



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

City of Wolverhampton College

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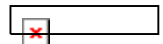
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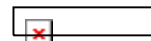
Basic information about the college



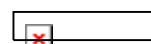
Name of college:	City of Wolverhampton College
Type of college:	Further Education College
Principal:	Cliff Hall
Address of college:	Paget Road Campus Paget Road Wolverhampton WV6 0DU
Telephone number:	01902 836 000
Fax number:	01902 423 070
Chair of governors:	Jim Parker

Unique reference number: 130484
Name of reporting inspector: Lorna Fitzjohn
Dates of inspection: 13-17 and 20-24 January 2003

Part A: Summary

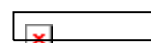


Information about the college



City of Wolverhampton College is a large further education (FE) college. The college has seven centres including two main campuses spread across Wolverhampton. The newly built Wellington Road (Bilston) Campus is to the east of the city centre and the Paget Road (Wulfrun) Campus towards the northwest. The college is the result of a merger of two colleges in 1999. Using college data that have yet to be audited, the number of student enrolments in 2001/02 was 30,599. Some 10% were full time. Some 78% of the enrolling students were aged 19 or over and 53% of the full-time students were aged 16 to 18. About 40% of students were from minority ethnic groups. Work-based training is provided for 261 modern apprentices. Parts of the city have a high level of social deprivation. The college recruits from secondary schools in the Wolverhampton area. In 2001, 44% of Wolverhampton school leavers achieved five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A* to C, compared with a national average of 49%. The unemployment rate in Wolverhampton was 6.5% in January 2003 compared with the national average of 3.9%. In its mission, one of the college's aims is to provide access to excellent life-long learning opportunities to enable local people, communities and business to achieve.

How effective is the college?



The quality of education and training is good in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, visual and performing arts and media, health and social care, early years, and engineering. It is satisfactory in science and mathematics, construction, business, information and communication technology (ICT), hospitality and catering, literacy and numeracy, humanities, and English, languages and communications. The quality is unsatisfactory in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Work-based learning is satisfactory in hairdressing and beauty therapy, but weak in engineering. Retention and pass rates have improved in the last three years, but retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 at foundation level remain below the national average.

Key strengths

- strong strategic leadership
- effective strategies to widen participation in education and training

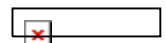
- good pass rates for adult students
- good financial management
- good accommodation and specialist resources
- wide range of courses offered in response to employer and community needs
- good additional support for students.

What should be improved

- retention rates for students aged 16 to 18, particularly at level 1
- extent of good or better teaching
- poor teaching in some areas which fails to interest and motivate students
- poor attendance and punctuality amongst students
- consistency of impact of quality assurance procedures at course level.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

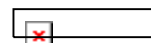


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) courses are good, but pass rates are poor in GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) mathematics, GCE AS biology and GCSE mathematics. Teaching and learning in science are good. Good resources are used to support teaching and learning but there is some unsatisfactory laboratory accommodation.
Construction	Satisfactory. Key skills provision is well developed. Programme reviews are good. Individual student support is good. Pass rates are poor on the basic bricklaying and full-time electrical installation courses. Teaching is often dull. Learning is adversely affected by poor punctuality. Full-time learners do not have sufficient work experience or enrichment activities.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good. Retention rates on most courses and achievement on some courses are good. Teaching and learning are good. Theory is well related to practice. Workshops are well equipped. Additional learning support is good. Work-based provision is weak. Key skills are poorly developed.
Business, administration, management and professional	Satisfactory. Pass rates are good on most courses. Teaching and learning are good, lessons are lively and use a range of strategies to sustain interest. Retention rates are low on some courses. Target setting for full-time students is weak.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. A wide range of courses is provided in a variety of community locations. All teaching is satisfactory or better. There are good retention and pass rates on many part-time courses. Pass rates on some courses are declining. Achievement on the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate is unsatisfactory.
Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory. Teaching in practical classes is good and students' skills are well developed. The students benefit from a high level of support. Retention is good and attendance is very good. Some pass rates are low. Some students are insufficiently challenged in both practical and theory classes.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Pass rates on beauty therapy courses are good. Retention rates in hairdressing are unsatisfactory. There is a good range of courses and enrichment activities. Some teaching on full-time courses is dull and uninspiring, and fails to meet individual learner needs. Work-based learning is satisfactory.
Health and social care, early years	Good. Pass rates are good on part-time courses and some full-time courses. Achievement at foundation level is poor. Pass rates at certificate level have declined to below average. Student support is very good. Teaching is good but marred by unsatisfactory attendance.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Most teaching is good. The standard of students' work is good, as are most pass rates. The resources for media and performing arts are very good. Some pass rates are poor. Resources for art and design are inadequate.
Humanities	Satisfactory. Adult students are very well taught but the quality of teaching of students aged 16 to 18 varies between very good and

	unsatisfactory. Achievements at GCE AS have improved and are now good in all subjects, except law and history. At GCE A2, pass rates are mixed. The provision of key skills is unsatisfactory. Student support is good.
English, languages and communications	Satisfactory. Achievement in GCE A2 English language and GCSE Panjabi is very good. Retention in GCE AS English courses is poor. Teaching on English courses is good but some teaching in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory. Regular workshops support students' learning.
English for speakers of other languages	Unsatisfactory. The provision is responsive to the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs of the changing local community. The learners benefit from good accommodation at college and community centres and they make good use of enrichment activities. Narrow range of teaching styles is used. There is insufficient development of individual learners' use of language. The arrangements for monitoring the progress and achievement of learners are inadequate.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Programmes are well designed to support a wide range of needs in a flexible way and to develop personal, social and vocational skills. There is good management of the quality of the learners' experience. Learners are well motivated, work towards well-defined individual and programme goals, enjoy their programmes and achieve well.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good but some aspects of quality control are weak. Individual support for learners is good, and good efforts are made to widen participation through the use of community based venues. Some pass rates on external qualifications are poor.

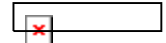
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. Much has been achieved in the last three years and governors and senior managers have been successful in establishing a new college since its formation in October 1999. Governors and senior managers work well together and strategic planning is effective. Governors monitor the achievement of strategic aims carefully and are well informed about the academic and financial performance of the college. The college has been successful in widening participation in education and training. Communication within the college is effective and teachers are well informed about expectations and priorities. The college makes good use of collaborative arrangements and partnerships. There is effective management of financial and human resources. Financial management is effective and the college has substantially achieved challenging recruitment targets and improved the efficiency of its operations. The improvements brought about through the additional funding provide good value for money and, given the unusual circumstances, the college provides satisfactory value for money. Leadership and management at the curriculum level are less effective than at senior level, but are mostly satisfactory and good in some areas.

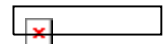
Retention and pass rates have improved since the inspections of the former Bilston and Wulfrun colleges but retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 at foundation level remain below the national average. The quality of teaching and learning has improved but quality assurance procedures at course level are not having sufficient impact in all areas.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



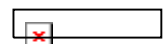
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. There are effective strategies for widening participation. The college consults with a wide range of local organisations and has strong community links. There is a good range of programmes and courses that meet the needs of the local community. In addition to the main sites, education and training are provided at many other locations across the city. The college has been successful in increasing participation in education in the local community and recruits many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is greater in the college than in the local community. The college has been particularly responsive to the needs of a large number of refugees and asylum seekers within the local community. Guidance and support for students are good. The college has good access for students with restricted mobility. There is effective monitoring of equal opportunities. The college collects data on the ethnic backgrounds and gender of its students. These data are analysed by curriculum areas and actions have been taken to address issues and to promote greater participation.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for learners are good. The learning support team effectively plans additional support needs for each student. All students receive a comprehensive induction, which they value. College managers regularly review induction. The quality of initial advice and guidance offered to students is good. There are well-planned schemes of work for group tutorials in most curriculum areas. Some group tutorials are ineffective. The college has very good provision for childcare. In 2002/03 approximately 250 childcare places were taken up by the children of students studying courses at the college. Student support staff provide very good help to individual students in class. The college has procedures for tackling poor attendance.

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

- good working relationships with approachable teachers

- being welcomed and respected as an adult

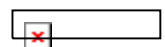
- wide range of courses which enables them to progress

- facilities and accommodation
- good information technology (IT) and library facilities
- quality of teaching
- range of enrichment activities
- fair and thorough assessment of their work
- meeting other college students.

What they feel could be improved

- choice of food in the refectory and prices
- consistency of approach to attendance and punctuality by tutors
- access to guidance and counselling for students
- quiet work areas.

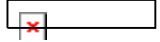
Other information



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

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 is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



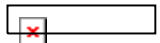
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	55	37	8
19+ and WBL*	65	28	7
Learning 16-18	48	42	10
19+ and WBL*	59	33	8

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. City of Wolverhampton College offers a wide range of courses that can be studied part time and full time. All 14 of the LSC programme areas are covered. The number of students studying on land-based, customer service and retailing courses is small. The work-based provision is offered primarily in the areas of engineering and hairdressing. The inspection covered 12 areas of learning. In 2001/02 the college enrolled 20,718 students, of whom 78% were adults. Student numbers increased significantly (53%) during the previous three years. Most growth has been at level 2 and for short course provision. Approximately 50% of the 2,549 students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on full-time programmes. Most adult learners attend part time or take short courses. However, some 717 adults are enrolled as full-time students. The courses are offered at a range of college and community venues across the city. Currently there are 261 modern apprentices.

2. College achievements are good for adults and satisfactory for students aged 16 to 18. Retention rates are variable. They are below national benchmarks at level 1, but at the national averages at levels 2 and 3. All key indicators show that the college is performing at or above the FE national averages for colleges with a high widening participation factor. There are, however, some variations between curriculum areas.

3. The retention rates for students taking GCE AS/A-level examinations for 2001/02 are good,

particularly in GCE A2 English language, GCE AS law, GCE AS psychology, GCE A-level mathematics, GCE A-level physics and GCE AS biology, where rates are significantly above national averages. Those significantly below the national averages are GCE AS chemistry, GCE AS English language, GCE AS English literature and GCE AS media studies. Pass rates are also generally satisfactory. Those with good pass rates include GCE AS media, GCE A2 English, GCE AS English language, GCE AS business, GCE AS and A-level sociology. Retention and pass rates for GCSEs are satisfactory or better, apart from in English and mathematics, where pass rates are significantly below benchmarks.

