

North East Worcestershire College

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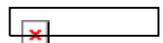
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Basic information about the college

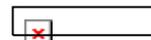


Name of college:	North East Worcestershire College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Neil Bromley
Address of college:	Blackwood Road Bromsgrove Worcestershire B60 1PQ
Telephone number:	01527 570020
Fax number:	01527 572900
Chair of governors:	Ken Campbell
Unique reference number:	130713
Name of reporting inspector:	D K Dana HMI
Date of inspection:	28 January-1 February 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



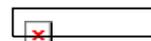
North East Worcestershire College is a large general further education (FE) college serving the north of the county of Hereford and Worcester. It also draws students from the south of Birmingham and the west of Warwickshire. Some 23% of college students live in Bromsgrove, 47% live in Redditch, 3% in Birmingham and 27% live within the Worcestershire and West Midlands boundaries. The college operates on two large campuses in Redditch and Bromsgrove, some nine miles apart and on an increasing number of community venues including two information technology (IT) centres. The accommodation on both main campuses is in the process of redevelopment or upgrading. Some 55% of enrolments are on the campuses and 45% are community based. The populations of Redditch and Bromsgrove are each of similar size and approaching 90,000. Minority ethnic groups are under 5% of the total population. Employment in Bromsgrove is mainly in the services sector and in distribution and hotel and catering in particular, whereas Redditch has more manufacturing industry.

The college has a broad range of programmes covering all 14 areas of learning, although student numbers are small in some areas, such as agriculture. The work ranges from pre-foundation courses to degree courses. The college has become increasingly responsive to the education and training needs of local communities. Community provision has grown substantially over the last two years, particularly in IT, in line with strategic planning. The college makes substantial provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students studying for professional body awards. It offers an extensive adult education programme including access to higher education (HE) programmes and full-time and part-time HE provision. A variety of modes of attendance are available to students. Many students aged 16 to 18 study full-time in the sixth form centre in the college. All the secondary schools in the area have sixth forms. Full-time student numbers have increased for the first time in three years by 4%. A substantial number of students, mainly adults, study part time.

In 2000/01, there were 20,985 enrolments to college courses. Of these, some 2,244 were enrolled on full-time programmes and the remaining 18,741 enrolments were on part-time courses. Around one third of students are aged 16 to 18 and the remaining two thirds are aged over 19. Some 60% of students enrolled are female. The largest numbers of students were enrolled on programmes in health and community care, IT, business, humanities and engineering. There are 172 students in work-based learning, of whom 96 are foundation modern apprentices and 76 are advanced modern apprentices. There are five New Deal clients. The majority of work-based learning is in engineering, business administration and health and social care.

The college's mission statement is: 'The business of our organisation is learning. By providing high quality and accessible learning opportunities we will promote independence and employability.'

How effective is the college?



This is an effective college. The range of provision offered by the college serves the needs of the local community well. The number of adult students who successfully completed their courses in 2000/01 showed some improvement at most levels of study, with pass rates well above national averages. Results for students aged 16 to 18 were more varied. The quality of education was good in engineering, business management, hospitality and catering, art and design, English, basic skills and discrete programmes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Provision in business administration, IT, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health and social care and sociology and psychology was satisfactory. The work-based learning provision was satisfactory in engineering, but unsatisfactory in hairdressing. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are set out below.

Key strengths

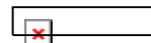
- extensive range of easily accessible courses
- well-managed advice, guidance and support
- good access to IT facilities
- inclusive approach to students, staff and the community
- open style of management
- clear strategic direction.

What should be improved

- retention rates on adult provision
- less effective teaching and learning including the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in some courses
- consistent promotion of key skills across all provision
- monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- monitoring achievement in work-based learning and other programmes that enrol all year.

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

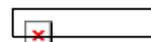


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good. Provision is well managed and meets the needs of students and employers. Pass rates are good, although there are low retention rates on some courses. All the teaching is satisfactory or good and support for students in college and the workplace is also good. The learning resources are satisfactory overall, with a mix of new and outdated equipment.
Business administration	Satisfactory. Students benefit from a wide range of courses and modes of attendance. Students are well supported by committed and enthusiastic staff who provide some exciting teaching. There is some poor business IT software. Pass rates are generally satisfactory or good, but some retention rates are poor.
Business management and professional studies	Good. There is a broad range of courses that students can study at times convenient to them. Most of the teaching is satisfactory or good but there was some poor use of ICT to enhance learning. Students are well supported in their studies and learn well. Retention and pass rates are good on most courses.
Computing and information technology	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are generally good, but the best practice is not shared across the departments managing the provision. There is a wide range of accessible courses that enable students with very varied experiences to gain a qualification in IT. The retention rates on part-time courses are high, but pass rates on most full-time courses are poor. Some accommodation is cramped and hot.
Hospitality and catering	Good. There are opportunities for most students to gain craft and restaurant skills at a high level. All the teaching is satisfactory or good. Students enjoy their studies and are well supported to achieve their professional qualifications. Retention and pass rates are good on most courses. Some health and safety practices require greater emphasis.
Hairdressing and beauty therapies	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. The holistic therapies courses are of good quality. Retention and pass rates are good on some courses, but there are also some poor pass rates. The pass rates for work-based trainees are poor. Some equipment and resources require updating.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Teaching is generally effective, but there is an over-reliance on group work that is, at times, unstructured. A wide range of courses with several choices of attendance patterns offers good opportunities for progression. Students have many good opportunities for work experience. Retention and pass rates are inconsistent across the provision. In-year course reviews lack rigour.
Art, design and media	Good. The retention and pass rates are good or very good on most art and design courses. Much of the teaching is good. Students' learning is satisfactory and well supported by some excellent equipment. There is insufficient emphasis on observational drawing on

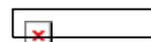
	most courses, resulting in lower than expected standards by a minority of students.
Humanities (sociology and psychology)	Satisfactory. Good teaching and good support enable students from a diverse range of backgrounds to achieve their potential and develop self-esteem. Pass rates have steadily improved and are now satisfactory or better: some are excellent. Poor retention rates in General Certificate of Education (GCE) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) remain a serious weakness. This is currently being addressed.
English	Good. Teaching is particularly successful and imaginative on GCE courses and is satisfactory or better elsewhere. Most students make good progress and pass rates are at, or above, national averages. Retention rates on GCSE courses have fallen. The provision is well managed. Staff evaluate their own work well and plans for improvement are clear.
Foundation programmes - basic skills	Good. Teaching is mainly good and some is very good. Students' progress is thoroughly monitored. They receive effective support that meets their individually assessed needs. Most students make progress and there are good retention rates on a number of accredited courses. IT resources are used well. There are no opportunities on the courses for students to gain work experience.
Foundation programmes - students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Teaching is mostly good or very good. A wide range of provision is managed by an enthusiastic and committed team. Enrichment activities significantly enhance and broaden the learning. Individual learning plans support the good progress made by most students. Systematic procedures are required to monitor students' progress after completion of their courses.

How well is the college led and managed?



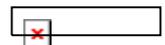
Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction through strategic priorities in the comprehensive annual plan. The commitment to widening participation and inclusiveness within these strategic priorities has resulted in a significant increase in courses offered in community venues and an increase in participation by adults. Communications with staff and students are good. Demanding, but realistic, targets are set for students' retention, pass rates and attendance across the college and on individual courses. The achievement of these targets is well monitored. The management information system provides an accurate and timely range of reports. There is insufficient monitoring of achievements on work-based learning and other courses where enrolments take place throughout the year. Overall, the number of adult students who successfully completed their courses in 2001 showed some improvement over previous years at most levels of study, but results were more varied for students aged 16 to 18. There are appropriate procedures for monitoring the college's finances. Sound procedures are in place to ensure staff are deployed effectively and consumable costs are controlled. The college achieved a financial operating surplus during 2000/01, but has not achieved its funding target.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



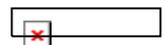
The college is strongly committed to equal opportunities and this is reflected in its strategic priorities. There is an inclusive approach to students, the staff and the community. The college is responsive to the views of students and the community. A senior manager has responsibility for equal opportunity issues and for ensuring that learning is accessible to all. The equal opportunities committee meets regularly to monitor and promote equal opportunities within the college. A report and review of the equal opportunities policy are presented to the corporation annually. The checklist for identifying good practice in the curriculum is comprehensive, but this has not been monitored fully. Equal opportunities issues are not monitored effectively within the work placements. The college has effective procedures for dealing with complaints and an annual report on complaints received by the college is presented to the corporation.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The college provides a good range of support for students. Guidance and support are well managed, with good links to curriculum areas and effective liaison with external agencies. Tutorial support is underpinned by a clearly stated entitlement for all students. Much of it is good, but there are inconsistencies, which are not yet being addressed. Procedures for monitoring attendance have recently been strengthened. They are resulting in improved levels of attendance so far in 2001/02. Learning support is well organised and effective, although the proportion of learners receiving individual support is not high for the size of the college and the range of its work. Support for students with sensory impairment is good. The college provides an inclusive and effective response to students with disabilities. Welfare and careers guidance services are well planned, with clear targets and good links with curriculum areas.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- helpful and supportive teachers and tutors

- adult environment

- tutorial arrangements

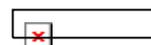
- ease of access to good IT in many areas

- attention of the college to students' views.

What they feel could be improved

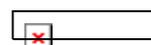
- lack of bus shelters and poor behaviour of a few passengers
- staff sickness cover arrangements in a few curriculum areas
- limited access to sports facilities.

Other information

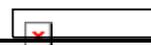


The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	62	29	9
19+ and WBL*	76	22	2
Learning 16-18	56	32	12
19+ and WBL*	72	26	2

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 college offers an extensive range of courses covering both academic and vocational provision in most of the 14 areas of learning. In 1999/2000, there were 1,600 full-time students and 13,300 part-time students enrolled at the college. In 2000/01, the college had some 2,244 full-time students and 18,741 part-time students enrolled. Vocational programmes attract the most student enrolments. There are similar numbers of students, about 500 each, aged 16 to 18 and adults, enrolled on GCE A-level (Advanced-level) and GCSE courses. The remaining students take vocationally orientated programmes. General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and British Technology Education Council (BTEC) vocational programmes are popular with students aged 16 to 18, as they are mainly full-time courses. Significantly more adults than students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and vocational short courses. The aggregated retention and pass rates for the academic year 2000/01, provided by the college, were still being finalised at the time of the inspection. However, the data available did provide a good indication of overall trends in pass and retention rates, two of the key indicators of college performance. When the college's aggregated retention and pass rates by level of study and age are compared with the national average rates for similar colleges over the four-year period 1998 to 2001, the number of adults who successfully completed their courses in 2000/01 showed improvement at most levels of study, but the achievements of students aged 16 to 18 were less consistent. The college does not consistently monitor students' progress against prior attainment in all courses. Where this information was available, students generally did well relative to their attainment.

16-18 year olds

2. In 2000/01, the overall percentages of successful students have improved at level 1, higher-level courses and short courses, but declined at levels 2 and 3 although, at level 3, the percentage remains above the national level for similar colleges. Pass rates have been maintained at the national average for similar colleges for those studying at level 3, but have declined to below the national average at levels 1 and 2. The pass rates for short courses have been good over the three years 1998 to 2000, but the trend was downward. This trend has been reversed in 2000/01, with a significant improvement. There have been improvements in retention rates at both level 1 and level 2 in 2000/01, which in both cases have reversed declines. Retention rates at level 1 have reached the national average and the retention rates for level 2 are now above the national average. The retention rate at level 3 has shown a small decline, but remains above the national average for similar colleges. The retention rate on short courses has been consistently above 95% over the last three years.

