



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Runshaw College

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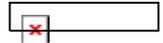
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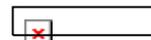
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Basic information about the college

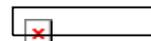


Name of college:	Runshaw College
Type of college:	General Further Education/Tertiary College
Principal:	Michael Sheehan
Address of college:	Runshaw College Langdale Road Leyland Lancashire PR25 3DQ
Telephone number:	01772 622677
Fax number:	01772 642012
Chair of governors:	James Barnes
Unique reference number:	130741
Name of reporting inspector:	Colin Evans HMI
Dates of inspection:	28 February-4 March 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



Runshaw College is a large tertiary college situated in the area of South Ribble and Chorley in Lancashire. It primarily serves a population of about 204,000. It also recruits students from south Lancashire. People from minority ethnic groups form a low proportion, 2%, of the population of the area. The area has low levels of unemployment, about 1.5%, but also has pockets of deprivation. Key employment sectors include distribution, public administration, health, banking, finance and insurance. In South Ribble manufacturing is important. In 2003, 59% of the area's school pupils aged 15 achieved 5 A* to C grades at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) compared with 54% nationally. The proportion of school leavers continuing in full-time education is 70% compared with 72% nationally.

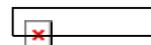
In 2003/04, the college enrolled 9,272 further education (FE) students funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), of whom 3,730 were full-time students. Some 95% of the full-time students and 3 % of the part-time students are aged 16 to 18. About 230 students were enrolled on higher education (HE) courses and 143 on apprenticeship programmes managed by the college. In full-time equivalent terms about 70% of the students were enrolled on level 3 courses, 18% at level 2 and 9% at level 1. The college has substantial provision in 11 of the LSC's 14 areas of learning. There are few students enrolled on courses in the land-based, construction, and retailing, customer service and transportation areas of learning. The college's income was £24million in 2003/04. The LSC categorises the college as grade A for its financial position. It was classified as excellent overall by the LSC in the spring review and excellent for each of the following: recruitment and participation; student experience and performance; and management.

The college is the destination for 70% of school-leavers in Chorley and South Ribble. A large number of post-16 providers of education and training operate nearby. Within a 15 mile radius are five sixth form colleges, five FE colleges, an 11 to 18 denominational school and several independent schools. The college operates from three major sites which house distinctive provision. At Leyland, the sixth form centre provides academic and vocational courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18, most of whom study at level 3. The adult college, three miles away and near Chorley, provides part-time vocational courses, access to HE courses, adult basic education and education and training for two prisons. The Runshaw business centre, which provides services for industry, is located in the adult college buildings. Hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapy courses and basic skills provision are provided at a site in Chorley town centre. Community-based provision is available in four outreach centres. A bus equipped with information technology (IT) facilities brings learning to outlying areas. In April 2004, the college assimilated the work of a work-based learning provider with which it had previously worked in partnership. 'Runshaw training' which is part of the Runshaw business centre, now provides for over 200 work-based learners in 8 vocational areas. There are two centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs); the leadership and management CoVE based primarily in the business centre and the IT for business CoVE which is focused on the schools of IT and computing.

The college aims to sustain the current size of its sixth form centre, and to provide a wide range of learning opportunities and a supportive environment where each individual feels valued. It seeks to increase the number of adults participating in learning and to expand the services provided to the business community. It aims to provide all its students with first class facilities.

The college became a Beacon college in 2001, it won the 2002 United Kingdom Business Excellence Award (public sector category) and in 2003 the European Quality Award (public service category) and a special prize for leadership and 'constancy of purpose'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching and learning and students' achievements to be outstanding in seven areas of learning and good in two. Work-based learning was judged to be good in both of the areas inspected, business, and health and social care. The college's key strengths and weaknesses and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- outstanding leadership and management

- outstanding pass and retention rates for students aged 16 to 18

- the very good value added to 16 to 18 students' progress

- adult students' high pass rates at levels 1 and 2

- the good achievement of apprenticeship frameworks

- high-quality, and often outstanding, teaching and learning

- the high standard of students' work

- excellent resources

- the rigorous monitoring of students' progress

- the wide-ranging subject and general enrichment activities

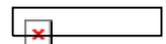
- outstanding support for students
- clear and shared strategic direction, values and behaviour
- rigorous quality assurance and accurate self-assessment
- the strong focus on quality improvement, particularly for teaching and learning
- promotion of equality and respect for diversity.

What should be improved

- the range of adult provision in some curriculum areas
- the lack of an area strategy for 'skills for life' provision
- low key skills pass rates.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

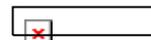


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Outstanding. General certificate of education (GCE) pass rates are

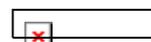
	<p>outstandingly high and retention rates are very high. Teaching is effective and stimulating. Good use is made of information and learning technology (ILT). Support for individual students is excellent. The management of the curriculum is very good. The provision for adults is small.</p>
Business	<p>Outstanding. The contributory grade for work-based learning is good. Pass and retention rates are high. Retention and pass rates on work-based courses are good. Learning is very effective; good use is made of vocationally relevant teaching and innovative use of the virtual learning environment. Support for students is effective. Enrichment is excellent. Curriculum management is outstanding. There are some shortcomings in provision leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs).</p>
Information and communications technology	<p>Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are high. Teaching and learning are very good. Resources are good and used effectively. The wide range of provision meets student needs. Support for students is excellent. Curriculum management is outstanding.</p>
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	<p>Good. NVQ pass rates are high. Retention rates are high on beauty therapy courses. Retention and pass rates were low on part-time holistic therapy courses in 2004. Teaching and learning are good and support for students is excellent. There are shortcomings in curriculum and resource management and professional practice.</p>
Health and social care	<p>Outstanding. The contributory grade for work-based learning is good. Pass rates are very high and retention is good. Teaching is highly effective. Support for learners is outstanding and leadership and management are outstanding.</p>
Visual arts	<p>Outstanding. Pass rates are high. Students produce work of a high standard. Much of the teaching is demanding and inspirational. Stimulating enrichment activities enhance the learning. Resources are excellent.</p>
Humanities	<p>Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are outstandingly high. Students achieve much better grades at GCE A level than predicted by their GCSE performance. Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are rigorous. Support for students is exceptional. Leadership and management are very good. The adult provision is not well established.</p>
English and modern foreign languages	<p>Outstanding. Pass rates are high. GCE course retention rates are high. Students achieve much better grades at GCE A level than predicted by their GCSE performance. Teaching is highly effective. Resources are very good. There is excellent academic and personal support. Enrichment opportunities are outstanding. Course leadership and teamwork are very effective.</p>
Literacy and numeracy	<p>Good. Pass rates are high on the new national certificates in adult literacy and numeracy. Most of the teaching is good. Literacy and numeracy specialists are highly qualified. Students' progress is monitored effectively. Literacy and numeracy study support is very good. Achievement on some short courses is low. Key skills achievements were low in 2004. There is no clear strategy for the management of the 'skills for life' provision.</p>

How well is the college led and managed?



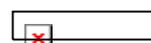
Leadership and management are outstanding. The quality of teaching and learning is exceptionally high and students do better than predictions based on their prior attainment at school. Managers' expectations of both students and staff are very high. There is a clear focus on improving teaching, learning and achievement. Support for students is excellent. Students' progress is monitored rigorously. Quality assurance processes are very effective. Self-assessment is rigorous and inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. There is a high level of adherence by staff and students to the college's values. The focus on equality and diversity is strong and effective. The college is financially healthy and financial management is good. Governance is very good; governors give the college a clear strategic direction and priorities for improvement. Strategic planning processes are clear and involve all staff. There is a strong commitment to developing and supporting staff, particularly to improve teaching and learning. The college's policy on key skills assessment is not implemented effectively. The college provides very good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



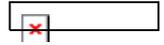
The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. It is reflected in the college's core values, for example, of valuing the individual and striving for excellence. The range of level 3 courses is wide. Adult provision is small in some curriculum areas. Arrangements to ensure students enrol on the right courses are good. Teaching is very good and is well matched to the needs of all the students. Students' progress is rigorously monitored. Pass and retention rates on students' main courses are high and students achieve higher grades than predicted by their attainment at GCSE. Key skills achievements are low. The support provided for students with additional needs is excellent. The timing of a few courses is not well suited to the needs of parents with young children. Effective action has been taken to ensure that males and females and minority ethnic groups achieve equally well. A good response has been made to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Equality and diversity are promoted actively. Accommodation is accessible to students with restricted mobility. There is no clear area strategy to promote 'skills for life' provision.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are outstanding. Pastoral and academic support are well managed. The pre-entry advice and guidance provided for students is impartial and helpful. Informative material is produced in various community languages and is sensitive to issues of equality and diversity. The induction programme is excellent. Initial assessment contributes to the early identification of students' needs. Students with additional needs are very well supported. The tutorial programme is outstanding. Staff are very helpful, give freely of their time and provide highly effective support. Students' progress is rigorously monitored. Students receive good careers education and guidance. They have good access to health and financial advice, counselling and welfare support. Policies and procedures are in place to monitor punctuality and attendance and non-attendance is actively followed-up. The college has responded well to legislation on child protection. A senior manager is responsible for managing child protection issues and staff are well informed of their responsibilities.

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

- supportive staff

- friendly, clean and safe environment

- good teaching

- quality and availability of study support

- good facilities and accommodation

- enrichment activities

- easy access to computers

- library resources.

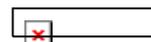
What they feel could be improved

- quality of canteen food and the availability of healthy options on some college sites

- crowded canteens at peak times and few informal leisure facilities

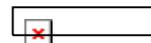
- availability of parking and the state of repair of the Euxton car park
- support for child care.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



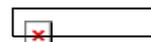
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	87	13	0
19+ and WBL*	79	21	0
Learning 16-18	86	14	0
19+ and WBL*	84	16	0

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. The standard of work in lessons is high. Standards are particularly high in GCE A-level and advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) lessons. In mathematics, for example, students talk confidently about the subject and show good insights. Business assignment work is of a high standard. Art students demonstrate good standards of work and a maturity in their approach to learning. Information and communications technology (ICT) students are confident in their use of software and hardware. In humanities, students are fluent, make good use of terminology and present well-reasoned arguments. Students' written work is well presented, and demonstrates good levels of skill in the use of IT.

