate %	63	72	75	73	74	61
	National average %	75	77	80	68	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	3	1	2	134	124	89
	Retention rate %	100	100	50	58	65	92
	National average %	73	71	74	67	68	69
	Pass rate %	0	0	100	17	33	30
	National average %	54	57	68	54	54	58

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 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR.

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level
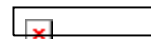
Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	55	31	12	70
Level 2 (intermediate)	42	40	16	54
Level 1 (foundation)	75	17	6	29
Other sessions	71	24	4	45
Totals	**59**	**30**	**11**	**0**