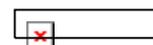
3. There are 172 students in work-based learning, of whom 96 are foundation modern apprentices and 76 are advanced modern apprentices. Of these, 20 young people are following a Lifeskills programme. There are 50 students following courses leading to engineering awards, 42 following business administration awards, 43 following care awards and 37 following hair and beauty awards. There are five New Deal clients. Work-based learning is managed by the college's training group. The students are based with local employers in the surrounding area and attend the college for off-the-job learning. Completion of individual learning plans and achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks are poor and little action has been taken to address this latter issue of poor achievement. Over the last three years, an average of 27% of students have gained NVQs and 9% have completed the frameworks. The late introduction of key skills into many programmes and individual learning plans has hindered some students' completion of their full award.

Adult learners

4. In 2000/01, the overall pass rates of the adult students who started a programme of study at the

college have improved at all levels of study except level 1, where results have declined. Pass rates for adult students have been maintained or improved in 2000/01 at all levels. The pass rates on the level 2 courses have improved to well above the national average for similar colleges, while the level 1 pass rate has been maintained at above the national average. The level 3 pass rate has remained at the national average. The pass rate for higher-level programmes has improved to the national average for similar colleges. However, the overall retention rates on the level 1, level 2 and level 3 courses have continued to decline and, in 2000/01, these are at or slightly below the national average.

Quality of education and training



5. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 202 sessions across 12 curriculum areas. Of these, teaching was good or better in 68%, satisfactory in a further 26% and unsatisfactory in 6%. Teaching was better for students aged 19 and over, with 76% graded good or better and only 2% unsatisfactory. On level 3 programmes, 71% of the teaching was good or better and 5% unsatisfactory compared to 59% and 9%, respectively, on level 2 programmes. The best teaching was observed in hospitality and catering. In no area was the overall quality of teaching poor.

6. Many lessons are well planned and most teachers share with students what is to be achieved during the lesson. Effective use is made of an appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods. Many students enjoy their lessons in a productive learning environment and are effectively involved in group work and discussions. Practical work is used particularly effectively to reinforce theory in engineering, catering and hair and beauty lessons, although health and safety were not always emphasised sufficiently in engineering and catering. Most teachers address the needs of students with differing abilities and the support offered to students with additional support needs such as dyslexia is good. On basic skills courses, students' support needs are identified, individual learning goals are quickly established and progress is closely monitored. In the weaker lessons, teaching was frequently unimaginative or undemanding tasks were set that failed to challenge students. Opportunities to support and reinforce learning by integrating ICT into lessons were frequently missed. In a few lessons, group work was used when direct teaching would have been more effective.

7. Assignments require students to use knowledge gained in lessons in order to carry out the tasks. Some innovative projects were used in business administration to engage and motivate the students. Feedback on individual work leads to improvements in some curriculum areas. Although feedback is timely, the quality varies considerably, and in some cases is only a grade on the work.

8. All students aged 16 to 18 are assessed in key skills using on-line computer assessment to establish the level of key skills they should reach and the areas in which they need to improve. A key skills support centre is well equipped with computers and good self-study booklets. Students are encouraged to improve in the areas identified in their initial assessment, but the centre is not well used by all students. Students' evidence for their key skills portfolios is drawn from their subject work. Progress with building portfolios is monitored by personal tutors. While key skills are given some prominence in the sixth form centre, they are not promoted consistently across all the appropriate provision in the college. In particular, work-based learners are not completing the full apprenticeship framework because they are not completing their key skills.

9. The college is safe, well maintained and decorated. Teaching accommodation is generally good, although the temporary accommodation used for art and media is cramped, but adequate. New accommodation for art and media is a part of the major modernisation programme of the whole college accommodation. Most teaching rooms are fitted with white boards and projection equipment. The college environment is generally conducive to learning and students' work is displayed in many areas. Refectories are small, but provide a good service which is valued by students. There are

adequate social areas for students. The college has undertaken much work to improve access for students with limited mobility, but some areas, such as catering and media, remain poor. These weaknesses are being addressed in the modernisation programme. A free inter-site bus provides a regular service between sites for students and staff. Childcare facilities are available on both sites.

10. Staff are well qualified. Some 74% of full-time staff have a teaching qualification and others are working towards a qualification. More than half of the full-time staff are qualified as vocational assessors with one in five staff qualified in internal verification. Part-time staff make up a significant proportion of teachers. They are generally well supported and integrated into the college. Few full-time staff have recent industrial experience, but part-time tutors often bring the necessary current experience to the courses. There is a continuing professional development strategy for full-time and part-time staff linked to appraisal and departmental business plans.

11. The college has easily accessible IT facilities for students. There are 780 computers available for student access. All staff and students have access to the Internet and e-mail. Some staff share computers. Physical resources in most curriculum areas are adequate, although in hair and beauty, engineering and catering, there are shortfalls. Open learning spaces are well equipped, welcoming and generally spacious. The learning resource centres have a good range of books, journals and learning resources available by computer. Six learning advisors, each linked to a department, provide good support to students and staff. Adequate learning resources are available in community venues. The sporting facilities on both sites are limited. Students are given concessions to use local commercial sports centres.

12. For most students, assessment is well planned and appropriate to the level and type of programme and is used to monitor progress and reinforce teaching and learning. Assessment is reviewed annually and any issues are dealt with. It complies with the requirements of awarding bodies on most programmes. There are sufficient appropriately qualified assessors and verifiers for the range of programmes offered by the college, including the work-based learning provision. Employers and work-place supervisors are qualified as assessors where appropriate. Accreditation of prior learning is available for most subjects. Students on some courses find the assessments are bunched and this creates an excessive workload. Students do not regularly assess their own performance. There are some inconsistent internal verification practices. In some cases, verification of assessments is insufficiently regular. Senior managers closely monitor external verifier reports and take action as required.

13. The college provides a good range of academic and vocational courses at entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The provision is responsive to employers and the local community needs. The college manages some of the community provision, sometimes provides teachers and sometimes franchises the provision to community partners. Work-based training and modern apprenticeships are effectively promoted. Many of the courses are available at times and in venues to suit the students. The development of a sixth form centre that focuses on academic and university entry provision has the support of the local community and recruitment has increased. A range of HE access courses is available for adults. Strong links exist with local HE institutions. Some HE programmes are being taught in the college.

14. Enriched activities are provided for all students aged 16 to 18. These include the development of key skills, employability training, talks by visiting speakers from industry and some outdoor pursuits. Students on some programmes are able to participate in organised study tours within the United Kingdom and Europe. There are no organised team sports.

15. Management arrangements for student advice, guidance and support for students have recently been improved. Roles are clear, communications are good and links with curriculum areas and external agencies are effective. The college works collaboratively with a few local 11 to 18 schools, but it has to rely mostly on its own open evenings to provide advice and guidance directly to school-leavers. There are good links with local schools for students with learning difficulties. The college provides taster sessions for Year 10 pupils from these and other schools, and for Year 11 students the college provides a schools link programme. These links help the college to ensure that school-leavers are well informed about courses on offer. The advice and guidance team responds to the enquiries of adult students at both sites and at community locations. Students new to the college are

generally guided onto an appropriate course and settle into it well.

16. The systems for monitoring attendance are increasingly effective. Departments make their own arrangements. Some of these are particularly effective, for example, the procedure in the Redditch sixth form centre where a support team has responsibility for pursuing issues of non-attendance. Attendance in the college as a whole was 75% in 2000/01. During the first term of 2001/02, the college attendance was at 83% and during the inspection 80%. Notification of absence by work-based students during their college sessions is prompt. The student advice and guidance team is informed of any students who have withdrawn and need careers guidance or more general advice.

17. The implementation of tutorial arrangements is the responsibility of each department. A college-wide tutorial entitlement is clearly explained in leaflets for students. Part-time, as well as full-time students have a member of staff identified as their personal tutor. Tutorial guidance and support for full-time students is reinforced by five learner-management weeks, which are popular and generally successful. During these weeks the regular timetable is suspended, alternative work is set or activities provided and tutors review progress and set targets with each student.

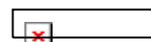
18. Many tutorial lessons are purposeful and effective at supporting and monitoring students' progress, but the quality of tutorials is inconsistent. Some students find the individual guidance tutorials of more value than the whole-group meetings. Targets for many individual students are too general to be reviewed at a later date. Some individual tutorials regularly combine work on key skills with general guidance, but in other areas, they are held too infrequently or do not emphasise key skills sufficiently to be effective. The college is aware of the lack of college-wide quality assurance for tutorial guidance and support. Despite this weakness, much of the tutorial provision is good. Most work-based students have thorough and supportive progress reviews that make use of appropriate target setting. Students on access to HE courses speak highly of the practical guidance they receive from their teachers.

19. There are good links between tutors and the college counsellor, who divides her time between sites and visits tutor groups to acquaint students with the counselling service. The careers officer has a similarly pro-active and targeted approach to her work.

20. Additional learning support is well managed. Links with curriculum areas are good. The college has increased the volume of in-class support provided, particularly for entry and foundation level programmes. Tutors and teachers are kept informed of the progress of students attending individual learning support tutorials. The assessment of needs for individual learning support is the responsibility of the departments. Good printed guidance on students' learning support is provided for them, as well as staff training. In 2000/01, there were approximately 300 referrals for individual learning support. This figure is low for the size of the college. Only 55% of these students took up the support on offer.

21. Students with sensory impairments and mobility difficulties are well supported. There are close links to the local authority's hearing and visual impairment specialists, some of whom are based in the college. Some college staff are trained as disability champions; they are located in key customer service positions such as the refectory and reception areas, as well as in departments, and they provide training for other staff. Some areas of the college, particularly at Bromsgrove, have difficult access for people in wheelchairs, but the college has taken steps to rearrange classrooms and adjust the timetable to accommodate their needs.

Leadership and management



22. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction for

and raising students' achievement. The plan is underpinned by a detailed operating statement with clear objectives and a range of measurable targets. Communication throughout the college is good. Staff appreciate the open and accessible style of management adopted by the management team. The principal's termly 'surgeries' with all departments provides a good forum for the dissemination and discussion of issues affecting the college. A regular and informative principal's bulletin is distributed to all staff.

23. The organisation of the college has recently changed to enable staff to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of students more effectively. The curriculum is delivered through six departments, with a seventh department responsible for learning resources and learning support. Work-based learning is managed separately. Heads of department are well supported by teams of programme leaders who have responsibility for students and teaching and learning. The quality of leadership and management within curriculum areas is good: most courses are well planned and co-ordinated. However, in some curriculum areas, particularly where courses are organised within different departments, there is insufficient cross-college co-ordination and opportunities are not provided for sharing good practice.