4. The retention rates on GNVQ courses are variable. At advanced level in business the retention rate is good, but mostly poor at intermediate level, particularly in business. GNVQ intermediate art and design remains good. At foundation level, health and social care has both poor retention and pass rates. Pass rates are good in business but poor in art and design and ICT. Retention and pass rates are generally good in national diploma/certificate courses in business, music technology, early years and engineering. Retention rates for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are good, apart from in hair and beauty and manufacturing, where these are below the national averages. Pass and retention rates are good in care, early years, carpentry and joinery, and NVQs in food preparation and cooking. Pass rates are more variable. They are good in care, early years, carpentry and joinery, administration, manufacturing and beauty therapy. Retention and pass rates are good on short courses. There is good development of literacy and numeracy skills. ESOL students progress within ESOL courses and onto mainstream programmes. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

5. The college started to offer modern apprenticeships in February 2002. It is too early to make judgements on retention and achievement in the two curriculum areas (hairdressing and engineering) where this is offered. Most learners are making satisfactory progress towards completion of the qualifications.

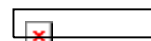
16 to 18 year olds

6. In 2001/02 the number of students aged 16 to 18 who enrolled on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 was 2,079 (30%), 2,729 (40%) and 1,668 (24%) respectively. A small number (6%) are on other types of courses. Most students study vocational courses. Full-time students study for GCE AS and A levels, GCSEs, GNVQs or national diplomas. Pass rates for most level 3 courses are at or slightly above the national average, while retention rates are significantly below the national average for level 3 courses. The average points score for each student completing GCE A-level courses after two years of study increased from 11.6 to 11.9 in 2001, but declined to 10.9 in 2002. Numbers sitting GCE A levels have reduced during this time. At level 2, pass rates are around or slightly below national averages as is retention. At level 1, pass rates are at the national average but retention rates were significantly below during the last two years. The standard of work of students aged 16 to 18 is mostly satisfactory. The achievement of key skills is poor and declined in application of number from 31% to 16% in 2001/02. Communication achievement remained constant at around 35% and IT improved from 12% to 16%.

Adult learners

7. The retention rates for adults studying at all levels of provision are at least satisfactory. At intermediate and advanced levels these are above national averages. Pass rates for adults are generally good and above the national averages in the last two years. Most adult enrolments are on short courses where retention and achievement are good. Pass rates are also good for higher level courses. The standard of adults' work is good practically, orally and in written form in 56% of classes observed. Only 6% was seen to be less than satisfactory.

Quality of education and training



8. Inspectors graded teaching and learning in 269 sessions. Teaching was usually satisfactory or better and high standards were reached in a small number of classes. The standard has improved significantly since the last inspection of Bilston Community College, which was undertaken by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1999. Although almost 60% of lessons were graded good or better and 22% were excellent or very good, this figure is lower than the national average for teaching and learning grades across colleges inspected. Several factors contributed to this good teaching. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and have a secure, up-to-date knowledge of their subject. Most lessons are well planned. Tutors support their students well. In care and early years courses, in-class support helps students with their literacy and numeracy needs. The use of ICT enhances student learning in some classes, for example, the use of electronic speaking and spelling aids and voice recognition software particularly in science and motor vehicle. In good classes, tutors use a wide range of teaching strategies to motivate, engage and interest learners. Teachers combine practical and theory elements successfully. Questions and discussions extend learning for students.

9. The quality of teaching is particularly good in engineering, business, courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and literacy and numeracy. Very little teaching is less than satisfactory in these areas. All the off-the-job training for modern apprentices is satisfactory or better. In some areas, such as hairdressing, humanities, modern foreign languages, and ESOL, there is some evidence of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. However, very little of the teaching is poor and none is very poor. The majority of unsatisfactory lessons are simply dull and uninspiring, with a slow pace and insufficient checks on student learning. Some teaching lacks variety in the methods used. In some lessons, students arrive late and attendance is poor.

10. The best teaching is on level 2 and 3 courses: it was good or better in 61% of lessons during the inspection. On level 1 courses, teaching was good or very good in only 46% of lessons, and in 9% it was unsatisfactory. Learning was also unsatisfactory in 20% of the level 1 classes observed, well below the national average of 10% across all classes. Teaching and learning are better in classes for adults, where 65% and 59% respectively were graded good or better. Classes where theory and practical aspects of the course are taught together are mostly good or better. Part-time staff carry out a higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching than full-time staff.

11. Strategic management of resources is effective. During the time since the college was formed in 1999 there has been well-managed rationalisation of both accommodation and staffing. There is good strategic emphasis on resources and carefully considered plans for future developments. Many of the teaching staff have been consulted about changes to accommodation in curriculum areas and resource utilisation is monitored closely to assess cost effectiveness.

12. Most teaching staff are well qualified and have appropriate vocational experience. Over 78% of teachers hold a recognised teaching qualification. The proportion of full-time and part-time teaching staff with a teaching qualification is 87%, but only 50% of visiting teachers have such a qualification. The college's staff development plan identifies the need for more staff to have teaching qualifications as a priority for improvement. Staff on NVQ programmes have appropriate assessor awards. There are sufficient qualified technical support staff to help students and teachers, and to maintain resources and learning materials. However, there is some inefficient use of learning assistants to support students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A comprehensive staff induction process and effective development for most staff help to improve the quality of the students' learning experience. Information regarding staff qualifications is held on a central database. However, a skills audit has not taken place and managers are not aware of the overall skills and experience available to them across the college. Full-time staff in business administration have insufficient opportunity to update their industrial and commercial experience. Individual training needs are identified through a new staff appraisal system introduced in September 2002. Part-time staff are offered the same development opportunities as full-time staff and are paid for their attendance at training activities. There is good staff training in information learning technology (ILT) and each curriculum area has a member of staff responsible for the promotion of ILT within the area. From February 2003, a team of teaching and learning advisers, whose role is to facilitate improvements in teaching and learning on all courses, will be in place. Staff development activities are thoroughly monitored and recorded.

13. The college has made significant improvements to its accommodation over the last few years, including the construction of a major new building at one of the main sites. This new building is well designed and provides a good learning environment. Most teaching rooms are pleasant and spacious. However, some laboratory accommodation in science and studios for art and design are unsatisfactory. The accommodation in hospitality and catering limits curriculum development and opportunities for assessment. The college is aware of these issues, and plans to address them are included in the accommodation strategy for 2002-2005. Some teaching rooms are not big enough for the size of the classes using them and there is some under-utilisation of space across the college. The arrangements for carrying out essential maintenance are satisfactory. The college has good access for students with restricted mobility and over 98% of the college areas are now available to all students.

14. Learning resources are very good in media and performing arts, and there are well-equipped workshop facilities in engineering. There are also some good learning resources in science and mathematics, ICT, and literacy and numeracy. Resources in art and design are insufficient to support a satisfactory range of three-dimensional design work. The college has invested in modern IT equipment, which is effectively maintained, and staff and students have good access to computers. The college established an intranet for staff and students in 2000 and staff in the curriculum areas are encouraged to put learning materials onto the intranet. Effective use is made of specialist resources to support students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Links between the learning centres and curriculum areas are good. A learning centre at one of the main sites is too small and none of the learning centres have silent study areas. Almost all computers have Internet access and many students use the Internet for research purposes. There is no access to the Internet for horticulture students at one college site.

15. Assessment is effectively managed on most courses. Assessment is fair, thorough and carried out on a regular basis. Students' work is returned within a reasonable period of time. Most teachers provide good feedback to students on their performance and indicate areas for improvement. Students on most courses are well informed about the planned assessment programme and the standard of work required. Methods of assessment are appropriate for the courses and standards are linked to the requirements of examining and awarding bodies. Assessment information is used to guide course and programme development. There are clear policies and procedures for internal verification, supported by a comprehensive range of documentation. Regular meetings of internal verifiers are held within the college and verification documentation in curriculum areas is audited on an annual basis. Internal verification procedures in hairdressing and beauty therapy, and on foundation programmes are inadequate. The college has an effective system for monitoring reports and action plans are produced to remedy any weaknesses identified by external verifiers and moderators.

16. Arrangements for the initial assessment of students are effective. All full-time students and many part-time students take diagnostic tests to identify the suitability of their chosen programme and the appropriate levels for key skills. Initial assessment is also used to identify additional learning needs. Students are informed of the outcome of the tests and those with identified needs are referred to the learning support team. Information from initial assessment is also given to personal tutors. Support for students with additional learning needs is good.

17. Assessment information is used by personal tutors to monitor the progress of full-time students and part-time students attending the college for more than eight hours each week. Tutors monitor attendance patterns and effort and attainment grades on a monthly basis for students aged 16 to 19 and twice each term for adult students. All full-time students have an individual review of progress with their tutor at least twice each year. Progress is discussed and recorded and an action plan is usually produced. Many action plans, however, lack clearly defined targets with an appropriate timescale. The use of prior educational or vocational achievement to inform target setting is underdeveloped. The college has recognised the need for additional staff training on target setting. Reports of students' progress are sent to parents or employers twice each year. Parents are invited to attend a consultation evening following the publication of reports. Part-time students attending the college for less than eight hours each week do not have a tutor and there are no formal procedures for monitoring progress. Most of these students, however, have a satisfactory awareness of progress towards their main qualification aims.

18. The extent to which programmes and courses meet learners' needs and interests is good. The college offers a very wide range of courses from entry level to undergraduate programmes and it includes courses in all 14 of the LSC's areas of learning. Progression for students in most curriculum areas is good, and particularly so in mathematics and science, engineering, ICT, childcare, and business and administration. A very good range of part-time short courses is available in ICT, which provide significant progression opportunities, especially for adults. There is very good community based provision in schools, residential homes, and other venues, which enables learners who would not normally be able to attend college, to benefit from courses, especially in ICT, ESOL and literacy and numeracy. The college has a very flexible access to higher education (HE) programme, which meets the needs of mature learners. Students can study the course part time, full time or by open learning, and they can start in September or in January. Many access students are successful in gaining places at HE institutions, especially for courses in nurse training and health studies. Progression opportunities at level 3 in construction are limited and there is no vocational science provision.