2. Students' attendance is high. The average attendance in the lessons inspected was 85%, 8% above the national average for similar colleges. In no area of learning was the attendance below the national average for that area. It was highest in science and mathematics, at 90%.

3. In the following paragraphs, college pass rates are compared with national averages for similar colleges, that is all general FE and tertiary colleges. At the time of the inspection, national averages for 2004 were not available. College pass rates for 2004 are compared with national averages for 2003.

16 to 18 year olds

4. Students studying courses at levels 2 and 3 achieve very high pass and retention rates. These students represent 95% of the enrolments on long courses at levels 1 to 4 by students aged 16 to 18 and 70% of the long course enrolments of students of all ages.

5. The level 3 pass rate places the college in the top 10% of similar colleges in each of the four years to 2004. The retention rate is almost as good; in 2001 and 2004 the rate placed the college in the top 10%, and in the middle two years in the top quartile. The 'success rate' that is the proportion of students who achieve their qualification compared with the number of starters, has been above 80% in each year, has been at least 24% above the national average, and consistently places the college in the top 10% of similar colleges.

6. The level 2 pass rate is nearly as impressive. The pass rate was in the top 10% in 2001 and 2004 and in the top quartile in the middle two years. The retention rate placed the college in the top 10% in each of the three years to 2003 and in the top quartile in 2004. The success rate has been above 70% in each year, has been at least 19% above the national average, and consistently places the college in the top 10% of similar colleges.

7. The level 1 pass rate is consistently well above the national average. In 2001 and 2002, the college was in the top quartile of similar colleges for this measure. In 2003 and 2004, the rate declined to below the top quartile, but was still well above the average. The retention rate placed the college in the top quartile in 2002 and 2003. In 2001 and 2004, it was close to the average for similar colleges. The success rate has been consistently in the top quartile of colleges in the four years to 2004.

8. Achievements in AS-level and GCE A-level subjects are very good. Retention rates are very high, 97% and 92%, respectively, in 2004. The GCE A-level pass rate was 100% in 2004 and 98% in 2003 and the AS-level pass rate 96% and 94% in these years. These rates are well above national averages. Higher-grade (A and B) pass rates are also very high, for example, 54% at GCE A-level and 46% in AS-level subjects in 2004. Achievements at GCE A level, when compared with those predicted by students' attainment at GCSE, (value added) were consistently well above prediction in the four years to 2001. They dipped in 2002, partially recovered in 2003 and were again well above those predicted in 2004. Some subjects, for example, GCE A-level physics, accountancy, modern foreign languages and the vocational GCE A level in art and design consistently achieve very high value added scores. Achievements on courses leading to NVQs, general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs), and their precursors, are outstanding. Pass rates were 92%, 95% and 93%, respectively, in 2004 and retention rates 84%, 74% and 80%. These rates are much higher than national averages.

9. Key skills pass rates in application of number and communications at level 1 were high in 2002 and 2003. They were low in 2004. At level 2, they were well above average in communications and close to the average in application of number in 2003. In 2004, few students were entered for application of number. Pass rates in communications were low.

10. The college contracted directly with the LSC to manage work-based learning from April 2004. Since then, the early leaver rate has been low and a high proportion of those who have reached the end of the programme have achieved the full framework.

Adult learners

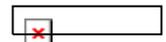
11. The achievements of adults are more mixed than those for students aged 16 to 18, but still impressive. They are very good at level 2, good at level 1 and satisfactory at level 3.

12. At level 2, the pass rate has been in the top 10% of similar colleges in both 2003 and 2004. The retention rate has fallen from its position in the top 10% of similar colleges in 2002, to the top quartile in 2003 to 5% above the national average in 2004. The success rate places the college in the top 10% of colleges in both 2003 and 2004.

13. The level 1 pass rate has been in the top quartile of colleges in both 2003 and 2004. The retention rate has fallen from its position in the top 10% in 2002 to the top quartile in 2003 to 7% above average 2004. The success rate places the college in the top quartile of colleges in both 2003 and 2004.

14. The level 3 pass rate fluctuates, but is at least satisfactory. It was in the top quartile in 2001 and in the top 10% in 2003. In 2002 and 2004, it was close to the average. The retention rate has been at the average in the three years to 2004. The success rate also fluctuates, but is at least satisfactory. It placed the college in the middle 50% of colleges, but well above average, in 2002, in the top 10% in 2003 and close to the average in 2004.

Quality of education and training



15. Teaching is consistently very good. It is very good in both theory and practical lessons, to students aged 16 to 18 and to adults, and whether taught by full-time or part-time teachers. Teaching was good or better in nearly 85% of the lessons and very good or excellent in over half. These proportions are well above those usually seen in similar colleges. In almost all the lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory. Teaching to GCE A-level students is exceptional. It was judged good or better in almost all the lessons and very good or excellent in 60%. Teaching in AS-level lessons is nearly as good. Teaching to students aged 16 to 18 is outstanding. In 87% of the lessons it was rated good or better and in over half very good or better, proportions which compare very favourably with similar colleges. The grade profiles for learning are similarly very good.

16. In all nine areas of learning inspected, the proportion of teaching which was good or better was much higher than usually seen in similar colleges. In three areas, the proportion of teaching which was good or better was 90% or higher. In English and modern foreign languages, all lessons were judged good or better and three quarters were judged very good or excellent.

17. Lesson planning is thorough. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and shared by subject teams. They ensure that lessons are well structured and that the demanding varied teaching methods result in very good learning. Classroom management is good in most lessons. The teaching is well matched to the needs of each student. This is achieved, for example, by employing a suitably wide variety of teaching methods, regularly checking that all students understand the topic development, and using extension tasks to engage the quicker students. In a

small number of lessons in, for example, mathematics, a few of the more able students are not given sufficient work to do. Practical work is generally well managed and gives appropriate attention to health and safety.

18. Teachers use praise and questioning to good effect and most employ lively teaching styles and make the subject matter interesting. Good use is made of group work, games and discussion to engender interest, and promote learning. For example, in ICT, teachers imaginatively use wordsearch activity, in humanities role-play, in English quizzes and games, and in foreign languages games to match words to their meaning. In foreign language teaching, the language being taught is used sensitively to challenge the students' understanding and to extend their vocabulary. In science, group exercises and demonstrations are used to good effect. In a few lessons, for example, in foreign languages, more demanding activity is left too late in the lesson when students are tired. Where appropriate, good links are made to vocational practice. In business, for example, teachers make good use of business case studies. Health and social care teaching is rooted firmly in vocational practice. Good use is made of visits and visiting speakers and other enrichment activity to create links with professional practice. In some areas of learning, insufficient use is made of work experience.

19. Learning materials are good and support the teaching well. For example, in one lesson in business, they are chosen to be controversial and thereby succeed in stimulating interest. In language teaching, there are very useful topic booklets for the various themes, such as grammar. In English, teachers use background slides relating to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan period to punctuate the study of the sonnets. Good use is made of ILT. In business and English, for example, the college's virtual learning environment is used to provide additional materials. In languages, the interactive whiteboard is used well to involve students and make links with relevant websites. Teachers of ICT use data projectors well to demonstrate techniques.

20. Students respond well to the teaching. They are punctual and attendance is generally good. They participate well in discussion and group work and have established good working relations with the teachers and other students. Students are diligent in lessons, work productively and demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding.

21. The college changed the way it manages key skills teaching in 2004, in order to increase the integration of the teaching into each student's main programme. The weaknesses in key skills achievements in 2004 were identified and the college is implementing an appropriate action plan which is successfully improving the teaching and aims to improve the achievements. Teaching in 80% of the key skills lessons observed by inspectors was good or better and no teaching was unsatisfactory.

22. Teachers are well qualified in their specialist areas and bring a wealth of experience to their teaching. A high proportion hold higher degrees and many are external examiners. Nearly all full-time teachers and a high proportion of part-time teachers hold teaching qualifications. Many teachers of vocational subjects are current practitioners. Opportunities for professional updating are excellent. Staff development concentrates on teaching and learning. Teachers without teaching qualifications are working towards them and their progress is closely monitored. A good feature of the staff development programme is the 'best in class' scheme whereby staff visit providers where there is known to be good practice. The college has worked closely with staff who recently transferred from another provider. These staff have updated their assessor qualifications and are taking teaching qualifications.

23. Specialist equipment and learning resources are excellent. Equipment is up to date and well maintained, and reflects high professional standards. Significant investment has been made in computers and software. The college has a good ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students. ILT is available in many classrooms. The college's virtual learning environment is well established and is increasingly being used to support teaching. Learning centres are attractive, and well equipped with resources such as books, journals, and videos. Students are guided by knowledgeable and helpful centre staff. Learning resources are well managed and materials are kept up to date.

24. Accommodation is excellent. It provides good access for students with restricted mobility. The college's sites are attractive. Since the last inspection, all mobile units have been replaced by permanent accommodation. The science laboratories are spacious and well equipped. Classrooms are well furnished, well equipped and attractive. During peak times, a small proportion of the accommodation becomes overcrowded. Students' work is displayed extensively, celebrating success, enhancing the learning environment and providing a strong sense of identity. Internal and external areas are kept tidy and safe. Health and safety are a high priority. Accident reporting is good, and issues are addressed quickly. Eating facilities are good.

25. Assessment is very well managed. Comprehensive cross-college assessment procedures are well documented. Working groups address assessment and verification issues and share good practice. A systematic approach to marking, moderating and standardising work is adopted which ensures fair, consistent and rigorous assessment. Internal verification provides very good quality control of assessment practices in most curriculum areas. Students' work is thoroughly marked and promptly returned. Teachers provide very good verbal feedback and detailed and constructive written comment. Students undertake well devised coursework including challenging assignments which enable students to demonstrate well their knowledge and skills.

26. Students' progress is rigorously and regularly monitored. Minimum target grades are established for each student's work. These target grades are based on prior attainment at GCSE and are used well to monitor student achievement and to inform students of their progress. Students are positive about the ways in which they are assessed and their progress monitored, and how this is used to plan their future learning. College policies and procedures to monitor punctuality and attendance are implemented effectively. Students are well informed of the requirements. Teachers are supportive of students, give freely of their time and provide very effective academic help, both for those who are struggling academically and for the gifted and talented. Parents, guardians and carers, as appropriate, are kept well informed about the progress of their offspring. They receive detailed reports of progress and parents' evenings are well attended.

