



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Askham Bryan College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Agriculture and countryside](#)

[Animal management](#)

[Equine studies](#)

[Horticulture and floristry](#)

[Foundation](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

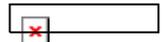
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

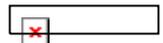
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

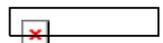


Name of college:	Askham Bryan College
Type of college:	Specialist Land-Based Further Education College
Principal:	Gareth Rees
Address of college:	Askham Bryan College Askham Bryan York North Yorkshire YO23 3FR
Telephone number:	01904 772277
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Chair of governors:	Christine Grainger
Unique reference number:	130595
Name of reporting inspector:	Josephine Parkman
Dates of inspection:	1-5 November 2004

Part A: Summary



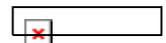
Information about the college



Askham Bryan College is a specialist land-based college, situated three miles west of York, in North Yorkshire. The main campus, located in the village of Askham Bryan, is set in extensive grounds which include the college's own 174-hectare farm, horticulture, animal management and equine units, woodlands, a small lake and outdoor sports facilities. The college also offers part-time courses and work-based learning at centres at Harrogate, Bedale, Pickering and Guisborough. Askham Bryan also operates the North East Centre for Animal Management (NECAM) in partnership with Middlesbrough College and offers higher education (HE) in affiliation with the University of Leeds. The college provides full-time, part-time and short courses, as well as work-based learning programmes for the land-based and related industries. It is organised into seven curriculum areas. Courses are offered from foundation to advanced level in a range of subjects including agriculture, animal management, business, countryside management, design, engineering, floristry, forestry, equine management and horticulture. A range of short courses is offered for industry and local communities. Work-based learning programmes are available, mainly in agriculture and horticulture. A full-time and a part-time course at entry level are designed to meet the needs of students who have a learning disability and/or difficulty. The college was granted centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) status for food chain technology in November 2003.

In 2002/03, there were 4,049 students at the college, of whom 80% were aged over 19 and 57% were female. Some 86% of students were following part-time courses. About half of the students were from North Yorkshire. The number of students from minority ethnic groups was very low, at less than 1% compared to 1.6% for York and North Yorkshire. The college's mission is 'enhancing regional growth in land-based industries and rural communities through individual learner success'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of provision as good in animal management and satisfactory in equine studies, horticulture, and agriculture and foundation studies. Provision of work-based learning is satisfactory in service engineering, but unsatisfactory in agriculture and in horticulture. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- effective and productive links with the land-based industry

- good support and guidance for students

- good use of practical teaching resources and college grounds

- successful action to widen participation

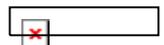
- highly inclusive ethos
- very clear strategy and vision for the future.

What should be improved

- low retention rates at level 2
- poor management of work-based learning
- ineffective use of initial assessment for many students
- too little good or better teaching
- insufficiently rigorous self-assessment
- slow implementation of the 'Skills For Life' strategy
- ineffective use of data and target setting.

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

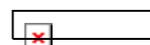


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how

range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Agriculture and countryside	Satisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade for service engineering is satisfactory . Work-based learning contributory grade for agriculture is unsatisfactory . Pass rates are high on the national certificate course, but retention rates on the national diploma course and pass rates in key skills are low. Retention rates are high in work-based learning in service engineering, but progress in agricultural work-based learning is slow. There is good commercial reality in teaching linked to highly effective use of resources and good links with industry. Management of on-the-job training for work-based learners is poor.
Animal management	Good. Much teaching is good and student work is of a high standard. Animal care and veterinary nursing facilities at the main campus are very good. Effective partnerships with other colleges and zoos widen participation. Programmes offer good progression opportunities and course management is highly effective, but there is not enough short course or part-time provision. Retention rates on the first diploma are low.
Equine studies	Satisfactory. Pass rates on the national diploma course are high, but retention rates on first diploma and national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses are low. Teaching of theory is good. Teaching techniques in riding lessons are weak and there are too few timetabled sessions for riding and yard work. There is good progression for students from level 1 to level 3 courses. The tutorial system provides strong support for students.
Horticulture and floristry	Satisfactory. Work-based learning contributory grade is unsatisfactory . Pass rates on the national diploma in horticulture, general examination in horticulture and the certificate in gardening are high, but there is low achievement of apprenticeships. Teachers make good use of resources and successfully link theory and practice in their teaching. Students develop good practical skills. There is insufficient initial assessment for part-time students. There is some poor assessment practice in the sports turf work-based learning programme and management of on-the-job training in work-based learning is weak.
Foundation	Satisfactory. Individual guidance and general support are good. A wide range of programmes offers students opportunities to learn and develop useful practical skills. Vocational teaching is effective, but teaching of literacy and numeracy is uninspiring and fails to take account of students' different levels of ability. Insufficient use is made of the results of initial and diagnostic assessment. The development of strategies to improve the literacy and numeracy aspects of the curriculum has been slow and has not yet had any effect on the programmes.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior management set a very clear direction for the

on the needs of students within the economic development of the region, is leading to investment in specialist facilities and the development of partnership operations. The strategy has had a very positive effect on morale and external perceptions of the college. A range of strategies to improve quality assurance is in place, but the implementation of some of them is not thorough enough and they have yet to have an effective impact. The college is highly inclusive and the principles of equal opportunities are a central part of policies and practices. The corporation is effective and governors are committed to, and involved in, the work of the college. Sound management information and financial systems are now in place. The college's financial position is extremely weak. A challenging plan to remedy this financial position is in place and is supported by governors and the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Adequate processes for self-assessment are used. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. A wide range of land-based provision from foundation level to HE with clear progression routes meets the needs and aspirations of students in North Yorkshire. Work-based learning is promoted in a number of subject areas. A growing programme of short and part-time courses responds to local community needs. Full-time and part-time provision with good progression opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well established. Students receive satisfactory basic skills teaching. Four main centres in the community provide good access for students from both urban concentrations and sparsely populated rural areas. Innovative and productive links with schools result in effective 14 to 16 provision for over 200 pupils. Promotion of equality and diversity is strengthened through the work of a working group which includes a wide staff representation. The college has made satisfactory responses to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support, advice and guidance are good. The extensive range of support services available to students is used and managed well. Procedures for the provision and management of support are clear, well documented and understood by students and staff. The college is effective in supporting students at risk of dropping out. Induction is comprehensive and helps students to settle into their course quickly. Advice and guidance for students are very good, both before and during the course. Good careers advice ensures that high numbers of leavers progress to higher-level courses or employment. Provision of additional learning support is satisfactory, but the teaching does not take sufficient account of the different learning needs of students and there is insufficient development of literacy and numeracy skills. There is good uptake of childcare, travel cost and residential bursaries. Pastoral support is good. Students have access to counselling and the chaplaincy for help with all types of personal problems. Residential students are particularly well supported by the wardens. Attendance and punctuality are monitored thoroughly. Tutorial support is good, but there are insufficient progress reviews for work-based learners.

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

- the friendly and supportive staff

- the opportunities to take additional qualifications

- the industrial expertise of the staff and the way they use this in teaching

- the new practical facilities on the site

- the welcoming atmosphere, good social life and opportunities to meet new people

- the range of classes and courses

- the opportunities to go on trips and visits.

What they feel could be improved

- the quality and price of the food in the canteen

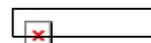
- the amount of practical activities on their courses

- some boring teaching

- the unreliable and expensive transport into college

- the slow progress of work-based learners towards achieving their qualification.

Other information



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

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

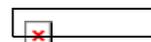


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	51	43	6
19+	56	44	0
WBL*	60	40	0
Learning 16-18	47	45	8
19+	56	44	0
WBL*	60	40	0

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

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. Data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised student records (ISR) for 2001/02 and 2002/03 were provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2003/04. Inspectors used additional data provided by the college to help them make their judgements, particularly in relation to work-based learning and in-year retention rates for 2004.