19. Innovative programmes are tailored to meet the needs of particular students. A joint project with a local health action zone encourages those with mental health problems to enter employment in the care sector, and another provides basic vocational skills for offenders as part of their Community Punishment Order. There is a wide range of vocational options for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The range of enrichment activities offered to students is good. In the current academic year, a large number of students on the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) business studies course attended a series of team-building activities at a residential centre. The college supports the Millennium Volunteers programme and many students aged 16 to 18 have participated in a wide range of charity related work in the city. On childcare courses, students have participated in health days and attended residential events, and hospitality students have made industrial visits and visits to exhibitions. The college has a well-equipped gym which many students use and which is free at certain times of the day. Enrichment opportunities for students in construction and in ICT, however, are limited. The college has innovative and effective partnerships with a very wide range of local organisations. In health and social care, students benefit from the college's links with local care homes, and in engineering with local employers. Senior college staff represent the interests of post-16 learners and contribute to the economic and civic development of Wolverhampton through their significant contribution to partnerships such as the Wolverhampton strategic partnership, the Wolverhampton learning partnership and the Connexions local management committee.

20. The college has responded very effectively to local needs, for example, through its ESOL programme for asylum seekers and courses for students who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Some combination of teaching groups in modern foreign languages is inappropriate. In these classes, learning is not effective owing to students' different levels of prior attainment in the target language.

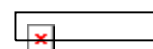
21. Guidance and support for learners are good. Full-time students are interviewed by a team of personal tutors, who make an initial assessment of their additional support needs. Part-time students are not normally interviewed except for applicants to some professional courses. The college has recently introduced an on-line enrolment system for part-time students. All full-time and substantial part-time students complete an initial assessment in numeracy and literacy. The results are used to inform individual learning plans and these are monitored through a tutorial system. The learning support team effectively plans additional support needs for each student. All students receive a comprehensive induction, which they value. College managers regularly review induction. Part-time students and students who join a programme late also have an induction. The quality of initial advice and guidance offered to students is good. The advice and guidance team participates in student induction and offers impartial course and careers advice. There is thorough pre-course guidance for students, especially for those embarking on GCE A-level courses and access to HE.

22. All full-time and some part-time students are allocated a personal tutor. There are effective schemes of work for group tutorials in most curriculum areas. Some schemes of work for students aged 16 to 18 include tutorial activities on citizenship, self-development and health education. Some group tutorials are ineffective. This issue was recognised in the college's self-assessment report. Students do not always value group tutorials and many do not attend. Personal tutors monitor the

progress of students by means of a personal action log, which all full-time students and most part-time students are required to update regularly. Personal action logs are used effectively to set targets and to establish action plans for individual students. Some targets set for full-time students are imprecise. Students do not always place a high value on the importance of their personal action logs. Individual tutorials are used effectively to support students' progress towards their learning goals. Individual subject-based tutorials are offered in many curriculum areas. The college has very good provision for childcare. In 2002/03 approximately 250 childcare places were taken up by the children of students studying courses at the college.

23. Student support staff are very well used to help individual students in class. Many learners (approximately 1,300 in the current academic year so far) receive support from the college. Learning support is provided in teaching sessions to those identified through initial assessment as requiring it; these learners make good progress. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. For example, very effective use of learning support assistants was made in teaching sessions in ICT and motor vehicle engineering to assist students with hearing impairment. The college has procedures for tackling poor attendance. Monthly attendance registers are produced for each student and personal tutors follow up poor attendance. Some schools have appointed attendance monitors who work closely with personal tutors. However, procedures for monitoring of learners' attendance vary significantly between curriculum areas and this results in inconsistent practice. The college learning support team identifies students who are 'at risk' of withdrawing from a programme of study and has developed effective procedures for dealing with this. One procedure involved the training of a number of student mentors who then worked with at risk students. This scheme succeeded in retaining many of the 35 students identified as at risk in 2001/02.

Leadership and management



24. Leadership and management are good. Much has been achieved since the establishment of the college in October 1999. The legacy of poor management and poor learning opportunities left by the former Bilston Community College has been eradicated and governors and senior managers have been successful in establishing a new college. The mission of the college clearly states its intention to provide effective learning opportunities, widen participation in education and training, and enable individuals, communities and businesses to achieve success. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups at the college is higher than the Wolverhampton average and the overall numbers of students from minority ethnic groups have increased significantly since 1999. Some 50% of students at the college are from areas of deprivation and eight of the schools from which the college attracts students achieve GCSE A-C grades below 30%. The college is committed to providing equality of opportunity and there is an awareness of and respect for cultural diversity across the college. The monitoring of the effectiveness of the college's equal opportunities policy and of the academic performance of students from different minority ethnic backgrounds is exemplary. The college provides a wide range of opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and effective support for students with disabilities across the full range of college courses.

25. Governors and senior managers work well together and operate within a sound framework for governance. The clerk to the corporation is a member of the college senior management team and governors receive good, impartial advice and guidance. Strategic planning is effective and governors are involved at all stages of the planning process. Strategic aims are stated clearly and underpin the mission of the college. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards. Governors monitor the achievement of strategic aims carefully and are well informed about the academic and financial performance of the college. Senior managers know their college well and prioritise tasks effectively. They are careful to ensure that the tasks they set are stretching but achievable. The management structure of the college and management responsibilities clearly reflect the mission of the college and are kept under review by the senior management team. Communication within the college is effective and teachers are well informed about expectations and priorities. Good use is made of staff

bulletins and newsletters. Monthly meetings of a management forum which was established the September prior to the inspection have improved communication and ensure that managers at all levels are consulted and feel ownership of developments. Managers at all levels are well informed and committed to raising standards and achieving the aims of the college.

26. The college has been proactive in developing effective collaborative arrangements but is careful to ensure that the partnerships and projects to which it commits significant time and resources further the achievement of its mission. Examples of successful arrangements range from the development of a city centre campus jointly with the local education authority and other agencies, to community based work with the Prince's Trust Volunteers and work with offenders serving Community Punishment Orders. Some of the work carried out in partnership with employers through the college business development unit is exemplary in the way it meets the training needs of employers and secures funding to support the training.

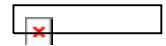
27. Financial management is effective and the college has substantially achieved challenging recruitment targets. Marketing is effective. The work of the college marketing unit is well managed and focuses on helping managers achieve the strategic aims of the college. Since 1999 the college has been operating at an enhanced level of funding in recognition of the difficulties associated with the merger. This has been reduced over time to converge with the sector average by 2003/04. As a result, the college has had to increase the efficiency of its operations and, at the time of the inspection, was on target to achieve the required efficiencies by 2003/04. The college has achieved significant changes in its staffing profile without prejudicing its strategy for improving the quality of provision. Finance and personnel staff work together effectively to ensure that targets for reducing expenditure are achievable. Expenditure, income generation and student retention are carefully monitored by the senior management team on a weekly basis. The corporation and its estates and finance committee receive regular and timely reports. Budgets are appropriately delegated within the college and budget holders are provided with good information on expenditure to date. Work carried out by consultants has helped identify areas for reducing costs and the college monitors the cost of the curriculum provided by different college centres in relation to the income generated regularly. The college has achieved the conditions and targets attached to its enhanced funding and has used this funding prudently and effectively. The standards of accommodation and resources, for example, have been improved significantly, as has participation in education and training in the area. The standards of teaching, learning and students' achievements are improving. The improvements brought about through the additional funding provide good value for money and, given the unusual circumstances, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

28. Overall, leadership and management at the curriculum level are less effective than at senior level but are mostly satisfactory, with some examples of good management in engineering, the visual and performing arts, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The quality of college data for making judgements about the academic performance of the college has improved since the merger and data for the academic year prior to the inspection are reliable.

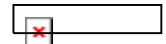
29. The college has established clear systems and procedures for quality assurance and ensures that managers comply with the requirements of its quality handbook. Good use is made of questionnaires and comparisons with national norms indicate that students express a high degree of satisfaction with the provision they receive. The college has been rigorous in identifying and implementing actions to raise the standards of poorly performing courses. These are closely monitored by senior managers and there is regular reporting on progress to the governors. Lesson observation procedures are conducted effectively but there is insufficient observation of teaching of part-time teachers. The level of less than satisfactory teaching has been reduced to the sector norm. Although there has been improvement in the level of good or better teaching, it remains below the sector average. All full-time teachers are appraised annually and the college provides a good range of training and development opportunities that clearly link to its mission and strategic aims. College policy does not require lesson observations as part of the appraisal process and practice varies across curriculum areas. At the time of the inspection the college was establishing additional posts to strengthen its strategy for raising the standards of teaching and learning. There is insufficient central monitoring of attendance by senior managers and a lack of consistency in the way managers of different curriculum areas monitor and address poor attendance and punctuality. The college has introduced an electronic system for monitoring attendance, but at the time of the inspection, was

trying to resolve problems with the technology. The use of methodologies for determining improvements in students' performance compared with their achievements at enrolment is at an early stage of development and little use is made of targets to help individual students to improve their performance. Self-assessment has been effective in identifying the key strengths and weaknesses in curriculum areas. There are inconsistencies, however, in the rigour with which course reviews are carried out, both within and across curriculum areas, and in the action planning to bring about improvement at course level. Course reviews do not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning and there are inconsistencies in the impact course reviews are having on raising standards.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- good teaching and learning in science

- effective support for students in science and mathematics workshops

- good range of academic courses at all levels

- good resources to support teaching and learning.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in GCE AS mathematics and GCE AS biology

- poor pass rates in GCSE mathematics in 2002

- no vocational science provision
- insufficient use of value added data in course management
- unsatisfactory laboratory accommodation.