27. The curriculum portfolio is diverse and provides appropriate breadth, particularly for full-time students aged 16 to 18 studying at level 3. Provision is available from entry level to level 3. There is a broad range of GCE courses and a small amount of level 4 work. The scope of community provision is satisfactory. In some areas of learning, aspects of the provision are not well established. For example, there is little provision for adults in humanities, at level 2 in health and social care, and in literacy and numeracy work in the community. Some literacy and numeracy work is taught in partnership with Lancashire College. Work-based learning has been recently added to the portfolio. It is available in eight vocational areas. It is small in volume. Courses are planned carefully to enable progression to higher-level courses and to HE and employment.

28. Enrichment activities are a strong feature of the college. Full-time students benefit from an extensive range of activities including visits, and attendance at exhibitions. There are good opportunities for students to engage in sport, cultural and other activities. Arrangements to support the gifted and talented are very good. Academies in each curriculum area provide additional support for these students. The provision of work experience is variable. In some areas, for example, in health and social care, work experience is relevant and well managed. In others, for example, in ICT, the take-up of work experience by students is low.

29. Employer engagement is good in most areas. The Runshaw business centre provides flexible bespoke training for employers. The training provided is evaluated thoroughly and, where necessary, improved. Links with the voluntary sector provide work experience opportunities. The CoVEs in leadership and management and ICT have succeeded in increasing the range of higher-level work in the college and have secured good links with employers.

30. The college's work with school pupils aged 14 to 16 is good, but limited in its volume. The college plans to expand the provision and is leading a small consortium of providers and a local aerospace company to broaden the portfolio. It currently offers GCSEs in engineering and applied ICT and a range of vocational courses, some of which are provided in partnership with work-based learning providers. Attendance, retention and pass rates on both the college-based courses and the provision organised by Runshaw Training are high.

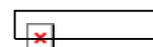
31. The college provides very good pre-entry advice and guidance, taster days and master classes which help to ensure pupils are enrolled on appropriate courses. This support continues throughout the induction programme. Informative material for students is produced in community languages, large print and Braille, and is made available within the college and externally to schools, employers and local community groups.

32. Students are well supported both academically and to help with other individual needs. Pastoral, vocational and academic support are well co-ordinated and responsive to need. The college induction programme is excellent and prepares the students very well for their studies. It is thorough and particularly comprehensive for full-time students. It enables students to become familiar with college systems and course requirements, and allows them sufficient time to make informed decisions about their chosen programme. Issues raised during induction are systematically followed-up through the tutorial system.

33. A comprehensive and coherent range of initial and diagnostic assessment tools are used to identify any additional learning needs required by full-time students, and part-time students on substantial programmes. Students are assessed for additional learning needs, for example, in literacy and numeracy and support for other needs including dyslexia, and sensory and mobility needs. Assessment results contribute to detailed individual learning plans and are used by teachers to develop appropriate schemes of work, differentiated approaches to teaching and learning and to inform the planning of future learning. The early identification of students' needs helps ensure that highly effective support arrangements are in place from the beginning of students' courses.

34. Staff who provide additional student support are well qualified and experienced. They comprise a dedicated team who liaise effectively with teachers and tutors. They provide a wide range of effective services to meet identified additional learning and support needs, for example, individual support, in-class support, workshops and catch-up activities. The learning centres provide very good resources to support the work. College support services provide diverse, informative and practical help for individuals. This includes careers education and guidance, health and financial advice, and counselling. These services are well publicised, easily accessible and used extensively. External organisations augment the range of services available. The college provides financial help for students who need to provide childcare. This is sometimes not fully effective in enabling students to attend easily. A senior member of staff has been identified to manage and co-ordinate child protection issues. Appropriate policies are in place and staff are well informed of their responsibilities. Training on child care issues is provided as part of staff development.

Leadership and management



35. Leadership and management are outstanding. The strategic direction is clear and focuses appropriately on improving teaching, learning and achievement. Students' achievements are outstanding. Students' grades exceed expectations based on their prior attainment at school. Retention rates are very high. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The support that teachers give their students is excellent. There are high expectations of both students and staff. For example, students' progress is monitored rigorously and teachers are expected to achieve at least a grade denoting good provision in the lessons observed in the internal observation programme. Most of the areas for development identified at the last inspection have been addressed. More needs to be done to ensure that the basic skills needs of students in the area are met by the college and its partners.

36. Quality assurance processes are very effective. Self-assessment is rigorous and inspectors agreed with all the grades given in the self-assessment report. Weaknesses are promptly and energetically addressed. Progress against resulting action plans is closely monitored by the senior management team. Students' progress, attendance and retention rates are monitored closely. Value added data is used to evaluate how effectively the college is improving. Both the senior

management team and the Standards Committee receive regular summaries of key indicators on students' progress. There are systematic arrangements in place to collect the views of staff and students. Action planning takes place to address issues raised, and year-on-year comparisons of results show improving trends.

37. There is an exceptional focus on quality improvement within the college, in particular on improving teaching and learning. A comprehensive and externally validated graded lesson observation process is in place; a development plan is agreed with each teacher following observation and teachers are supported closely to effect improvement. Where needed, for example, when a teacher does not achieve a grade 3 during internal lesson observation, support is intensive and ongoing followed by re-observation until the teaching observed is judged to be good.

38. Staff at all levels are involved in annually reviewing and agreeing the college's values and are committed to these values. Associated behaviour statements for staff and students are also agreed, and adhered to strongly. The college achieves its mission of putting the needs of the student first, and helping individuals to fulfil their potential, and exceeds the challenging commitments to students made in the student charter.

39. Curriculum management is outstanding. Staff responsibilities within the curriculum are clear. Communications are good. Responsibilities, for example, for subject and course leadership, quality assurance, the implementation of strategies for improvement, and the promotion of equality and diversity, are discharged well. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and is a key priority. Recent changes to the teaching of key skills, made in response to low achievements in 2003/04, have yet to yield improvement.

40. Work-based learning is well managed. The college, at the request of the local LSC, recently took over a work-based learning contract which had had a history of underachievement. The college ensured a smooth transition of students and staff from the original provider to Runshaw Training. The management of the provision is now good and framework completions have improved significantly. There is a well-devised strategy for growth and an appropriate focus on student experience. Managers are well informed of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Some weaknesses, for example, in assessment and students' progress reviews, remain.

41. Good teamwork is evident at all levels. Senior managers are visible and monitor punctuality and behaviour closely. Communication is good. Meetings are regularly scheduled within the curriculum, and agreed actions are minuted and their implementation monitored. 'Staff Update' is issued weekly and there are five staff conference days annually. These help keep staff up to date on key external developments and help them participate in the reviews of the college's strategic aims, values and behaviours.

42. Managers have access to timely and accurate data. Online reports provide key monitoring information. The college's quality unit provides curriculum teams with a comprehensive set of data to form the basis of self-assessment. This includes benchmarked retention, pass and success rate data, an analysis of student feedback for the subject area, equality and diversity analyses, a summary of key issues raised in internal and external verification reports and the lesson observation profile for the area.

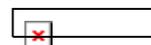
43. The college complies with SENDA and race relations legislation, and is exceptional in addressing equality and diversity issues. For example, the performances of student groups with different ethnic backgrounds, and by gender are analysed. The impact of the implementation of resulting action plans for improvement is assessed. For example, substantial attention has been given to previous male underachievement. There is now no significant variance between male and female achievement. Male achievement is now significantly above national averages. Challenging equality and diversity targets are set annually and met by the college. There is a significant focus on equality and diversity within the curriculum areas, including a range of enrichment activities to celebrate diversity and encourage tolerance, for example, the annual 'Runshaw Respect' week and the 'Image of Diversity' competition. The standards committee closely monitors progress against equality and diversity actions each term; an annual report on progress is presented to the corporation.

44. Commitment to staff development is high, particularly to improve teaching and learning. The college's professional development centre provides courses for teacher-training qualifications and co-ordinates all staff development to improve teaching and learning. New teachers are given a mentor for at least six months, and undertake an agreed development programme. Staff undertake an induction programme within two weeks of joining the college. This focuses on sharing the aims, values and behaviours that have been agreed for Runshaw staff and students. Extensive opportunities for staff development are provided for staff. These are planned well in advance and widely promoted. There is a significant commitment to management development. A set of competences have been agreed for managers, who are assessed against these periodically, and helped, where necessary, to improve their performance. The outcomes are used to support succession planning at the college. An internal management development programme is available for newly appointed and potential managers, and there are good opportunities to undertake externally accredited development.

45. Governors set a clear strategic direction for the college, and have been instrumental in establishing the exceptional focus on quality improvement. The standards committee monitors the performance of curriculum areas closely. The skills of governors are audited regularly, and the outcomes are used by the search committee to ensure that new governors bring appropriate skills to the board. The corporation is representative of the local community.

46. Considerable care is taken to recruit staff who share Runshaw values and who can commit to the agreed Runshaw behaviours. The teaching ability of full-time and part-time teachers is determined prior to appointment. The college is strong financially and financial management is good. There has been a significant commitment of resources to improve college accommodation in recent years. On the basis of strong student achievements, outstanding teaching and learning, high attendance, and the college's strong financial position the college offers very good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates and very high retention rates on GCE courses

- the very high proportion of A to B grades on GCE courses

- effective and stimulating teaching

- good use of ILT to enhance learning

- excellent individual support

- very good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- little provision for adult students.

Scope of provision

47. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in biology, chemistry, electronics, geology, human biology, physics, mathematics and further mathematics. A Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) applied science national diploma has replaced the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) science courses. Students on these courses are full-time and are aged 16 to 18. GCSE courses in applied science are offered at intermediate and foundation levels and in mathematics at intermediate level. There is little evening provision for adults. There are currently 436 full-time and 206 part-time students enrolled on mathematics and science courses. Nearly all the full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and nearly all the part-time students are adult.

Achievement and standards

48. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are outstandingly high. All GCE A-level courses have pass rates well above the national averages. For example, in 2004, the pass rates in both geology and physics were 100% and in chemistry and mathematics 99%. Pass rates on the AS-level programmes are also very high. For example, in 2004, the pass rate in human biology was 94% and in further mathematics 100%. The proportions of A to B grades on AS-level and GCE A-level courses are all above the national average and most are very high. For example, at GCE A level, the percentage of high grades in mathematics is 60% and in physics is 51%. On average, the grades achieved in GCE A-level mathematics, biology and physics are well above the grades predicted on the basis of students' GCSE results. Pass rates on the three GCSE courses are also high.