24. Quality assurance procedures have been enhanced since the last inspection and are leading to improvement in both curriculum and support areas. Significant attention is given to obtaining and analysing students' views on the quality of their college experience. The college has recognised a number of areas that require further improvement. It has recently taken steps to improve the lesson observation scheme and the consistency of course reviews and to monitor the quality of tutorials more effectively. The college has an established system of appraisal for both teaching and support staff which is used to identify staff development needs. The annual staff development programme is closely linked to the college's strategic priorities.

25. There is a thorough self-assessment process involving all staff and governors. Managers are increasingly using self-assessment to inform curriculum and business planning and to assist with the development and monitoring of the annual plan. The current self-assessment report clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses and is well supported by a broad range of evidence including data on pass and retention rates, lesson observations and students' views. Development plans address identified weaknesses and contain performance measures and time-scales for achievement.

26. The quality and accuracy of the college's management information have improved significantly since the last inspection. The management information system currently provides a good range of reports on enrolments, attendance, students' achievement and funding. However, the availability of accurate and timely data on students' achievement for some areas of course provision, notably NVQ and work-based training, where enrolments take place throughout the year, is unsatisfactory.

27. Demanding, but realistic, targets are set for retention and pass rates across the college as a whole and for individual courses. There is good monitoring of progress towards these targets at whole-college and course level. The senior management team receives regular updates on funding units, enrolments, and retention and pass rates. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of franchise and off-site provision, however, are less well developed. There is a need for student pass rate data for these programmes to be identified in more detail in order for the college to monitor the performance of individual providers more effectively.

28. Governors provide the college with a wide range of skills and experience. The college's performance is regularly and rigorously monitored through the corporation's quality and standards committee. A 'health check' has been carried out and has helped governors to identify and plan their training requirements. When governors are appointed, they receive careful guidance on their new role. The college has developed good collaborative relationships with a range of partner organisations, including schools, community groups, local councils and local employers in order to support its strategic priority relating to community-based work and widening participation.

29. The college's commitment to equal opportunities is strongly reflected in its strategic priorities. A senior manager has responsibility for equal opportunity issues and for ensuring that learning is accessible to all. The equal opportunities committee meets regularly to monitor and discuss the promotion of equal opportunities within the college. The committee has drawn up a comprehensive

checklist for identifying good practice in the curriculum, but this has not been fully monitored. An annual report and review of the equal opportunities policy is presented to the corporation. The achievement of these targets is well monitored. Equal opportunity issues are not effectively monitored or understood within the work placements used by work-based trainees. The college has an effective procedure for dealing with complaints. Responses to complaints are carefully monitored. An annual report on complaints received by the college is presented to the corporation.

30. There are appropriate procedures for monitoring the college's finances. The college uses its funds well to offer a wide range of courses that meets community needs. A robust and well-monitored, business-planning process supports curriculum planning and enables staffing and consumable resources to be allocated on a sound basis. The framework seems to expect an explicit evaluation of value for money. Although the college achieved an operating surplus during 2000/01, it has not achieved its funding target during the last three years.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Engineering

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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates
- good quality teaching
- thorough internal verification
- good employer support
- highly satisfied students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- unsafe working practices
- outdated equipment and resources in some areas
- poor target setting in work-based learning.

Scope of provision

31. Engineering is comprised of three curriculum areas, namely, motor vehicle, mechanical and electrical engineering. The electrical provision is small and was not inspected. All the engineering provision is located on the Bromsgrove campus. The section provides full-time, part-time and evening only vocational courses from craft and foundation levels to advanced technician levels. The employers are nearly all small to medium-sized companies. NVQs are offered from level 1 to level 3. There are 870 students studying either motor vehicle engineering or mechanical engineering. A number of these students are sponsored by local employers and by training providers. The college has a contract to train 36 work-based students. Full-time students have work experience as part of their courses.

Achievement and standards

32. The pass rates are all above the national averages for the last year, with most well above. In the two previous years results were generally good, but some dipped in the year of college re-organisation. The retention rates have been near, or above, the average for most courses. The two evening only courses, welding and computer-aided engineering have 100% pass rates and reflect the enthusiasm from the more mature students. Current retention rates are 80% for engineering, and 83% for motor vehicle.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 201 basic engineering	1	No. of starts	32	38	29
		% retention	94	82	93
		% pass rate	83	94	92
Welding and fabrication	1	No. of starts	16	33	11
		% retention	88	54	73
		% pass rate	82	86	100
NVQ in engineering manufacture	2	No. of starts	56	53	36
		% retention	93	79	78
		% pass rate	80	69	100

City and Guilds 3830-02 motor vehicle repair and servicing	2	No. of starts	61	65	49
		% retention	80	75	84
		% pass rate	84	37	33
City and Guilds 2280-02 mechanical production competencies	2	No. of starts	31	19	20
		% retention	90	67	86
		% pass rate	77	42	86
City and Guilds 3980-02 vehicle body competencies	2	No. of starts	30	24	17
		% retention	83	73	94
		% pass rate	57	31	75
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	68	63	35
		% retention	90	83	71
		% pass rate	65	86	100
City and Guilds 2300 computer-aided engineering	3	No. of starts	34	32	36
		% retention	73	84	77
		% pass rate	100	93	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

33. The teaching is good: all the lessons were satisfactory or better and half were good. In most classes, there is a mix of theory and practical teaching. The best teaching showed students fully engaged in their learning, for example, a City and Guilds evening class was being taught the difference between hazard and risk. The students were given a chart, with a list of work-related activities or conditions. The students had to decide whether each was a hazard or risk and indicate the choice on the chart. This promoted considerable discussion, the students demonstrating good understanding. They were then asked to complete a case study. This again caused considerable discussion and encouraged the students to use personal anecdotes to show knowledge and understanding. Practical teaching is particularly good. However, some lectures did not fully engage students. There were some examples of unsafe working practice, one in the welding shop where the lecturer and the student failed to wear safety glasses whilst using gas cutting equipment.

34. Students' files are well organised and work is at an appropriate standard and is well presented. Assignments are clear and concise. Each assignment states the criteria to achieve pass, merit or distinction grade. Students' work is of a good standard. The quality of feedback is variable, with some teachers giving good feedback, while others give a grade only with no explanation. Students are also well supported with their assignments, research and coursework by a 'learning advisor' in the learning resource centre. The internal verification process is thorough. Some students do not know the schedule for assignments.

35. Teaching staff have the appropriate vocational qualifications and experience, but recent industrial experience is limited to a few staff. The majority of full-time staff are qualified as assessors and 75% have a teaching qualification. The new IT facilities are good, but, much of the classroom accommodation is poor and needs modernising. There is a good range of specialist resources, for example, metrology laboratory, materials, computer controlled (CNC) machines and body spray shop. However, much of the equipment, while serviceable, is dated. For example, the only way a programme can be loaded into the CNC machines is by punched paper tape. The metrology laboratory contains equipment over 30-years-old and does not portray a high standard of industrial measurement. The car stock is also ageing with few cars under 5-years-old.

36. The range of courses offers good access to all levels of ability, while also meeting the needs of

industry through a number of tailored courses. The City and Guilds 2140 /2320 maintenance course and the evening Open College Network (OCN) courses are particularly successful examples. Course tutors support full-time and part-time students. `Student-management weeks' are carried out every five weeks providing opportunities for individual tutorials and time to complete assignments and portfolios.

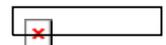
37. Target setting for work-based students is poor. Formal feedback has not been sought from students or employers. There is also no policy for measuring the quality of learning in the work place. The college does not monitor equal opportunities and some employers do not have a policy in place.

38. All full-time students receive diagnostic testing of their key skills ability and additional support requirements. The support given to part-time students from employers is good. In some cases, employers meet with the student after their day at college to review their learning. Students speak highly of their programmes and the support they receive from the tutors.

Leadership and management

39. The department managers work hard to meet the needs of industry and individuals and maintain a high standard of teaching and learning. Curriculum staff are closely involved in identifying the programme performance indicators. There are some resources which need improvement to ensure that classrooms and workshops reflect up-to-date industrial/commercial settings. The college training group administers the work-based learning, workplace assessment and students' progress reviews. Internal verification is carried out by technology staff. There is an opportunity to improve the links between the department and the training group, for example, comments from the students' reviews are not shared between staff. Feedback from employers and trainees is not requested and the equal opportunities policy is not monitored.

Business administration



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

Strengths

- comprehensive range of provision
- very good support for students
- some stimulating teaching.

Weaknesses

- out-of-date software on some business administration courses

- poor teaching on some GNVQ and AVCE courses
- limited access to IT in many lessons.

Scope of provision

40. The college offers a comprehensive range of 18 programmes within business administration with good progression routes to further courses or into employment. Full-time provision mainly for students aged 16 to 18 includes, the GNVQ and Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) business studies courses. A range of other programmes can be studied full time and most are also available as part-time day or evening courses. Students are offered a variety of attendance modes and can enrol at any time of the year. Vocational courses are available from level 1 to level 4 and include the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) legal secretaries course and the higher diploma in administrative procedures. Programmes at entry and level 1 are offered in a number of the community venues. There are 1,414 students on business administration courses, including 14 modern apprentices working towards NVQs in administration.

Achievement and standards

41. The examination results are near, or at, the national average. The results for the office skills programme have been well above the national averages over the last three years. The GNVQ intermediate course has retention rates consistently above the national average, but the pass rates are more variable. Pass rates in other courses are improving and are near to the national averages. Retention rates on some courses are low.

42. Most students are well motivated, keen to attend and punctual. Some lessons, however, are not well attended. Written work on most students is well organised and neatly presented with portfolios of a satisfactory standard or better. Most students on advanced level courses demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of the subject. These students are able to interpret data and apply theory to practical situations.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	18	12	8
		% retention	78	83	100
		% pass rate	50	100	63
Office skills	2	No. of starts	29	28	46
		% retention	86	93	98
		% pass rate	88	62	69
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	21	27	21
		% retention	52	81	52
		% pass rate	45	73	64
NVQ business administration	3	No. of starts	20	16	11
		% retention	75	81	73

		% pass rate	13	8	63
Higher diploma in administrative procedures	4	No. of starts	29	23	22
		% retention	97	91	55
		% pass rate	36	57	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

43. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students on most programmes feel well supported, but they are not always adequately challenged by the level or pace of teaching. Most lessons have clear objectives. In the best lessons, teaching is well planned with the needs of individual students identified and supported. Teachers draw on their own professional experience and also use students' experience and knowledge to hold their interest and contribute to the learning. The poorer lessons failed to involve students or confirm their understanding of the topics being covered. In a few lessons, the range of students' previous experience was overlooked. Assignments are designed to motivate students and effectively develop their skills. One three-week project for students on the higher diploma in administrative procedures, focused on recruitment. Students prepared a job description, placed an advertisement, reviewed applications to draw up a short list, prepared interview questions and interviewed candidates. The candidates were from the NVQ administration course and the interview was used to assess their communication skills. However, there is insufficient use of IT in classes. In some lessons, reference was made to additional information on the Internet, but students did not then have the opportunity to find it.

44. Students on all the NVQ administrative courses benefit from a well-designed, one-week internal work placement in the college business centre in addition to external work placements. In any week there are students from the level 2 office skills programme, the level 3 business administration, legal secretaries and medical secretaries programmes undertaking appropriate work from staff, students and some external clients. All this is managed and supervised by a higher-diploma student. The students cover elements of their course and the key skills programme during this internal work placement.