2. Attendance in the lessons observed during the inspection was 85% overall. This is similar to the average attendance for specialist land-based colleges inspected in 2002/03. Attendance is highest in equine, agriculture and countryside at 90%. Attendance is lowest in foundation studies, although this is still similar to the national average for lessons in literacy and numeracy. Students are well motivated, work enthusiastically and most attain at least satisfactory or good standards. Standards of work are particularly high in horticulture and animal management. Students demonstrate good practical skills in horticulture, agriculture and on foundation programmes, but practical skill development is less effective in equine studies. Students' learning skills are developed through well-designed assignments, but individual learning plans have only been used by the college since September 2004 and are not yet fully effective in ensuring that individual learning needs are met.

3. Retention rates on programmes at levels 1 and 3 all improved in the three years up to 2003 and were above national averages. Rates for level 2 show decline in 2002/03 and were below national averages. College data for 2003/04 show a decline in retention rates at all levels for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults at level 3. Rates at level 1 for adults are broadly similar to the previous year and at level 2 have improved to and are now at the national average.

4. Pass rates for all students are in line with, or above the national average, at all levels and have shown a steady improvement since 2000/01. Pass rates are now particularly good for adults at level 1.

16 to 18 year olds

5. Pass rates in 2002/03 were in line with national averages at levels 1 and 3 and college data for 2003/04 shows some improvement. While pass rates at level 2 for the last four years have been above the national average, retention rates at this level have been low and continue to decline to 25% below the national average for 2003/04. Key skills pass rates are low except for students on animal management courses where they are at, or above, the national average.

6. The achievement of modern apprenticeships by work-based learners is poor in horticulture and too slow in agriculture. In particular, pass rates for advanced modern apprentices in horticulture have averaged only 16% a year over the last five years. Pass rates for foundation modern apprentices have averaged only 24% for those years where all learners have now completed their programmes. In agriculture, pass rates for foundation apprentices have never been above 38%. Too many learners working towards apprenticeships in agriculture make slow progress, even though they start the course with considerable experience. Achievement of service engineering apprentices is satisfactory at around 50% for foundation apprentices.

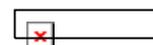
7. Most students on courses at levels 2 and 3 make satisfactory progress and develop appropriate knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of the college estate and farm for teaching. Students in horticulture and animal management produce practical work of a high standard. However, there are insufficient timetabled practical sessions for students on equine programmes. On foundation courses, there is effective development of students' practical skills, confidence and self-esteem. Many make considerable progress in the development of their personal and social skills. However, levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy are often lower than the course level indicates. There is very good progression both into further education (FE) or HE and into employment.

Adult learners

8. Many adult students are on courses at level 1. Pass rates are consistently well above the national average. Retention rates at this level have improved significantly and are now well above the

national average. Retention and pass rates at levels 2 and 3 are in line with the national averages and pass rates, in particular, are improving. There are large numbers of adult students on short courses. In 2003/04, 2,423 adults were enrolled on short courses. Most of these adults are on courses in community education. Retention and pass rates have been in line with national averages, but the retention rate dropped sharply in 2003/04 to substantially below the national average.

Quality of education and training



9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 70 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 54% of lessons, satisfactory in 43% and less than satisfactory in 3%. The percentage of teaching that was good or better is lower than the average for colleges of this type, but the percentage of unsatisfactory teaching is also significantly lower. Learning was good or better in 52% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 4%. In 47% of lessons, attainment was satisfactory and unsatisfactory in only 6% of the lessons. The highest proportion of good or better teaching was in animal management. The proportions of good or better teaching are around the national average for agriculture and horticulture, but significantly below average for equine. Only 29% of teaching in foundation was judged good or better and this area also had the highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, at 7%.

10. The quality of teaching for adult students is better than that for students aged 16 to 18, although the sample of observations for this group of students is smaller at about 25% of the total number of lessons observed. Adults also learn more effectively and have significantly higher levels of attainment. Overall, the quality of teaching is best at level 2 and generally better in practical lessons. However, there is no good or better practical teaching in equine and attainment levels in practical lessons for equine students are well below the national average. There is little difference between the quality of teaching for full-time students compared to part-time students.

11. On average, the lessons taught by part-time teachers are of a lower quality than those taught by full-time teachers. Part-time teachers use their industrial experience well, but are less experienced as teachers.

12. The college has introduced improved procedures for lesson planning. Most curriculum areas make good use of well-prepared lesson plans and schemes of work. In some curriculum areas, detailed profiles of the individual learning needs and learning styles of each student are identified through initial assessment. However, not all teachers make good use of this information in teaching.

13. In the best lessons, teachers combine theory and practical elements effectively to maintain students' interest and link the curriculum to practice in industry. This is particularly evident in agriculture and horticulture. Good use is made of the new animal management teaching facilities which enable excellent integration of practical and theory. In less effective lessons, teachers fail to take account of the individual needs of students: some students are not able to complete the tasks set while others finish early and have nothing to do or have to repeat tasks. Much literary and numeracy teaching is dull and insufficiently linked to the vocational area which students are following. Riding teaching for equine students is weaker than the theory teaching, which is good. There is insufficient dialogue between students and the teacher. Too often students are drilled through exercises with little correction or help to develop their skills.

14. On-the-job training is unsatisfactory for most work-based learners. It is not planned and insufficient use is made of learners' prior experience and knowledge.

15. Teachers hold appropriate vocational qualifications and almost all either hold, or are working towards acquiring, teaching qualifications. Many have up-to-date occupational knowledge and use this effectively to promote learning. Recent and effective new staff appointments include student support officers at each of the four centres in the community and additional work-based learning

guidance officers to increase the support for trainees in the workplace. Technicians are in place in each of the curriculum areas and are actively involved in supporting learning alongside their other responsibilities. High priority is now given to staff development to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Recent training, however, has not yet had an effect in all curriculum areas. Too few teachers of literacy and numeracy hold appropriate qualifications, but a training programme is in place to address this.

16. Most classrooms provide a bright, clean and spacious environment for teaching and are well equipped. A significant minority, including some workshops, are basic, cold and in need of refurbishment. A high level of recent investment has resulted in the provision of modern specialist resources in almost all areas. Well-planned redevelopment of existing buildings or the provision of new buildings has ensured pleasant and attractive learning environments. A few areas, including resources for dog and cat work in animal management and workshop machinery in agriculture, are less well provided. Effective maintenance takes place and the campus, grounds and working areas are clean, tidy and well kept. Development and refurbishment of the centres in the community are ongoing and significant improvements are evident in two of the four main centres. Access for students with restricted mobility remains difficult in several areas, including parts of the learning resource centre and the community centres. Placements for work-based trainees in agriculture and horticulture are well resourced.

17. The provision of information and learning technology (ILT) resources is good. Improved book stocks and a well-managed learning resource centre at the main campus are well used by students. Equine text books and some basic skills learning materials are outdated. Sufficient modern computers are available across all sites and an adequate intranet is in place. A dedicated basic skills resource area is in the early stages of development. Too little electronic information is held about the farm, animal management and equine areas limiting opportunities for students to use this for learning.

18. Health and safety are emphasised in teaching across the college. Procedures for health and safety checks on work placements are established and now take place at appropriate times. In previous years, some placements were not checked at a sufficiently early stage in a student's placement period. Risk assessment procedures are undertaken diligently, but the process does not accurately identify the likelihood or severity of each risk.

19. Initial assessment of learning needs for full-time students and work-based learners is comprehensive. There is too little vocational aptitude assessment, although equine students take a riding test. All students complete a learning styles questionnaire. Results are passed to tutors with advice on how to support the students individually in lessons. However, little use is made of this information to plan individual learning. Initial assessment for part-time courses is too informal and not given uniformly for all groups of students, although this is now being addressed by the college. There is little structured development of literacy and numeracy skills and insufficient recording of progress. A significant minority of students work towards inappropriate levels of numeracy and literacy.