49. Students' retention rates are very high. The retention rate on all the GCE A-level courses is at least 98%. The retention rate on the AS-level courses is well above the national average. For example, the retention rate on the applied mathematics, chemistry and physics courses is 92%. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

50. Most students achieve high standards and develop a wide range of skills. They have good academic knowledge and many produce work of a very good standard. Students are well motivated, work productively, and make effective contributions to their learning. Science students participate in a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, groups of AS-level science students are undertaking a research project. They will present their findings to college staff and parents and use the written report as part of their application to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	371	301	285
		% retention	91	82	76
		% pass rate	49	63	55
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	74	21	48
		% retention	85	67	75
		% pass rate	65	86	53
GCE A-level biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	174	134	190
		% retention	99	96	99
		% pass rate	93	100	99
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	86	86	129
		% retention	98	98	99
		% pass rate	99	100	99
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	127	132	189
		% retention	100	98	98
		% pass rate	100	96	99
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	87	56	82
		% retention	100	93	99
		% pass rate	100	98	100
AS-level applied mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	327	257
		% retention	*	96	92
		% pass rate	*	83	89
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	211	326	260
		% retention	93	90	87
		% pass rate	94	95	94
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	85	108	149
		% retention	98	92	94
		% pass rate	93	97	92

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

51. Teaching is effective and encourages learning. Most teaching is good or very good. Lesson plans are detailed and lessons well structured. Learning aims are clearly stated at the beginning of the lesson and there is usually an effective summary at the end. Students enjoy learning and many show great insight and imagination. For example, in an AS-level mathematics lesson, students were asked to sum the sequence of numbers from 1 to 100. Students quickly solved this problem using a variety of techniques similar to those first used by Gauss. Most of the teaching succeeds in meeting the needs of all the students in a class. In a few mathematics lessons, some students have insufficient work to do.

52. Teaching activities are suitably varied and include exposition, questioning, and answer, group work and 'brain-storming' sessions. In a GCE A-level human biology lesson, a lively discussion on muscular responses was followed by students using bendy straws, popit beads, pipe cleaners and plasticine to make a moving model to illustrate the processes involved. In another lesson on the human digestive system, a model of the human body was dismantled to demonstrate how food is digested. Students confirmed their understanding of digestion in a group exercise by attaching the correct labels to a diagram of the organs involved. Practical activities are very well organised. Students undertake experiments with care and enthusiasm. Effective use is made of experimental work to reinforce theory.

53. Good use is made of ILT to enhance learning. Mathematics teachers make effective use of computer-based teaching resources. Students greatly value the virtual learning environment that enables them to access curriculum-based materials at home. In a GCE A-level chemistry lesson, students determined the percentage iron in a ferrous compound by entering their measurements on to a computer spreadsheet using the computers in the laboratory.

54. Students receive excellent individual support from their teachers. A four-week induction course enables them to confirm their choice of programme or, if appropriate, transfer to another subject. Effective systems are in place for monitoring student progress relative to their target minimum grades. Progress reports are discussed regularly with the students and sent to parents. Additional support for students is given through workshops and revision sessions. A short bridging course for students starting AS-level mathematics with lower grades is much appreciated by students. 'Master' classes stimulate the more able students. Homework is set regularly and assignments are well planned and interesting. Students' work is marked carefully. Most teachers give helpful feedback.

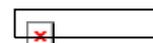
55. Teachers are well qualified and most have relevant specialist teaching experience. The accommodation is good. The laboratories are spacious and well equipped. The mathematics rooms are well furnished and spacious. The laboratories are well serviced by a dedicated team of technicians. The library is well stocked with books and multimedia packages.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are very good. Curriculum management in both science and mathematics is effective. Communications are good. There is an excellent team spirit and staff share learning resources readily. Students' views are noted and acted upon. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. Partnerships with local schools are productive. A taster day for Year 10 pupils is well supported.

57. Professional development opportunities are taken up and good emphasis is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. The internal lesson observation grades awarded by the college were in line with those awarded by the inspectors. Target setting is well established and student retention and pass rates are monitored and carefully analysed.

Business



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates

- good retention and pass rates in work-based learning
- effective learning through practical, vocationally related activities
- innovative use of the virtual learning environment
- good support for students
- excellent enrichment for staff and students
- outstanding curriculum leadership.

Weaknesses

- some shortcomings in NVQ provision.

Scope of provision

58. At the time of the inspection there were 297 full-time students aged 16 to 18, 800 part-time adult students and 43 apprentices. Full-time courses range from NVQ level 1 in business administration to AS levels and GCE A levels and include both academic and vocational courses. The part-time courses include NVQs in business administration and accounting up to level 4, management courses, team leading, and certificate in marketing. The provision is taught by four curriculum teaching teams.

Achievement and standards

59. Students' achievements are outstanding. Pass rates are consistently high. For example, in 2004, the pass rate in AS-level business studies was 96% and 48% achieved A to B grades. In GCE A-level economics, the pass rate was 100% and 61% achieved an A to B grade. The pass rate on AVCE double award business was 96%. All these rates are well above national averages.

60. Retention rates are consistently well above national averages on most courses. For example, in AS-level business, it is consistently above 90% and on GCE A-level business close to 100%. The apprenticeship retention rate is very high at 97% for accounting and 79% for business administration. Achievement of full apprenticeships compares favourably with national averages. For example, on the foundation modern apprenticeship it is 59%. Attendance is good and punctuality is well managed.

61. The standard of students' work is impressive. Written work is well presented and meticulous. Students enjoy working with others and on their own in lessons, and gain in confidence. They are able to use theoretical models and research effectively in discussions on a range of topics, for example, centralisation, economic systems, and marketing strategies. Standards are commensurate with higher grades as students are able to analyse, criticise and present logical arguments with increasing intellectual maturity. Both project work and assignment work demonstrate good evidence of extensive primary research and the analysis of different forms of data.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	57	35	30
		% retention	91	80	77
		% pass rate	88	86	83
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	74	89	71
		% retention	89	80	86
		% pass rate	86	66	87
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	170	206	216
		% retention	92	93	94
		% pass rate	94	99	96
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	38	48	52
		% retention	92	96	90
		% pass rate	91	89	96
AVCE (double award) in business	3	No. of starts	63	53	63
		% retention	75	79	75
		% pass rate	94	95	96
GCE A2 business	3	No. of starts	119	104	154
		% retention	100	96	98
		% pass rate	97	99	100

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

Quality of education and training

62. A high proportion of the teaching is good or better. Planning of lessons is thorough. It draws on learning styles analysis and teachers use a variety of methods effectively to meet the needs of all students. Learning materials are of high quality. Good use is made of extension tasks using the virtual learning environment to consolidate understanding. Extensive use is made of, for example, topical and thought provoking case study material, business-related games, simulations and work experience. Apprentices benefit from the work-focused teaching methods used in their off-the-job training sessions.

63. Most lessons are purposeful and employ an appropriate range of activities which motivate the students. For example, in an AS-level business lesson on advertising, students were asked to analyse proposals for the launch of a new alcoholic drink. They watched a short documentary of the public relations campaign and the advertising. They then engaged in a lively discussion during which they applied marketing theory and drew on their own experiences. They thoroughly evaluated the effectiveness of the campaign and then devised their own promotional campaigns.

64. ILT is used very effectively in many lessons. The virtual learning environment is used innovatively. For example, apprentices use it to access learning materials in readiness for lessons. Full-time students are required to view video clips, undertake business games, and undertake research using website links and complete worksheets which they e-mail to teachers for marking.

65. The libraries provide a range of up-to-date materials, including magazines, videos and study guides. Teachers are very well qualified. Several of the professional courses have guest presenters and consultants who are highly placed in their organisations. They participate readily in a range of updating activities including secondments and work shadowing.

66. Teachers are highly experienced in examination practice and give detailed and helpful tips to students on how to gain maximum marks. Assessment is generally well planned. The marking of students' work is thorough, and provides detailed pointers for improvement. Full-time students' progress is carefully monitored. There are some weaknesses in assessment on NVQ programmes. For example, insufficient use is made of evidence drawn from employment in accounting. Progress reviews for apprentices lack sufficient rigour. Too little attention is given to constructing and updating individual learning plans.

67. Provision is wide ranging, particularly at level 3, both for full-time students aged 16 to 18 and part-time adult students. There are clear progression opportunities to levels 4 and 5 in the college. Full-time and part-time students benefit from a good range of enrichment activities, for example, work placements, business dynamics training days, trips, and presentations.

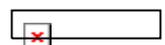
68. The college has recently established a CoVE in leadership and management. The CoVE is making good progress. It has recruited substantial numbers of students and is building strong partnerships with national and local employers. It has developed a range of courses in team leading and management by introducing bespoke modules and programmes around culture management. Resources in the Runshaw business centre are of a high professional standard and the centre offers a welcoming and business-like environment. Teachers in the centre are well qualified. Consultants with recent and relevant industry experience contribute to the teaching.

69. Student support is outstanding. The business academy provides excellent enrichment opportunities for gifted students. Students receive effective in-class support supplemented by additional study workshops, regular tutorials and informal help.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are excellent. Communications are excellent and the sense of drive and vision is shared by all. There are regular meetings to discuss key issues. Each of the business schools has its own appropriate culture. Teachers work well together. Runshaw Training responded energetically and effectively when asked to take over another training provider's provision. The internal verification process for NVQs is not well established. Sampling documentation is incomplete and there is insufficient direct observation of assessors. Equality of opportunity and health and safety are well managed and promoted and embedded within the teaching. There is a clear strategy for improvement. Improvements are planned as part of the quality assurance process and developments are monitored carefully. Lesson observation is thorough. The performance review system and lesson observation inform staff development appropriately. Students' views and achievement data are used effectively to inform self-assessment and course development. Male underachievement led to a strategy to engage male students by using interactive and flexible approaches to study using ILT. The strategy successfully improved achievement.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates

- very good teaching and learning

- good resources for learning

- a wide range of provision to meet student needs

- excellent support for students

- outstanding curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- none.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers a wide range of courses from level 1 through to level 3 and good opportunities for progression. For the 16 to 18 age group, the provision is almost entirely full time and includes introductory IT at work, BTEC first and national diploma awards and AS-level and GCE A-level courses in computing and ICT. Part-time courses include European computer driving license (ECDL), new computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), in addition to courses in computer installation and maintenance, networking and programming. In an attempt to improve gender balance, the college has introduced a vocational GCSE programme for female students aged 14 to 16. Nearly all the 293 full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and nearly all the 789 part-time students are adults.