45. In most lessons, the review and assessment of students' progress were adequate. Assignments are set regularly and, in the vocational courses, teams systematically reviewed and verified them. Students are given the performance criteria and guidance on what is expected for grades A and C. Teachers mark and return work promptly and, in the best examples, provide clear guidance on how to improve. Students on the administrative programmes have individually set programmes that are monitored through progress charts and regularly reviewed. This arrangement works particularly well for the ILEX legal secretaries' course.

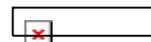
46. Most students are well supported and motivated by their tutors. Full-time students meet their tutor individually and as a group. Most programmes have formal schemes of work for the tutorial lessons. Part-time students can usually obtain tutorial support immediately before or after lessons. On the higher diploma in administrative procedures (evening provision), students had started the programme at different times and were studying modules in a different order, but all felt that they were well supported and making progress relevant to the programme.

47. Most teachers are well qualified. Since some have little recent industrial experience, a staff development programme is being organised for all staff to undertake relevant work experience. Classrooms are furnished appropriately, however, many on the Bromsgrove site lack visual stimuli. Resources in the business administration rooms are adequate, although the internal computer network has been unreliable. Some business administration students are disadvantaged by out of date computer software. Most teaching materials are of high quality, particularly the business administration learning materials. In a limited number of classes, learning materials are of poor quality. Some learning materials, particularly for GNVQ and AVCE, are dated.

Leadership and management

48. Programmes are generally well managed. Course teams meet regularly and courses are revised to reflect the changing requirements of industry. Programme reviews are detailed and include an effective analysis of examination results. The management of the programmes is split between two departments, professional studies and sixth form studies. There is an over-reliance on part-time staff in the sixth form centre that adversely affects the co-ordination of some programmes. Some full-time staff work across the departments, but the part-time staff work within the departments and are not able to share information adequately. Not all new part-time staff are well supported. Some resources are readily available to start new programmes.

Business management and professional studies



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

Strengths

- good pass rates
- high standards of teaching and learning
- broad range of courses
- wide variety of study arrangements
- strong student support.

Weaknesses

- poor use of ICT in the curriculum
- limited recent commercial experience of staff.

Scope of provision

49. A wide range of provision is offered for full-time and part-time students during the day and in the evening. There are over 1,000 registered students, mostly part-time, who can access more than 30 professional qualifications. General management training is offered, together with vocational and professional training, such as legal executive, marketing, purchasing and supply courses. Nearly all courses are offered at different levels allowing students to progress to professional qualifications. There are well-established progression routes, for example, in the National Examination Board Supervisory (NEBS) management, Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) and Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) (personnel practice) series of awards.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates are good and recent results show that many courses have pass rates well above the national average. Examples include NEBS management at 100% in 2001, Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply at 100% and the certificate in personnel practice at 92%. There is some low achievement, such as in Chartered Institute of Management Accounts (CIMA) stage 2, which had a 40% pass rate in 1999/2000 which was in line with national averages. Retention rates within the department's courses are generally above the national average. Portfolios and written work are of a high quality in many of the professional courses as confirmed by the comments of visiting external examiners and verifiers. Students understand key business concepts and terminology and can apply the theory learned to commercial issues. Many students also develop strong oral presentation skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business management and professional studies, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
AAT foundation	2	No. of starts	63	30	64
		% retention	84	83	86
		% pass rate	64	56	51
NEBS management certificate	3	No. of starts	27	29	8
		% retention	81	86	63
		% pass rate	59	92	100
CIPD certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	37	26	13
		% retention	100	92	92
		% pass rate	97	92	100
AAT intermediate	3	No. of starts	44	60	3
		% retention	89	88	94
		% pass rate	54	61	69
CIPD core management	4	No. of starts	16	24	19
		% retention	88	100	100
		% pass rate	93	88	100
AAT technician	4	No. of starts	34	36	50
		% retention	88	83	88
		% pass rate	47	53	55

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

51. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and organise and prepare their work competently with detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. They use a range of different teaching and learning methods and most lessons are lively and engaging. Some classes, such as many in accounting, are taught very effectively in a traditional teacher-led manner. Others, in management and personnel, for example, use a wider variety of methods including small group work and student-led activities. Teachers enable students to learn in ways appropriate to their needs. One observed class, for example, successfully integrated full-time younger, part-time adult and modern apprentice students, all aiming for the same accounting qualification. Students are given clear targets and understand what is expected from them. Teachers check students' progress both routinely in class and through the assessment of their written work. Teachers return written assignments promptly and write constructive and useful comments to students.

52. Most students enjoy their lessons. They are challenged and well motivated. A very small amount of teaching is dull and fails to inspire the students. Poor teaching occurs when activities are regularly repeated at the same pace and level and do not challenge students. The department is implementing new teacher observation procedures to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A particular strength of the department is the variety of curriculum design and style of teaching. Students welcome the flexible enrolment days and staff are helpful and supportive. A key additional feature is the department's Flexastudy provision. This allows students to attend college for study and regular tutorials, but at a time which is convenient to their individual needs throughout the year. For example, students taking accounting or personnel management examinations could attend some AAT or CIPD modules in set college lessons while using Flexastudy arrangements to study more modules in their own time. This arrangement also helps the department to offer courses leading to a wide range of specialised professional qualifications to relatively small numbers of students. There are over 100 students currently using the Flexastudy arrangements. Good relationships exist between staff and students. Feedback from students is positive. All students are entitled to tutorial support. Meetings are recorded with action points and review dates. Additional specialist support to students is also available through the student services.

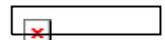
53. There is insufficient use of IT in much of the curriculum planning and teaching. Most classes do not use or refer to the use of IT, either for the presentation of work or for research purposes. Students miss opportunities to improve their presentational skills and do not easily research the latest information and trends about their area of professional interest.

54. Most full-time staff have had little recent business or commercial experience. Some rely upon business contacts made during the work experience of students. Others update their knowledge by attending staff development events organised by professional organisations. The major source of current business expertise and knowledge is provided by part-time staff who also work in the professional areas. The department has recently begun a staff development programme specifically to encourage full-time staff to refresh their knowledge of current commercial practice.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership of the management and professional areas is good. Clear lines of responsibility exist and regular weekly meetings of the management team take place to review progress and deal with concerns promptly. Staffing is closely monitored centrally while team leaders have more individual local responsibility for setting and monitoring targets and for other curriculum issues. Morale is good and there is a sense of both cross-college co-operation and of staff working together in the curriculum area to ensure that continuous progress and improvements are made.

Computing and information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on part-time courses
- good standard of teaching and learning
- good opportunities for adults to learn IT skills.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on most full-time courses
- some unsatisfactory teaching accommodation
- lack of cross college co-ordination of IT.

Scope of provision

56. The college offers a wide range of computing and IT courses to 180 full-time students and 2,400 part-time students. The provision is managed by a number of departments. Many of the part-time courses allow students to follow flexible individual programmes and book sessions at times to suit their personal needs. The sixth form centre at Redditch provides full-time courses ranging from GNVQ foundation to AVCE and a national diploma programme. The technology department offers part-time evening courses in programming and computer maintenance. It offers HE courses in IT. There are also flexible learning courses in web-page design and multimedia. A range of courses is offered through flexible learning at IT centres in Bromsgrove, Redditch and Droitwich. The college, in partnership with other organisations, also offers short flexible learning courses in a variety of locations within the community. College courses are also franchised through other training providers.

Achievement and standards

57. There are good retention rates on part-time courses. The computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course has a retention rate of 83%, against a national average of 66%. In other part-time courses, the retention rates are at least 14% above the national average. Retention rates on the full-time courses have improved in recent years. Most are now satisfactory at about the national average. Pass rates on part-time courses are satisfactory with some courses above the national average. With the exception of the GNVQ foundation course, which has high pass rates, the pass rates on full-time courses are below the national average and some are poor. Students achieve good IT skills together with theoretical knowledge and sound practical competence. Students use the Internet with ease to research projects and assignments. Many students progress to higher-level courses within the college and at university. Students produce comprehensive and imaginative project work. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and have improved as a result of a new college monitoring system.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and information and communication technology, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation ICT	1	No. of starts	19	12	15
		% retention	68	67	100
		% pass rate	69	88	100
CLAIT - one year	1	No. of starts	385	391	124
		% retention	87	90	83
		% pass rate	58	41	99
City and Guilds 7261 IT certificate in computer applications	1	No. of starts	*	151	353
		% retention	*	59	75
		% pass rate	*	84	81
City and Guilds 7261 certificate in IT - short	1	No. of starts	220	59	28
		% retention	85	90	89
		% pass rate	73	68	86
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	39	51	37
		% retention	64	53	81
		% pass rate	15	67	33
National diploma IT	3	No. of starts	35	35	35
		% retention	89	71	60
		% pass rate	51	84	62
GNVQ advanced ICT	3	No. of starts	9	25	27
		% retention	56	64	74
		% pass rate	40	56	35

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

58. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers create a good learning environment and students are encouraged to work to their full potential. There is a productive relationship between staff and students. In a few lessons, teachers failed to hold students' interests. In these lessons, students were given few opportunities to become actively involved in demonstrations and contributing to the development of new ideas and techniques. Courses are well planned with detailed schemes of work and good lesson plans. Lessons have clear aims and objectives. Some tutors use examples from their own recent industrial experience. Assignments are well planned to appeal to the interest of students. Students work at their own pace on tasks and assignments with good advice and guidance from their tutors. The workbooks and handouts are of a high standard. Learning for full-time students is enhanced by effective use of directed study. However, not all students make best use of this opportunity. There are good opportunities for full-time students to gain valuable work experience in an appropriate business environment. This enhances their practical skills. It allows them to apply their theoretical knowledge and assists them in gaining a wider perspective of their studies. Part-time students are well motivated, enjoy learning new skills and quickly become confident in computer

techniques. They have high expectations and follow clearly identified progression routes for further courses within the IT centres and community workshops. In the Redditch IT centre, student record books are used effectively to identify and monitor short-term targets giving students a clear sense of progression. Similar arrangements are used in other centres.

59. There are sufficient workstations for all full-time and part-time students. Hardware and software are of a satisfactory standard. One centre has the latest state of the art software. Good facilities and specialist equipment are available at most centres for disabled students. There is a welcoming and reassuring environment with well-qualified and experienced support staff. Systems are periodically updated to reflect developments in local industry and to introduce new ways of learning. IT accommodation at the Bromsgrove site is adequate. However, at the Redditch site, some of the computer rooms are too small for the groups using them and quickly overheat. The computer desk layout in these rooms leaves insufficient workspace for students to take notes. Tutors are well qualified: some are experienced IT practitioners working toward teaching qualifications. There is a good programme of staff development.

60. Assessment and monitoring of the students' progress is satisfactory and meets awarding body standards. Internal verification within each course team is satisfactory. However, there is no standard internal verification policy or practice and there is a lack of sharing of good assessment practice.