Scope of provision

30. The school of mathematics and science offers a range of courses for both students aged 16 to 18 and 19+ students. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and attend the college on a full-time basis. GCE AS/A levels are available in biology, human biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics. GCSE courses are available in biology, chemistry, human physiology and health, science and technology, mathematics and physics. There are 211 students on GCE courses and 538 on GCSE courses. The school of mathematics and science provides application of number courses and numeracy courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are no vocational courses in science, but there is an entry level course, which is being taken by 24 students.

Achievement and standards

31. There are good retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses. For 2002, the retention rate on these courses was 94% and the pass rate was 89%. The pass rate in GCE AS chemistry in 2002 was significantly above the national average, at 85%. The pass rates in GCE AS biology and mathematics, however, are poor. The pass rate for biology in 2001/02 was 41% and the pass rate in mathematics during the same period was 22%. Pass rates are also low in GCE AS human biology and GCE AS physics in 2002, being 50% and 30% respectively. There was a poor pass rate in GCSE mathematics in 2002, being only 21%. This pass rate has declined from 35% in 2000. Retention rates in GCSE science and technology are satisfactory, but have declined by 27% during the period 2000/02 and are now below the national average. The quality of students' work and the level of attainment in observed lessons were generally satisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 3750 stage 2 (one year)	1	No. of starts	96	23	24
		% retention	71	**52	71
		% pass rate	50	**40	50
GCSE science single award	2	No. of starts	21	44	40
		% retention	90	75	63
		% pass rate	95	33	52
GCSE mathematics (one year)	2	No. of starts	286	341	342
		% retention	72	72	71
		% pass rate	35	31	21
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	17	27

		% retention	*	71	74
		% pass rate	*	67	85
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	63	56
		% retention	*	79	73
		% pass rate	*	22	22
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	18	27
		% retention	*	72	85
		% pass rate	*	38	43
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	9	17	8
		% retention	100	**82	100
		% pass rate	89	100	100
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	13	42	13
		% retention	100	**86	100
		% pass rate	92	79	77

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

32. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is good teaching and learning in science but some mathematics lessons lack variety and the pace of some lessons is slow. For example, most mathematics lessons rely on teacher exposition followed by students working through examples. In many lessons, those students who have quickly grasped the concepts either finish early and wait, or are set additional, rather than more difficult, examples. Although attendance, progress and effort are regularly monitored, attendance is still unsatisfactory in some lessons and 25% of observed lessons had an attendance of 70% or less. Staff and students enjoy friendly and effective relationships, and students speak positively about the staff and the help they give.

33. Resources are satisfactory. There are some good resources to support teaching and learning including textbooks, workbooks and a well-equipped workshop. For example, GCSE mathematics classes usually have new sets of books at both foundation and intermediate level, and students in the workshop have access to good paper-based resource packs and Internet-connected PCs. Powerpoint presentations are effectively used in many science lessons and Internet-connected PCs are used to support learning in some classes. However, there is some unsatisfactory laboratory accommodation, which limits the teaching and learning strategies that can be employed.

34. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is satisfactory. Students are set regular homework and receive prompt and helpful feedback. Moderation, however, occurs only where externally required and is not used by teams to ensure consistent standards of marking and feedback.

35. Programmes and courses satisfactorily meet the needs and interest of learners. A good range of academic courses at all levels from entry to level 3 is provided and all courses are available to be studied by flexibly negotiated attendance. No vocational science provision is currently available, although the college is addressing this. There is opportunity to progress internally to HE in science.

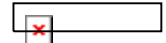
36. Student guidance and support are satisfactory. Effective support is offered for students in the

science and mathematics workshop that is highly valued by the students. The workshop offers a well-resourced and welcoming environment with general support readily available throughout the day. Subject-specific support is available for several hours a week on a timetabled basis. The three-day induction for full-time students is effective.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college self-assessment report identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses, although it does not link clearly with subject development plans. Many of these fail to address all the weaknesses and, in the worst ones, curriculum subject teams identify actions for others rather than themselves. For example, in one plan, in order to improve retention and achievement, the only action proposed was to "raise entry requirements". Subject tutors fail to use added value data to set individual targets for students and, as a consequence, there is no periodic measure of how far a student has progressed from an initial starting point. Regular departmental meetings ensure effective formal communication among the team and localised staff workrooms facilitate regular informal discussions of students' progress.

Construction



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

Strengths

- good implementation and development of vocationally integrated key skills

- good programme reviews

- close links with local schools

- good one-to-one tutorials and effective learning support.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in basic bricklaying skills and electrical installation

- narrow range of teaching methods

students

- poor student punctuality disrupted learning in most classes.

Scope of provision

38. The college offers a wide range of courses mostly at foundation and intermediate level including bricklaying, carpentry/joinery, electrical installation, painting, decorating, and plumbing. There is a small number of courses at advanced level. Attendance is flexible to suit learners' availability. Many of the learners attend the college two days a week. At the time of inspection there were 974 learners enrolled on full-time and part-time courses, which is a 20% increase over the previous year. Some 38% of students are aged 16 to 18 and some have chosen their course as a result of attending the college on successful school link course programmes. Additionally, a large number of students attend short updating courses in electrical installation and mechanical services. The advanced GNVQ programmes have ceased. There are plans to replace this provision with the new national certificate in construction.

Achievement and standards

39. The pass rates for NVQ (two-year) carpentry and joinery are good, with 100% pass rate in 2001/02. The two-year electrical installation programme is also significantly above the national benchmark. However, pass rates in basic bricklaying skills and the one-year electrical installation course are poor and are below the national average. The personal success and development of many of the learners stem from the contribution made by the inclusion of additional learning support into their programmes. Additionally, there is good implementation and development of vocationally integrated key skills, with learners producing a single vocational portfolio that is clearly mapped to meet the range of assessment criteria. Some learning is ineffective and attainment was judged to be poor in a number of lessons observed. A prize awards evening has been introduced to celebrate the achievements and successes of the learners. The practical work carried out by electrical installation students is not of a sufficiently high standard. Cables are generally installed in an untidy manner and not neatly clipped in straight lines. The terminations, although generally safe, are not neatly made. More emphasis needs to be placed on the development of good practical craft skills within this area. In some of the learners' workbooks, circuits are drawn with point-to-point lines at any angle, which is inconsistent with correct practice and does not aid understanding of the circuit. Some of the learners, when questioned, were able to recall their earlier studies but had difficulty relating them to their practical work. Some had poor practical skills, for example in a brickwork class, students were having difficulty laying bricks at floor level.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Basic bricklaying skills (one year)	1	No. of starts	10	37	60
		% retention	80	44	56
		% pass rate	38	83	42
NVQ trowel trades (one year)	1	No. of starts	16	21	*
		% retention	50	60	*
		% pass rate	50	90	*
Electrical installation part 1 (two year)	1	No. of starts	36	58	100
		% retention	92	**	58

		% pass rate	74	74	86
Electrical installation part 1 (one year)	1	No. of starts	55	41	50
		% retention	73	95	72
		% pass rate	48	37	44
NVQ carpentry and joinery (two year)	2	No. of starts	*	30	24
		% retention	*	**	87
		% pass rate	*	77	100
Mechanical services - plumbing part 2	2	No. of starts	43	60	80
		% retention	86	**	53
		% pass rate	44	100	61
Electrical installation part 2	2	No. of starts	55	74	77
		% retention	80	85	70
		% pass rate	41	35	54

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*course did not run

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

40. Teaching is generally satisfactory but with too few lessons graded good or better. This is below the national profile. The presentation and organisation of most lessons is satisfactory, but limited ranges of teaching methods are used. In practical activities some good individual instruction is provided but only one group demonstration of craft skills was observed in the workshops. In plumbing there is some good integration between theory lessons and practical craft activities. The tutorial and student review procedure for learners is good, with learners recognising it as an important feature of their study programme. Learner attainment is generally low. In some cases, learners' poor punctuality at the start of classes causes disruption to the lessons. This has a detrimental affect on learning and is not routinely challenged by staff. Most learners are responsive to staff and the development of key skills has increased their abilities. Many theory classes are dull and uninspiring. Although the handout material is generally good, there are few demonstrations or practical activities to support the learning and no use is made of IT. Some teachers often fail to engage all of the class, there is very little directed questioning and progress is often at the pace of the slowest learner. All construction learners undertake basic skills testing during their induction that provides a good indicator of their need for additional support and programme suitability. The level of additional support to learners is of a high standard.

41. Most of the staff are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach and many have industrial experience. The provision of non-teaching and support staff is good and adequate help is maintained in the workshops. Some learners are restricted in their development of skills as a result of the cramped workshop space in electrical installation. Painting and decorating learners, however, use and share areas with plumbing students to practise and develop their craft skills. A small number of portfolios include word processed material but more could be done to encourage all learners to develop their skills in this area.

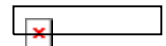
42. The internal verification system is robust and well documented. It is used consistently throughout the construction curriculum area. The sampled assessment decisions are fair, with all staff being rigorous in their approach across the programmes. Learners are provided with good written and verbal feedback, with workshop progress charts displayed for students to observe their current situation. The external verification reports across a range of construction courses are good.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management at curriculum level are satisfactory. The school of the built environment delivers the construction programmes within the faculty of technology, which is split onto two sites. The faculty is led by a director with a head of school for the built environment. Both managers are relatively new appointments; one in January and one in August 2002. Together with their colleagues they provide positive leadership in the implementation of college strategies, policy and many new initiatives. There is a good programme review using the college process that is carried out three times a year. This process generates action plans that are focused on improvement of issues identified in the reviews. Some of the action plans are not time related but are regularly monitored.

44. Additionally, regular formal monthly monitoring and review meetings are held with staff that lead to appropriate action plans being put in place. A self-assessment document has been produced which evaluates the provision and the learning activities, though this is more favourable than the inspection judgement. Positive action planning and changes resulting from the self-assessment process are addressing the identified weakness, and are having some beneficial effects on learners and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is fully recognised that many of these initiatives are being developed and will require to be reinforced if they are to reach their maturity.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing



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

Strengths

- good retention on most courses

- good achievement on NVQ performing manufacturing operations courses

- very good development of practical skills

- good teaching and learning

- well-equipped workshop facilities

- effective additional learning support.

