Birkenhead Sixth Form College

CONTENTS

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Birkenhead Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Roger Cracknell
Address of college:	Park Road West
	Claughton
	Prenton
	CH43 8SQ
Telephone number:	0151 652 5575
Fax number:	0151 653 4419
Chair of governors:	Pauline Cocker
Unique reference number:	130494
Name of reporting inspector:	Bev Barlow
Dates of inspection:	7-11 March 2005

Part A: Summary
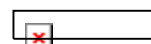
Information about the college

Birkenhead Sixth Form College was established as a sixth form college in 1988. Most of the college's work is on a single site about one mile from the centre of Birkenhead. Courses for adults are also offered at 23 centres in the community. In the local area, there are eight selective 11 to 18 schools, eleven 11 to 18 comprehensive schools and a large further education (FE) college. Overall, the Wirral is the 44th most deprived area in the country, based on indices of disadvantage. However, there are significant variations in average family incomes across the Wirral. Unemployment levels are high and at 5.7% are more than double the national rate. In 2004, around 54% of Year 11 pupils at Wirral schools, achieved five or more grades A* to C at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), slightly above the national average of 52%. In 2004, around 74% of school leavers entered full-time education, compared to a national average of 72%.

Over the last four years, the number of full-time students aged 16 to 18 remained constant at around 1,200 students. Around 58% of full-time students are female and the small proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly above the average of the Wirral population. The college recruits a high proportion of students from socially and economically deprived areas; in 2004, 45% were eligible for the education maintenance allowance. The majority of full-time students are studying advanced level courses, but many combine these with GCSE courses. In business, information and communications technology (ICT) and health and social care courses are provided from foundation to advanced level. Around 30 subjects are offered at advanced subsidiary level (AS level) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and 16 subjects at GCSE. Full-time vocational courses are available in business studies, ICT, childcare, health and social care and leisure, travel and tourism. The number of part-time students aged 19 and over has increased steadily in recent years to over 2,000 in 2003/04. A wide range of part-time courses is offered including basic skills. The majority of adults study courses in ICT and modern foreign languages; most students are enrolled on courses at levels 1 and 2.

The college's mission is `to provide high quality education for all'. The college has developed five core values to support its mission, which are summarised as: inclusivity, support, partnership, mutual respect and the development of potential.

How effective is the college?
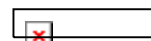
Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be good in business and ICT, and English and modern foreign languages. Provision is satisfactory in visual and performing arts and media, and humanities. A contributory grade of good was awarded in art and design. Provision in science and mathematics is unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- o high pass rates on vocational courses
- o effective strategies to widen participation
- o high standard of students' work in art and design, and English
- o wide range of courses for adults that meets the needs of the local community
- o strong personal and subject support for all students
- o high-quality learning resources
- o good governance
- o good communications and consultation throughout the college.

What should be improved

- o overall achievement of students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses relative to their prior attainment
- o performance in science and mathematics
- o quality of teaching
- o self-assessment in some areas
- o rigour of lesson observations
- o uptake of numeracy support
- o some accommodation is too small for the size of classes.

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
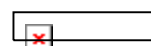
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	**Unsatisfactory.** Pass and retention rates are low on most courses, with low added value on most advanced level courses. Some teaching is insufficiently challenging, however, there is good use of information and learning technology (ILT) in the teaching of biology. Subject support for students is good. Slow progress has been made in raising standards.
Business studies and information and communications technology	**Good.** Pass rates are high on most courses and many students on vocational courses achieve high grades. Retention and pass rates in AS-level computing are low. Most teaching is good, but some lessons lack sufficient challenge. A wide range of courses are available for full-time and part-time students, and there is good subject support.
Visual and performing arts and media	**Satisfactory.** The contributory grade for art and design is **good**. Pass rates are high in art and design, but retention rates are low in AS-level theatre, performance and communication studies. The standard of students' work is high in fine art, music and textiles, but there is insufficient development of students' creative skills in media and graphic design. Subject support is good and ILT is used very effectively in the teaching of art and design courses. There is insufficient sharing of good practice.
Humanities	**Satisfactory.** Retention and pass rates are satisfactory overall; the retention rate on GCSE courses is high, but the pass rate on most AS-level courses is low. High-quality learning resources have been developed and are enhancing students' learning. There is good academic and personal support for students. Curriculum management is satisfactory, although quality assurance is weak.
English and modern foreign languages	**Good.** Pass rates are high on most AS-level and GCE A-level courses and retention rates are very high in AS-level and GCE A-level French and Spanish. There are, however, low pass rates in GCSE Spanish and modern foreign languages short course provision and low retention rates on many AS-level and GCE A-level English courses. There is much good teaching and learning, supported by good resources and the effective use of ILT. Curriculum management is

good.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal, staff and governors set a clear vision and direction for the college. Curriculum management is variable and the provision for adults is managed separately. There is insufficient sharing of good practice within and across curriculum teams. Achievements for students on courses at levels 1 and 2 are good. On level 3 courses, retention rates are around the national average for sixth form colleges; however, pass rates have fallen since 2002 to below the national average in 2004. Communications are good and the principal consults widely with all staff. The college has good community links, is responsive to local needs and has an effective strategy to widen participation. The college's quality assurance processes are insufficiently rigorous. Managers do not monitor the quality of teaching effectively. Governance is good; the performance of the college is effectively monitored. Financial management is strong and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The college recruits many students from disadvantaged backgrounds; a high proportion of students are in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance. Adult and community provision is very effective in increasing the numbers of adults participating in education. The college has made a good response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA), including training for all staff and an audit of premises. Good progress has been made in making the college accessible to students with restricted mobility. Action plans are in place to further improve the main campus and the centres used in the community. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. The response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 has been slow. A policy is in place, but there is no implementation plan. Staff and governors have not yet received training in race equality. Retention and pass rates are analysed by gender and ethnicity, but there is little use of the data in action plans. The college has made good progress in implementing arrangements for safeguarding children in education.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support and guidance for students are good. Prospective students receive helpful pre-entry advice and guidance. The college has established effective links with partner schools and provides extra support to Year 11 pupils whose transition to college is at risk. Initial assessments are effective in identifying the additional learning support needs of all students. The take-up of additional numeracy support is low. The support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is very good. Teachers provide good individual subject support. A well-structured tutorial programme is in place, but a minority of group tutorials do not actively involve all students. Students speak positively of the support they receive from their personal tutor. Personal tutors monitor closely the progress of their students. High attendance rates are expected and achieved. Careers education is well planned;

guidance for part-time adult students is good and meets their needs well.