Leadership and management

61. The management of courses is satisfactory. Tutors, especially those in the IT centres, manage their time effectively. Staff have targets for achievement, retention, attendance and punctuality which are reviewed at appraisal. Communications within the department are effective. There are planned calendars of meetings, which are clearly minuted. Staff development and training is planned to support curriculum objectives. For example, staff are attending training in preparation for the introduction of the European computer driving licence (ECDL) course. The managers are responsive to students' requirements. Students' perceptions are collected in an effective way. However, there is a lack of formal cross-college co-ordination of IT. Staff do not have joint meetings with colleagues from other departments and there is a lack of sharing of good practice within the ICT curriculum. Self-assessment is considered a crucial function of curriculum development. Course reviews have contributed effectively to the development of the ICT curriculum self-assessment report.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on most courses
- good reinforcement of theory and practice during practical sessions
- well-planned and well-taught delivered theory sessions

- motivated students
- good provision of individual learning support
- good support for part-time tutors.

Weaknesses

- poor promotion of hygiene in kitchen practical lessons
- insufficient emphasis on kitchen production skills for some national diploma students
- inadequate access for students and customers with limited mobility.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers a satisfactory range of hospitality and catering provision, from NVQ levels 1 to 3 and national diploma through to Higher National Diploma (HND), that meets most of the needs of the industry. A foundation degree is being developed in conjunction with University College Worcester. There are some 650 students enrolled on the programmes. The provision is mainly located at the Church Green Annexe in Redditch where students undertake both practical and theory lessons. Full-time students study for a professional craft qualification in food preparation and cooking and food and drink service at NVQ levels 1 and 2. At NVQ level 3 students can choose to specialise in kitchen and larder, or pastry and confectionery. NVQ day-release courses are also available, but there is low take-up of these with no work-based provision. An East Midlands Further Education Council pastry course is also offered which NVQ kitchen and larder and national diploma students take as an additional qualification. It is also run as an evening class. The national licensee certificate examination and intermediate food hygiene certificate are available in addition to the courses in basic food hygiene.

Achievement and standards

63. Retention and pass rates for courses are generally good. Four of the courses taken by full-time students had retention rates above the national average. These are the NVQ 2 serving food and drink, the GNVQ advanced and national diploma, the NVQ 3 kitchen and larder and EMFEC pastry cooks. Seven courses had pass rates above the national average including four which achieved 100% in one or more of the last three years. There were, however, some poorer retention and pass rates. The NVQ 1 serving food and drink - table, NVQ 2 food preparation and cooking had declining retention rates over the last three years to below the national average. The EMFEC pastry course had low pass rate in 1998/99 and 2000/01.

64. In both the restaurant and kitchen, students work at an appropriate standard and also have

opportunities to gain practical experience above the NVQ level required, which aids later progression. At one busy evening function, NVQ level 1 restaurant students practised banqueting skills and silver service with great confidence, while NVQ level 2 students produced an excellent standard of food for the college's restaurant. The college was awarded 'Restaurant of the Year' for 1999 by Briefcase Magazine. In addition, students have the opportunity to enter national and international competitions and have recently won three gold medals, one silver and four certificates of merit at the Hospitality Exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham. Portfolios are generally at the required standards with the written work of NVQ level 3 students, in particular, of a good standard.

65. All students are expected to achieve key skills as a part of their studies and these are in many instances well integrated into the programme. The IT programme is good with NVQ students reaching the required standard by completing vocationally relevant tasks. Communication tasks are also relevant to students' work, but this is not the case with all the numeracy work. Retention rates for the full key skills programme are low.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Basic food hygiene certificate	short	No. of starts	1,853	583	551
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	98	96	100
NVQ food preparation and cooking one year	1	No. of starts	17	11	21
		% retention	82	73	76
		% pass rate	86	100	100
NVQ serving food and drink - table one year	1	No. of starts	23	12	18
		% retention	87	75	72
		% pass rate	85	56	92
NVQ food preparation and cooking one year	2	No. of starts	57	18	23
		% retention	93	89	83
		% pass rate	72	75	89
NVQ serving food and drink - table one year	2	No. of starts	33	10	23
		% retention	94	80	87
		% pass rate	65	100	95
EMFEC pastry cooks stage 1	2	No. of starts	13	27	19
		% retention	85	89	88
		% pass rate	18	100	29
GNVQ advanced 1998 to 2000 /national diploma hotel and catering 2000/01	3	No. of starts	24	13	13
		% retention	88	77	92
		% pass rate	87	83	92
NVQ kitchen and larder -one year	3	No. of starts	19	19	13
		% retention	84	100	92
		% pass rate	63	95	85
National licensee certificate	3	No. of starts	23	19	22
		% retention	100	100	100

		% pass rate	100	78	86
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Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

66. Students enjoy their studies and have a high regard for the college. Staff are committed to meeting their needs and relationships are productive. There is some excellent and some very good teaching in hospitality and catering. Lessons are well planned and when working individually, students are well supported. Students with additional support needs receive good support for practical and theory lessons and make good progress. Support assistants work in class with students with dyslexia or other special needs. Other students attend the learning support centre for an hour a week for additional help with literacy and numeracy.

67. In most lessons, students are given clear instructions and understand the tasks they are required to complete. Most students are able to work independently at an appropriate level. In the best practical lessons teachers constantly draw out key points as they arise and reinforce the knowledge gained. In some classes challenging tasks and standards were set and generally met by students who gained in confidence as a result. In a few lessons tutors do not give sufficient direction to students or ensure that all students contribute effectively to discussions and respond to questions. There is insufficient attention paid to the personal, equipment or food hygiene issues or standards of dress in some practical lessons. Some national diploma students are allowed to opt out of general food production classes affecting their range of practical skills and knowledge and later career choices.

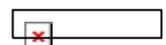
68. The learning materials and handouts used by students are relevant and produced to a good standard. The books and periodicals in the learning centre meet students research needs and, in addition, students are well supported when using the Internet. The range of specialist catering equipment is appropriate for the courses offered. The ovens are old, but adequate for developing students' skills. Overall, the accommodation for catering is adequate. The restaurant is a pleasant learning environment although, as identified by the college, has a poor access for customers and students with limited mobility.

Leadership and management

69. Planning has improved since the last inspection and management is generally good. Programme leaders meet weekly with the head of section to deal with routine management issues. The curriculum team has regular weekly meetings. Although all part-time staff are not able to attend, a mentoring system has been established to provide information and support. This works well and is valued by the staff involved and is to be introduced college wide. There are course review meetings twice a year which part-time tutors attend. These are the times when all staff are involved in reviewing progress against previously identified action points. All staff are also involved in producing the curriculum area's annual self-assessment report. However, insufficient emphasis has been given to HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control System) in relation to hygiene.

70. Recruitment targets are set and all programme leaders receive updated information about progress towards the targets. The hospitality and catering team are aware of their student retention and pass rate targets. College-wide strategies to improve retention and pass rates, such as the termly student management weeks, are used to plan action and review progress with students. Most students find these weeks useful.

Hairdressing and beauty therapies



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

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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- good quality holistic therapies courses
- effective tutorial system
- good retention and pass rates on NVQ 1 hairdressing and NVQ 3 beauty therapy.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on NVQ courses
- poor retention and pass rates for modern apprentices
- insufficient internal verification and assessment on some courses
- some poor resources.

Scope of provision

71. A wide range of courses is provided in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies. There are over 500 students on full-time and part-time NVQ and diploma courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy, theatrical make-up and media make-up, sports therapy and holistic therapies courses, such as aromatherapy and reflexology. There are 37 work-based learners who are working towards an NVQ including key skills which is part of a modern apprenticeship. There are taster courses for school pupils. Students aged 16 to 18 work towards key skills.

Achievement and standards

72. There are very good pass rates on the NVQ level 1 course in hairdressing and NVQ level 3

courses in beauty therapy, reflexology and aromatherapy. Pass rates on NVQ 2 courses are poor. For example, on the NVQ 2 hairdressing course, there have been consistently low pass rates over the past three years and the beauty therapy NVQ level 2 pass rates for 2000/01 are low. There are declining retention rates on the NVQ level 3 hairdressing. Since 1998, no students have completed the modern apprenticeship framework and pass and retention rates for work-based learners on NVQs are consistently poor.

73. Students' practical work is of a good standard. There are often insufficient clients on whom students can practise on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. The lack of clients reduces opportunities for students to be assessed. The standard of portfolios is good. Access to IT is good: it is well used in most portfolios, but only to a limited extent in the classroom. Key skills are not yet fully integrated on to courses. Students do not see the relevance or value of key skills. Students lack interest and attendance at key skill sessions during the inspection was low.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapies, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing one year	1	No. of starts	30	42	28
		% retention	73	76	86
		% pass rate	86	63	92
NVQ hairdressing one year	2	No. of starts	97	7	99
		% retention	75	77	87
		% pass rate	33	40	40
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	23	55	52
		% retention	96	64	85
		% pass rate	64	83	27
NVQ hairdressing one year	3	No. of starts	32	46	38
		% retention	81	87	71
		% pass rate	42	68	63
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	31	27	23
		% retention	74	70	87
		% pass rate	61	100	85
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	44	60	65
		% retention	87	87	82
		% pass rate	82	94	92
Diploma in aromatherapy	3	No. of starts	28	34	31
		% retention	82	82	84
		% pass rate	78	89	92

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

74. Teaching in practical and theory classes is very good. The lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The teaching is consistently good by all staff and work-based trainers. In the best sessions, teachers used a variety of learning methods and activities to engage and

challenge the students. Students are highly satisfied with their teaching particularly in holistic and sports therapies. More use could be made of ICT to enhance learning. The students have access to a computer in the hairdressing reception area. None of the computers in hairdressing or beauty therapy are connected to the college network and this restriction limits the research that students can undertake on, for example, new products. Students are given good feedback on their written work and assignments. Written work and assignments are high. Tracking of students' progress is excellent in beauty therapy and hairdressing; it is underdeveloped in sports and holistic therapy. Internal verification and feedback to assessors are good. There is good feedback to assessors. External verification reports identify few actions for improvement. However, during the past few months there has been insufficient internal verification of beauty, sports and holistic therapy and of work-based assessors in hairdressing.

75. Tutorials are effective and help students to progress. Targets are negotiated and additional support is available if they are not met. Students are also able to access specialist support to develop their basic and key skills. There are five learner management weeks each year to reinforce learning and allow students to resolve outstanding issues. Most full-time students have a period of work experience for one week each year. Part-time students are also encouraged to take part. There is crèche provision for students who have children and are on work-experience placements. Students are visited by staff, but not assessed in the workplace. There is annual feedback to parents for students who are aged under 19. There is also a parents' evening, the most recent of which was poorly attended.

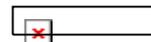
76. All staff have appropriate vocational, academic and assessor qualifications. All full-time staff have an annual appraisal. The part-time teaching staff are working through an agency and do not have an annual review. There is a peer observation scheme for all staff to raise the quality of teaching and learning. All part-time staff have a mentor. Consumable resources are sufficient to support all practical training and assessments. There are opportunities to sell professional products to clients. The dispensary areas are well stocked. However, the salons do not reflect current industry standards. Two beauty therapy salons are very small. Some equipment is old. Both libraries have too few books and students are not always able to obtain the books they require. The range of available journals is narrow; there are few videos and no networked CD-ROMs. Some teaching materials are of poor quality and a few of these have not been checked for errors.

77. Students have the opportunity for educational visits and can take part in competitions. The holistic therapy students were successful in recent competitions.