20. Most assessment and internal verification procedures are well planned, thorough and effective. Students regard assessment as fair. The majority of assessment briefs and an appropriate sample of completed work are internally moderated. Assignments with key skills elements are moderated by key skills specialists. Feedback to students is timely and helpful. However, internal verification procedures are not yet fully effective for work-based learning or for supported learning programmes. On a few courses, the loading of assignments is uneven and causes problems for students in meeting deadlines. On work-based learning programmes, many students lack understanding of how to construct portfolio evidence, and there is insufficient workplace assessment. On sports turf courses, there is ineffective use of workplace assessors and little assessment planning. Too little use is made of unit accreditation owing to low awareness of this process amongst staff.

21. Regular monitoring of students' progress takes place and parents and employers are kept appropriately informed. On most courses, there are frequent group and individual reviews. However, target setting at tutorials is infrequent and goals are vague. The recording of students' progress is not always thorough and this prevents their progress being measured accurately. Progress reviews

are not held often enough for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to measure small but significant achievements.

22. On full-time and work-based learning programmes key skills are made a part of selected vocational assignments. Assignments with key skills elements are moderated by key skills specialists before they are given to students. There is joint timetabling of key skills specialists with vocational tutors. Increased emphasis has been placed on students providing evidence for exemptions and proxy awards. In work-based learning, key skills champions in every occupational area now liaise with key skills specialists effectively and regularly. Attendance at key skills classes is rigorously monitored. Attendance and pass rates are now improving significantly. There is insufficient provision of numeracy and literacy courses at levels 1 and 2 across the college, and insufficient recording of any progress made.

23. A comprehensive range of provision in land-based subjects provides opportunities for all students to take a course well suited to their needs and aspirations. The recent addition of a land-based full-time course at level 1 has ensured that appropriate progression is available. Work-based learning is an integral part of the college's curriculum and courses are offered in agriculture, horticulture and service engineering. Through the four centres in the community, a significant number of short and part-time courses are offered, including a part-time route to a national certificate in agriculture. This provision meets local and regional needs and includes significant emphasis on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is not, however, enough short course provision in animal management.

24. The college has extensive links with a range of partners producing some significant developments in the range and scope of the college's work. The level of consultation and involvement with industry representatives in curriculum developments is very high and productive. Significantly, the recent award of CoVE status in foodchain technology has enabled the college to establish a state of the art robotic milking parlour and a national beef centre linked to two major foodchain companies. New courses, linked to the CoVE, are approved and in the process of recruitment. Innovative and productive links with schools results in an active and effective 14 to 16 provision for over 200 pupils.

25. The college's approach to marketing is proving increasingly effective and it has successfully promoted a range of provision, including that at foundation level. Promotional materials are attractive and informative and have due regard to providing appropriate information to a full range of prospective students. Almost all students achieve additional qualifications as part of their courses which enhances their employment prospects. The opportunity to improve grades in English and mathematics at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) level is offered as well as an advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) course in biology. A range of enrichment activities are available to all students and many are actively involved in sports teams. Little use of accreditation of students' prior learning is made, especially on work-based learning courses. This results in repetition of work for some students and some slow progress in completing apprenticeships.

26. Students are well supported during their courses. The extensive range of support services available to students is used and managed well. Explanatory leaflets and course documents are clear and informative. The college has good partnerships with the Connexions service to support students at risk of dropping out. New student support assistants based at centres in the community are improving access to advice and support across all sites. Tutorial support is good. Full-time and part-time students have regular one-to-one and group tutorials, with free access to tutors between appointments. Group tutorials cover health and social issues and students are able to influence the programme of topics and speakers to suit their needs. There are insufficient tutorials for work-based learners. Guidance officers appointed to act as tutors to work-based learners visit them infrequently and support needs are not adequately recorded.

27. Advice and guidance for students are good. Course information is easily accessible to prospective students on the college website or through prospectuses and leaflets. Recruitment procedures are effective. Prospective students are able to discuss their skills and aspirations with trained college staff on site, or at schools and careers events. Many young people attend the college for 'taster' days to help assess their vocational skills and aptitudes before selecting a vocational

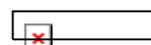
pathway. Careers advice is effective. All college students have ready access to a careers library, and a job search programme, as well as receiving good careers advice by the college adviser. Course tutors give effective preparation for HE in tutorial sessions. Tracking of destinations is effective and shows that in 2003/04, 44% of students progressed to higher-level courses, including those in HE, and 35% progressed to employment.

28. Induction is comprehensive and helps students settle into their course quickly. Students have the opportunity to gain certificates in manual handling and food hygiene. However, late starters are not given the welcome pack straightaway, have to wait for their induction and some are accordingly disadvantaged. Detailed advice is available on financial support, transport benefits and residential accommodation. There is good uptake of childcare funding and residential bursaries.

29. Learning support is satisfactory and results in students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieving their goals. However, results are not used sufficiently by tutors to plan different learning activities to meet the differing needs of the students in lessons. For example, on foundation courses, students are usually all working on the same tasks at the same level. Learning support assistants are allocated to most courses at levels 1 and 2, and provide valuable support to students in note taking, assignment writing and language, but there is insufficient development of numeracy and literacy by specialist tutors. Very good additional specialist support is sensitively provided for students with visual or hearing impairment, both in class and in the learning resource centre.

30. Pastoral support is good. Students have access to counselling and the chaplaincy for help with all types of personal problems. Issues are resolved quickly. For example, a student was evicted from home by his parents and was immediately given temporary accommodation at the college. Residential students are particularly well supported by the wardens and all students feel secure and safe. Attendance and punctuality are monitored effectively and support is given promptly to students where personal issues are affecting attendance. The student council has a wide representation, including an advocate for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and is effective in bringing about changes and improvements.

Leadership and management



31. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior management sets a very clear direction for the college. A new strategy, which re-affirms the college's land-based credentials and at the same time develops modern specialist facilities and expertise, is designed to increase student numbers and raise the profile of the college. The accompanying vision statement and six priority areas place the college at the forefront of the economic development of the region. These are widely disseminated, thoroughly understood and welcomed by staff and partner organisations. The college's strategic plan sets out a clear rationale and actions. Staff and governors have been appropriately involved in strategic planning processes. The college has strong links with local employers and as part of its new strategy is playing a vigorous and leading role in a wide range of collaborative developments, with both the industrial and commercial sectors as well as educational partners. However, the college's plans to incorporate the 'Skills for Life' initiative have been implemented too slowly and are not yet fully effective.

32. The senior management team have appropriate roles that they understand and are committed to fulfilling, both individually and as a team. Collectively there is an open management style that staff appreciate. A recent restructuring has given section leaders a greater sense of autonomy, and the senior management team are supporting the development of this crucial tier of management well. The quality of leadership and management of curriculum areas is mixed. Enthusiasm, good teamwork and communication are evident in many areas. Self-assessment processes are satisfactory, but the analysis they contain is not thorough or deep enough, especially with regard to the use made of data. Curriculum action plans are not linked clearly to the college's development plans. Targets for enrolment, retention and pass rates are set at various points in the year, but the

targets within the action plans from self-assessment reviews are not always sufficiently clear. The management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory.

33. A good range of quality assurance procedures is in place. Many improvements and additions to the range have been introduced recently, such as better use of an attendance administrator, section teaching mentors and the implementation of cross-college schemes of work and lesson-planning formats. It is too early to judge the impact of some of these measures. Induction and staff development procedures are very good. Regular use is made of staff feedback mechanisms and actions are taken in response. There are well-established risk management procedures which have recently been evaluated by external advisers. Job descriptions are in place. Around 75% of permanent staff have teaching qualifications and a further 16% are working towards them. Appraisal policies and procedures are well established, but over the last 12 months records indicate that only just under two thirds of eligible staff received an appraisal. Similarly, lesson observation is established, but the quality of the recording is variable and grades are generous. Steps have been taken to improve both the quantity and rigour of the system for 2004/05. Links between lesson observation outcomes and professional development and appraisal are unclear.