Weaknesses

- poor work-based learning provision

- poor development of key skills

- inadequate health and safety practices in motor vehicle and fabrication workshops.

Scope of provision

45. A range of full-time and part-time engineering courses is provided to meet the needs of engineering, manufacturing and motor vehicle students, and there are opportunities for progression from level 1 to level 3 and onwards to HE. There are approximately 800 students enrolled on courses that operate on the one main campus. Approximately 75% of these are adults. There are 40 work-based learners following both foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships.

Achievement and standards

46. Course pass rates are good on NVQ performing manufacturing operations at levels 1 and 2. At level 1, achievement was 84% and at level 2, it was 75% in 2001/02. However, there is slow progress to NVQ level 2 and 3 achievement for work-based trainees.

47. Retention rates are above national averages for most courses, including motor vehicle repair and maintenance level 2, and repair and service of road vehicles level 3. Course retention rates were greatly reduced on the NVQ engineering manufacturing course due to a large local company ceasing trading and making many students redundant. However, those that responded to college encouragement to complete their studies had an 86% success rate. Students display satisfactory industrial skill levels in some college workshops. In one class a group of first-year electronics students was able to work through an exercise where they received all component parts for a personal computer, invoiced and in package form. All students were able to fully assemble the components into a working personal computer, test the assembly for functionality and to fault find where appropriate. In a fabrication and welding class, students were able to produce overhead weld seams and to test the finished run for mechanical properties. In a motor vehicle class, students were set realistic time targets to complete practical assignments to an industry standard.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, technology and manufacturing, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ performing manufacture operations	1	No. of starts	78	76	53
		% retention	58	67	83
		% pass rate	0	90	84
Vehicle body competencies	1	No. of starts	27	29	19
		% retention	73	82	68
		% pass rate	42	52	62

Motor vehicle repair and maintenance	1	No. of starts	90	86	114
		% retention	77	76	78
		% pass rate	71	51	68
NVQ engineering manufacture (foundation)	2	No. of starts	64	65	22
		% retention	*	*	32*
		% pass rate	20	64	86
NVQ performing manufacturing operations	2	No. of starts	6	28	18
		% retention	67	*	67
		% pass rate	75	*	75
National certificate/ diploma engineering	3	No. of starts	41	67	12
		% retention	84	*	92
		% pass rate	62	98	64
Repair and service road vehicles	3	No. of starts	12	9	13
		% retention	100	89	92
		% pass rate	33	38	42

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

48. Good resources are used to aid teaching and learning. Electronic and fabrication welding workshops are well equipped, with students able to manufacture and test components for functional properties. Motor vehicle and mechanical engineering workshops are satisfactory for their purpose. Three health and safety issues were observed. These include a missing safety guard on a fast moving machine and a heavy leakage of coolant on to the floor of the motor vehicle workshop. Engineering teaching rooms are sterile and lack photographs, posters or displays of technical work. A comprehensive and well-used library stock exists and additionally a broad range of CD-ROM-based learning materials is held within the motor vehicle curriculum area. Students are encouraged to research the Internet for information to complete assignment work.

49. Teaching is mainly good or better, with few satisfactory or less than satisfactory lessons. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are appropriate. All students are screened during the course induction period for their level of basic skills, and their individual needs are assessed for any learning support. This analysis is carried out by a cross-college team who analyse information and respond quickly to individual learning needs. A good system is used for tracking the progress of individual students, with students, tutors and course tutors all possessing this documentation. All college courses have a timetabled period for student tutorials when personal or study issues are discussed, and this informs the learning process for individuals or groups of students. However, in work-based learning there are inadequate assessment arrangements and insufficient review of learner progress.

50. Programmes and courses fully meet the needs of learners. Where appropriate, mature students receive a detailed assessment of prior learning. They are then put on the programme at the best point for them to build upon their prior knowledge and to complete their course with the appropriate certification as quickly as possible. There is a broad curriculum offer, with students able to progress from first-year craft courses to a foundation degree. However, the curriculum area has not addressed Curriculum 2000 and full-time electronic engineering students do not have a college organised work experience opportunity.

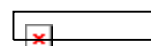
51. There is good support for students with additional social and learning needs. Some 22 students in engineering and motor vehicle received prompt assistance and support in areas such as literacy, numeracy and dyslexia during 2001/02, and currently 30 students are receiving support. In one theory class, a signer and a note taker assisted two motor vehicle students to keep pace successfully with mainstream provision. There is an effective initial screening process for basic skills, and tutorial support is timetabled for all part-time students. The student support services unit is open both during evenings and in college holidays. Only small amounts of evidence of key skills achievement was available, with many students attempting to complete two years work in one year. Key skills are not offered to part-time engineering students. For work-based learners there is no re-enforcement of equality of opportunity issues with learners or employers. Individual learning plans for work-based learners are not updated and do not reflect learner progression.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management in the curriculum area are good. Managers communicate effectively. There are regular course and school meetings, with staff able to contribute to curriculum area management. Teaching staff have individual access to the management information system and are able to quickly produce standard reports such as student class lists or details of course review and evaluation. Many improvements have taken place during the seven months since the preparation of the last curriculum area self-assessment report, with areas for improvement that have now become strengths. There have been significant improvements in issues such as the use of ICT by tutors, strategy and action for improving students' punctuality and attendance, and the development of a tutorial process for part-time students. There is, however, a need to address more fully some college workshop health and safety issues and the management of work-based learning.

53. The progress of second-year and third-year work-based learners is a cause for concern. Many have received no progress reviews since commencing the programme, most reviews lack detail and do not set challenging targets. Assessment arrangements are poor with missed appointments, delayed progress and superficial assessment.

Business, administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses

- much effective teaching

- provision which is responsive to community and industry needs

- good progression from entry level to HE

- opportunities for students to acquire additional qualifications.

Weaknesses

- low retention on some courses
- implementation of homework policy and guidelines
- updating teachers' industrial and commercial experience
- target setting for full-time students.

Scope of provision

54. The college offers a wide range of business administration and professional courses including business courses ranging from foundation to HE levels. Professional courses cover accounting, personnel and marketing. The provision includes GCE A-level business studies. Business administration courses are offered at foundation to advanced level and include full-time courses for legal secretaries, a private secretarial diploma and NVQ courses in administration. The college also offers a wide range of part-time courses in word processing, shorthand, and call handling operations, and has developed strong links with the local community and employers. Provision is responsive to both their needs and a range of courses is provided in two community venues. The strong links with industry are reflected in tailored short courses in, for example, the training of receptionists and a call handling skills course developed to meet the needs of a local hospital. There are also opportunities for students to follow programmes on a distance learning basis. At the time of inspection, there were some 1,100 students enrolled on business-related courses at the college, of whom 860 were adults.

Achievement and standards

55. Pass rates on most courses are good, including the GNVQ advanced diploma in business, the administration secretarial diploma, and the part-time certificate in personnel practice. Retention rates on significant full-time courses are low. The retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was 19 percentage points below the national average in 2002. There are indications that measures taken by the college to improve retention are having an impact. Retention for the first term of the 2002/03 academic year shows an improvement when compared with the same period the previous year. Students' attendance at lessons is poor at 74%. An enrichment programme was introduced in September 2002 which includes attendance at residentials, team-building activities, and visits from speakers aimed at maintaining students' interest and motivation.

56. Most students are responsive and willing to participate in the activities provided. In the most successful lessons, students make good progress. In a group tutorial for instance, administration students responded with interest and enthusiasm to a discussion on career planning. Students have the opportunity to progress within the college from foundation to advanced level and beyond. In 2002, 32 % of students on business and management courses made this progression.

57. Students make good use of the opportunities offered to gain additional qualifications as part of their full-time programmes of study. These include key skills in IT, application of number, and improving own performance, GCSE mathematics and English, and the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) paralegal certificate. The additional qualifications gained enhance employability and help students to progress to further study. These additional learning opportunities improve students' skills necessary for employment in a business environment or those needed to progress to further, more advanced study.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, administration, management and professional, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	27	46	52
		% retention	85	*	73
		% pass rate	83	88	100
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	27	27	32
		% retention	67	70	53
		% pass rate	94	68	82
Administration secretarial diploma	3	No. of starts	12	15	17
		% retention	92	93	76
		% pass rate	64	57	69
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	42	38	54
		% retention	93	*	76
		% pass rate	67	82	94
National certificate in business	3	No. of starts	15	34	24
		% retention	100	*	67
		% pass rate	80	93	83
GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	19	48	63
		% retention	89	91	81
		% pass rate	80	88	73
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	23	33	19
		% retention	83	97	95
		% pass rate	100	100	94

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

58. In most classes, teaching is good or very good. Little teaching was less than satisfactory. Courses are well planned with appropriate schemes of work. Most teaching is satisfactory or better and teachers are knowledgeable about their subject. The best lessons are well managed and lively, and appropriate and effective use is made of a range of techniques to involve all students and sustain their interest. In one lesson, for example, good use was made of a video game to stimulate students' interest and promote discussion. Administration students in one of the lessons observed were introduced to office skills in binding and laminating. Explanations provided by the teacher were

clear and thorough, and each student had an opportunity to practise the newly introduced skill. In lessons attended by part-time students on professional courses, teachers make effective use of questions and discussion to involve all students. Students are encouraged to share their knowledge and experience of the workplace, and teachers make effective use of students' comments when explaining theoretical concepts and the impact of different actions. In less effective lessons the tasks set for students are dull and do little to motivate them. In one office skills lesson, for example, the teacher's input to the lesson was limited to supervising students answering past examination papers. The college homework policy is not implemented consistently by teachers as a means of monitoring student progress, and identifying areas for improvement. Homework is not an integral part of all schemes of work.

59. Students' work is carefully and accurately marked. In most cases, teachers provide written comments that help students to improve their work and make progress. On NVQ programmes, such as in administration, work-based assessment is carefully linked to students' individual action plans. Assessors visit students in the workplace regularly to conduct assessments and provide support to individual students. Internal verification practice is satisfactory and meets the requirements of awarding bodies. The role of verifiers is clear and procedures are fully documented. Clear records of verification practice are maintained and verifiers provide written feedback to assessors, with agreed action points where necessary.