Leadership and management

78. The management of the department is satisfactory. The recent management changes have already resulted in improvements, but further work is required. For example, employers of modern apprentices now receive a copy of the student review. An accommodation strategy addresses deficiencies with specialist rooms. There is good teamwork, but more could be done to share good practice across the curriculum team. Students are encouraged to attend staff meetings. Regular surveys are used to gather student feedback and make improvements. Students feel listened to and are aware that action is taken on their concerns. Course reviews could be more self-critical, particularly in relation to meeting targets set for retention and pass rates.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- broad range of provision and flexibility of attendance patterns on many courses
- good support for students
- systematic and effective internal verification for NVQs
- effective and varied work placements.

Weaknesses

- missed opportunities to use IT to enhance learning
- poor match of tasks to students' experience in some lessons
- limited involvement of students in some lessons
- mid-term reviews lacked rigour on some courses.

Scope of provision

79. A broad range of courses and clear progression routes meet the needs of a wide range of students. The provision has the largest enrolment in the college. It has some 1,700 enrolments on long courses and 6,000 on short programmes. Students can take the Council for Awards in Childrens' Care and Education (CACHE) certificate or diploma in childcare and education, the foundation award in caring, NVQs in childcare and education and playwork, BTEC national diplomas in early years and health studies, the first award in care and the AVCE in health and social care. Provision specifically for adults includes access courses in nursing and social work, a good range of NVQs in care and childcare, in addition to a wide range of short courses. A system of dual awards was introduced in response to local employer needs with students working towards an NVQ at the same time as studying for their certificate or diploma. There are flexible arrangements for attendance on many of the courses including part-time, extended study and intensive shortened courses to suit individual students' needs. Students also have the chance to gain many useful additional qualifications such as emergency first aid, food hygiene and OCN units in personal development.

Achievement and standards

80. Some retention rates are good, but they are not consistent. Retention rates for the AVCE in health and social care and BTEC national diploma in caring services have been consistently above

the national averages over the last three years and the BTEC first diploma has improved significantly in 2001 to well above the national average. The CACHE diploma and certificate in childcare and education have retention rates in line with the national average, but the NVQ in early years and education has declined to below the national average. Pass rates for the NVQ early years and education have been above the national average for the last two years and the CACHE diploma was good at 100% in 2000/01. The pass rates for other courses were at, or below ,the national average.

81. Many students successfully progress to courses in HE, FE or gain relevant employment. More than half of the BTEC national diploma students went on to HE courses. Most of the students who obtained the CACHE diploma in childcare and education went into employment.

82. The standards set for assignments are appropriate for the courses offered. Key skills are integrated into assignments and students generally achieve the required level of competence. Portfolios are generally good and the standard of students' work on display is excellent.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CACHE certificate childcare and education	2	No. of starts	38	21	30
		% retention	70	90	77
		% pass rate	*	63	57
First diploma in care	2	No. of starts	**	21	10
		% retention	**	57	100
		% pass rate	**	42	75
CACHE diploma child care and education (NNEB)	3	No. of starts	74	63	42
		% retention	80	72	76
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NVQ level 3 early years and education (pre-school)	3	No. of starts	19	64	67
		% retention	100	89	76
		% pass rate	*	65	61
BTEC national diploma in caring services	3	No. of starts	16	14	7
		% retention	93	86	86
		% pass rate	100	83	*
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	18	14	9
		% retention	72	86	89
		% pass rate	*	58	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001). * unreliable data

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

83. The teaching is mainly satisfactory with some good and very good lessons. The better lessons are well planned and identify individual students' needs such as dyslexia. They motivated the students and generated a sense of purpose and enjoyment. In the most successful lessons, teachers encouraged the students to link theory with practice by relating their learning in the classroom with

their work placements and their own experiences. In one lesson, the teacher used a life-size baby doll throughout as a visual aid and reminder of the developmental stages of infants, and in another, story lines from a popular soap opera were used to interest the students and help them to explore the issue of domestic violence.

84. In less satisfactory lessons, teachers failed to capitalise on available resources and sufficiently challenge the students. For example, teachers produced material they had downloaded from the Internet instead of encouraging the students to research the topics themselves. In some lessons, the tasks set for students failed to address the range of previous experience and abilities of the students and this resulted in few responding to questions or seeking clarification about new concepts. Opportunities to use technology such as data projectors and videos for presentations to enhance learning and encourage students to use IT were not always taken. In one lesson, students were discussing presentation skills for interviews and no use was made of visual aids.

85. Assignments are relevant to the programme of study. Requirements for each assignment are clear and students are informed of performance criteria for assignment grades. On the healthcare courses, feedback to students on performance on assignments is thorough and helpful, but on some other courses it is not sufficiently evaluative. Assessment meets the requirements of the awarding bodies and the monitoring of NVQs through the internal verification system is effective and systematic.

86. Students feel well supported. They receive good advice on the courses available to them and how these match their previous experience. The induction onto the courses is thorough and there are opportunities to move between courses if this is necessary. Students find the student management weeks useful as they provide opportunities for them to complete assignments and work on evidence for portfolios. Students benefit from a wide variety of work-placement opportunities that enhance their learning. Placement supervision is good and practical assessments are carried out regularly.

87. There is a satisfactory range of learning resources, equipment and learning support staff to support students in their studies. Teachers are generally well qualified. Over 60% of teachers have a teaching qualification and most have Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) assessor awards. A mentoring system enables experienced colleagues to support new teachers. However, most recent staff development activities have focused on whole college issues rather than improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers maintain good communication with their course teams. Course teams meet regularly and there is a strong commitment to team working. The course reviews held each term to identify emerging issues and monitor progress of actions lack rigour and do not include clear action plans for improvement. The internal process of teaching observation failed to recognise some of the weaknesses in teaching. All staff are involved in self-assessment.

Art, design and media



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on some courses

- some good teaching of contextual studies, computing and life drawing
- good tutorial support for students
- excellent equipment.

Weaknesses

- insufficient challenge in some lessons
- insufficient observational drawing on most courses
- temporary accommodation inhibiting students' work.

Scope of provision

89. This area has an appropriate range of courses at intermediate and advanced levels in art, design, and media including national diplomas in graphics and design crafts, AVCEs in media and art and design, an art foundation diploma and a range of City and Guilds creative studies programmes. There are also higher diplomas and certificates. Some 300 students are enrolled full time. The courses offer good progression opportunities for HE and employment. Most art and design courses are based at Britten House in Redditch. This is a temporary arrangement since a fire destroyed the previous building in 1999. The media provision is based at the Redditch site.

Achievement and standards

90. There are good retention and pass rates on the art foundation course, which are above the national average. The pass rate on intermediate GNVQ is well above the national average. Students acquire good skills on most courses. Part-time students reach high standards in their practical work. Students' knowledge is of a high standard, for example, the technical knowledge in a ceramics lesson using a glaze technology was good and students had a clear understanding of their experimental test results. Students on media courses have variable oral skills. Not all students are confident in discussions or able to express their ideas. Students in graphic design on the national diploma are familiar with core ideas and concepts of design and their answers to questions are well informed. Attendance was good during inspection but there was some poor punctuality in a number of art and design and media courses, which interrupted the learning. Some lessons are insufficiently challenging in both art and design and media and expectations by some staff are low, which adversely affects the learning.

91. Part-time art and design students with classes at Redditch are disadvantaged by lack of exposure to visual studies and design work displayed at Britten House and their work does not

reflect the same level of visual awareness as others.

A sample of retention and pass rates in art, design and media 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 7802 life drawing	2	No. of starts	53	30	*
		% retention	81	83	*
		% pass rate	47	96	*
National diploma design and crafts	3	No. of starts	35	20	24
		% retention	80	65	84
		% pass rate	86	77	75
GNVQ art and design intermediate	3	No. of starts	15	6	19
		% retention	73	83	73
		% pass rate	90	80	93
Art and design foundation diploma	3	No. of starts	17	8	18
		% retention	59	100	95
		% pass rate	70	100	100
National diploma visual com	3	No. of starts	11	22	16
		% retention	100	91	88
		% pass rate	63	60	79

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

92. Teaching is mostly satisfactory or better. Lessons are well prepared with good supporting materials in most cases. Tutorials are regular and students find them helpful. Art and design informs its tutorials through recording discussions with students and the incidental advice and guidance given by staff. Teaching on courses with small numbers of part-time students with a variety of specialisms and levels is very well managed. One teacher successfully managed a group of students with a wide range of previous experience. However, insufficient attention is paid to core design on some courses and design skills are underdeveloped. Teaching of contextual studies to first year diploma students is good. Teachers use examples of the work of artists as a starting point for a visual narrative. Image manipulation is well taught. In life drawing students broadened and developed their approach from measured drawings experienced at the start of the course to making marks with brushes and felt tipped markers tied to sticks. Mark-making and surface-pattern techniques and use of texture on most courses are good. However, observational drawing is insufficiently used on most courses. For example, the sketchbook work of GNVQ intermediate students depends too much upon magazine cuttings, photocopies and inappropriate use of cartoon images. Some staff have low expectations of their students' ability to learn to draw and the standards of drawing skills were low on these courses. On a small number of courses, lessons are undemanding, activities not varied enough and pace too slow. Media students work towards clear individual targets. Teaching, however, does not differentiate between students with different target grades.

93. The equipment is excellent. Most equipment is new and of the highest standard. At the Redditch Campus, there is very good provision for media, including a television studio and advanced editing

suites. Part-time students have access to programmable sewing machines. The equipment available for textiles, printing, ceramics and photography is also of an exceptional standard. Britten House is, however, restrictive in the configuration of its rooms and their size. Students are restricted in the size of work they can produce. There is no space for large-scale ceramics or sculptural pieces. However, as temporary accommodation, it is well organised to support learning and has the assistance of a technician.

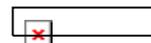
94. Full-time students take additional qualifications as part of their main programme of study. In most cases, these are appropriate and meet the needs of students. Both full-time and part-time students value the educational visits which have been organised for them. Foundation diploma students have visited exhibitions in Barcelona and London. Part-time creative studies students have been to Paris.

95. Students receive good initial advice and guidance about their choice of course and students are highly satisfied with the tutorial support. Students who may be at risk of leaving are monitored and additional support is given. Tutorials are regular and well recorded.

Leadership and management

96. The management team are open and approachable. Staff understand their roles and feel valued. Courses are well planned and well managed. Students' feedback is sought and acted upon. There has been improvement in the promptness on the return of marked work. The college has also resolved staffing issues raised by media students and identified in the self-assessment report. Two new teachers have been appointed and the college has taken action to ensure learning has not been affected. Insufficient attention is paid to improving the image that GNVQ students have of their course.

Humanities (sociology and psychology)



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

Strengths

- good pass rates
- much well-planned teaching
- flexible attendance arrangements to meet individual students' circumstances
- good tutorial support
- good learning resources.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on many courses
- poor attendance in some lessons
- insufficient involvement of students in some learning activities.

Scope of provision

97. Psychology and sociology are offered at GCE Advanced Subsidiary and A levels and for the GCSE in the sixth form centre. GCSE psychology and sociology are also offered as options for students intending to study for a career in nursing. Psychology is taught as part of the diploma in welfare studies. The subjects are also substantial elements in access to HE programmes in humanities, nursing and health care, social work and teacher training. In order to provide the widest opportunities for students to attend, access programmes are available full time, part time in the day or evening, or in specially arranged timetables. Adult students study successfully in predominantly 16 to 18 course groups. Access to HE is also available through supported individual learning and the GCE A levels through home study. Students may take a lengthy gap in their studies, for example, for childcare, and return to college to complete their course units later. This flexible approach to meeting students' needs is popular with students.