Achievement and standards

72. Pass rates are high on all courses, often well above national averages. On GCE A-level and AS-level courses, for example, they are consistently well above 90%. On the AVCE double award they are close to 100%. Students regularly achieve grades which are above those predicted by their GCSE results, particularly in computing. Pass rates on part-time courses are also high. Retention rates on most courses are very good and well above national averages, for example, on GCE A-

level courses consistently above 94% and on AS-level courses above 90%. The retention rate on the AVCE ICT single award course was low in 2004. This course has since been replaced. Progression rates from all full-time courses to ICT and computing-related courses in HE are excellent.

73. Student attendance rates are high. Achievement in practical lessons is good. The standards of some students' projects are very good. For example, one GCE A-level student was implementing a tracking system for a local fire safety company which demonstrated an excellent level of design and implementation skills. In another lesson, students made highly effective use of the college virtual learning environment to complete an assignment on network communications. In another lesson, students worked in groups to formulate the criteria for a successful web design, and the results of this were confidently presented to the remainder of the class. Full-time students make insufficient use of the opportunities available for work placement.

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 4248 start IT	1	No. of starts	104	90	159
		% retention	94	97	85
		% pass rate	87	89	89
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	50	67	*
		% retention	96	87	*
		% pass rate	81	93	*
ECDL	2	No. of starts	151	38	115
		% retention	97	95	87
		% pass rate	90	94	94
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	45	47	37
		% retention	100	94	95
		% pass rate	98	100	100
GCE A-level IT	3	No. of starts	99	118	104
		% retention	99	95	98
		% pass rate	97	96	98
AS-level IT	3	No. of starts	177	190	168
		% retention	93	90	93
		% pass rate	98	94	97
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	58	66	72
		% retention	98	92	94
		% pass rate	93	95	97
AVCE double award in IT	3	No. of starts	91	118	85
		% retention	88	72	76
		% pass rate	100	99	98

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

74. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is well planned. Lesson plans and schemes of work and teaching take clear account of students' learning styles. In the most effective lessons, teachers involve all students in a range of varied activities, group work, discussions, selective questioning and presentations. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Humour and lively discussion are used frequently and effectively, capturing and maintaining students' interest and encouraging learning. Debate and discussion amongst students is of a high quality and related to the task in hand. Students demonstrate a mature approach to their work and enjoy learning.

75. Teachers use imaginative techniques to enthuse and engage students. For example, in one lesson, students were working in groups to develop an algorithm. The students used green and red cards to indicate agreement or disagreement with an emerging solution displayed by the teacher. This encouraged discussion and ensured that all students were engaged in learning how to consider the alternative routes to a solution. In another lesson, the teacher used a simple but effective name generator to randomly flash the name of the student selected to provide a definition. Teachers do not record key skills achievements clearly or regularly enough.

76. Data projectors are used well to demonstrate techniques. Students have access to good computer resources which help them to progress with their individual learning. Increasing use is made of a new virtual learning environment and a good range of resource materials and assignments are available across all sites. All students have e-mail accounts and there is adequate storage space on the network. Most rooms are spacious and enable a good range of activities to take place which enhance learning. Wall displays celebrate the work of students. Students have access to suitable periodicals and magazines. Staff are suitably qualified, an extensive staff development programme is organised both externally and in-house. Within the staff development programme, a clear emphasis is placed on the sharing of best practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

77. Teachers set assignments regularly and mark and return them promptly to students. They provide appropriate and supportive comments which identify areas for improvement. The use of poor English, spelling mistakes and inappropriate technical terminology are usually corrected. Assignments have clear grading criteria. Assessments are used effectively to improve students' performance. Full-time students have assignment schedules that allow deadlines to be staggered throughout the year, successfully avoiding overloading students. Teachers use suitable tracking mechanisms to enable them to monitor students' progress on assignments. They use minimum target grades to help assess the quality of the work. Teachers provide additional support to students in practical workshops and informal discussions. These opportunities are highly valued by students.

78. The CoVE in computing meets the needs of students and local employers and has successfully met many of its key targets. The CoVE covers the range of computing provision in the college and has successfully improved IT resources. For example, new robotics and logic system resources have been provided and the IT bus has been re-equipped with industrial-standard facilities.

79. Initial assessment and advice are very good. Individual support given to students on all courses is very effective and a high proportion of students identified as needing support achieve their qualifications. Full-time students are set appropriate target grades on entry and with the help of their teachers they monitor their progress towards exceeding these. Students who fall behind in their work are given effective additional help. Full-time students value the support provided by regular well structured individual tutorials.

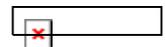
Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management are outstanding. There are clear lines of accountability for each of the main programme areas. There is an appropriate focus on improving achievement. Curriculum and course developments are well planned to meet local needs. Managers, teachers and technicians based at the different sites communicate effectively. All staff are involved in the process of self-assessment and set and monitor and meet targets for improvement. Data are used effectively

to measure performance. These data include the analysis of pass and retention rates and added value at student, class and course level. Minutes of meetings show that effective actions are taken to resolve identified issues. Annual performance reviews include the identification of staff development needs. These include the opportunity for work experience, visiting good providers and the sharing of good practice to improve learning strategies.

81. The CoVE provision is well managed and quality assurance is a central part of all aspects of its provision. Employers are involved in the development of the provision. For example, provision was developed to meet the needs of the Asian Business Federation and the certificate in IT course has been developed to meet the specific IT needs of school teachers and support workers. The development and design of a new IT foundation degree was in response to identified employer needs.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on NVQ programmes
- high retention rates on beauty therapy NVQ programmes
- good teaching and learning
- excellent support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on part-time holistic therapy courses in 2003/04
- some shortcomings in curriculum and resource management
- some poor professional practice.

Scope of provision

82. The college offers full-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 and certificates in holistic therapies and salon management to level 4. Part-time courses in hairdressing include barbering and NVQ levels 1 and 2. NVQ level 2 part-time beauty therapy courses are also provided. Holistic therapies include Indian head massage, body massage, aromatherapy and reflexology. There are 147 full-time students of whom almost half are aged 16 to 18 and the remainder adults. Nearly all the 201 part-time students are adults. Some provision is available for Key Stage 4 pupils. The main provision is located in the town centre in Chorley.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates on NVQ courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy have been consistently high in the three years to 2004. Retention rates on full-time beauty therapy NVQ courses are high. The retention rate on NVQ courses in hairdressing is close to the national average. Retention and pass rates were low on holistic therapy part-time courses in 2004. Most students make good progress in developing practical skills. Some adult NVQ level 1 hairdressing students develop skills beyond those required for the qualification and do so quickly. The progress of students aged 16 to 18 in achieving units of their NVQ 1 is slow. NVQ level 1 beauty therapy students carry out facial massage movements with confidence and part-time students have a good knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Students on the level 4 certificate in technical salon management effectively acquire skills in a range of treatments in advanced massage.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ hairdressing 1 year	1	No. of starts	45	32	51
		% retention	69	81	75
		% pass rate	97	100	95
NVQ hairdressing 1 year	2	No. of starts	33	27	21
		% retention	91	93	71
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ beauty therapy 2 year	2	No. of starts	59	61	66
		% retention	80	74	85
		% pass rate	89	91	86
NVQ beauty therapy 1 year	3	No. of starts	21	23	32
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	90	95	88
Diploma in reflexology 1 year part time	3	No. of starts	36	25	25
		% retention	92	88	72
		% pass rate	70	86	50

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

Quality of education and training

84. Teaching and learning are good. A much higher proportion of lessons are good or better than is the case nationally in similar colleges. The proportion of lessons which were judged very good or excellent was nearly twice the national average. Lessons are planned well and meet the needs of all the students. The tasks set to develop key skills are appropriate and students effectively link application of number to industrial practices. Most theory input is creative and visual aids are used to good effect. For example, in hairdressing, models have been constructed of the hair cuticle and used

to demonstrate the action of colour molecules on the hair. Lessons start with a detailed recapitulation of the previous lesson. Students are well presented and promote a professional image. Some practice in the salons is unsatisfactory. For example, in one lesson, there was unhygienic use of equipment.

85. The accommodation and resources for hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies are satisfactory. Salons are modern and clean and provide a pleasant learning environment. The hairdressing and beauty therapy training rooms operate as commercial salons and are equipped with fittings of a good industrial standard. One beauty therapy salon is sometimes overcrowded with students. Reception areas are not of commercial standard. Teachers are well qualified and regularly update their teaching and professional skills. The well-stocked learning resource centre has excellent IT facilities. Learning materials used on the course are of a high standard.

86. Assessment procedures and internal verification are satisfactory. Students' written assignments are returned promptly and feedback is encouraging and constructive. Teachers carefully monitor individual students' progress and set useful targets for future learning.

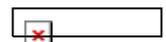
87. The range of courses provided is satisfactory. There are some gaps in the provision, for example, a part-time NVQ level 3 course in hairdressing is not offered. In hairdressing, all students complete NVQ level 1 as a prerequisite to NVQ level 2, regardless of their incoming levels of attainment. In beauty therapy, students may start at either level 1 or level 2. Full-time students have insufficient experience of industrial practices. This year, for the first time, they are to undertake work experience. Students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of curriculum activities such as manufacturers' training courses. There are strategies, to be implemented for next year's intake to increase the low proportion of male students in the area.

88. Both full-time and part-time students receive very good support from their teachers and personal tutors. Students' progress is monitored in weekly individual tutorials and new learning targets set. Educational support workers provide good additional support where needed. Teachers provide good pastoral support and students feel well supported. Managers listen to the views of students and address issues promptly.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course team meetings take place regularly. The outcomes of the performance review system and lesson observation are used to plan staff development. Staff development activity is regularly undertaken and has been instrumental in improving teaching methods. There are some shortcomings in the management of the curriculum and resource issues. For example, changes from one awarding body to another are not always planned thoroughly enough, NVQ level 1 students in hairdressing make slow progress, and some aspects of professional practice are not monitored closely enough.