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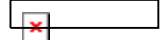
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the college

- o helpful and approachable teachers
- o the friendly and relaxed environment
- o good personal and subject support
- o advice and guidance on careers and higher education (HE)
- o good library and computer facilities
- o choice of subjects and additional activities.

What they feel could be improved

- o refectory and price of food
- o social areas for students
- o group tutorials
- o sports facilities.

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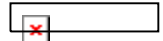
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The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

Part B: The college as a whole
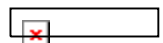
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors
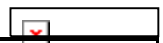
Aspect and learner	Graded good or better	Graded	Graded less than

type	(Grades 1 to 3) %	satisfactory (Grade 4) %	satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	64	33	3
19+ and WBL*	67	22	11
Learning 16-18	63	34	3
19+ and WBL*	67	22	11

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
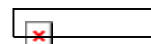
1. Around 97% of the college's 1,160 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. In 2003/04, these students accounted for 68% of college enrolments. Approximately 55% of full-time students study advanced level qualifications. Of the adult enrolments, the majority are at level 1.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Pass and retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses declined from 2002 to 2004 to below the national averages. Pass rates on GCE A levels improved in 2004 and 12 out of 28 subjects achieved a 100% pass rate. The percentage of students achieving high grades is low, at 23%. Pass rates on AS-level courses have declined over the last two years. In 2004, college data indicate that approximately 85% of students completed their AS-level course and, of those, around 77% were successful. These figures are below the national averages in sixth form colleges. Retention rates on advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses are good and most students are successful; in ICT and travel and tourism many students achieve high grades.

3. Data for 2004, which compare students' results at AS level and GCE A level with their previous achievements at GCSE, show that students are achieving higher than predicted in some subjects. The degree of improvement is considerable in GCE A-level art and design, English language and literature, French, ICT and music. Value added was high in five GCE AS-level courses. Conversely, students' progress was poor in 12 subjects at GCE A level and 10 AS-level subjects. Data for other subjects show students achieving broadly in line with expectations on entry. In 2004, there was a decline in the colleges overall value added score; indicating that, students' achievements are below expectations derived from their GCSE results.

4. At level 2, with much smaller number of enrolments, pass rates are consistently above the national average and improved in 2004 to 95%. The achievement of grades A* to C by students on GCSE courses improved in 2004 and at 48% is slightly below the national average. Pass rates on intermediate general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses improved significantly to 91% in 2004, but this was balanced by a similar decline in the retention rate. At level 1, pass rates are good with a 100% pass rate on foundation GNVQ courses in 2003 and 2004. Retention rates on level 1 and level 2 courses are around the national average.

5. The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall. Students' written work is good in English and they have a very good understanding of specialist linguistic terminology. Practical work is good in fine art, music and textiles. Students are encouraged to be innovative, experiment with a wide range of media and produce creative portfolios. In most subjects, students use the Internet well for research. Business studies and ICT students have developed effective project planning skills and their assignments are well presented. Students demonstrate good practical skills in science, theatre

studies and ICT. Students respond well to questions. In humanities and English, students participate well in class discussions and demonstrate sound subject knowledge. In science and mathematics, students use technical language well to solve problems, but many of the problems set are not demanding enough for the more able students. In humanities, students' analytical skills are underdeveloped.

Adult learners

6. The number of adults enrolling, mainly in the areas of ICT, modern foreign languages and basic skills has steadily increased over the last three years. Most adults study part time, either in the college in the evenings or during the day at one of 23 centres in the community. In 2004, 2,141 students aged over 19 were enrolled. The majority, around 76% were on courses at level 1. Approximately 6% were on courses at level 3 and 18% were on courses at level 2. The college has a commitment to widening participation; in 2004, 135 adults enrolled on a range of basic skills courses. At level 1, retention and pass rates have improved over the last three years and are now above the national average. Overall retention and pass rates on level 2 courses are good and consistently above the national average. In the three-year period to 2004, retention and pass rates on level 3 courses fluctuated around the national average.

7. Adult students are well motivated and they enjoy their learning. In ICT, students' confidence in the use of ICT software is satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, they develop satisfactory speaking and listening skills.

Quality of education and training
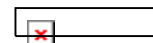
8. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Inspectors observed and graded 73 lessons and 8 group tutorials. Teaching was observed to be good or better in 64% of lessons, satisfactory in 32% and unsatisfactory in 4%. This profile is below the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of teaching judged to be very good or outstanding was 32%, compared with a national average of 36%. In only one lesson was teaching judged to be outstanding. The 4% of unsatisfactory lessons affected students on level 2 courses. Too much teaching across all curriculum areas does not sufficiently challenge students. The proportion of good or better teaching was greatest in English and modern foreign languages. Students' learning was judged to be good or better in 63% of lessons, satisfactory in 33% and unsatisfactory in 4%; this profile is much lower than the average for sixth form colleges. Students' attendance at lessons is good. An average attendance of 86% was observed during the inspection.

9. Most lessons are planned well. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of their students and use a range of activities to engage students and stimulate interest. In these lessons, students respond enthusiastically and learn quickly. The lessons are well structured and take into account students' individual learning needs and abilities. Teachers make good use of questioning techniques to maintain the pace of work and ensure that students understand it. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is particularly good in art and design, biology, psychology and modern foreign languages. In humanities and English, students participate well in group work and discussions. In ICT, science and music lessons teachers effectively use students' practical skills to develop their understanding of the theory.

10. In the less effective lessons, there is too much whole class teaching. The pace of work is slower and students are given too much time to complete the activities. Teachers' questions are not used effectively to check that all students have understood the work. In a minority of lessons, routine tasks, including note taking, do not challenge more able students to develop higher-level skills. Teachers had not planned for any extension activities for those students who finished the work quickly. In some lessons, teachers spend too much time talking and there are insufficient checks on what the students have learned. In unsatisfactory lessons, too many students are not learning new

ideas.

11. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and have good subject knowledge. All staff have an annual review of their performance. There are clear links between staff development and the college's strategic priorities. Opportunities for staff development are good. New teachers appreciate the mentoring support of a more experienced colleague. Technical, library and support staff are appropriately qualified and provide good support to teachers and students.