Achievement and standards

98. Most pass rates on GCE A-level courses have increased steadily over the past three years from below the national average. In 2001, all students entered for GCE A-level psychology and students aged 16 to 18 who completed two-year programmes in sociology at GCE A level passed. There has been an improvement in the proportion of higher-grade passes over the past three years. The proportion of those achieving A* to C grades in GCSE has consistently exceeded the national averages for psychology and sociology. However, in GCE and GCSE retention rates have declined over the last three years and, in 2001, were significantly below the national average for comparable colleges. The retention rate was only 38% for the two-year psychology course in 2001. Pass rates for students on access to HE in the social sciences and social work have been consistently high and well above national averages. In 2001, 100% of those who completed their programmes passed and progressed to university. Some other students also achieved their personal goal of successfully progressing to HE without their full access award. However, there were below average retention rates on access programmes. Students completing courses, which include sociology or psychology, usually pass and move successfully to other FE or HE or to the professional training of their choice.

99. Students' work is in line with standards normally expected on comparable courses. In coursework and in class, the better students demonstrate a clear grasp of theories and methods in the social sciences and are able to write and speak critically about the respective strengths and weaknesses. Many access to HE students are able to engage in productive debates about the respective merits of the theories, relating them to their own knowledge and experience. Advanced students develop a sound grasp of the value of different research methods.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities (sociology and psychology), 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE psychology (grades A to C)	2	No. of starts	66	56	57
		% retention	74	64	53
		% pass rate	50	72	55
GCSE sociology (grades A to C)	2	No. of starts	39	40	32
		% retention	84	68	56
		% pass rate	71	70	62
GCE A-level sociology (one year)	3	No. of starts	29	8	30
		% retention	64	88	46
		% pass rate	65	86	75
GCE A-level sociology (two year)	3	No. of starts	24	22	30
		% retention	75	57	59
		% pass rate	60	67	75
GCE A-level psychology (one year)	3	No. of starts	57	23	26
		% retention	71	65	46
		% pass rate	33	47	100
GCE A-level psychology (two year)	3	No. of starts	27	31	32
		% retention	74	80	38
		% pass rate	60	63	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

100. Much of the teaching provides good opportunities for students to develop their critical understanding of theories in the social sciences, their validity and application. Schemes of work and lessons are carefully planned to provide a variety of activities and meet the clearly stated objectives. Discussions in lessons are generally lively and good humoured, with rigorous debate and students are able to write and speak critically about the strengths and weaknesses of aspects of these different theories and approaches. However, some students failed to participate fully in discussions and were not encouraged sufficiently to do so. Unauthorised absences were also unacceptably high in several lessons.

101. Students apply appropriate research methods to test hypotheses on challenging topics such as moral behaviour. In lessons devoted to reviews of course work, most students discuss their ideas fluently. Key skills are developed within the curriculum. Students who need to improve their basic skills get the help they need as teachers work closely with learning support staff and record individual progress.

102. Assignments are generally carefully marked and frequently discussed at some length with the student concerned. Teachers' marking and feedback to students make clear what improvements are necessary. Verification and moderation of standards of assessed work fully meet the requirements of awarding bodies. Teachers, personal tutors and learning advisers co-operate well to support students and promote their success. Course timetables may be adapted to meet the needs of individual students. Informal tutorials augment those provided by entitlement. Personal targets for improvement, related where appropriate to GCSE scores, are agreed, then regularly monitored and reviewed. Access to HE students with previous GCSE A* to C grades in mathematics and English are able to have these accredited so as to be exempt from the GCSE equivalents in the access

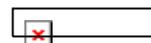
programme.

103. Teachers are well qualified and keep up to date through membership of professional bodies and personal professional development related to the curriculum. Teachers and learning resource centre staff co-operate well in developing new learning materials and sources of information. The Internet is used effectively as a learning resource in lessons and students have ready access to a recommended list of social science web-sites. There is a wide range of printed material, course handbooks, interactive texts and standard books available in course rooms. Attractive displays of students' works are used to enhance the learning environment. A few older rooms are less attractive and not suitable for the sizes of groups that use them.

Leadership and management

104. Curriculum management is effective both at Bromsgrove and Redditch. Although under separate line management, there is useful liaison and sharing of expertise between social science teachers across the two sites. Communication is generally good between managers and course teams who work closely on courses, although minor administrative details are sometimes missed. The interests of students and the improvement of the curriculum are the key priorities of managers. Courses are reviewed carefully and results and trends analysed in the light of national averages. Targets for improvement are set and strategies to achieve them devised. A pilot programme has been run to improve the preparation of some students to enrol on the access to HE programme.

English



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

Strengths

- good and improving examination results at GCE AS and A level
- good interpretation of, and response to, class studied texts
- good, varied teaching well matched to the new examination specifications
- well-used learning resources to broaden GCE A-level literature study
- detailed marking and helpful feedback on written assignments
- effective subject leadership especially for sixth form centre courses

- good tutorial support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some GCSE courses
- poor attendance and punctuality of a minority of students
- insufficient wider reading by students on the GCE A-level 'language and literature' course
- insufficient use of student self-assessment
- lack of detail in individual student's targets.

Scope of provision

105. The range of English provision meets the needs of students. GCE A-level English language and literature is a new course that has recently been added to the established English GCE A-level literature provision at the sixth form centre at Redditch. English literature is also offered as a one year, part-time, evening course at Redditch. A GCSE in English is offered both in the sixth form centre, for full-time and evening class students and at Bromsgrove. At Bromsgrove, English is also a core component on access courses preparing students for professional training and entry to HE. Literature modules are also offered on the access to HE programme.

106. The sixth form centre recruits successfully for English advanced level courses and GCSE. Students from diverse backgrounds are able to progress to FE and HE courses as a result of improved qualifications and competence in English. For a minority of students on the GCSE course, the substantial study of literature does not fully match their needs and this is reflected in low retention rates.

Achievement and standards

107. There has been a steady improvement in the examination results in English, with particularly strong results in 2000/01. The GCE A-level literature pass rate was above the national average for the sector and half of all candidates attained a higher grade. On the new GCE AS specifications students aged 16 to 18 in the sixth form centre also achieved well, with all students passing in literature. The pass rate in language and literature is close to the provisional national average for all candidates. Value added analysis indicates significant progress for many students in relation to their previous results at GCSE.

108. At GCSE, the proportion of students completing the course and gaining grades A* to C is now good, but this success has been achieved at the expense of the retention rate which is low. Students who complete the various access courses that include English, generally progress to FE, or HE, or to professional training.

109. Standards of speaking and listening are generally good, particularly in the GCE A-level and access to HE classes. A minority of GCSE students are reluctant to participate in class discussion and their contributions are undeveloped. Students' written work is generally at an appropriate standard for the course of study, with writing showing sound analytical and interpretative skills. Most are able to compose at length, with some GCE A-level literature coursework reaching a high standard. The spelling of technical terms is not always accurate. The range and level of challenge of personal reading are insufficient for students studying the new language and literature specification, reducing the range of their comments on style.

110. Most students are attentive and work hard in sessions. A minority of students do not attend regularly enough or are late to lessons. The college is monitoring and acting on poor attendance, but rates during the inspection week were below those usual in the sector.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level English and English literature (one and two year)	3	No. of starts	89	44	32
		% retention	91	73	75
		% pass rate	57	59	89
GCSE English language (1, 2 and 3 year)	3	No. of starts	154	108	112
		% retention	71	58	55
		% pass rate	42	70	90

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

111. Most teaching of English is good and students' knowledge and skills develop well. Lessons are well planned and students respond well to the variety of activities including effective pair and group work at GCE A-level. For example, literature students worked in pairs to plan director's notes for a scene from 'Doctor Faustus', using cut-out models, while language and literature students worked in groups to compare two excellent examples of character assassination from recent journalism. The teaching focuses tightly on the assessment objectives of the new specifications with close links forged between student's analysis of style and their own writing. Students build up useful files of materials: staff on most courses, especially access to HE, monitor closely the quality of students' note taking. In a minority of sessions, group or pair work is too protracted and the pace of learning for the highest attainers drops.

112. GCSE teaching is generally at least satisfactory, but the quality is uneven. In the best sessions, students are engaged by well-chosen texts or topics and class discussion is well managed. In less effective sessions, too little direct teaching takes place to improve students' use of language.

113. Learning resources are well used. Learning advisers are valuable in helping students studying GCE A-level literature and staff find background materials from books, journals and the Internet. This support is beginning to be reflected in the sophistication of students' writing.

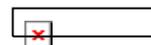
114. Written work is conscientiously marked. Students' progress is well supported by the helpful comments on what has been achieved and where work could be improved. Oral work at GCSE is

also carefully assessed. Little formal self-assessment or peer-assessment is used and so students are not very familiar with the assessment criteria. Tutorials are used for progress review of individual students with subject teachers. The quality of the self-assessment is not reflected in the written targets set which often lack sufficient detail to be easily implemented or revised.

Leadership and management

115. English work is well led in the college, particularly within the sixth form centre, where much of the GCE A-level and GCSE teaching takes place. Self-assessment in the department is well developed and the most recent review contains development points which the inspection confirmed as accurate. There are regular meetings of English and media teachers, sometimes attended by staff who teach on the access and other programmes in Bromsgrove. There is good practice in standardisation and coursework moderation. Collaboration over schemes of work is limited and few opportunities are available to observe and discuss English teaching and draw on the variety of styles currently used.

Foundation programmes - basic skills



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

Strengths

- well-structured, support to meet individual needs
- good IT resources, well used by students
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- good teaching for adults.

Weaknesses

- no work experience for full-time students
- some poor planning of group teaching
- low attendance in some courses.

Scope of provision

116. Basic skills programmes are offered at the Bromsgrove and Redditch college sites and in a range of community locations such as schools, and social services centres. Many of the courses are aimed at adults with limited previous experience of education. The courses provide good opportunities for improving reading, writing and numeracy. The adult basic skills courses offered for part-time study and the Springboard programme enrol students at any time during the year. There were 161 enrolments last year and so far this year there are 139 enrolments. After initial assessment students can follow a range of non-accredited and accredited courses. Students can 'drop-in' and start a course at any time. The college also offers two full-time courses for students aged 16 to 19 who need emotional and social support. Many of the students have had little previous academic success and have many gaps in their basic skills. This is the second year of this programme. There are currently 27 students enrolled on skill power plus and key skills plus programmes.

Achievement and standards

117. There are good retention rates on a number of formally accredited courses. The City and Guilds numeracy stage 2 course, the Assessment Qualifications Alliance (AQA) literacy tests and skill power plus courses all have retention rates significantly and consistently above the national average while for the adult literacy short course, retention has been at the national average. Pass rates are consistently good for adults on the City and Guilds numeracy stage 2 course and AQA literacy tests. Even where students do not take formal qualifications, students' portfolios indicate clear progress towards individually recorded learning goals. The aim of the full-time programme of study is to ensure that students enjoy some success and there is flexibility within the full-time programme for students to take full or part awards and study a mix of modules from the two courses to suit their needs. All students achieve some units and many are progressing from entry-level programmes to level 1 courses.