34. Improved management information systems have recently been put in place, but management information is not effectively used at all levels. The college intranet is well established, and is accessible from the college's centres in the community. Staff have been trained in the use of data systems, but its use in monitoring and reviewing student progress and performance is not yet efficient or reliable.

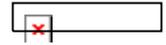
35. The college is a highly inclusive environment and the principles of equal opportunities are a central part of policies and practices. The college has responded promptly to the SENDA and the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act. Action plans are in place and are regularly reviewed. Enrolments and achievements of minority ethnic groups are analysed appropriately. Monitoring of the work of the college with regard to equality of opportunity is effective. Training has been arranged for governors and staff, although not all staff have yet received it. An equal opportunities committee is chaired by the principal and is served by a working group that has wide representation and is a lively and productive forum. Many appropriate measures are taken, such as the recent production and distribution to all students of a well-produced equality and diversity booklet. There are positive marketing strategies and very good links with partner organisations serving students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as a local school for children with hearing impairments. Many examples of the college striving to make adjustments to enable all students to have access to opportunities are obvious. Access for people with restricted mobility remains difficult in some areas of the college, although plans are in place to improve this situation.

36. The governors of the college provide a wide range of highly useful and relevant expertise and the work of the corporation is conducted efficiently and effectively. The work of the college is monitored and questioned appropriately and actions are taken to improve performance. For example, following an unforeseen overspend on the recently completed equine centre, the corporation has established a projects group which will monitor and report on future projects. Governors are committed to, and involved in, the work of the college, in a range of ways. Each governor is individually linked to an appropriate curriculum area or an aspect of work. The operation of these links is monitored and is effective. The corporation is fully aware of the new strategy of investment, growth and partnership development and support the principal in this vision. Their influence on the vision statement and priority areas, particularly in the references to rural economic diversification, is substantial. They understand the financial plan that underpins the strategy and have established close mechanisms to monitor the position.

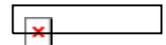
37. Reliable and robust financial information systems are in place. Best value review processes are established and budget setting and monitoring are effective. Staff are efficiently deployed and there are no significant vacancies. A thriving business development unit is generating useful income. However, the college's financial position is extremely weak. The college was for a number of years supporting its operating budget by the sale of surplus assets. There was a decline in infrastructure and a maintenance backlog. The new strategy, based on the needs of students and a vision of the college's role in the region, is to invest in new facilities, develop relevant specialisms and partnership operations, and grow. The effect of this clarion call on the morale of staff and students, and on the

perceptions of the college within the region, has been dramatic, but the immediate financial effect has been a significant budget deficit. The current three-year financial plan forecasts the college in a breakeven position by 2005/06. The plan, supported by the corporation and the local LSC, is a challenging one, depending for its success on growth in student numbers and the development of significant other sources of income. At present, the college offers satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Agriculture and countryside



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

The contributory grade for work-based learning in agriculture is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

The contributory grade for work-based learning in service engineering is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on national certificate courses
- good commercial reality in teaching
- good range of additional qualifications offered
- very good retention rates in work-based learning in service engineering
- highly effective use of resources
- good links with industry.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on national diploma courses

- low achievement of key skills by full-time students

- slow progress in work-based learning in agriculture

- poor management of on-the-job training.

Scope of provision

38. Full-time provision includes; an introductory skills certificate at level 1, managed by the supported learning section; a first diploma at level 2 with 9 students, 6 of whom are aged 16 to 18; and a national diploma at level 3 in either agriculture or countryside management, with 26 students in agriculture and 11 in countryside management. Most of these students are aged 16 to 18. A national certificate in agriculture was offered as a full-time course until July 2004 and is still run as a part-time course over three years at the Pickering, Harrogate and Bedale centres. There are 46 students currently enrolled on these courses of whom 40 are aged 16 to 18. Opportunity exists within the college to progress to HE in either agriculture or land management.

39. The proportion of work-based learners in this area is large compared to a relatively small number of other full-time students. Work-based learning includes apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in agriculture and service engineering. Agriculture provision has options in either livestock production or mixed farming, based at the Pickering, Harrogate, Bedale or Guisborough centres. There are 12 advanced apprentices, 32 apprentices and 9 learners working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. In service engineering, there are 27 advanced apprentices, 18 apprentices and 3 learners working towards NVQ at level 2. Provision for young people aged 14 to 16 includes a first diploma in countryside and environment at the Pickering centre. Taster programmes are also offered at Askham Bryan, Bedale, Harrogate, and Guisborough covering 18 schools with 215 learners.

Achievement and standards

40. There are high pass rates on the national diploma in agriculture and on the national certificate, both as a full-time and as a part-time course. However, retention rates on the national diploma are low, while those on the full-time national certificate in agriculture are good and improving. In-course retention rates on the second year of the new national diploma in countryside management are already low, although the number of students starting this course is very small. There is good achievement of some additional qualifications such as safe use of veterinary medicines. There was no achievement of key skills qualifications by any student on the full-time national certificate and diploma courses in 2003/04 as no portfolios were completed. There is very good progression from the level 2 national certificate to the level 3 national diploma and from the national diploma into either employment or into HE.

41. In agriculture, pass rates for foundation modern apprentices are low and have never been above 38%. Many learners working towards apprenticeships in agriculture make slow progress even though they start the course with considerable experience. Most apprentices in agriculture also work towards the part-time national certificate in agriculture, which runs over three years. There is overemphasis on the use of evidence obtained from this qualification for evidence of knowledge and understanding for the NVQ. Learners are not able to achieve their apprenticeship more quickly despite their previous experience or aptitude. Achievement of service engineering apprentices is satisfactory, at around 50% for foundation apprentices.

42. The retention rate in service engineering is very high, having averaged 86% since 2000/01. Retention rates in agriculture are satisfactory and improving. There is good progression in service engineering; of the 16 learners who have recently achieved a foundation apprenticeship 12 have progressed to an advanced apprenticeship.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
National certificate in agriculture full-time 1 year	2	No. of starts	18	11	12
		% retention	83	91	100
		% pass rate	80	80	92
National certificate in agriculture part-time 3 year	2	No. of starts	2	5	11
		% retention	50	20	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Safe use of veterinary medicines - short course	2	No. of starts	41	42	23
		% retention	100	100	96
		% pass rate	71	69	95
National diploma in agriculture full-time 2 and 3 years	3	No. of starts	20	13	12
		% retention	65	69	58
		% pass rate	92	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

43. Staff bring a good commercial reality to their teaching, frequently relating the theory to practice on the college farm, to the students' own experiences and to wider farming and commercial practice. In some lessons, there is effective use of ILT, real exemplars, short visits to the farm or grounds, and a variety of interactive techniques to maintain the students' interest and involvement.

44. Staff are well qualified both technically and vocationally. There has been considerable investment in the farm in recent years. This includes a new 200 cow dairy unit incorporating a rapid exit and a robotic parlour. The robotic parlour was funded as part of a CoVE in food production technology which has just completed its first year and also includes a partially completed food technology building. It is too early to assess the impact of the CoVE on the curriculum. Alongside this development the college has worked with industry to establish the National Beef Training Centre. This building is almost ready to take its first stock. Good use is made of the college dairy unit for well-structured routine duties, and effective realistic practical training. Very good use is made of local farms to provide practical facilities for part-time national certificate in agriculture and work-based learners and to enhance the students' learning. However, the farm is little used by the countryside students. There are well-equipped spacious centres at Bedale, Harrogate and Pickering which are used effectively in conjunction with facilities on local farms to run the part-time national certificate in agriculture as well as provide a base for the work-based learning and some 14 to 16 provision.