12. Resources for teaching and learning are good overall. The college has invested heavily in ICT equipment and staff training to support the use of e-learning. Most classrooms have access to computers which are connected to the college's intranet and to the Internet. All subjects have online learning resources which are easily accessible to students. In a minority of areas, the quality of the resources is poor and teachers do not use them effectively. Many classrooms have data projectors and interactive whiteboards and they are used well to support students' learning. There is a very good range of specialist equipment to help students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

13. The college's accommodation, including that in the community centres, is clean and well maintained. Attractive displays, including students' work, provide stimulating places in which to learn. Some classrooms and laboratories, for example, in media studies, business and science are too small for the number of students using them. Many centres used in the community have crèche facilities. A new library and learning resource centre known as `The Learning Curve' provides students with a sufficient number of places for individual study and good access to computers. The library stock is up to date and well used by students. Access to college for students with restricted mobility is good and an action plan is in place to secure further improvements. Not all centres in the community are accessible to students with restricted mobility; plans are in place to move the teaching to other buildings that are compliant with disability legislation.

14. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Most students understand how their work is assessed. All subjects have developed sound assessment practices. In some areas, for example, English, teachers moderate each others' marking to ensure it is accurate and consistent. Homework is set on a regular basis. Teachers provide detailed and constructive feedback that clearly indicates what students need to do to improve their performance. A coursework schedule, widely displayed throughout the college, helps students to plan their workload.

15. All full-time students on advanced level courses are set target minimum grades based on their GCSE results. They have a formal review, twice a year, with their subject teachers and personal tutor. Students are encouraged to review their own performance and, with teachers, to set targets for improvement. In some cases, these targets are insufficiently precise. Attendance is monitored closely and poor attendance is acted upon promptly. Parents and guardians are kept well informed about students' progress.

16. The college has developed good systems for the assessment and monitoring of part-time adult students. Course teachers carry out initial assessments with help and advice from the college's learning support team. Individual students' progress is reviewed at regular intervals.

17. The college is inclusive and provides an appropriate range of academic and vocational qualifications at advanced level for students aged 16 to 18. Around 30 subjects are offered at AS level and GCE A level and five advanced level vocational courses. The college timetable is flexible and this allows students to study their preferred combination of subjects. At level 2, the college offers 16 GCSE subjects and 5 vocational courses. Some students take GCSEs as a re-sit programme and others take them alongside their advanced course of study. Overall results of the re-sit GCSE programme indicate that some students are inappropriately placed on these courses. In the last two years, progression from AS level to GCE A level courses and from level 2 to level 3 courses has fallen. The choice of courses for full-time students at level 1 is limited. The college is aware of the limitations of its provision at level 2 and below and is currently conducting a thorough curriculum review.

18. The college has effective links with local businesses, a good range of external organisations and

the local community. Courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT are offered during the day at community centres. These are effective in engaging adults in education. Part-time evening provision includes ICT, modern foreign languages and non-accredited leisure courses.

19. Opportunities for full-time students to broaden their studies are good overall. Curriculum-related enrichment opportunities effectively broaden students' experiences and include foreign visits, trips, competitions and visiting speakers. Cross-college enrichment activities are good. Students can chose from a wide range of options including team and recreational sports, drama and music, film clubs, Russian and community work.

20. Key skills level 2 ICT is compulsory for all students without a qualification in the subject. However, the college does not assess the students' initial level of attainment and sometimes students, especially those on advanced level courses, are placed at a level of key skills in ICT which is inappropriate to their needs. Pass rates in key skills ICT at level 2 are good for students on intermediate GNVQ courses, but low for students whose main programme is at level 3 and those on GCSE re-sit programmes. The key skills policy states that all students without a GCSE grade A* to C in English or mathematics should be given the opportunity to progress towards a level 2 qualification. Most students resit their GCSE, and of the few that take key skills, most are students on foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses. Most students on foundation GNVQ are successful in achieving level 1 communication key skills.

21. Support for students is good. Prospective students receive comprehensive advice and guidance to help them choose their courses. The college has good links with its partner high schools and arranges for pupils to come into college for a day and sample lessons. Some pupils who have been identified by their school as having particular barriers to progression receive extra support from the college to encourage them to remain in education.

22. A planned tutorial programme meets the different needs of students aged 16 to 18. A team of 17 personal tutors teach the programme that includes a good mix of personal and social education, guidance on careers and HE, and routine administration. The participation of students in group tutorial activities varies. In some tutorials, students participate in lively debates and in others a large proportion of students remain passive and are insufficiently involved in the activities. Attendance is particularly well monitored, and students with high attendance rates receive letters home congratulating them. Students value the support they receive in individual tutorials. In these sessions, students review their attendance and progress and set targets for improvement. Communication between personal tutors and subject teachers is good and is used effectively to identify students who are underachieving.

23. High-quality additional support is available for students whose literacy and numeracy needs have been identified at enrolment. The take-up of numeracy support is low. Subject teachers can refer students for specific support and students can request extra help during their course. Students value the academic and personal support provided by their teachers outside timetabled lessons. In addition, some subjects have timetabled support lessons. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities receive very good specialist support. A college counsellor and established links with specialist agencies provide good support for students with personal issues. A personal adviser from the Connexions service gives valuable help to students who are at risk of leaving the college. Good arrangements are in place for the protection and safeguarding of children and young adults. The college's child protection policy includes clear procedures for staff to follow, all staff have a copy and further training is planned for June 2005.

24. Thorough arrangements are in place to support students' applications to HE and employment. A comprehensive programme of activities includes visits to HE institutions, visiting speakers, a bi-annual careers fair, and a work shadowing scheme. The college has compact arrangements with two local universities. In 2004, 72% of GCE A-level students progressed to HE.

25. Support for part-time adult students is highly effective. Information about the courses offered is good and they can sample the course before deciding to enrol. Learning support is provided by specialist tutors in the community centres and on the main college site. Connexions advisers visit classes held in the community to explain the services they can offer to help unemployed students

find jobs. Adult students can get financial support to attend courses, and have access to the college's support services.