118. Adult students have the opportunity, after initial assessment, to build their skills using selected learning materials. When they are ready they can choose between a range of accredited courses, for example, City and Guild Word power, Number Power, AQA achievement tests, Oxford Cambridge and RSA (OCR) Examinations Communication English Skills Reading and Writing. In addition to acquiring basic skills, most students gain in confidence and reported that they enjoyed using their new skills.

119. Attendance by full-time students is poor. This has been identified as a weakness in the course self-assessment report and a system of monitoring students' attendance and punctuality, introduced this year, is improving retention rates. Personal tutors contact parents and carers to reinforce the importance of attendance and identify issues concerning individual students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in foundation programmes - basic skills, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Skill power plus 16-19 full time	entry	No. of starts	**	**	14
		% retention	**	**	93
		% pass rate	**	**	57*
Basic education adult literacy 19+	entry/1	No. of starts	**	76	44
		% retention	**	71	75
		% pass rate	**	94	69
Basic education adult	entry/1	No. of starts	**	23	7

literacy one year 16 -18 year olds		% retention	**	48	100
		% pass rate	**	82	43
Basic education adult literacy short 16 to 18-year-olds	entry/1	No. of starts	**	10	15
		% retention	**	30	93
		% pass rate	**	100	79
City and Guilds 3750 numeracy stage 2 19+	entry/1	No. of starts	12	4	7
		% retention	92	100	100
		% pass rate	73	100	67
AQA literacy achievement tests adults	entry/1	No. of starts	7	10	29
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	86	100	96
Key skills plus	1	No. of starts	**	**	19
		% retention	**	**	58
		% pass rate	**	**	45*

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* all students passed some units

** course not offered

Quality of education and training

120. The majority of classes are well taught. Individual student's learning goals are identified and progress is checked through a well-documented system that is effectively monitored by tutors. Efforts are made to make learning relevant. In a community school location, the students, all parents of children at the school, had produced interesting and well-designed poetry and cookery booklets to share with their children. One student's first attempt at producing a booklet was at a very high standard. At a social services centre a student, who had a stroke, was carefully creating a dictionary of familiar words, including her children's names. She was delighted with her progress over the last six months. In college, a full-time group was planning as a group to enter a textiles competition. The classroom wall was covered with a very large very well-produced mural. In individual tutorials and group tutorials, full-time students have help to organise their work, identify gaps and make action plans for the next step. These tutorials are clearly recorded. In a minority of classes at the college, staff did not clearly explain the learning goals of the lesson, check effectively that students understood the tasks set or that they had the necessary supporting knowledge. This prevented the effective use of prepared resources and achievement of the objectives set.

121. Full-time college students have the opportunity to sample other college courses. One student was, with support, taking a health and social care unit in order to progress towards his aim of working in a leisure centre. He felt this would give him understanding of children's needs in a sports centre. There are no opportunities for full-time college students to gain work experience.

122. Students feel well supported by staff. Progression is a focus of a unit followed in the tutorial programme. However, the student handbook is not easy to read and is not understood by all foundation level students. Students go to the Job Centre and see careers advisors to find out about future options.

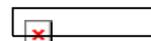
123. There are good IT resources both in the college learning resource centre and in the classrooms. Students use IT frequently and effectively. One group printed road maps as part of an estimation/measuring exercise and another group wrote letters to potential landlords. Teaching

rooms are generally good, but one art group did not have the required access to art room facilities. Part-time adult students believe that the frequent tutorial support, a review after every twenty hours of learning, is central to their success.

Leadership and management

124. The basic skills provision has benefited from the recent college restructuring. A new management role has been identified and there is a clear focus on the role of basic skills in meeting a range of community needs. The basic skills teams are enthusiastic and keen to improve the learning experience of their students. Staff development needs are identified through the appraisal system or course reviews and events such as managing challenging behaviour have been organised. However, basic skills training has not been undertaken by all staff working at foundation level.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- wide range of courses responsive to local needs
- highly effective course teams
- high level of learning and pastoral support
- good enrichment activities
- good standard of teaching.

Weaknesses

- unsystematic tracking of progression following course completion
- unsatisfactory IT facilities at one community centre.

Scope of provision

125. There is a wide range of full-time and part-time discrete courses for young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that have been developed to meet identified local needs. The Life Skills course is full time and offers students the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to progress to FE and/or employment. The course generally lasts for three years and there are currently 52 full-time students enrolled. The adult learning difficulties and disabilities course focuses on the development of skills for independent living and the acquired brain injury course is designed for adults with an acquired brain injury and offers individualised specialist provision. Students are able to take part in the courses on a full-time or part-time basis. The vocational transition course supports progression into employment for both young people and adults for whom employment is an option and the 'Link-Up' course is specifically designed to re-engage in learning users of mental health services. There are 241 students currently on these courses. The 'Life Skills Learning Gateway' programme helps young people to progress into mainstream learning. Students attend for 16 hours a week for approximately 19 weeks. Many of the courses are run in conjunction with other external agencies. The 'Snax on Trax' course, for example, is run in partnership with the Kingsfield Day Service, Worcestershire Lifestyles, Mencap and Central Trains and gives students the opportunity to work part time in a snack shop at Droitwich railway station. Widening participation within the community continues to be developed with courses or parts of courses operating in 13 outreach centres and 8 community centres. All courses offer students, where appropriate, the opportunity to achieve an external qualification and work experience is an integral part of most courses.

Achievement and standards

126. Many students make good progress into further courses or employment. In 2000/01 89% of Life Skills students progressed to FE and 50% of the Vocational Transition students gained employment during the same period. Seven students have progressed into teaching and currently five are employed at the college full-time or part-time as tutors or teaching support assistants. Retention rates are in line with national averages. Retention rates in 2000/01 were 97% and there was a high level of achievement for those students entered for recognised national awards. Students are able to choose from a range of work placements including a motorcycle shop, a falconry centre, a nursing home and a pet shop. Staff spend time with students at their placements, monitor progress and carry out work-based assessments which are used as evidence towards the achievement of various awards. Whilst the introduction of work experience, as an integral part of the courses, has only been available during the last year both tutors and students recognise and appreciate the benefits of this initiative

Quality of education and training

127. There is a high level of learning support and pastoral support for students. Learning support assistants are present in all lessons of Life Skills, adult learning difficulties and disabilities and acquired brain injury vocational preparation courses and in 75% of Link Up lessons. Other specific support needs, such as hearing impairment, are also met during lessons. Tutors are able to identify other barriers to learning through a comprehensive progress review and tutorial system. All teaching staff complete reviews of students' progress towards their learning goals at the end of every session. This information is used during students' tutorial sessions and gives both students and tutors the opportunity to update the individual learning plans where appropriate and agree tactics to overcome barriers. Staff have excellent links with a wide range of external agencies and are able to assist students by directing and, on occasion, escorting them to specific agencies.

128. Students have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of enrichment activities. Staff recognise the value of residential training and organise these activities, where possible, for all groups. Recent residentials have included visits to France, Holland and Bulgaria. There have also been one-day educational visits to London, Greenwich, an archaeological centre, Birmingham Airport and Gloucester Docks. Students are also able to access a range of other courses within the college and have attended guitar and art lessons. This year staff have taken advice from local schools while planning and introducing a literacy and numeracy hour. The literacy hour is now a successful reading

hour with students choosing reading material from a range of books, magazines and newspapers to suit their interest and level of reading. Students really enjoy the hour and their reading skills have improved.

129. There is a good standard of teaching: many lessons are good or better. Tutors take account of the wide ability range within groups when planning lessons. All lessons are well planned, are relevant to the curriculum area and made interesting through a wide range of stimulating activities. Learning resources are generally of a high standard and adapted where necessary to individual students' needs. In the weaker lessons, students are allowed to adopt a more passive role and some found the sessions dull. Some learning materials were of poor quality. Portfolios are well organised and presented. Photographs are well used to provide additional evidence of completed tasks. Tutors work well together and share good practice across all courses. Some tutors share their teaching time between campuses and outreach centres, but are still able to liaise regularly with colleagues. Only one tutor lacks regular contact with colleagues because all his/her teaching is carried out in outreach centres.

130. There is no regular formal tracking of students' progress after course completion. Students progress to a range of destinations including FE, training or employment. While staff are aware of students' destinations, they do not routinely monitor or analyse subsequent success. Many students progress to mainstream courses at the college, but there is no formal procedure to check students' attendance patterns, for example. There is no recording of the overall retention rates of students and staff are unable to determine whether additional support during this transitional period would improve retention rates. Similarly, the continued attendance, for those students progressing into employment, is not routinely documented and any additional support needs cannot be identified.

131. The IT facilities available are generally good. However, at one outreach centre, the facilities do not provide an appropriate relevant commercial experience and a lack of technician support renders some computers unusable.

Leadership and management

132. Highly effective and enthusiastic course teams are managed by the head of department and three programme leaders. All staff meet regularly both formally and informally. Staff are all involved in self-assessment. They set themselves demanding targets that are formally reviewed. Good practice is regularly shared across all curriculum areas and between sites. Staff use feedback from students to develop existing courses and to promote new ones. Students' progress needs to be tracked systematically as an essential part of continuous improvement. There are excellent links with a wide range of external organisations including the local authority, health service, social services and many charities. Staff have also developed good links with many local employers, many of which offer work experience opportunities for students.

Part D: College data

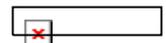
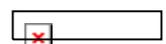


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	22.8	34.6

2	28.9	17.0
3	29.4	13.7
4/5	0.9	4.4
Other	18.0	30.3
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in autumn 2001.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	808	4,789	19.4
Agriculture	1	137	0.5
Construction	62	203	0.9
Engineering	489	833	4.6
Business	619	2,718	11.6
Hotel and catering	771	1,936	9.4
Health and community care	1,296	6,821	28.2
Art and design	288	1,504	6.2
Humanities	1,599	2,899	15.6
Basic education	191	839	3.6
Total	6,124	22,679	100

Source: Provided by the college in autumn 2001.

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000
		1	Starters excluding transfers	712	947	805	1,453
	Retention rate (%)	80	75	70	92	86	84

	National average (%)	81	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	64	72	73	75	70	75
	National average (%)	59	62	66	62	63	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,737	1,455	1,274	1,639	1,207	1,171
	Retention rate (%)	81	80	77	85	78	80
	National average (%)	76	76	77	79	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	54	67	66	49	64	66
	National average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,223	1,294	1,302	2,092	1,862	1,827
	Retention rate (%)	82	80	83	87	85	85
	National average (%)	77	77	77	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	66	76	75	61	65	69
	National average (%)	71	72	73	64	65	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	31	32	17	961	680	591
	Retention rate (%)	81	94	82	94	91	82
	National average (%)	83	84	80	84	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	69	57	75	46	57	47
	National average (%)	64	65	70	58	61	60

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 (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

2. College rates for 1997/98 - 1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

3. College rates for (1999/2000): provided by the college in autumn 2001.

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)	71.2	23.8	5.0	80
Level 2 (intermediate)	58.9	32.2	8.9	56
Level 1 (foundation)	68.8	21.9	9.3	32
Other sessions	76.5	23.5	0.0	34
Totals	68.4	25.7	5.9	202

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