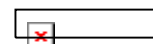
60. Full-time teachers are well qualified and the majority are teacher trained. A number of teachers are members of professional bodies, such as the Institute of Linguists and the Chartered Institute of Bankers. Part-time teachers bring a strong mix of experience and commercial knowledge to their teaching. Teachers are provided with good training and development opportunities and there is good analysis of the effectiveness of the training provided. Insufficient opportunities are provided for full-time teachers to update their industrial and commercial knowledge. Learning resources are good. There is a wide range of current textbooks and relevant business journals to support students' learning, and good access to IT, including Internet access where appropriate.

61. Pre-course guidance is satisfactory and students receive clear information before joining courses of study. The numeracy and literacy skills of all full-time students are assessed on enrolment and students identified as in need of literacy or numeracy support are directed to attend workshops. The effectiveness of the support is monitored and results are used to inform individual learning plans, which are monitored through a college tutorial system. Full-time students have a weekly tutorial and students have individual tutorials once a term to monitor their progress. Some of the targets set for full-time students to help them improve their performance are too general, for example, 'continue to do background reading in this subject'. These targets are difficult to monitor and are not consistent with the guidelines drawn up by the college for implementing its Student Personal Action Log. There are no formal tutorial arrangements for part-time students.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management of the area are good. The provision is located in two schools, and the co-operation and working relationship between the school heads is positive and works to the benefit of students and staff. The lesson observation scheme has contributed to improved standards of teaching and learning across the area. Course reviews and self-assessment reports are thorough and accurate. Action plans are realistic and have led to improvements. The importance of key skills is recognised in the additional qualifications taken by students and in the integration of these qualifications with others as the chosen means of delivery.

Information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on many part-time courses
- wide range of provision
- good individual support for students
- good specialist resources to support learning.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rates on GNVQ intermediate
- declining pass rates on computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), City and Guilds level 1, and Integrated Business Technology (IBT) II
- poor attendance in many classes
- students' slow progress on community classes in European computer driving licence (ECDL) and CLAIT+.

Scope of provision

63. The college offers a wide range of provision and qualifications from foundation to level 4. The full-time courses include GNVQ foundation ICT, GNVQ intermediate ICT, AVCE ICT, and pre Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND). In addition to the full-time courses, there is a wide range of general and specialist short courses in areas such as word processing, computer literacy, IT, Internet technologies, programming and web publishing. Flexible programmes of study provide training and re-training that lead to recognised qualifications at a range of levels. Widening participation has led to a growth of courses in 24 community locations, such as a facility for unemployed in a deprived ward in the town and various other venues.

Achievement and standards

64. The pass and retention rates of students on part-time IT courses are good. Students work diligently in class and develop good practical IT skills. On level 2 community based courses progress is slow. The English language skills of a number of students are limited. Examples of good pass

rates on part-time courses include 82% for certificate level 1 IT courses, which is over 20% above national averages, 78% for IBT stage III, which is over 30% above average, and the ECDL at 79%, which is 18% above. There has been a decline in pass rates on a number of part-time courses even though they are still above the national averages. This has coincided with a widening participation and establishing training in community locations.

65. The assessed work indicates that most of the students are working at appropriate standards for the qualification being undertaken. However, within community-based courses where new level 2 qualifications are being taught, progress is very slow. For example, a number of these students were finding it difficult to cope with the file management aspect of the course and could not easily locate a file in a folder on a disc. Many of the portfolios contain evidence of good understanding and good research, though in some there is no evidence of correcting errors and checking accuracy of work.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communication technology, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	929	1155	1071
		% retention	80	78	79
		% pass rate	86	68	64
IT certificate (short)	1	No. of starts	69	119	130
		% retention	94	82	79
		% pass rate	95	88	82
ECDL	2	No. of starts	*	23	135
		% retention	*	78	80
		% pass rate	*	72	79
IBT stage II (one year)	2	No. of starts	32	270	417
		% retention	81	89	86
		% pass rate	88	74	58
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	37	67	60
		% retention	65	64	76
		% pass rate	58	37	44
IBT stage III	3	No. of starts	55	97	86
		% retention	82	84	80
		% pass rate	40	96	78
GCE AS IT	3	No. of starts	*	54	45
		% retention	*	83	67
		% pass rate	*	61	63

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

66. The standard of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. No lessons were graded less than satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned. Students work diligently in class with enthusiasm

for their learning. The vocational courses feature well-constructed assignments with clear assessment criteria. Teachers support their students well. Theory is taught less well than practical skills. The teaching is passive with insufficient checking of understanding. Attendance in a number of classes is poor. The vocational courses feature well-constructed assignments with clear assessment criteria. The Internet is well used as a research tool. Good quality curriculum resources, many of which are available in electronic form on the network, enhance learning.

67. Examples of good teaching include an AVCE class within which concepts related to human computer interaction were taught using a combination of techniques. A good presentation involving students was followed by effective group discussion and pooling of ideas, at the end of which students presented their conclusions to the rest of the class. In a well-planned GNVQ lesson focused on developing skills in using presentation software, students learn quickly through a series of short focused activities, developing in difficulty and supported by a multimedia projector and digital camera. Students progress from following the steps of the teacher to working more independently by the end of the lesson. Photographs are taken of the students and the resulting images are incorporated into the presentations, thus extending the skills learnt.

68. In the less effective lessons, teachers talk for too long, do not provide sufficient variety to engage learners, and do not adequately check understanding. An example of this was a revision lesson that focused on difficult mock examination questions. The teacher talked through possible answers without summarising the main points. Even though this was a small class the teacher did not notice that some students were not making notes and missed opportunities to check understanding despite the little time left before the formal examination.

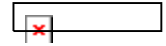
69. Full-time students are assessed on entry for learning support needs and, if identified as necessary, appropriate support is provided. Students are well supported academically in the classroom and on personal issues through the tutorial process. Detailed tutorial notes record interviews with students and individual action plans are maintained. Clear procedures are in place to monitor attendance but these are not effective in improving attendance in a number of classes. Students on the AVCE course appreciate the support tutors provide via e-mail; this is particularly helpful while students are working on assignments at home. The vocational courses feature well-constructed assignments with clear assessment criteria. Teachers mark students' work effectively and helpful written comments indicate how students could improve. Portfolios are assessed accurately and consistently.

70. Teachers are well qualified and have a secure and up-to-date technical knowledge. Teaching and learning are supported by good quality computing resources situated in spacious accommodation. Students have access to modern application software and professional programming and web development tools. Multimedia projectors are used effectively on the main campuses but are less readily available for the community provision. Open access facilities are limited on the Paget Road campus. There are good quality curriculum resources, both on paper and electronic, to support learning.

Leadership and management

71. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality assurance procedures including internal verification are well established and effectively monitor provision to ensure that awarding body criteria are being satisfied. There are regular team meetings that concentrate on curriculum related issues. A recent focus for these meetings has been attendance and retention, but poor attendance has still to be improved. Well-structured schemes of work and lesson plans are used consistently across a wide range of provision despite the fact that two programme co-ordinators have been absent due to ill health for many months. Regular staff development is used to assist in co-ordinating developments across the breadth of provision. However, staff are experiencing difficulties in introducing new level 2 part-time qualifications in community locations and many students on these courses are not progressing fast enough.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- good retention rates

- students' highly developed practical skills

- good attendance

- good support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rates on foundation and intermediate food preparation and cooking courses and basic pastry courses

- inappropriate practical environments for assessment purposes

- teaching that does not meet the learning needs of more able students.

Scope of provision

72. The college offers NVQ food preparation and cooking, and serving food and drink courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. An NVQ course on preparing and serving food is also offered at foundation level. Food safety, national licensees certificate, and basic and advanced pastry courses are also available. Some 25 students aged 16 to 18 and 13 adults are enrolled on full-time courses, and 20 students aged 16 to 18 and 150 adults attend part time.

Achievement and standards

73. Retention rates are good across all courses in the area and those on the food preparation and cooking courses at foundation and intermediate levels are well above the national averages for colleges of a similar type. Pass rates on these courses and the basic pastry cooks and patissiers course were poor in 2002. Retention and pass rates are similar for both students aged 16 to 18 and

adults. The majority of successful students gain awards in addition to their main qualification. All students achieve a basic level food safety certificate. Students' attainment in lessons is satisfactory and much of the work produced by students is of a good standard. One foundation NVQ student, for example, produced Bakewell Tarts for serving in the college restaurant. Most students progress to relevant employment or continue onto higher level qualifications.

74. Students' technical skills are of a high standard. For example, they show excellent knife skills and use these well when jointing poultry and cutting vegetables. Students work well together as a team when preparing and serving food, and display good social skills when dealing with customers in the restaurant. They display good manners, patience and good humour. The food produced is well presented and efficiently served by students at all levels of study. Students keep accurate portfolios of their work which include suitable evidence of their progress, such as copies of menus. Attendance in lessons is very good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ food preparation and cooking (one year)	1	No. of starts	14	19	26
		% retention	86	*	96
		% pass rate	67	88	58
NVQ preparing and serving food (one year)	1	No. of starts	**	24	29
		% retention	**	*	86
		% pass rate	**	82	89
NVQ food preparation and cooking (one year)	2	No. of starts	18	18	13
		% retention	83	*	100
		% pass rate	36	70	62
Pastry cooks and patissiers basic (one year)	2	No. of starts	24	24	37
		% retention	63	71	86
		% pass rate	60	59	56
BII national licensees certificate (short)	3	No. of starts	105	116	48
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	33	59	79

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*data unreliable

**course did not run

Quality of education and training

75. Teaching is generally satisfactory. Teaching in half the lessons in the area is good or better. These lessons are carefully planned and well structured and motivate students. Students respond well to being given clearly defined roles such as head chef and wine waiter. Teachers use good learning materials which are well prepared and presented. Handouts are imaginative and include colourful illustrations which help students learn key facts. One teacher used handouts which included diagrams of a side of lamb and a model with removable parts to help students understand the differences between different joints of meat. Teachers link the teaching of theory to practical work and draw on students' experience of working in industry to help them develop good working practices. For example, teachers reinforce the importance of good hygiene practices during practical

demonstrations. Teachers and support staff work closely together to ensure that students are supported during practical lessons in the production kitchen and restaurant. Teachers question students continuously to ensure that they understand what they are doing and that they are learning.