Leadership and management
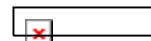
26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal, staff and governors set a clear vision and direction for the college. The college's mission, `to provide high quality education for all' was agreed after significant consultation with all staff and governors. The quality of education and training is mixed; overall it has declined since the last inspection in October 2000. Achievements for students aged 16 to 18 and adults at levels 1 and 2 are good. Retention and pass rates on vocational courses are high and most students are successful. Overall retention and pass rates on level 3 courses have fallen since 2002. New strategies to improve performance have been introduced, but though in-year retention rates have improved, it is too early to judge their full impact.

27. A new management structure to focus on raising standards was finalised in January 2005. Senior managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. However, some college staff are unclear about these new roles. The quality of curriculum management varies widely. For example, it is good in art and design and English, satisfactory in humanities and performing arts and unsatisfactory in science and mathematics. Inspectors identified some improvements as a result of recent management changes. The college's provision for adults is managed separately from the provision for students aged 16 to 19. This separation is hampering the sharing of good practice and joint working.

28. Communication in the college is good. Staff are clear about the college's strategic direction and key priorities for improvement. The principal consults widely and has an open door policy. Staff are kept informed about all aspects of the college's business through weekly briefings, newsletters and regular team meetings. Planning and review processes are well organised, thorough and effective. College targets are closely monitored by managers at all levels.

29. The college has effective community links and is responsive to local needs. Its strategy to increase and widen participation is strongly supported by the local education authority and other partners. There has been significant growth in adult provision through evening classes and provision in 23 community centres. A range of partnerships, often supported through project bids has proved very successful, such as the introduction of adult basic skills courses to widen participation.

30. Governance is good. Governors have a good mix of skills and experience which are used effectively by the college. They are involved appropriately in determining the mission and strategy of the college. Governors carefully monitor student performance, and financial and risk management. They are well informed by regular reports and good management information data. Governors ask challenging questions. For example, at a meeting of the standards and quality committee, they discussed the poor progression of many of the AS-level students on to GCE A levels in 2004. A well-planned induction and mentor system effectively supports new governors. Governors accurately assess their own performance and regularly attend training events to keep up to date on the current issues in FE.

31. Quality assurance procedures have not led to consistent improvements in standards. The quality assurance process is clear and understood by teachers and support staff. The annual quality report involves all staff and is used for the self-assessment report. The evidence base for making judgements includes lesson observations, data on students' achievements and the views of students. Self-assessment is insufficiently rigorous and does not always identify key weaknesses. In some areas, there is insufficient emphasis on improving students' achievements and teaching and learning. In 2004, all teachers were observed as part of the quality assurance process. Almost 95% of lessons were judged to be good or better. This grade profile is much higher than the findings from

the inspection, which judged 64% of lessons good or better. The college has recognised this problem of overgrading. The new directors of curriculum have responsibility for improving teaching and learning, but it is too early to judge their impact. Action plans from the quality processes are variable in quality and some targets are not measurable. Since the previous inspection, a number of procedures have been introduced to gauge students' views. These include surveys, focus groups and feedback from the student council. The results and actions are communicated clearly to students.

32. Management information data are accurate and reliable. A range of standard reports are produced regularly to help managers in their decision making. Curriculum teams receive good support in understanding the data. Heads of subject use a good range of information to make judgements on the quality of their courses. The range includes detailed analysis of value added data, performance data benchmarked against similar colleges, students' views and lesson observation grades. Detailed analysis of this data is reviewed at meetings with senior managers. Personal tutors receive weekly attendance data to review with their students.

33. Staff development is clearly linked to the college's strategic priorities and objectives. The annual appraisal system for teachers is performance related and contributes directly to the identification of training and development needs. Both full-time and part-time staff have good opportunities for professional development. Part-time teachers are encouraged to attend training events and key meetings. Staff value the whole college staff development days. There is a failure to share good practice within and between some curriculum teams. The staff development plan identifies college priorities, but does not have any targets.

34. The college effectively promotes equality of opportunity. A strong emphasis is placed on widening participation. The college enrols students from a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities. It recognises that provision below level 3 does not meet the needs of all students. The college is currently undertaking a review of the curriculum for full-time students aged 16 to 18. The college analyses students' achievements by gender and ethnicity, but this is not used consistently to set targets. A range of policies and action plans meet the requirements of SENDA. The equality and diversity group closely monitors progress against these plans. The implementation of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 is slow.

35. Financial management is strong. Senior managers and governors monitor the college's financial position carefully. In 2003/04, the college did not meet its income target and in October 2004 it did not meet its target for the number of students aged 16 to 18, an action plan is in place to address this. Risk management systems are in place and regularly monitored. Inspectors judged that the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas
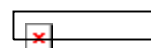
Science and mathematics
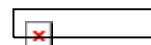
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- o   good use of ILT within teaching and learning in biology
- o   strong subject support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- o low pass rates on AS-level courses, GCE A-level physics and GCSE sciences
- o students' underachievement on most advanced level courses
- o low retention rate on many courses
- o slow progress in raising standards
- o insufficiently challenging teaching.

Scope of provision

36. The college offers AS levels and GCE A levels in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and geology, and GCSE courses in science, mathematics and human physiology. City and Guilds numeracy qualifications, from entry level to level 2, are offered to students who are not yet ready to study GCSE mathematics. Currently, 650 full-time student aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on mathematics and science courses; around 300 are studying GCSE mathematics. Part-time provision, mainly for adults, includes GCSE science, astronomy and mathematics and AS-level mathematics; around 100 students are enrolled on these courses.

Achievement and standards

37. Overall, students' achievements in science and mathematics are unsatisfactory. In 2004, pass rates were low on most AS-level courses and GCE A-level physics. For AS-level biology, geology and mathematics, the pass rates have been consistently below the national average for the last three years. Pass rates on most GCE A-level courses are around the national average. However, a significant proportion of AS-level and GCE A-level students do not achieve the grade that would be expected from their prior achievement. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C on GCSE science courses are low; for GCSE mathematics, the proportion of high grades achieved were slightly below the national average of 44%, in 2003 and 2004.

38. Retention rates on most AS-level courses are low. In 2004, the retention rate on GCE A-level chemistry, geology and mathematics was significantly below national averages. Currently, the in-year retention rate has improved on advanced level science courses, but remains low on AS-level mathematics and GCSE mathematics and science. Relatively few students succeed in AS-level mathematics. In 2004, out of 74 students who started the course, only half of them passed.