45. Assignments on full-time courses are well planned throughout the year and the standard of the students' assignment work is satisfactory. There is systematic and comprehensive internal verification. Assessment briefs contain clear criteria. In most instances, feedback is adequate to enable the student to understand the reasons for the grade and what could be done to improve it. The use of assessments to set clear targets and monitor progress is less well developed. There is no formal assessment of vocational competence at the start of the course.

46. There is a wide range of additional qualifications on offer for full-time and part-time students including tractor driving, fork-lift truck, safe use of veterinary medicines, sprayer, chain saw, sheep dipping and computer courses. A separate programme also offers AS-level biology, together with GCSE mathematics and English aimed at those with grade Ds in these subjects. There is a good take up of this provision. The centres in the community are used effectively to enable students from the more distant rural areas of the county to attend training. The national certificate in agriculture is offered to all work-based learners. This qualification is well respected by industry and learners greatly appreciate the opportunity to achieve it alongside their apprenticeship. The enrichment programme is largely restricted to technical visits or sports, and does not help to develop students' social skills or knowledge of related subjects such as health and finance. The CoVE in food chain technology and the establishment of the National Beef Training Centre are a response to the demands of local industry and have strengthened the links with local farms and the food processing industry, enabling the college to plan new courses to start in September 2005.

47. Students are well supported by their personal tutors. There is good careers advice and guidance by tutors and high progression rates into continuing education or employment. The new system of attendance monitoring is proving effective at reducing absenteeism. Attendance at lessons during the inspection averaged over 90%, with virtually all absences accounted for. All students are assessed on entry to determine their learning support needs. Support is provided where a need is identified, including individual support and support in lessons where learning support staff are used effectively.

Leadership and management

48. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Senior managers set a clear direction which is enthusiastically supported by staff. The new developments resulting from the CoVE and the National Beef Training Centre have strongly motivated staff. Course files are comprehensive, up to date and well structured. Courses are well organised and students are kept well aware of any changes. The course review and evaluation process has good systems to gather together the views of staff, students and industry. However, insufficient use is made of management information and data to analyse the section's performance against national averages, identify areas where improvement is needed, set targets and monitor progress. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory and good use is made of the out-centres to extend provision into more remote rural areas.

49. The management of work-based learning is poor. There is poor planning of training in the workplace. There are no on-the-job training plans and weak monitoring of learners' progress. There is insufficient co-ordination between the on-the-job and off-the-job training which learners attend at the college. Employers lack information about the requirements of the work-based training programme. Target setting during learner reviews is poor. A new progress review record has been introduced this autumn, but it is not being completed correctly. Infrequent visit to the workplace are recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report and new guidance officers have recently been appointed. Three engineering learners have not been visited in the workplace since March 2004. Self-assessment is not used effectively to improve the quality of the work-based training programmes. The college has little data to establish trends in pass and retention rates and data is not used effectively to manage and monitor the learners' progress.

Animal management



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

Strengths

- much good teaching

- high standard of students' work
- very good animal care and veterinary nursing facilities at York
- effective partnerships to widen participation
- good progression to FE, HE and employment
- highly effective course management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on the first diploma
- not enough short course and part-time provision in animal care
- insufficient facilities for dog and cat work.

Scope of provision

50. There is a range of animal management and veterinary nursing courses from level 1 to higher national diploma (HND) and degree. Student numbers have increased each year and at the time of the inspection there were 215 students enrolled. First and national diplomas are taught at the main college campus and through productive college partnerships at Middlesbrough and Wakefield. Some 94% of students are enrolled on full-time programmes and the majority are aged 16 to 18. The college has outline approval as a Veterinary Nurse Approved Centre (VNAC) and intends to expand veterinary nursing provision. Some 12 students aged over 19 are enrolled on part-time veterinary nursing courses at levels 2 and 3. Full-time students work towards a number of additional qualifications such as tractor operation, manual handling, safe use of veterinary medicines, horse owner's certificate, first aid and GCSEs.

Achievement and standards

51. Pass rates for the first diploma course are high, but retention rates are poor and have been around 10% below the national average for the last three years. Results on the new veterinary nursing course are good, although only four students have completed the course so far, all have

been successful. Pass and retention rates on the national diploma course are good and similar to the national averages. Key skills achievements are above the national average.

52. Attendance during inspection was good at 88% which is above the national average. There is good progression to FE, HE and employment. Last year over three quarters of first diploma students progressed to a national diploma and almost half of the national diploma students progressed to HE, while the remaining half successfully gained employment.

53. Students' work is of a particularly high standard. They develop very good practical skills and are confident and competent in all aspects of handling and managing animals. Students support one another in lessons and are confident about asking questions and expressing their views. The standard of written assignment work is also good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First diploma animal care	2	No. of starts	49	50	45
		% retention	73	74	69
		% pass rate	92	100	97
National diploma animal care	3	No. of starts	43	54	*
		% retention	70	70	*
		% pass rate	97	84	*
National diploma animal management	3	No. of starts	*	*	70
		% retention	*	*	74
		% pass rate	*	*	92
NVQ veterinary nursing	2	No. of starts	*	*	4
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	100

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

54. In over two thirds of lessons, teaching is good or better. Teachers prepare lessons well and take account of the different learning styles of students. Teaching and learning activities include role play, group work, discussion, presentations, and artwork and keep students involved and learning at all times. Theory and practical work are well integrated. Teachers and technical support staff have in-depth professional knowledge and experience, which is used effectively to promote learning. There is a strong awareness and application of health and safety, and welfare standards for both handlers and animals. Good use is made of the knowledge of more experienced students. For example, in a level 2 veterinary nursing lesson, students demonstrated the use of restraint equipment and approaches to handling a range of animals and wildlife to each other. They confidently and accurately commented on the accuracy of each other's performance. However, there is little use of older students as supervisors on the animal management unit during routine duties. Most students work enthusiastically and ask searching questions of each other and the teacher. For example, national diploma students are able to evaluate the effectiveness of a range of animal enclosures in terms of keepers', visitors' and animals' needs. First diploma students have a good understanding of the role of government agencies and are able to confidently present their findings to the group and depict them visually. Students make good use of information technology (IT) in their work. There are well-resourced library and IT facilities, although there are insufficient computers in classrooms in the

animal care units. In a few less successful lessons, too much of the lesson is led by the teachers who often answer their own questions and spend too long on one topic. A few teachers do not relate their teaching in lessons to assessment activities that the students will need to complete.

55. There are very good animal nursing and veterinary facilities at the main college campus in York. The unit has a wide range of animals. There are indoor and outdoor enclosures for goats, rheas, wallabies, birds and poultry, ferrets, exotic mammals, chinchillas, degus, chipmunks, rodents, reptiles, fish and invertebrates. Theory is taught in a practical setting in the well-equipped veterinary nursing simulation centre with reception area, consulting room, operating theatre, and radiographic facilities. There is good labelling of the pens and cages at both sites, including information categorised for different levels of handling. The college recognises that dog grooming facilities are inadequate. There are no indoor holding pens and grooming activities sometimes take place in inappropriate outdoor conditions. Both dogs and cats have to be taken past the rodent enclosure which can be distressing for both animals. At Middlesbrough the range of animals is adequate and is supplemented by regular visits to animal collections. There is insufficient classroom accommodation. One teaching room also houses reptiles, and animals are handled on desks.

56. Assignments are well designed. They include a range of activities such as designing promotional leaflets and presentations, and build in opportunities for research. A few assignments lack imagination. Written work presented by most level 3 students is comprehensive and reflective. Work is marked thoroughly and teachers provide comprehensive and constructive written feedback. They explain exactly what students have to do to improve their work.

57. There is insufficient short course or part-time provision in animal care. The college has recognised this and there are plans to develop a wider range of courses. Virtually no short courses are offered and part-time provision is limited to veterinary nursing and infill to full-time courses. There are no work-based learning or NVQ programmes.