Health and social care



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- very high pass rates on all courses

- good retention rates on all courses

- highly effective teaching and learning

- excellent support for students

- outstanding leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- none.

Scope of provision

90. The college provides full-time courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in health and social care and early years care and education. Most of the 334 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. There are 499 part-time students nearly all of whom are adults. In addition, some 46 early years and 11 care learners are on work-based apprenticeship programmes, including 31 who have transferred from another provider. As part of the IF programme, 6 Key Stage 4 pupils study a foundation award in childcare.

Achievement and standards

91. Pass rates are very high. On courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18 at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels in health and social care, pass rates are outstandingly high. For example, the pass rate on the GNVQ foundation course and the AVCE course has been consistently above 94% in the two years to 2004. Pass rates on the national and first diplomas in early years are very high. For example, the national diploma pass rate has been between 98% and 100% for the three years to 2004. The achievement of learners on work-based learning programmes who were transferred, at the request of the local LSC, from another provider 11 months ago is also very good. For example, since then 82% of foundation apprenticeships have achieved the full framework.

92. Retention rates on courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18 is very high, with rates on all courses significantly above the national averages. Retention rates on courses for adults have improved and were well above national averages in 2004. For example, on the NVQ level 2 in care, the retention rate improved from 33% to 78% against an average of 41% and on the certificate in counselling skills, from 64% to 86% against an average of 80%. The percentage of high grades in health and social care is significantly above average. For example, on the AVCE 70% and on the foundation GNVQ, 79% of students achieved high grades against averages of 35% and 38%, respectively. Students' work in lessons and coursework is of a high standard. It is well presented and based on good levels of independent research. The standards of debate in lessons are high. Students' work displayed in the college is of a high quality.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	**	17	20
		% retention	**	100	95
		% pass rate	**	94	95
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	58	19	*
		% retention	95	100	*
		% pass rate	96	95	*
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	**	42	18
		% retention	**	33	78
		% pass rate	**	100	100
Certificate in counselling skills	2	No. of starts	*	36	28
		% retention	*	64	86
		% pass rate	*	87	88
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	51	45	65
		% retention	88	64	78
		% pass rate	100	100	98
AVCE double award in health and social care	3	No. of starts	68	85	43
		% retention	51	72	77
		% pass rate	83	98	100
Access to HE nurse training and health studies	3	No. of starts	44	21	17
		% retention	52	62	88
		% pass rate	83	100	93

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

*course not running

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

93. Teaching and learning are highly effective. Lesson planning is thorough and ensures that the teaching methods used meet the needs of all students. For example, lessons on stereotyping were planned effectively to meet the differing needs of students on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 by the use of demanding experiential exercises. Individual needs are met through well-focused teaching facilitated by the extensive use of educational support workers. Teachers have a very good understanding of how to support students with specific needs. Teaching closely relates theory to practice and lessons are firmly rooted in a care and early years context by vocationally experienced teachers. For example, students confidently develop ideas for play activities around their chosen theme which link closely to theories of child development. Multicultural issues are incorporated naturally into lessons. For example, students devise menus which meet the nutritional and cultural needs of diverse communities. Students effectively explore nursery rhymes involving number and shape to introduce appropriate mathematical concepts to the early years setting. Teachers use a wide range of methods including questioning, quizzes and gapped handouts to check and reinforce learning.

94. Teachers are well qualified. They have appropriate vocational and teaching qualifications and

are regularly updated through internal and external staff development activities. Resources are good overall, although group work is inhibited by the layout of some classrooms. Early years teachers have appropriate resources for realistic creative activities. The dedicated counselling suite gives a very good ambience to the lessons.

95. Assessment is of high quality, a judgement confirmed by external verifier reports. Diagnostic assessment is thorough, and identifies individual student's needs in detail. Students' progress is measured against minimum target grades, helping to ensure high achievement. Work is marked regularly and returned promptly. Feedback gives clear information on how students can improve their work. The internal verification process in NVQ early years is incomplete. Assessment practice is good. Standardisation and sampling strategies are not well established, partly due to a vacancy for an early years assessor.

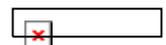
96. The courses provided suit the needs of the students well. Students are continuously assessed rather than assessed through external tests, a process which they prefer. The portfolio offers clear progression routes from level 1 to HE. The area is responsive to employer demand both in its generally available courses and through bespoke commissioned courses offered at a time and place to suit employers' needs. A National Health Service (NHS) cadet scheme has been developed to encourage more young people into the health service in conjunction with the local NHS workforce development directorate and other partner organisations.

97. Support for students is outstanding. The individual needs of students are comprehensively met through closely targeted support in the classroom provided by educational support workers, well-briefed teachers and additional workshops such as English for speakers of other languages and support for higher achieving students. The very supportive individual tutorial system systematically addresses a range of issues including attendance and behaviour. Learning targets are set and agreed between tutor and student, decisions are carefully recorded and progress reviewed at the next tutorial. The effective tutorial support is helping to improve academic achievement and behaviour.

Leadership and management

98. Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers set a clear direction and set high standards. Clear action plans are set to improve the provision and their implementation regularly monitored. There is a strong concern for the continuous quality improvement of learning. Work-based learning provision has improved significantly in the 11 months since the students transferred. Achievement is now good. Some aspects of quality control such as internal verification are not well established. The staff performance management and appraisal system leads to staff development and is helping to raise students' achievements. Good practice is routinely shared. Equality of opportunity is fully integrated and promoted in lessons, handouts and displays. The college is taking active measures to recruit more male and ethnic minority students.

Visual arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all courses

- high standard of students' work

- o much demanding and often inspirational teaching

- o excellent resources

- o stimulating enrichment activities to enhance learning.

Weaknesses

- o none.

Scope of provision

99. In the school of visual arts, in the sixth form centre, the full-time course portfolio includes the intermediate GNVQ and the AVCE in art and design and the national diploma in graphic design as its vocational options. Academic courses are offered in AS-level and GCE A-level fine art, three-dimensional design, textiles, photography and graphics. At the adult college, there is a full-time art foundation course and several accredited short courses in arts, crafts and design. There are 259 full-time students, nearly all of whom are aged 16 to 18, and 393 adult part-time students.

Achievement and standards

100. Pass rates on all courses are very high and considerably above national averages. For example, on many courses, the pass rate has been above 96% in each of the two years to 2004. In some, pass rates are consistently 100%. The proportion of high grades (A to B) in art was 21% above average in 2004. In GCE A-level design technology, the pass rate was 100% in 2004, but the percentage of high grades was 9% below average. Value added data shows that students make good progress while attending the college. The retention rate of students is good on all courses. Progression, both internally and to HE is excellent. Students are punctual and attendance is good. Students' work is of a high standard. Recently, one student was awarded a £250 digital camera for winning the Lancashire County Council's Road Safety competition with a graphic, imaginative and chastening image. Art students regularly provide high definition images for college events and productions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	17	*	15
		% retention	82	*	93
		% pass rate	100	*	100
AS-level graphics	3	No. of starts	50	58	51
		% retention	84	88	96
		% pass rate	86	98	100

AS-level fine art	3	No. of starts	45	56	63
		% retention	89	88	92
		% pass rate	98	96	98
AVCE double award art and design	3	No. of starts	39	43	50
		% retention	69	77	88
		% pass rate	85	100	98
National diploma in graphics	3	No. of starts	19	21	26
		% retention	89	81	77
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

101. Teaching is very good. It is well matched to the needs of each student. A high proportion of the lessons are good or better. Students are expected to manage their own learning and to be responsible for it. They respond well. There is much emphasis on collaborative learning and students recognise a commitment to help each other. Teachers have high expectations. Vocational practice is encouraged by teachers identifying themselves with students. At the start of each lesson, teachers share objectives and tasks with the class. Students new to life drawing demonstrate high levels of maturity and recognise the conventions of the discipline. In a graphics lesson, students were expected, in an assignment entitled 'Get on your soapbox', to devise an advertising campaign about issues that were important to them. They showed good understanding of image, colour and language. Adult students comment on their increased visual awareness since returning to education and are able to perceptively analyse the work of different artists and confidently express opinions. Teachers and students value their mutually good relationships. In a small minority of lessons, insufficient attention is paid to the different abilities of students and good practice in some lessons regarding non-negotiable practice is not always evident in a few others. However, in all lessons, classroom management is good.

102. Resources are outstanding. Students have access to a wide range of equipment and technical facilities that are of industrial standard. Accommodation is excellent and there is a strong sense of identity with stimulating displays, some inspired by the work of Andy Warhol, in the foyer, along the corridors and in classrooms and workshops. Computers are in all teaching rooms. There are dedicated areas for specialist subjects at both the adult and sixth form sites. Technician support is very good and the learning resource centre is well stocked with relevant publications and computers. A small number of classrooms are sometimes crowded. The area of learning is very well maintained. Teachers are well qualified; most have appropriate teaching qualifications and those that do not are currently acquiring them. Some teachers have higher-level degrees. All teachers demonstrate a very good command of their subject and most undertake some professional arts, crafts and design work.

103. Assessment methods and standards are good. Students' practical work both in class and in coursework is of a high standard. In academic tutorials, students' progress against target grades is monitored using a well-designed review and guidance sheet. External verifiers and examiners confirm that national standards are met, that grading is accurate and that the awarding bodies' requirements are met. Where appropriate, assignments are vocationally relevant. Work is marked quickly and returned with helpful advice on how it may be improved.

104. The range of provision is good. There is a choice between vocational and academic pathways. Most specialist arts, crafts and design areas are available. Timetables are well organised and allow students sufficient study time off-site. The needs of adult students are met through the imaginative use of short courses that encourage older students to return to learning, often with much enjoyment

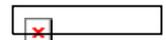
and satisfaction. Start times of adult classes recognise the different demands for these students. Enrichment activities are excellent and enhance learning. All staff give their own time freely. For example, one teacher visits exhibitions first to see whether they are sufficiently worthwhile to warrant a visit by students. Extensive and stimulating trips to galleries are arranged and the benefit is reflected in the work of students. Residential trips to, for example, New York, Paris, and Barcelona are regularly organised. Current practitioners are regularly invited to talk to students as are ex-students who are at HE institutions.