39. Students' written work is generally good and students are encouraged to present their work carefully. At advanced level, students use technical terms appropriately to solve problems. However, many of the tasks set are routine and do not challenge the more able students. Across science subjects, students make good progress in developing their practical skills. In mathematics, GCSE and advanced level students use software packages confidently to present graphical work.

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	235	235	345
		% retention	84	89	85
		% pass rate	54	42	41
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	47	39	69
		% retention	81	77	83
		% pass rate	55	40	44
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	104	81	140
		% retention	80	83	80
		% pass rate	86	73	71
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	89	69	83

		% retention	81	81	83
		% pass rate	57	41	62
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	45	46	38
		% retention	96	96	95
		% pass rate	93	91	94
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	15	16	17
		% retention	87	100	71
		% pass rate	100	100	83

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

Quality of education and training

40. The quality of teaching and learning is variable; some teaching is very good, but too much is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of effective activities; students are fully engaged in their learning which is checked regularly. For example, in a biology lesson, students examined how the body's natural defence mechanisms function. The teacher used a good mixture of ILT, worksheets and mini-whiteboards to develop ideas and check students' understanding. In the less effective lessons, there is too much emphasis on whole class teaching and students spend too much time listening to the teacher and making notes. In some lessons, students do not extend their skills and knowledge and, the teacher does not sufficiently check students' learning.

41. In science and mathematics, teachers are well qualified and some are examiners. Staff development is good; team meetings are used to discuss resources and share good practice in teaching and learning. Some part-time staff are not able to attend these meetings. ILT is used effectively in many lessons. In biology, an extensive range of material including revision notes teaching materials, examination papers and web links are available on the college's intranet. Other subject teachers are making good progress in developing similar resources.

42. Accommodation is generally good, with well-equipped teaching rooms and laboratories. The new teaching rooms for mathematics and physics are particularly well resourced and contain good displays of subject-specific posters and students' work. Some laboratories are too small for the number of students in a class and this limits the amount of practical work. Technician support is good.

43. Overall, the assessment of students' progress is satisfactory. Homework is set regularly and marked thoroughly. Teachers' written and verbal feedback helps students to improve the quality of their work. New systems are in place to monitor students' performance relative to their target minimum grades. Standardised tests, often based on examination questions, are used effectively to identify underachieving students. These students are encouraged to do extra work in subject support sessions.

44. In mathematics, there is a good range of provision, from entry level to advanced level. In science, the college has been considering the introduction of vocational courses for some time, but this has not yet happened. Students benefit from a range of enrichment opportunities, these include competitions, lectures at local universities and a trip to Alton Towers to investigate the application of mechanics.

45. Support for students is good. Timetabled support lessons are well attended. Teachers provide much informal individual support outside lessons. Extra revision workshops are held around examination time.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Self-assessment lacks rigour and the

underachievement of students has not been addressed adequately by managers. Recent changes, including the appointment of a new head of subject in both chemistry and mathematics, are beginning to have some impact. Action plans for 2004 identify a number of strategies for improvement; these include switching to a different awarding body, the development and sharing of teaching resources, increased use of ILT in lessons and the introduction of a more systematic and thorough system to monitor students' progress. It is too early to accurately judge their impact on students' achievement. However, the in-year retention rate on AS-level science courses has improved, although it has declined on AS-level and GCSE mathematics courses.

Business studies and information and communications technology
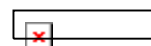
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o   high pass rates on most courses
- o   high achievement of high grades on vocational courses
- o   good subject support for students
- o   good range of courses.

Weaknesses

- o   low retention and pass rates in AS-level computing
- o   insufficient challenge in lessons
- o   adverse effect on learning of small teaching rooms.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses in business and ICT. Provision in both subjects includes GNVQ at foundation and intermediate level, GCSE, AVCE, AS level and GCE A level. Computing is offered at AS level and GCE A level. The European computer driving licence (ECDL), computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and computerised accounts are offered in several centres in the community during the day and on the main college site in the evening. Most students on these courses are part-time adults. Currently, there are around 1,250 enrolments in business and ICT; approximately 530 are full-time students aged 16 to 18. Nearly 80% of students in this area are on ICT courses.

Achievement and standards

48. Pass rates are high on most courses. In 2003 and 2004, the pass rate was at, or close to, 100% on GCE A-level business studies and ICT. Achievements on full-time vocational courses are above national averages. Pass rates on AS-level computing are well below the national average and, in 2004, the retention rate fell to 79%. Most students on AVCEs and GCE A-level ICT achieve grades higher than those predicted by their GCSE results. Students on AS-level and GCE A-level business studies and computing courses achieve grades in line with those predicted by their prior achievements. Retention and pass rates on most part-time courses for adults are high.

49. The standard of students' work is good. Students' assignment work on vocational courses is planned and presented well, with good use of research skills. In business studies students have a good understanding of business terminology and key concepts and can apply these to case studies and project work. ICT students' practical work is good and demonstrates effective competence in the use of ICT applications. Computing students show a clear understanding of computer systems and software. For example, computing students were confident in the production of web pages;

these were used effectively to feedback their research findings to the rest of the class. Part-time adult students are well motivated and developing satisfactory ICT skills. For example, most students could competently apply formulas to spreadsheets.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Certificate for information technology (IT) users (New CLAIT)	1	No. of starts	219	225	164
		% retention	70	80	92
		% pass rate	63	75	68
GCSE business studies	2	No. of starts	29	25	38
		% retention	59	72	76
		% pass rate	59	56	90
GNVQ IT	2	No. of starts	32	27	34
		% retention	84	89	94
		% pass rate	93	96	91
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	74	86	85
		% retention	82	77	86
		% pass rate	84	61	84
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	29	32	23
		% retention	93	97	91
		% pass rate	100	97	100
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	34	31	38
		% retention	85	90	79
		% pass rate	83	68	70
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	47	42	20
		% retention	94	98	100
		% pass rate	86	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

50. Teaching and learning are good in business and ICT. Lessons are well planned and most include a good range of activities. Most handouts given to students are of a high quality, well written and easy for the students to follow. Teachers promote good working relationships with students and have high expectations of them. Students are attentive, responsive and enjoy their lessons. In the best business studies lessons, teachers make good links between theory and topical examples of business to develop students' understanding. For example, in a lesson on mergers and takeovers, the teacher used up-to-date case studies to illustrate the theory. This was followed by effective questioning techniques to develop students' understanding. In the best ICT lessons, teachers use a good mix of practical activities to develop students' technical skills. All students are challenged appropriately and a good pace of work is maintained.