58. The college has made particularly good use of partnerships to widen participation. For example, the partnerships with Middlesbrough and Wakefield colleges have allowed the college to expand its provision to meet the needs of learners who cannot travel to the York campus. Good use is made of work experience and visits to outside organisations, for example, Flamingo Land Zoo, Chester Zoo, Sea Life Centre, and other animal collections to develop students' skills. There is a particularly successful collaboration with Flamingo Land where the college has jointly funded the appointment of an education officer for the last two years.

59. Students are enthusiastic about the courses and the help they receive. They know exactly where to go to get specific support. There are regular individual tutorials. However, the recording of tutorials is not consistently effective across all centres. Students receive a comprehensive induction to the college. This also involves taking a food handling qualification, manual lifting, literacy and numeracy assessments and introduction to a health and safety assignment. Guidance and careers advice for current students wishing to progress is good.

60. There are good examples of unobtrusive helpful support to meet the needs of students with hearing impairment and physical disabilities. In most first diploma lessons, a learning support tutor is present. However, in national diploma lessons, although the teacher is aware of specific needs it is not always clear how those needs will be met in the classroom.

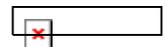
Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are good and course management is highly effective. Quality assurance procedures are implemented thoroughly. Accountabilities are clear within the new management structure. There has been a rapid expansion of staff and students and the team is now consolidating its approach. Staff at all sites feel valued and consider themselves part of one large team. Staff support each other well and there is good sharing of practice across centres. Communication is effective over the sites, although there is no access to the college intranet from Middlesbrough college. There is a supportive mentoring scheme in place which new staff value and good support for new teachers from other staff. Teams diligently follow college procedures for review

and evaluation. Actions and responsibilities are particularly related to improving retention rates and they are having a positive effect. While the team is aware of student statistics, there has been a tendency to consider individual centres in isolation and not look at the overall trends in performance on a particular course.

62. Staff have good opportunities for generic and vocational professional development. The results of observation of teaching and learning are similar to inspection findings, although the college graded slightly more observations good and better. There has been rapid growth in this area and not all teachers have teaching qualifications. Non-qualified staff are enrolled on some form of teacher training courses early on in the year. Inspectors agree with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but consider that it is insufficiently self-critical when looking at reasons for falling retention rates.

Equine studies



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on national diploma in horse management

- good theory teaching

- strong support for students through tutorials

- good progression from level 1 to level 3 courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on first diploma and NVQ courses

- weak teaching techniques in riding lessons

- too few timetabled sessions for riding and stable yard work.

Scope of provision

63. Equine provision includes NVQs at levels 1 and 2, a first diploma in horse care, a national award in horse management and a national diploma in horse management. British Horse Society (BHS) stages examinations; BHS riding and road safety and BHS horse owner certificates are offered on a part-time and short-course basis and as additional qualifications for full-time students. Most of the 64 students on full-time courses are aged 16 to 18. There are 37 students on part-time courses. There are also six, second-year national diploma students are based at Middlesbrough college and receive practical training at a nearby riding centre.

Achievement and standards

64. Pass rates on the national diploma horse management course are high. Over the last two years, all students who completed passed. Although the retention rate has been poor, it has improved and was well above the national average for 2003/04. Retention rates on first diploma horse care and national NVQ courses are low. The college has recognised that some students are enrolled inappropriately on these courses and has put strategies in place to improve recruitment practices. On NVQ courses, many students are part time and are unable to reach the required practical level to achieve the qualification. Pass rates on additional qualifications such as BHS horse owner certificates and riding and road safety are good. Key skills pass rates are low. There is good progression from level 1 to level 3 courses and high percentages of students continue in education or gain employment at the end of their course. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory and demonstrates adequate understanding of their subject. All full-time students perform yard duties at the college equine centre, but there are too few timetabled sessions for this practical work. Students do not learn to work at commercial speeds and they are not well prepared to work practically within the equine industry. Attendance and punctuality are good on all courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
BHS horse owners certificate*	1	No. of starts	6	26	37
		% retention	100	96	92
		% pass rate	50	80	79
NVQ (1 yr)	2	No. of starts	8	20	26
		% retention	88	65	58
		% pass rate	88	62	100
First diploma in horse management	2	No. of starts	5	5	7
		% retention	60	100	43
		% pass rate	40	100	29
BHS horse owners certificate*	2	No. of starts	***	25	11
		% retention	***	96	82
		% pass rate	***	83	100
National diploma in horse management	3	No. of starts	23**	14	17
		% retention	57**	64	88
		% pass rate	77**	100	100
BHS horse owners certificate*	3	No. of starts	***	17	6
		% retention	***	94	100
		% pass rate	***	94	83

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

* *short course*

***college data*

****data unavailable*

Quality of education and training

65. Teaching of theory lessons is good. Teachers use a range of teaching methods and activities effectively to motivate students. Good use is made by teachers of activities which not only increase students' knowledge of caring for and managing horses, but also develop their ability to work with others, take part in discussions and plan and delegate activities within groups. Teachers are careful to ensure that they maintain the students' interest and excellent use is made of the experience of both students and staff working with horses.

66. However, the teaching in practical riding is less successful. Too often, teachers drill riders through movements and pay insufficient attention to helping the rider improve the horse's way of going. Riders are not sufficiently involved in a dialogue with the teacher about their assessment of the feedback they are receiving from their horse. In some cases, teachers give students information which is out of date or incorrect. For example, students were being instructed to change their whip when they changed the rein, although this is no longer the practice in the industry. The indoor school, where many lessons take place, does not have any markers and so students are not learning to ride school movements accurately. Although the horses are very suitable for level 2 riders, there are insufficient horses working at a level suitable for level 3 students.

67. Most teaching staff have appropriate vocational qualifications and either have, or are working towards, a formal teaching qualification. Good use is made of the onsite equine facilities by staff when designing assignments. However, the students can not make use of the college loan horse records because they are not available electronically. Assignment feedback is constructive, but in some cases lacks attention to detail regarding spelling and grammar. Assignment schedules are well planned to avoid overloading students. The equine unit is managed effectively and stable management is of an appropriate standard. However, too often students ride in the dirty boots that they have worn for stable work and bridles are often put away without the bits being washed. Good attention is given to health and safety on the yard and staff have completed appropriate risk assessments for all activities relating to horses.

68. The range of provision in equine is good. There is good progression from level 1 courses through to level 3 and beyond. Careers advice and guidance are effective and students have clear ideas about their future careers and the further training which is available both at the college and elsewhere. The college arranges frequent open days and taster sessions to encourage potential students. Links with work experience employers are good and the industrial liaison advisory group currently meets twice annually. However, staff from the college do not always visit work experience placements before students commence work and the system for monitoring work placements is weak. There is a good programme of enrichment activities and guest lecturers and speakers are invited to the college to give talks. A variety of short courses is available during weekday evenings and mornings.

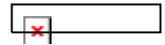
69. Students are enthusiastic about their studies and develop very good working relationships with the teaching and yard staff. Students receive good initial guidance from staff in the equine unit to help them choose the correct course. Additional learning support is available to all students. Induction is effective and enables students to settle into their courses quickly. Tutorials are used effectively to monitor students' progress and set targets. Tutors provide excellent support for both personal and academic problems. They are quick to follow-up any problems with either attendance or submission of assignment work and students value the help they receive.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. At the time of the

inspection, the section was carrying out a full review of management procedures. Courses are well managed. Minutes of team meetings are comprehensive. However, important agenda items such as teaching, tutoring, retention rates, pass rates, recruitment, course reviews and equal opportunities are not included. Part-time staff are not involved in the development of the self-assessment report. Prior to the current academic year, none of the equine staff had received a formal appraisal. New staff have a mentor and are well supported in their teaching and tutoring. A lesson observation scheme is in place, but it had not identified the weaknesses in riding teaching found at inspection. The equine section of the college prospectus does not challenge gender stereotypes and does not contain a sufficient number of photographs of men working with horses.