76. In the less effective lessons, handouts are used merely as a means of providing information and do not help students learn. Such handouts are sometimes placed directly into students' files and have no impact on learning during the lesson. Many lessons in the production kitchen and restaurant do not reflect the kind of commercial pressures students need to experience and become familiar with. The numbers of students working in the production kitchen do not reflect industry practices. The experiences provided do not ensure that students are best prepared for entering the industry. In these weaker lessons, more able students often have insufficient work to keep them occupied and motivated, and they lose concentration. There is insufficient planning to ensure that the learning needs of all students in these lessons are met. There is little teaching and reinforcing of key skills during practical lessons.

77. Some practical assessment of NVQs is unrealistic because students are assessed in inappropriate situations which do not fully reflect industrial practice. Most assessments are carried out through observation and questioning. The use of alternative methods of assessment such as witness statements is limited. The internal verification of NVQ assessment is satisfactory. Internal verification sampling plans are available but these do not include all aspects of assessment. Internal verifiers sample units from each student portfolio.

78. Students receive high levels of support from their tutors. Induction and tutorial programmes are thorough and are well planned. The programmes include introductions to health and safety, food safety, equality of opportunity, careers and other employment topics. Students' progress is effectively monitored and issues raised are documented. Students at risk of failure are set clear targets for improving their performance and are provided with additional support as required. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored and absences are followed up immediately. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed during induction and excellent support and guidance is provided. A teacher from the curriculum area works with literacy and numeracy teachers to ensure that support is provided in an appropriate occupational context. There is little accreditation of students' prior learning and/or experience.

79. All staff are well qualified. Some teachers gain industrial experience with the support of the college. The catering facilities include one training kitchen, a production kitchen and a restaurant. At the time of the inspection, the hospitality and catering department was housed in temporary accommodation whilst awaiting a move to a purpose-built site. The space available is limited and the kitchens and restaurant do not provide realistic working environments. The kitchens have a variety of specialist equipment to support learning and provide appropriate environments for students to develop practical skills. Most of the equipment is in good working order. However, the convection oven in the production kitchen is inefficient and underused. The library bookstock is good. Students have access to computers and the Internet to aid research. Students' experiences are broadened through a variety of visits to exhibitions and local employers. Intermediate NVQ students are given the opportunity to experience a two-week work placement. A variety of enrichment opportunities is available to full-time students, including additional qualifications such as GCSEs and first aid courses.

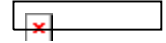
Leadership and management

80. Overall, the leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Retention and achievement targets are set at course level and teachers are aware of the targets. Staff meetings are held regularly and appropriate action is taken to remedy issues that arise. All staff work together well as a team. Appraisals are effective and ensure that continuous professional development takes place. Lesson observations take place regularly and inform staff appraisal. Self-assessment reports are prepared as required by college policy and all the staff in the area are involved in the process, but weaknesses are not always accurately identified and insufficient attention is given to weaknesses in teaching and learning. Course reviews are carried out but do not fully inform the self-assessment process. Managers place insufficient emphasis on ensuring that the facilities provided in the kitchens and restaurant meet the realistic working environment criteria required for the courses

provided. The restaurant is not marketed as a commercial operation.

81. The hospitality and catering department is currently in temporary accommodation with limited space whilst awaiting a move to a purpose-built site.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on full-time beauty therapy courses

- broad range of courses and additional enrichment opportunities

- effective links with industry.

Weaknesses

- much uninspiring teaching in hairdressing

- slow progress in achieving NVQ units

- poor retention on hairdressing courses

- poor management of internal verification in college-based courses.

Scope of provision

82. The college offers a broad range of courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. The offer includes beauty therapy, hairdressing and holistic therapies. There is an extensive range of part-time beauty and holistic therapy courses at certificate and diploma level, and foundation college-certified courses in beauty and holistic therapy offered out in the community. In total there were 622 hair and beauty learners on programmes at the college. The college took over a work-based learning contract from a local provider in February 2002 and can now offer foundation and

modern apprenticeships and NVQ programmes. At the time of inspection there were 221 learners on modern apprenticeship programmes. All are employed in local salons. The majority of students on college courses are aged over 19. Taster courses in beauty therapy are provided for school pupils. All full-time students aged 16 to 18 are expected to do key skills and work-based learners work towards the key skills aspect of their framework.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates on NVQ beauty therapy courses are good. For example, the pass rates on both NVQ levels 2 and 3 have exceeded the national average for the last two years. The college is no longer offering the combined hair and beauty courses, as it recognised that learners were having difficulty in achieving outcomes within the allocated times, and often withdrew from the courses with no NVQ achievement. Retention in hairdressing is poor, with retention rates well below national average. The retention rate for the current year on work-based learning is good. However, it is too early to make a judgement on achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks as the college only acquired the company in February 2002. Work-based learners are achieving the key skills although the NVQ achievement is often slow. Attendance at key skills sessions at the college is poor; therefore there has been little key skills achievement. Delivery of key skills in isolation to the NVQ means that learners cannot see the relevance to the main course. There is little use of the opportunities available within the NVQ for assessment of key skills. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was unsatisfactory, at 71%, which is below the national average of 75%.

84. Learners produce good quality assignments in beauty therapy and there is good feedback from assessors which aids progress.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	23	34	57
		% retention	91	27	47
		% pass rate	71	100	80
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	17	19	23
		% retention	76	21	70
		% pass rate	54	100	91
Indian head massage diploma (short course/one year)	2	No. of starts	18	39	36
		% retention	100	79	81
		% pass rate	83	100	83
Cosmetic make up certificate (one year)	2	No. of starts	40	38	41
		% retention	78	66	78
		% pass rate	55	76	78
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	6	8	10
		% retention	100	63	90
		% pass rate	0	100	100
Diploma in reflexology (one year)	3	No. of starts	28	12	20
		% retention	82	100	100
		% pass rate	61	83	75
Body massage certificate (one year)	3	No. of starts	14	16	16
		% retention	93	75	63

		% pass rate	85	75	80
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

Quality of education and training

85. Teaching is generally satisfactory. Teaching in beauty therapy was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. The learners display a good professional image. In some of the better lessons, good reference is made to commercial practices. Learners respond well in sessions and make valuable contributions to discussion. Much of the teaching of hairdressing is uninspiring and fails to motivate learners. Sessions often make little demand on the learners to use their own initiative. Teachers have a good command of the subject, though in one hairdressing session observed, the teacher gave incorrect information. There is insufficient variety in teaching and learning methods to promote learning and accommodate individual needs. In some sessions, flip charts and whiteboards are not well used and handouts contain spelling mistakes. Excessive use of handouts and dictation was observed.

86. There is a broad range of enrichment activities available to learners, along with having the opportunity to take short courses in addition to the main programme, in subjects such as nail art and barbering. Learners participate in competitions and attend trade shows and exhibitions. Guest presenters are invited in from hair and beauty product manufacturers. The work-based learners and their employers can attend events that invite high profile hairdressers to demonstrate their skills.

87. Some learners arrive late and disrupt the sessions; some learners in hairdressing salons were dressed inappropriately and wore excessive jewellery, which was not addressed by the teacher.

88. The salon resources, which are occupied in temporary accommodation until the new salons are built in the town centre, are adequate. Some of the equipment is in need of repair and learners have to manage without or wait for it to be available. Lack of clients for some treatments impedes the learners' progress, although the college has recognised this and has made a new appointment of a 'model co-ordinator' to build the client base.

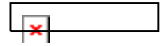
89. The assessment process is delayed due to learners not having been issued with an assessment book. Some who started the programme in September 2002 have still not received their logbook to record assessments.

90. There is good learning support available but this is rarely taken up by learners. All learners undergo initial literacy and numeracy skills tests and those who would benefit from learning support are identified. There is no specialist support integrated within the hair and beauty sessions. There are no study support sessions on the timetable, however, teachers in the curriculum area give support within the sessions as required.

Leadership and management

91. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Since the merger of the college and a new management structure, there has been recognition that the hair and beauty department is in need of change to become more responsive to the needs of industry. Collaboration with an industry partner has allowed staff to undergo occupational updating. However, there are many aspects of the provision that are not well managed. For example, internal verification is not planned and carried out to ensure that there is standardisation of assessment practice, although the feedback to assessors on the few records that are available is useful. The transfer of the work-based provision has been well managed. The college now employs the director of the previous provider company as the work-based co-ordinator and this has been beneficial for both employers and learners. There are good links with employers. Employers are invited into the college for meetings and the recent meeting was well attended.

Health and social care, early years



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on part-time courses

- much good teaching

- wide range of additional qualifications and enrichment activities

- strong and effective local partnerships

- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory attendance

- poor pass rates at foundation level.

Scope of provision

92. The college offers full-time courses for 307 students from entry level to level 3 in both health and social care and early years. Most of these students are aged 16 to 18 and a small number of this age group join these courses on a part-time basis. Some 171 students are taking access to HE for nursing, and 79 for social work. There are 234 students enrolled on different options in first aid, some of whom are full-time students on college courses. There are 113 students on NVQ level 2 or 3 in care or early years programmes, with an additional 220 working for these qualifications through local partnerships. Some 265 students are taking counselling courses at four levels. The college also offers a range of short courses in child minding, with 110 enrolments. Full-time students are able to acquire additional qualifications. The provision is split between two main sites and there is also part-time provision in several community venues.

Achievement and standards

93. Pass rates of those who complete part-time courses are good, reaching 100% in first aid and counselling. The pass rate in the national diploma in early years is also good and above the national average. Pass rates in GNVQ/AVCE and national diploma in caring services were unsatisfactory but improved to 100% in 2002, whereas in the certificate in childcare, the pass rate dipped and was unsatisfactory in that year. At foundation level in both early years and health and social care, the pass rates are unsatisfactory. There is satisfactory retention on most courses. Attendance was unsatisfactory during the inspection at 72%. In over one third of the classes observed, fewer than 66% of the students were present. The college has recognised this issue and staff are enthusiastic about the new measures to improve attendance.