105. Support for students is good. Induction is extensive and ensures that students are on the correct course. Individual learning needs are identified and appropriate support offered. The specialist art knowledge of some of the support workers is especially helpful to students and teachers alike. There are regular reviews and students are kept informed of their progress. Reports of progress are sent to parents and parents' evenings are organised. Students confirm that advice and guidance for entry to HE are very good. Students value the efforts made on their behalf by their teachers.

Leadership and management

106. Leadership and management are very good. All staff are committed to continuous improvement and confidently share good practice informally and through observation of each other teaching. Formal lesson observations are positively perceived. Course and subject leaders feel valued. Professional development opportunities are plentiful and readily supported by the college. Communications are good between course and subject teams and all staff are actively involved in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Gender imbalances in certain subjects are recognised and attempts are made to address them. The few weaknesses that are identified are subject to action plans which are effectively implemented.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass and retention rates

- the exceptional value added to students' progress

- very good teaching and learning

- rigorous assessment and monitoring of students' progress

- excellent student support and guidance in academic and personal tutorials

- very good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- lack of adult provision.

Scope of provision

107. Nearly all of the 600 full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and taking AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Nearly all the 500 part-time students are adults. A wide range of GCE subjects is available for 16 to 18 students. Humanities provision for adult students consists mainly of part-time short courses at levels 1 to 3 available through the Open College Network. A small number of adult students take GCSE courses in psychology, history, sociology or law.

Achievement and standards

108. Pass rates and higher grade, A to B, pass rates are consistently outstanding on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. In 2004, six subjects had 100% pass rates at GCE A level, including psychology with 266 students completing the course and history with 157. GCE A-level religious studies and sociology, both with significant numbers of students completing the course have had 100% pass rates in both 2003 and 2004. The GCE A-level higher grade A to B pass rates in geography, sociology and religious studies were 59%, 71% and 75%, respectively, all well above national averages. AS-level pass rates are high, well above national averages, in all subjects. In psychology, 392 of the 400 students completing obtained a pass and 46% of these achieved a grade A or B. The AS-level higher-grade A to B pass rate for 2004 was 63%. Many students achieve grades which are well above those predicted by their GCSE achievements.

109. Retention rates are high on all GCE A-level and most AS-level courses. In AS-level general studies the retention rate in 2004 was below the national average. Attendance rates are high. A high proportion of students progress to HE. In 2004, 80% of psychology students went on to related degree courses. The majority of adult students taking short courses at level 2 achieve a pass grade. Longer courses for adults at level 2 achieved a high pass rate in 2004 of 90% and most students complete their courses.

110. Students use new knowledge intelligently. There is an appetite for learning. Analytical, evaluative and critical appraisal skills using different source materials are well developed. IT skills are used competently in research for coursework and extended assignments. Students work well together in groups of mixed gender, race and ability. They respect each other's opinions. Students communicate their ideas clearly in role-play, short presentations and class discussion. Written work is of a high standard. Essays contain well-reasoned arguments and coursework is methodically organised. The more able students demonstrate high levels of skill in unpicking complex issues. Students maintain comprehensive files of work and have good note-making skills. They are well prepared for examinations.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	90	120	114
		% retention	91	91	93

		% pass rate	95	93	98
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	358	461	426
		% retention	89	89	94
		% pass rate	87	94	98
AS-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	94	98	97
		% retention	88	89	91
		% pass rate	96	93	99
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	145	144	148
		% retention	86	84	89
		% pass rate	91	98	97
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	81	88	164
		% retention	98	100	96
		% pass rate	90	99	100
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	121	114	124
		% retention	99	92	99
		% pass rate	95	97	99
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	211	222	286
		% retention	99	95	93
		% pass rate	97	96	100
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	110	73	93
		% retention	95	95	97
		% pass rate	94	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

111. Teaching and learning are very good. Over half the lessons are very good or excellent and some are inspiring. Teachers have high expectations of students. Lessons progress logically and are designed to ensure that students of all abilities are engaged in learning. In a sociology lesson, mixed ability groups of students enthusiastically challenged functionalist ideology. They share ideas and critically evaluate established theory. Students' understanding is regularly checked. Teachers' presentations are lucid and convincing. In the most inspiring lessons, students develop a range of communication and learning skills. Students develop skills in analysis and evaluation and some achieve a high level of intellectual effort. In a religious studies lesson, students explored ethical dilemmas and compared the approach of WD Ross, a recent scholar, with the ideas behind Kantian ethics. In a critical thinking lesson, students used language carefully, logically and with exceptional clarity to identify where selected statements were flawed. Visual stimulus material and well-produced textual handouts are often used to reinforce learning.

112. In some lessons, good use is made of ILT. In a geography lesson, IT sources were used to explore Bangkok's attempts to solve its traffic problems. In psychology, a computerised presentation incorporated clip art, music, multiple choice responses and animation to explain theories of classical conditioning. Students regularly practise responses to examination type questions and develop synoptic skills. They enjoy learning and concentration levels are high. A law lesson used role-play scenarios on police powers to test knowledge in an innovative way. Sociology students visit primary schools to evaluate the impact of social class on education and members of the prison service visit psychology lessons.

113. There are excellent resources for learning. Well-qualified and experienced teachers are appropriately deployed. Several law teachers have previous experience of the legal profession. There are good intranet subject websites and students have easy access to computers. Good links with the learning centres ensure adequate stocks of appropriate books and journals. Designated teaching areas are attractive, comfortable and clean. There is very good provision of audio-visual equipment, computer links with the college network and a lecture theatre in each teaching block. Subject workbooks and source materials are of a high quality.

114. Progress is rigorously assessed and monitored. Student performance is recorded against targets. Progress is assiduously monitored and addressed in personal tutorials. Teachers are alert to those 'at risk' or in need of additional learning support. Assignments are set regularly and are marked thoroughly. Law students receive detailed and constructive feedback on cover sheets. Assessment strategies are standardised to ensure consistency. Examination board mark schemes are used widely. There is cross-marking of major assignments.

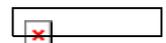
115. A wide range of academic courses for young people aged 16 to 18 attracts high student numbers. Strenuous efforts are made to respond to local needs and to students' preferences. Students can enrol without prior subject qualifications in their chosen subjects. Photographic records of curriculum enrichment activities are on display. Adult provision is not well established. There is a lack of clarity about the access to HE programme, for example, about the credit requirements for the full access certificate and accreditation of prior learning. The timing of courses disadvantages students with children.

116. Student support and guidance are excellent. Subject-specific diagnostic tests are well designed. On-going support for those needing extra help is maintained through one-to-one tutorials and additional timetabled subject tutorials. A shorter induction process for full-time adult students includes screening for literacy, numeracy and any subject-based needs. Study support is then made available. Students at the adult college have access to an excellent transport scheme to support those with transport difficulties. Staff are caring and initiatives are in place to respond to those students who have special learning needs.

Leadership and management

117. Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers have vision and promote continuing improvement. Course leaders conscientiously apply quality assurance procedures. They develop a good team ethos in which there is mutual support and co-operation. Psychology and sociology teachers frequently plan joint visits and activities. There is much dissemination of good practice such as the best ways of starting and ending lessons and mind-mapping exercise to aid visual students. Managers ensure that there are no discriminatory practices in learning opportunities and access to resources. There is good mentoring support for new and newly qualified staff. On-going professional development is excellent. Staff are encouraged to identify their personal teaching needs. Subject management files are excellent. Records include detailed analysis of performance indicators which is used in action planning. There is effective communication within schools of study and curriculum improvement teams. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well developed in all subjects. Self-assessment reports are well constructed and judgements are based on sound evidence.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- high retention rates on GCE courses
- exceptional value added to students' progress
- highly effective teaching
- very good resources supporting learning
- excellent academic monitoring and support
- outstanding enrichment opportunities
- excellent support for students
- highly effective course leadership and teamwork.

Weaknesses

- none.

Scope of provision

118. At the time of inspection, there were 739 students taking courses in English or modern foreign languages. Nearly all the 259 full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and nearly all the part-time students are adults. The part-time adults, mainly studying at the adult college take courses from entry level to GCSE. The students aged 16 to 18, at the sixth form centre, take AS-level and GCE A-level courses. The balance between English and foreign language students overall is about one third English and two thirds languages, with most of the latter being part time. The college offers English courses in language, literature, and language and literature. Foreign language courses in French, German, Spanish and Italian are available at a variety of levels from entry level to level 3.

Achievement and standards

119. Pass rates are excellent in all AS-level and GCE A-level courses in English and modern foreign languages. In 2004, there were 100% pass rates in French, German and Spanish at both AS level and GCE A level, and also in all three English GCE A levels. High proportions of the students gained grades A or B, especially in AS-level English language and literature (45%), GCE A-level English language (54%), and GCE A-level French and Spanish, 75% and 76%, respectively. Students are highly motivated and focused on their own success and perform well relative to their previous GCSE grades. Students of foreign languages, in particular, achieve much higher grades than those predicted by their GCSE achievements. Retention rates are high in all the AS-level and GCE A-level courses. The standard of students' work is excellent. In English, student attainment is particularly impressive in debate, discussion, analysis and original thinking. Foreign language lessons, conducted almost entirely in the languages being taught and spoken at a brisk pace, demonstrate how effectively students can express themselves and engage in complex discussions in their chosen language.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
START award in languages (short)	1	No. of starts	157	123	176
		% retention	98	93	83
		% pass rate	49	67	71
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	252	131	233
		% retention	89	80	66
		% pass rate	81	100	96
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	164	166	143
		% retention	93	87	96
		% pass rate	95	97	100
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	134	111	104
		% retention	90	86	95
		% pass rate	95	100	99
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	165	99	103
		% retention	98	95	96
		% pass rate	96	100	100
AS-level German	3	No. of starts	36	38	49
		% retention	97	92	94
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	55	40	55
		% retention	96	95	100
		% pass rate	92	100	100
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	22	32	27
		% retention	100	100	93
		% pass rate	95	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

120. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers are highly committed and energetic, and able to get the most out of students through highly practical learning activities which involve and inspire. Effective and detailed planning and strong classroom management underpin this success. A variety of innovative and practical activities stimulate interest. In an AS-level English literature lesson, students built their understanding of Edmond in *King Lear*, by researching contemporary Machiavellian characters, whilst adult students of Spanish built vocabulary and practised their pronunciation by matching images and words in a game of 'Food Bingo'. Teamwork is developed across the provision. In an AS-level English language lesson, students worked co-operatively to produce a piece of dialogue which demonstrates their understanding of asymmetrical language. The resulting piece which they perform demonstrates skill and confidence in practically exploring linguistic theory.