51. In a small number of less successful lessons, the pace of work is too slow, and teachers spend too much time talking and do not provide a range of activities to maintain students' interest. In a few lessons, teachers do not systematically check students' understanding and a minority of students are not involved in class discussions.

52. Overall resources are good. Specialist resources for ICT are very good. Data projectors and interactive whiteboards are used regularly by ICT teachers. Students use industry-standard software and have good access to computers, in class and in the learning resource centre. There is insufficient use of e-learning in business studies. Teachers are well qualified and are encouraged to update their skills. Some teaching rooms are too small for the number of students using them; this restricts the range of teaching and learning activities. For example, in a computing lesson students completed written work on their knees as there was not enough desk space. In a business studies lesson, the room was too small to allow work in groups.

53. The assessment of students' work is good. Homework is set regularly and teachers provide constructive suggestions on how students can improve their work. Coursework assignments are well written and help students to achieve high grades. Students' progress against their target minimum grade is closely monitored. Students are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

54. A good range of courses are available from foundation to advanced level. Part-time courses meet the needs of the community and are effective in engaging adults in education. Work experience is limited to students on GNVQ courses. Enrichment activities include residential trips to Barcelona and Paris and visits to theme parks and car manufacturers.

55. Student support and guidance are good. Subject support for students is effective. Students value the time teachers give outside the lessons to help them complete their coursework. Support for students with specific learning needs is very good. Liaison between teachers and support assistants is good. Adult students value the support and pre-entry guidance they receive.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management of the area are good. Course management is very effective in improving performance. Part-time courses, both in the college and at the centres in the community are managed well. Teachers work well together and communicate effectively. Full-time and part-time staff attend weekly team meetings. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and the setting of targets. Good use is made of data to identify the strengths and weaknesses in students' achievements. Action plans identify strategies to improve standards. Internal observations of lessons result in teaching and learning grades that are overgenerous. There is some sharing of good practice in teaching and learning, but this is not widespread across the area, especially between full-time and part-time staff.

Visual and performing arts and media
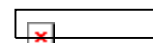
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Contributory grade for art and design is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o   high pass rates in art and design
- o   high standard of student work in advanced level fine art, music and textiles
- o   good use of ILT in art and design
- o   good subject support.

Weaknesses

- o   low retention rates in AS-level theatre, performance and communication studies

- o   insufficient development of students' creative skills in media studies and graphics
- o   accommodation too small in art and design and media studies
- o   insufficient sharing of good practice.

Scope of provision

57. Most courses are at level 3 and include AS levels and GCE A levels in art and design, three-dimensional design, textiles, graphics, media studies, film studies, communication studies, music, theatre studies and performance studies. At level 2, there are GCSE courses in media studies. Currently, there are around 550 full-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on courses in this area. The majority of enrolments are in media and visual arts, with approximately 20% of students on courses in performing arts. Part-time courses for adults are available at intermediate and advanced levels in art and design and film studies.

Achievement and standards

58. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory overall. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level art and design, and GCE A-level music, performance and communication studies are consistently high. In 2004, retention and pass rates on AS-level music, performance and communication studies were low. Students on AS-level and GCE A-level art and design courses achieve significantly higher grades than those predicted by their performance at GCSE. Most other students make satisfactory progress.

59. The standard of students' work is good, particularly in fine art and textiles. In textiles, students use an imaginative range of materials and techniques in their own designs. For example, a skirt had been made from different types of cutlery. Fine art students discuss their work with confidence. In graphic design, students rely too much on copied images in their research. Music and theatre studies students have a good understanding of theory; this is used effectively in their performance work. Media, film and communication studies students' written work demonstrates good subject knowledge. However, their evaluative and analytical skills in class discussions are less well developed.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE media studies	2	No. of starts	*	17	45
		% retention	*	76	71
		% pass rate	*	46	46
AS-level art and design	3	No. of starts	140	105	133
		% retention	91	89	84
		% pass rate	100	98	97
AS-level theatre studies	3	No. of starts	39	19	35
		% retention	90	84	80
		% pass rate	94	81	89
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	119	122	113
		% retention	85	85	85
		% pass rate	97	98	85
GCE A-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	26	37	22
		% retention	96	86	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level	3	No. of starts	27	24	16

communication studies		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	96	100

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

60. Most teaching and learning is good or better. In the best lessons, students are enthusiastic and respond well to challenging activities. The lessons are well planned and effectively integrate theory and practice. For example, in a music lesson, students discussed chord progression in jazz before composing and playing their own music. In a theatre studies lesson, students evaluated slapstick and clowning techniques to produce an improvisation of *Waiting for Godot.* In art and design, students effectively analyse examples of art work to develop and improve their own skills. ILT is used effectively to enhance students' portfolios in textiles and graphics. In the less effective lessons, students are not challenged to develop their creative skills. The teacher spends too much time talking and there are too few opportunities for students to be involved in discussion and practical work.

61. Resources are satisfactory overall. A wide range of specialist equipment is available and students have good access to computers outside lessons. There are two well-equipped theatre studies and dance studios, but no small rehearsal spaces. The classrooms in media and film studies are too small for the number of students using them; in one lesson, some students had difficulty in seeing the television. Accommodation in art and design is unsuitable. The art rooms are interlinked; students' learning is disturbed by people moving between the rooms. Part-time students do not make use of the laptop computers and portable scanner. Staff are well qualified and have good opportunities for staff development.

62. Students are assessed regularly using appropriate methods. All full-time students are given a minimum target grade and progress is closely monitored. Teachers' written feedback on students' work is particularly helpful in art and design, music and performance studies. Students in these subjects are very clear about what they need to do to improve. In art and design lessons, students are given individual targets based on their progress so far. In media, film and communication studies, some students have to wait too long before their marked work is returned.

63. Opportunities for enrichment are good and include a film club, art workshops, music practice, a drama club and visits to local galleries and theatres. Specialist-subject workshops and revision sessions are well attended and highly valued by students.

64. Support for students is good. Teachers provide guidance outside lessons to help students develop their skills. In art and design, students are encouraged to use the equipment and classrooms in their free lessons. Communications between teachers and personal tutors is good.