Horticulture and floristry



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rate in national diploma horticulture, general examination in horticulture and certificate in gardening

- good development of practical skills to match industrial standards

- particularly successful teaching methods that relate theory and practice

- very good use of the grounds and other physical resources for teaching

- good initiatives to widen participation.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates for apprenticeships

- insufficient initial assessment for part-time learners

- weak management of on-the-job training in work-based learning

- weak assessment practice in work-based learning sports turf.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in horticulture, floristry, arboriculture and sports turf at the main campus. In addition, part-time courses in horticulture and floristry are offered at four centres. There are 113 students on full-time programmes, of whom 51 are aged 16 to 18 and 62 are aged over 19. There are 452 students on part-time courses of whom 445 are aged over 19. The proportion of work-based learners in this area is large compared to the number of other full-time students. The work-base learning programmes have 106 enrolled students, of whom 49 are on sports turf programme, 30 on horticulture programmes and the rest divided equally between arboriculture and floristry.

72. Full-time programmes include first diplomas, national diplomas and the advanced national certificate in horticulture. Part-time and evening programmes include City and Guilds certificate in gardening, City and Guilds certificate in garden design and the general examination in horticulture. Students on these courses attend for one day a week over one or two years. The college has links with local schools and many pupils aged 14 to 16 attend taster days and programmes which offer vocational experience in this curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

73. There are high pass rates on the national diploma in horticulture, the general examination in horticulture and the certificate in gardening. For the national diploma in horticulture, all of the students who have completed the course over the last four years have achieved the qualification. The pass rates for the certificate in gardening have been above the national average and improving for the last three years. The pass rate for the general examination in horticulture was 31% above the national average for 2003/04.

74. Students are well motivated and demonstrate high levels of professionalism in their practical work. They produce practical work to a high industrial standard. The standard of students' written work is also high. Students have a good understanding of the progression opportunities available to them and rates of progression to FE and HE, or employment are good.

75. Pass rates for apprentices are very poor. In particular, pass rates for advanced apprentices in horticulture have averaged only 16% over the last five years. Pass rates for foundation apprentices have averaged only 24% for those years where all learners have completed their programmes. The college acknowledged this in its self-assessment report and has recently implemented changes, particularly to the key skills provision, in an attempt to remedy the poor achievement. It is too early to judge what the impact of these new initiatives might be. Retention rates on most work-based learning programmes are poor, although a number of the early leavers have progressed to employment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 0061 certificate in gardening 2 year	2	No. of starts	121	125	89
		% retention	53	56	64
		% pass rate	81	84	91
City and Guilds 0350	2	No. of starts	26	10	7

national certificate in horticulture		% retention	85	80	86
		% pass rate	86	75	71
General examination in horticulture	2	No. of starts	71	117	43
		% retention	56	36	56
		% pass rate	58	67	92
NVQ floristry	2	No. of starts	24	5	9
		% retention	63	80	67
		% pass rate	67	86	100
National diploma in forestry 3 year	3	No. of starts	9	11	12
		% retention	56	64	50
		% pass rate	60	86	67
National diploma in horticulture 3 year	3	No. of starts	11	13	11
		% retention	45	92	86
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

76. Teachers use particularly successful teaching methods that relate theory and practice. Often, teachers carry out good demonstrations before giving students the opportunity to practice their skills. Students carry out interesting and challenging practical tasks both in the college grounds and in the community. This work on real projects is used effectively by teachers to reinforce students' understanding of the theory taught in the classroom. Most lessons contain an effective mixture of theory and practical work and staff and students move frequently between the classroom and practical areas. The experience and enthusiasm of staff raises students' aspirations and encourages them to develop professional attitudes. Each year, the college makes several entries into national competitions and this also serves to motivate students.

77. The extensive college grounds and plant collection are used imaginatively as a teaching resource. There is a detailed and ambitious plan to upgrade the grounds. Students are closely involved in implementing the plans as part of their courses. For example, students are involved in designing and developing hard landscaping and planting schemes such as the garden for sheltered housing for students with learning disabilities. There is a good modern glass-house block which is used to grow and sell plants commercially. The college resources are used well for off-the-job training for work-based learners and particularly to arrange assessments that are not available in the workplace. There are sufficient hand tools for student use and a wide range of horticultural and sports turf machinery and equipment. The college links with 21 commercial businesses which regularly demonstrate and loan up-to-date machinery and equipment. There is a well-equipped design studio, a science laboratory and a floristry work room. Students also have access to good learning materials on the college intranet. The levels of teaching and vocational qualifications of full-time and part-time staff are good.

78. Assessment practices on work-based learning sports turf programmes are weak. Most of the green-keeper learners are not aware of which technical certificates they will be taking or what key skills are required. In sports turf, there is insufficient observation of learners in the workplace by assessors and some portfolios have little assessed evidence for learners into their second year. Learners are not always given good guidance about collecting and using evidence. In one case, the learner was collecting all of his job sheets for all of the NVQ units before getting them signed by either the employer or assessor. There is insufficient internal verification of learners' work in sports turf and insufficient observation of assessors by internal verifiers. The college has recognised this and has allowed the verifier more time to visit workplaces, but this has only recently been introduced

and it is too early to judge its effectiveness in improving assessment practice. In some cases, the workplace assessors are not used effectively and the college does not plan with the assessor when assessments should be carried out or the targets for completion of the whole qualification

79. There is a good range of level 2 programmes with good opportunities to progress to level 3. There are good opportunities for full-time students to take additional qualifications in skills such as pesticide application and chainsaw use. The college has used a number of strategies effectively to widen participation on the training programmes, including flexible timetabling, the bridge scheme and taster days for young people aged 14 to 16. There is a particularly good range of courses at centres in the community to enable participation of people from the rural parts of North Yorkshire.

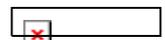
80. There is no formal initial assessment for part-time students. Tutors adopt their own methods to find out more about their students, but there is no uniform effective practice. Often teachers are only aware of students' difficulties when they are struggling to complete work. The college is aware of this and has plans to make improvements. Initial assessment for full-time and work-based learners is more comprehensive. Learning style questionnaires have recently been introduced and teachers are now beginning to use them to plan learning, but this is in its early stages. Additional support needs are identified during induction week and this information is communicated to tutors. The results of initial assessment are not always used to amend learning and teaching plans. For example, some lesson plans note learning styles, but then teachers do not use an appropriate variety of teaching methods to meet the individual needs identified. Tutorial support is good on full-time and part-time courses. Students receive individual and group tutorials and have good access to course tutors without appointments.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management of the curriculum are satisfactory. There is a clear sense of direction within the section with staff at all levels supporting the college's strategic aims. Communication within the section is satisfactory with regular weekly team meetings and course team meetings three times a year. Communication with centres is more informal and based largely on the sharing of staff. Quality assurance is satisfactory with all members of staff contributing to self-assessment. There is a staff appraisal system which has been recently revised and improved, but it is too early to reach a judgement on its effectiveness. Promotion of equal opportunities is good with staff and students being aware of diversity issues. However, on some courses, unsatisfactory gender mixes are claimed to reflect industrial practice, although some actions such as taster days for young people aged 14 to 16 are planned to address this. Physical resources are well deployed using strategies such as bulk buying and the sponsorship of tools and equipment from local, national and international companies.

82. Management of on-the-job training is unsatisfactory in work-based learning. There are insufficient links between on-the-job and off-the-job training and no plan for the on-the-job training. Employers are not given a programme for the off-the-job training and the college does not record what tasks learners can complete at the workplace or identify how any gaps will be filled. Employers are not aware of which parts of the training they are responsible for and which parts will be covered at college. Some learners are not aware of the key skill requirements or the technical certificates they must complete to achieve the whole framework. Learners' training plans are not sufficiently individual and no allowance is made for learners who have worked in the industry for some time to complete their qualification more quickly.