121. In many instances, ICT is used to enhance learning. French AS-level students enjoyed tapping the interactive whiteboard to summon up the next sentence in a sequence, testing out their answers to an exercise. English students benefited from dynamic computerised presentations.

122. Resources are excellent. Lessons are mostly taught in zoned base rooms where current work is on display creating a positive learning environment, conducive to study. In modern foreign languages, the study centre contains topical resources. Handouts and worksheets are well produced, up to date and well suited to students' abilities. Course handbooks and resource packs are widely available to support units across the specifications. GCSE English resources are comprehensive and creative and appropriate for a variety of students across the age range.

123. Assessment is outstanding. Students are assessed at the start of their course to identify additional support requirements and their preferred way of learning. Academic support tutorials provide regular help to GCE A-level students who need to catch up or who are potentially high achievers. Additional workshop time is allocated for those retaking their GCSE English and one-to-one support is available for adult students who may have missed their lesson. Students are aware of their minimum target grades and regular individual reviews monitor progress and negotiate action points to enable the students to reach their potential. Verbal feedback confirms students' progress within lessons and written feedback is timely, supportive and specific, giving students clear indication on how to achieve their best grade.

124. The range of provision meets students' needs well. Recreational courses, such as creative writing and beginners' language courses, give adult students the chance to develop relevant skills. Advanced extension awards are offered in English and a wide range of enrichment activities extend the provision. The English academy and the debating society, which competes in the Schools Mace and attended the grand final at Westminster School, meet twice weekly and the creative writing club and poetry society meet weekly. The GCSE English group went to York to research ghost stories and theatre trips have been arranged, for example, to see *King Lear*, *Henry V* and *Duchess of Malfi*. Foreign exchange visits are arranged for language students.

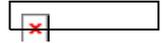
125. Support for students is outstanding. Pre-course guidance is comprehensive. Fifty English students attended an 'Introduction to Language' day and links exist with schools to offer taster days and master classes. All full-time students participate in an extended induction period and students' needs are promptly identified and met through extensive additional support. Specialist support teachers help students with particular learning needs in the classroom. Many GCE students attend regular academic support tutorials and highly value the help and focus they provide. Additional workshop support is timetabled for GCSE students and revision classes and holiday schools help students to prepare for examinations. In adult classes, part-time students are able to access additional study support to help them reach their potential. Students value the quality and availability of help outside of lessons.

Leadership and management

126. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is a strong team spirit and high aspirations are shared. Quality improvement is a central concern across the provision. Roles are clearly defined and heads of school communicate well within their teams. Course improvement teams establish clear development goals and action taken makes a positive difference,

demonstrated by improvements in achievement, the development of effective methods of teaching and increasingly shared creative coursework resources. The department responds creatively to equality and diversity issues. English literature texts are selected to enable students to investigate gender and race. New staff are well supported and advanced lecturers facilitate good practice.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on national certificate in adult literacy and numeracy courses
- effective teaching in the majority of lessons
- well-qualified literacy and numeracy specialists
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- very good literacy and numeracy study support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on some short courses
- a significant decline in pass rates on communication and application of number key skills in 2004
- lack of strategic management of the Skills for Life provision.

Scope of provision

127. The college offers a range of literacy and numeracy courses. At the time of the inspection, there

are 140 literacy and 90 numeracy students attending courses at the college or in one of six community venues. A growing number of courses are also being taught in the workplace. Literacy and numeracy learning support is available to college students on vocational and academic programmes. Currently, there are 145 students receiving literacy support and around 200 receiving numeracy support. This support is provided through in-class support, in small groups or in one-to-one support. There are around 390 full-time students working towards key skills qualifications in communications and application of number at levels 1 and 2.

Achievement and standards

128. Retention rates are above the national average on most courses and pass rates on the new national certificate courses in literacy and numeracy are high. Pass rates on one-year courses in literacy and numeracy accredited by the OCN are also high, although pass rates on a number of short courses accredited by OCN are below the national average. In 2004, pass rates on key skills courses in communication and application of number fell considerably and were significantly below the national average. In previous years, these pass rates were above the national average.

129. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory and the standard of their oral work is good. Students contribute confidently to class discussions and articulate their views clearly. In numeracy and application of number lessons, students discuss their methods and solutions with self-assurance and interest. They are able to recall concepts learned earlier in the course and apply them to new situations. For example, students discussing the likelihood of events in a lesson on probability were able to recall and apply earlier work on comparing fractions, decimals and percentages. In literacy and communication lessons, students are able to identify the basic components of language structure. Many can write in different styles, producing appropriate language for reports, letters and more creative writing. They can often correct mistakes in first drafts of their work with some help from the teacher. Reading and comprehension skills are often less well developed.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
OCN basic literacy (short)	entry	No. of starts	*	26	47
		% retention	*	73	98
		% pass rate	*	74	70
OCN basic numeracy (short)	entry	No. of starts	*	42	17
		% retention	*	83	94
		% pass rate	*	77	100
Certificate in adult literacy	1	No. of starts	*	19	23
		% retention	*	100	87
		% pass rate	*	84	90
Certificate in adult numeracy	1	No. of starts	*	44	18
		% retention	*	95	94
		% pass rate	*	74	88
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	*	104	351
		% retention	*	93	89
		% pass rate	*	78	12
Key skills communication	2	No. of starts	989	346	327
		% retention	88	89	88

		% pass rate	25	48	1
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Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* no data due to changes in qualifications

Quality of education and training

130. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan their lessons very carefully to take into account the needs of individual students. In the majority of lessons, students make good progress against their targets for learning, such as working on sentence structure or strategies to help them improve their spelling or number work. They are encouraged to take part in group discussions and presentations as well as working on individual tasks. In one lesson, lively debate took place on how persuasive language is used in advertising and students went on to write their own product descriptions. In an application of number lesson, the students enjoyed playing a game designed to practise their mental arithmetic whilst also improving their speaking and listening skills. They shared different ways of calculating and checking the answers. Teachers are skilful at improving students' confidence in identifying ways to improve their written work and at equipping them with strategies to develop skills. For example, in a study support session, a student learned how to organise her knowledge of a Shakespeare play to write an analysis of one of the characters. Good use was being made of World Book Day to stimulate students' interest in reading and encourage them to improve their comprehension skills. In a few lessons, group work is not effectively managed and students sit around doing little in parts of the lesson.

131. Resources to support learning are good. Staff are well qualified and a significant proportion have undertaken further training to keep them up to date with national standards. A number of staff are trained to work with students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia. The standard of accommodation is good. Computers are readily available and are well used to support learning in many lessons, including laptops in community venues and on the mobile bus used for outreach work.

132. Initial assessment of students' level of literacy and numeracy is well organised. The results of initial screening and diagnostic tests are available to teachers sufficiently early in the course to ensure an appropriate learning plan is in place. Students on other courses in the college receive effective support from literacy or numeracy specialists. Lesson plans and learning resources appropriate to the students' main courses are shared with the study support specialist to help the teaching in the support lesson. Students' work is regularly assessed and teacher comments help the student to know what they need to do to improve further. Progress monitoring is well used to plan learning targets.

133. Support for students is good. Students speak highly of the personal support they receive. Adults on basic literacy and numeracy courses are encouraged to progress to FE and training; careers advice is provided and visits are organised from community provision to main sites. There is effective support for students with physical disabilities or specific learning difficulties

134. Literacy and numeracy lessons for adults are available on college sites, in the community and on employer premises. There are fewer numeracy courses available than literacy. The college has recognised the need to develop the range of provision and an action plan has been established. There is some evidence to demonstrate progress in developing specifically targeted courses. The use of the outreach bus is enabling work with under-represented groups, such as travellers.

Leadership and management

135. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good teamwork and effective support for part-time staff and new teachers. Staff development opportunities are good. The day-to-day management of courses is effective and all staff are actively involved in quality improvement. The essential skills team are taking action to address issues identified in the teaching of communication

and application of number. The strategic plan for basic skills provision in the community, outlining what the college will provide in relation to the work of partner organisations lacks sufficient coherence and is underdeveloped. The response to Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and SENDA is satisfactory. All staff have had equal opportunities training and students are made aware of their rights. Data are monitored to identify issues relating to gender, race or disability.

Part D: College data

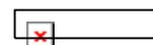
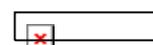


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	11	52
2	15	26
3	73	17
4/5	0	2
Other	1	3
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	2,150	243	12
Land-based provision	0	8	0
Construction	0	13	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	190	23	1
Business administration, management and professional	977	772	9
Information and communication technology	1,033	1,346	12
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	123	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	580	941	8

Hairdressing and beauty therapy	128	200	2
Health, social care and public services	594	1,314	10
Visual and performing arts and media	996	617	8
Humanities	3,536	716	21
English, languages and communication	1,429	827	11
Foundation programmes	380	741	5
Total	11,993	7,884	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
		1	Starters excluding transfers	192	383	359	902
	Retention rate %	84	82	78	84	81	78
	National average %	76	76	*	71	71	*
	Pass rate %	82	80	78	61	84	84
	National average %	69	73	*	70	77	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	944	1,060	994	1,371	1,200	1,088
	Retention rate %	87	85	77	82	75	72
	National average %	71	71	*	68	67	*
	Pass rate %	81	83	92	73	87	89
	National average %	70	73	*	71	73	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	6,624	7,284	7,412	1,196	904	681
	Retention rate %	92	89	92	73	74	70
	National average %	77	77	*	70	69	*
	Pass rate %	92	96	97	75	85	75
	National average %	77	80	*	71	74	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	**	36	**	45	83	59
	Retention rate %	**	94	**	93	77	83

	National average %	*	74	*	68	69	*
	Pass rate %	**	91	**	52	69	84
	National average %	*	68	*	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). Where applicable, the national rates used in the table are for GFE colleges which are grouped in the LSC benchmarking marking data as colleges with a 'high widening participation factor'.

Sources of information:

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

2. College rates for 2000/2001 to 2002/03: College ISR.

* data unavailable

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	88	12	0	112
Level 2 (intermediate)	81	19	0	54
Level 1 (foundation)	79	21	0	19
Other sessions	79	14	7	14
Totals	85	15	0	199

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