Leadership and management

65. Course leadership and management are satisfactory overall. In art and design, they are good. Communications within subject teams is generally good, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice across the area. For example, in art and design, different schemes of work and resources are used to deliver full-time and part-time GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Self-assessment is not always sufficiently self-critical. Students' achievements are often overstated as strengths when they are satisfactory. Internal lesson observation grades are too generous and there is insufficient emphasis on improving teaching and learning. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

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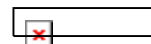
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- o high retention rates on GCSE courses
- o strong subject support for students
- o good resources for learning.

Weaknesses

- o low retention rate in AS-level government and politics and GCE A-level history
- o low pass rates on most AS-level courses
- o weak quality assurance.

Scope of provision

66. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in geography, government and politics, history, sociology and psychology. There are GCSE courses in geography, history, psychology, sociology and humanities. Psychology courses account for half the enrolments in the area. Currently, there are approximately 840 enrolments on humanities courses; most are full-time students aged 16 to 18. Around 50 part-time adult students were enrolled on the GCSE history and, AS-level and GCSE psychology courses offered in the evening.

Achievement and standards

67. Pass rates are satisfactory in most humanities subjects at GCSE and GCE A level. In 2003 and 2004, pass rates in AS-level geography, sociology and psychology were consistently below the national average. Retention rates are good on GCSE courses and satisfactory on most advanced level courses. In 2004, retention rates on AS-level government and politics and sociology and, GCE A-level history and sociology courses were low. In most subjects, students achieve the grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. In 2004, many students in history and government and politics did not achieve the grades expected of them.

68. Students in humanities demonstrate good subject knowledge and participate well in class discussions. For example, in an GCE A-level psychology lesson, students demonstrated a good understanding of the causes of stress in the workplace. Students in AS-level geography were confident in their evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of initiatives aimed at preventing migration from rural areas. These students were able to express their ideas clearly and apply the theoretical concepts to their own field work projects. In some subjects, students' written work lacks the depth of analysis required at advanced level.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	57	49	100
		% retention	70	76	79
		% pass rate	23	24	46
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	54	54	51
		% retention	94	89	90

		% pass rate	94	85	85
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	83	95	89
		% retention	93	88	90
		% pass rate	89	90	70
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	212	201	217
		% retention	91	87	84
		% pass rate	84	75	82
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	93	93	98
		% retention	88	94	81
		% pass rate	90	80	76
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	62	48	53
		% retention	100	90	91
		% pass rate	100	98	98
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	78	97	77
		% retention	95	96	95
		% pass rate	92	94	95

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

Quality of education and training

69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better, and there were several very good lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Students are attentive in lessons, respond well to questions and readily participate in class discussions. In the most effective lessons teachers have high expectations of their students. Teachers use a wide range of appropriate teaching methods, including group discussions, presentations, worksheets, videos and experiments, to motivate and engage students. For example, in a history lesson, students worked in small groups on a card exercise, to evaluate the long-term causes of the emergence of political democracy in Britain. The teacher used effective questioning to maintain a good pace of work and prompt students to think about their responses and they made good progress. In psychology lessons, students worked well in pairs and small groups on practical activities and quizzes to develop a good understanding of memory and why it can be unreliable. Students discussed their findings confidently. There is some good use of the interactive whiteboard to help students' learning.

70. In some less effective lessons, teachers fail to provide challenging work, allow students to take too much time to complete activities and often provide the answer to questions without giving students sufficient time to respond. In these lessons, the attainment is lower and more able students are not given the opportunity to develop their understanding.

71. Resources in humanities are good. Teaching rooms are well equipped and many have digital projectors or electronic whiteboards. Students have good access to computers, in and out of class. Appropriate displays of learning materials, posters and students work create a stimulating learning environment with a clear subject identity. Students are given well-designed subject booklets and coursework guides with clear and detailed explanations on different aspects of the course. For example, coursework guides in geography present task and field work assignment briefs in a clear and easily understandable format.

72. Teachers are well qualified and all, including part-time teachers, have a teaching qualification. Staff take full advantage of the good opportunities for internal and external professional development. Some staffing difficulties over the last two years have adversely affected students achievements, but these are now resolved.

73. Assessment and monitoring of students work are thorough. In most subjects, teachers write constructive comments on students' work, identifying clearly areas for further development. To improve essay writing skills, geography teachers encourage students to reflect on their own work through the use of self-assessment cover sheets. In all subjects, students are set minimum target grades based on their GCSE results. Students formally review their progress against the targets, with their teacher, twice a year.

74. An appropriate range of courses is available in humanities. There are too few enrichment opportunities to extend students' learning. However, in geography, students participate in a variety of field trips; the students' experiences from these visits are used well in classroom teaching.

75. Subject support is good. Teachers give freely of their time to support students outside lessons and, students value the support. Weekly timetabled subject support is well attended. At induction, full-time students have an initial assessment of their learning needs. Any identified additional support is quickly put in place. Learning support assistants are effectively used in lessons to help students with specific learning difficulties. For example, in a sociology lesson, a support worker effectively supported one student and made additional notes on a laptop. Careers advice and support for applications to HE are good and valued by the students.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course management is effective in developing detailed schemes of work, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice across the area. The curriculum managers report to three different senior managers. Quality assurance is weak. Course self-assessment reports do not adequately assess students' achievements and do not identify all the strengths and weaknesses in the area. For example, in GCE A-level psychology, although pass rates have improved over the last three years they remain slightly below the national average; this was judged to be strength. Internal lesson observation grades are much higher than those found by inspectors. The recent strategies to improve retention rates are having an impact; the in-year retention rate has improved on most courses.

English and modern foreign languages
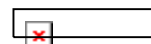
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- o high pass rates on most AS-level and GCE A-level courses
- o good retention rate on full-time AS-level and GCE A-level French and Spanish
- o much good teaching and learning
- o good resources and use of ILT to support learning
- o good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- o low pass rates on GCSE Spanish and modern foreign languages short course provision
- o low retention rate on many AS-level and GCE A-level English courses
- o lack of progression routes for adult learners**.**

Scope of provision

77. The college offers courses in English and modern foreign languages from entry to advanced

level, on a full-time and part-time basis. Advanced level courses are offered in English language, English literature, English language and literature, French, German and Spanish. This provision is mainly followed by full-time students aged 16 to 18. GCSE courses are offered in English language, French and Spanish. AS-level French, GCSE English and Spanish are offered in the evening, along with beginners' French, Spanish and Italian. There are currently 484 enrolments on full-time day courses and 182 on part-time evening courses.