Foundation



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

Strengths

- effective development of personal and vocational skills

- responsive range of courses with vocational elements offering progression from pre-entry to level 2

- good general support and guidance.

Weaknesses

- uninspiring teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT)

- inadequate use of initial and diagnostic assessments to meet individual needs

- insufficient development of strategies to improve the literacy and numeracy aspects of the curriculum.

Scope of provision

83. There are around 265 students at the 4 college centres, about 29 of them on full-time courses for young people aged 16 to 19. Most of the remainder are adults who study part time for up to 14 hours at pre-entry on the develop and accredit your skills programme where literacy and numeracy skills are integrated with the development of practical and creative skills. 'Options' is a full-time, two-year, vocational-linked course for school-leavers with learning difficulties and disabilities. Most of the students on this course are at entry level 1 to 3. Students can progress from this to the introductory skills certificate at level 1. This course aims to prepare students for entry into a mainstream vocational programmes at level 2. On both these full-time courses, students take vocational tasters including animal care, horticulture, and business studies.

Achievement and standards

84. The retention rate is good at over 90% for Options and DAYS courses, which is high and similar to the national average. Students on the DAYS course can choose from a number of craft courses and for many of these both retention and pass rates are near 100%.

85. In 2003/04, the retention rate was 71% for the introductory skills certificate, but all the students who completed achieved their qualification. The new introductory skills programme was introduced in 2004/05.

86. Students develop effective practical and vocational skills. For example, in the animal care option, students learned about the nutritional requirements of small animals in the theory lesson and in the practical lesson they prepared fruit and vegetables and selected and caught insects to feed the animals. They used technical language relating to nutrition and health and safety confidently and

competently. In the cookery sessions, students produced their own recipes for a light meal at a previous session and then used it in this session to prepare the meal. Many students used their literacy to read the recipe and numeracy skills to weigh the ingredients. At the end of the session, they competently presented a meal for 12 people.

87. Students' work in literacy, numeracy and ICT lessons is satisfactory and well presented. The standard of students' work is satisfactory, with comparatively little that is good or very good. Attendance was 76% during the inspection which is significantly above the national average.

Quality of education and training

88. Some teaching of literacy and numeracy is uninspiring. Teachers do not vary their teaching methods and too often lead students through exercises with little opportunity for them to work in small groups and share ideas or experiences. Some activities are not sufficiently demanding for students, especially those of higher ability while some students of lower ability struggle to keep up with the pace of the work. In less successful lessons, there is over-reliance on paper-based resources. Literacy, numeracy and IT lessons are not sufficiently linked to the vocational areas.

89. In the practical lessons, teachers effectively involved students and motivated them to learn. Some tutors are able to effectively manage classes with students of mixed levels of ability, and there is good management of behaviour. Some teachers use resources effectively. For example, in a health and safety lesson, the tutor used dummy fireworks and outdoor clothing to make students aware of the potential dangers. Students learned experientially how to measure five metres to keep a safe distance from a firework.

90. The ratio of staff to students is good and effective use is made of learning support assistants. All teachers have minimum teaching qualifications, and the learning support assistants have achieved the level 2 literacy test. Most have also achieved numeracy at level 1 or 2. There is an adequate range of appropriate resources. A Skills for Life base room is being developed where there are some good up-to-date resources, but also some outdated materials. All full-time students have a taught lesson of ICT, but apart from this there is no access to IT as there are no computers or other audio-visual equipment in classrooms, although one portable computer is available. The college has recently converted a former warden's cottage into an independent living house. It has a well-equipped kitchen and provides good modern facilities to develop a range of skills in a realistic setting.

91. Initial and diagnostic assessments are not used effectively to set targets and plan learning to meet students' individual needs. Extensive new documentation has been implemented during the year. There is a long period in between setting targets and reviewing them, and inadequate monitoring of students' progress in lessons. Students are not fully involved in the development of their individual learning plans and are not always aware of their targets. The individual learning plans have generic targets and these are not sufficiently related to students' identified learning needs. For example, a learner with severe learning difficulties had a target to learn all the letters of the alphabet rather than several smaller targets.

92. The college offers a good range of vocational and practical courses from pre-entry onwards. Full-time students develop good personal, vocational and practical skills, and gain confidence and independence as they progress. The full-time courses at entry level and level 1 have a core of literacy, numeracy and IT and a good choice of vocational options including agriculture, engineering, small animal care. The part-time programme offers a range of practical and creative courses across the four college centres. Students can progress within the programmes and, with support, into the wider college curriculum. The college has been particularly responsive to the needs of the local community and maintains effective communication with partners to ensure that it continues to provide appropriate courses.

93. There is good general support for students. Experienced learning support assistants offer in-class support. For example, learning support assistants take photographs for pre-entry students' portfolios, check students' learning, ensure that they are using equipment safely, keep them

engaged in learning, and make them feel valued. A liaison officer supports students who have emotional and behavioural needs on the Options programme, and maintains good communication with parents and students. However, there is insufficient support for some students with emotional and behavioural difficulties on the introductory skills certificate course. The tutorial system on the full-time programmes is good.

Leadership and management

94. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Team meetings are held every week and there are excellent working relationships between staff. However, although minutes are kept, no specific action plans are identified or followed-up. National developments in the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the managing of learning have had an insufficient impact on the curriculum. The teaching observation scheme is poorly understood by staff and there are insufficient links between observations and staff development and training. Staff are well aware of the requirements of SENDA, however, although staff have an awareness of the Race Relations (amendment) Act they have not received sufficient training on its implications. Staff have attended Skills for Life training, but there has been no evaluation of the impact of this training on teaching and learning. Only a small number of staff are working towards Skills for Life qualifications and there is no policy in place for all staff to become appropriately qualified. Staff have a poor awareness of the retention, pass and success rates for literacy and numeracy. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical.

Part D: College data

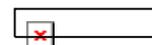
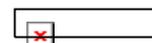


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04

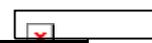
Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	24	41
2	39	25
3	13	9
4/5	2	2
Other	22	23
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)



Science and mathematics	316	1,043	16
Land-based provision	852	1,725	31
Construction	47	274	4
Engineering, technology and manufacture	48	15	1
Business administration, management and professional	13	276	3
Information and communication technology	213	455	8
Retailing, customer service and transportation	26	93	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	95	451	7
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	10	0
Health, social care and public services	59	26	1
Visual and performing arts and media	10	661	8
Humanities	0	0	0
English, languages and communication	278	33	4
Foundation programmes	172	107	3
Unknown AOL	338	643	13
Total	2,467	5,812	100

Source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	64	31	86	804	629	822
	Retention rate %	47	55	83	73	77	85
	National average %	84	82	80	80	70	68
	Pass rate %	47	76	75	81	85	87
	National average %	69	76	73	66	77	74
2	Starters excluding transfers	162	142	151	424	404	449
	Retention rate %	63	68	61	71	70	65

	National average %	77	77	77	71	72	70
	Pass rate %	74	80	87	76	71	80
	National average %	73	76	74	69	73	76
3	Starters excluding transfers	154	117	147	201	162	137
	Retention rate %	67	69	78	66	65	69
	National average %	73	75	75	70	66	59
	Pass rate %	83	83	83	74	74	62
	National average %	80	82	85	68	68	75
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	188	301	440	382	1,315	1,817
	Retention rate %	88	95	97	92	91	97
	National average %	96	96	97	97	97	97
	Pass rate %	61	76	81	83	83	84
	National average %	80	81	80	79	82	84

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

Sources of information:

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, Learning and Skills Council, September 2004.

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

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	60	37	3	30
Level 2 (intermediate)	60	36	4	25
Level 1 (foundation)	0	100	0	1
Other sessions	29	64	7	14
Totals	53	43	4	70

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