Achievement and standards

78. Pass rates are high on AS-level and GCE A-level English, French and Spanish courses. The retention rate is excellent on AS-level and GCE A-level French and Spanish, although it is below the national average on most advanced level English courses. In 2003 and 2004, A* to C pass rates on GCSE Spanish were well below national averages, although the retention rate is average. Students achieve results above expectations, based on their GCSE results, in AS-level English language, AS-level and GCE A-level English language and literature, AS-level German and GCE A-level French. In 2004, students in GCE A-level English literature achieved well below expectations. The majority of adult students who complete entry and level 1 short courses in modern foreign languages achieve the award, but pass rates are below national averages.

79. Standards of work in students' files, in class work and coursework are generally good. Advanced-level English students can analyse, sensitively and accurately, texts representing different linguistic styles and genres. For example, in a language and literature lesson, students demonstrated a high level of linguistic skill as they identified the literary and linguistic approaches adopted in poetry, political speech, autobiography and dialogue. Advanced-level German students used the interactive whiteboard to make interesting and informative presentations.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	164	166	141
		% retention	82	84	77
		% pass rate	63	50	64
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	90	74	79
		% retention	89	84	85
		% pass rate	99	98	99
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	20	24	13
		% retention	95	96	92
		% pass rate	100	96	83
AS-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	17	24	20
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	100	91	80
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	49	39	50
		% retention	100	100	90
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	36	46	30
		% retention	97	85	93
		% pass rate	100	97	100

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

Quality of education and training

80. Most teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and interesting. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects. Students are highly motivated and participate well in class discussion and activities. Teachers plan a wide range of activities to develop good oral and written skills. For example, in a GCSE English lesson, students discussed the advantages and disadvantages of allowing smoking in public places and produced good essay plans incorporating factual information drawn from the Asthma Society and BBC websites. Students are acquiring good linguistic and literacy skills. They can identify common features and linguistic devices in plays, literary texts and poetry. For example, in an English literature lesson students, ably and fluently, discussed common themes in *The Duchess of Malfi* and *My Last Duchess.*

81. Teachers of modern foreign languages have good linguistic fluency which is mostly used effectively to develop students' speaking and listening skills. Foreign language assistants and teachers add authenticity to the learning. For example, in a French lesson, students asked interesting and relevant questions following a presentation by the French assistant about growing up in different regions in France. In a particularly productive Spanish evening class students, although beginners, asked the teacher questions in Spanish and booked hotel accommodation on a Spanish website. In less successful lessons, the teaching does not sufficiently develop students' oral skills and students do not fully participate in the lesson.

82. Teachers are well qualified and keep up-to-date through effective staff development. Teaching and learning resources are good. Students have good access to computers for research and coursework. Modern foreign language students use interactive whiteboard technology confidently. Departments have a good up-to-date stock of videos, audio material, supplementary texts and high-quality handouts which support and extend learning. English teachers have produced an extensive range of high-quality learning materials. Accommodation is generally spacious; interesting displays provide a positive learning environment. Some evening classes are not located in modern foreign languages rooms dedicated to modern foreign languages and lose the benefit of working in an authentic language environment.

83. Assessment is rigorous. Students' work is set regularly and marked thoroughly. Teachers' oral and written feedback helps students to improve the standard of their work. Effective procedures and practices are used to carefully monitor students' progress. Careful cross-moderation in English ensures that work is marked to the same standard. In modern foreign languages, students negotiate targets for improvement and these are carefully monitored.

84. A good range of enrichment activities is organised in English and modern foreign languages. Examples include, performances and workshops on Shakespeare plays, a talk on `The family history of James Joyce' given by his great nephew; a short story competition, trips to Berlin and Nice and, and conferences at local universities.

85. Support and guidance are good. Teachers give freely of their time to help students with academic and personal issues. Students value the support and guidance they receive in their individual tutorials. Students' specific learning needs are identified during induction and support is quickly put in place. There is very good specialist support for students' with specific learning difficulties, disabilities or English as an additional language.

Leadership and management

86. Management of the full-time provision in English and modern foreign languages is good. Heads of department provide clear leadership and courses are organised efficiently. Effective practices are in place to monitor students' progress and raise the standards of teaching and learning. Meetings are purposeful, focus on curriculum issues and provide a forum for the sharing of good practice. Quality assurance is good; analysis of examination results is rigorous and strategies are quickly put in place to address weaknesses, although the English quality report places insufficient emphasis on improving retention rates. Co-ordination of evening provision is satisfactory. Individual tutors organise their courses effectively. Part-time teachers are kept informed of essential information and some attend meetings and staff development activities.
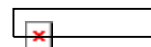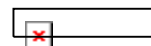
Part D: College data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	5	76
2	23	18
3	56	5
4/5	0	0
Other	16	1
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	797	100	11
Land-based provision	0	151	2
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	61	1	1
Business administration, management and professional	203	129	4
Information and communication technology	619	1,687	27
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	209	0	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	11	0
Health, social care and public services	153	71	3
Visual and performing arts and media	573	34	7
Humanities	1,453	107	18
English, languages and communication	585	171	9
Foundation programmes	225	233	5
Unknown AOL	926	14	11

Total		5,804	2,709	100		

Source: provided by the college in 2005

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			**19+**		
		2001	**2002**	**2003**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**
1	Starters excluding transfers	165	163	147	491	592	552
	Retention rate %	90	88	94	72	68	76
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	94	99	87	72	72	75
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	915	975	851	354	383	305
	Retention rate %	84	82	83	73	77	79
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	94	94	91	70	82	80
	National average %	84	84	86	69	70	74
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,054	3,251	3,158	163	88	101
	Retention rate %	69	91	89	67	69	74
	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	85	90	86	80	89	77
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77

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

Sources of information:

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

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

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:				No of sessions

	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	observed
Level 3 (advanced)	71	29	0	49
Level 2 (intermediate)	41	41	18	17
Level 1 (foundation)	71	29	0	7
Totals	**64**	**32**	**4**	**73**

Ofsted Better education and care