94. Standards achieved in students' portfolios and assignments are satisfactory. NVQ portfolios are well organised and students are competent in cross-referencing. Students on many of the part-time courses are confident in their ability to link new theory and knowledge to improve their practice in the occupational setting. They develop in confidence and study skills. One student on an access to nursing course gave a lively, interactive presentation on diabetes. Her fellow students practised giving injections using disposable syringes and oranges, and also took part in a quiz. They then evaluated the quality of her presentation. The majority of students have a clear understanding of the values and ethics that underpin this programme area. Delays in starting work experience with some early years groups has slowed the ability of the students to link new theoretical knowledge to the occupational settings. At all levels, in both full-time and part-time courses, students work collaboratively and effectively in groups, often demonstrating the interpersonal skills desirable in this vocational area. The use of IT is increasing in students' work and they are active in using web sites for independent research. There are good internal progression rates for full-time students moving from foundation to level 2, and intermediate to advanced health and social care.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, early years, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	*	11	8
		% retention	*	100	50
		% pass rate	*	27	25
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	10	23	43
		% retention	80	87	88
		% pass rate	100	95	66
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	17	17	41
		% retention	100	94	83
		% pass rate	29	56	92
Counselling skills advanced	2/3	No. of starts	17	8	14
		% retention	94	63	86
		% pass rate	69	100	100
NVQ early years	3	No. of starts	37	40	34
		% retention	73	**	85
		% pass rate	48	89	100
Access to nursing	3	No. of starts	*	60	54
		% retention	*	58	70
		% pass rate	*	62	91
National diploma in early years	3	No. of starts	45	54	31
		% retention	91	**	77

		% pass rate	88	93	94
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*course did not run

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

95. Much of the teaching is good. It is well planned and most classes include a good variety of activities. For example, a lively access lesson on the heart included teacher exposition and question and answer, use of models and illustrations, study packs, demonstration of dissection, dissection by students and video recording. Students improved their knowledge in clear stages in an atmosphere which supported the excitement of discovery. At all levels there is a purposeful atmosphere as students have a clear focus on learning. The most effective teachers provide good role models for the occupational or professional skills. Many teachers emphasise the importance of ethics, equal opportunities and confidentiality, and this is reflected in the students' application of these issues to the work setting. For example, a foundation class reviewing communication in care settings was challenged to identify the rights of different client groups. The teacher seized the opportunity to carry out a short role play which enabled the students to grasp the key issues very quickly. There are some large classes in early years education and teachers do not always use the full range of strategies for the most effective classroom management. In some classes the use of undirected questioning means that the more vocal students dominate, and more passive students do not gain as much. The majority of the teaching rooms are fit for purpose or better. Students' work is displayed together with photographs celebrating their achievements in the enrichment programme. In one room there was an excellent display of students' art work (a giant spider, silhouettes and spider webs) arising from the story of Anansi and the Honey Pot. This work had been stimulated by participation in Caribbean story telling during Black History Day. Staff are appropriately qualified and many bring current occupational experience to their teaching. There are good opportunities for staff development.

96. Students benefit from a varied programme of enrichment activities, including visits, residential experience, additional qualifications, fundraising for charities and health education promotion events. In an innovative approach to induction, health and care students undertake qualifications in manual handling and food hygiene, as well as other practical activities. This ensures group cohesion and enables staff to get to know their students more quickly. Other qualifications include practical craft skills and Makaton. These opportunities boost the confidence and self-esteem of students, in an area with high numbers at risk of social exclusion. There is an interesting project to develop key skills for AVCE students but it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

97. The college has been active in developing strong and effective local partnerships. For example there are innovative projects working with care homes, the NHS trust and mental health service users. The NHS project aims to upgrade the skills of the workforce in a significantly deprived area. Another is seeking to establish learning zones in local hospitals, which use non-traditional methods for providing life-long learning. The college provides a wide range of courses in this programme area, from entry level to level 3. This helps to support internal progression. Timetables and programmes are adjusted to meet the needs of mature students with domestic responsibilities.

98. Homework is set regularly. It is marked and returned quickly, accompanied by feedback sheets, most of which are useful in guiding students to improve their performance. There are some inconsistencies in the correction of spellings and grammar. Some assignments are strongly linked to placements. The information from assessments is used to inform students' individual action planning and target setting. Internal verification is satisfactory. There have been delays in assessments in NVQ level 2 in early years, but the college has recognised this and it is being addressed.

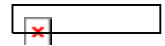
99. There is very good support for both full-time and part-time students. Staff have a good understanding of individual students' needs, and provide support for basic skills, social targets and

students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Formal reviews lead to action planning and specific targets for improvement. There are effective reviews, tutorials and assignment monitoring for full-time and part-time students. Learning support is also available for students who are based in community venues. Good schemes of work for tutorials for full-time students include a good mix of individual interviews, action planning, careers education, personal and social development, and citizenship. The tutorial system is supported by thorough documentation which is audited.

Leadership and management

100. Management of the programme area is good, with many strong aspects. These include well-organised systems for the delivery of programmes. Work experience is well co-ordinated. Staff are enthusiastic and are aware of their targets for attendance, achievement and retention. They are actively involved in the development of the self-assessment report. The induction, mentoring and monitoring system for new staff is particularly effective.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on media and garment making courses
- much good or better teaching
- very good resources for media and performing arts courses
- good leadership and management supporting effective collaborative partnerships.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on GNVQ intermediate art and design
- two unsatisfactory art and design studios
- insufficient resources to support a satisfactory range of three-dimensional design work.

Scope of provision

101. The college offers a good range of courses from entry to HE level for 300 full-time and 720 part-time students. These include courses in the performing arts, dance, theatre studies, music technology, art and design, craft studies, fashion, pattern cutting, garment making, a range of creative studies, such as interior design and soft furnishing, media production, journalism, film studies and photography. Some 90% of adults are on part-time courses. Three-quarters of students are enrolled for courses in art, design and the performing arts, of whom 76% are part time. Some 25% of media students are part time. Internal progression opportunities in media are good, with the college offering a HNC course in photography and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) course in journalism and editorial design in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton.

Achievement and standards

102. There are good pass rates in media and garment-making courses. The national diploma in music technology in 2002 and the foundation level National Open College Network (NOCN) garment making course in 2000 and 2001 achieved 100% pass rates. The retention rate on the foundation diploma in art and design improved by 13 percentage points from 2001 to 2002 and is above the national average. The pass rate improved by 21 percentage points to 100% over the same period. There is a continuing trend of poor pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate art and design course. Retention and pass rates are consistently high on six of the seven units on the National Council for Training Journalists (NCTJ) course. Students need to achieve a very high shorthand speed of 100 wpm to gain the full certificate. In 2002, 95% of students achieved 40wpm but did not achieve the speed required to gain a full certificate. Progression rates from GCE AS courses to GCE A2 are poor. Some 47 students enrolled on three GCE AS courses in 2000, but only seven progressed to three full GCE A-level courses in 2001. Progression is high on some courses. In 2002, 10% of leavers progressed to HE compared with the college average of 2%. In 2002, 88% of art foundation diploma students, 82% of video production, and 82% of drama students, progressed to HE.

103. Students work industriously and with confidence. They have a determination to succeed and value their learning. Listening skills are well developed and performance skills in drama are good. In a rehearsal of 'Antigone', students displayed good use of shoulder movements and eye line focus in their expression of power. Students work well together in small or large groups. In an evening singing class, for example, soprano, alto and bass groups combined in a performance of 'any dream will do'. Through the Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in the creative industries, students make good use of opportunities to work closely with the media industry through work experience placements. Full-time NCTJ students are all placed with newspapers throughout central England and an ex-student was National Student Journalist of the year in 2002. The year prior to the inspection, an ex-student became a presenter with BBC radio WM and hosts two shows each week.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Level 1 garment making	1	No. of starts	39	138	134
		% retention	87	83	74
		% pass rate	100	100	94
GCSE photography	2	No. of starts	29	34	71
		% retention	69	56	82
		% pass rate	65	68	41
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	*	18	40
		% retention	*	78	70

		% pass rate	*	93	96
GNVQ intermediate art design	3	No. of starts	9	10	16
		% retention	78	80	81
		% pass rate	29	38	38
National diploma music technology	3	No. of starts	7	12	17
		% retention	100	67	82
		% pass rate	86	88	100
Diploma in foundation studies	3	No. of starts	*	45	18
		% retention	*	76	89
		% pass rate	*	79	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

104. Teaching is good or better in most lessons. Challenging questioning of students' understanding is a feature of most lessons. Many students articulate their views confidently during group discussions and during one-to-one feedback sessions. A group of art students held a stimulating discussion about diversity, and a journalism student spoke animatedly during feedback on a recent test on defamation and contempt of court laws. There is much good teaching in adult evening classes and at community locations. Teachers in garment making classes demand high levels of skills which students develop. Their work is of a professional standard and detailed attention is given to seams, darts, inserting zips and smocking. All worksheets and handouts are in both Panjabi and English. Teaching styles effectively reflect the demands of the course. In NCTJ classes in law for journalists for example, regular tests of key facts help students to develop the ability to retain knowledge for instant recall when reporting. Many teachers set regular homework and tasks to extend lessons and help individual students to learn according to their ability. A media student, for example, was told that a local person had had all his prize canaries stolen and was told to find the man and interview him. Teachers manage learning activities in classrooms and studios effectively according to the needs of individual students. They combine practical and theoretical elements imaginatively. During a practical music lesson, students were required to produce written work on notation. The variety of the tasks kept them absorbed in their work and they concentrated well throughout the lesson. Computers are used effectively to help students to learn. Music technology students access web sites to allow them to preserve copyright on their original material. Where lessons are less effective, teachers fail to engage and motivate all the students in the class. Students in one drama class for example were undisciplined. Some lesson plans are too brief and most lesson plans do not focus sufficiently on what individual students are expected to learn. Teachers make good use of visits to professional performances, galleries and museums to support learning. Printmaking students examine authentic masks from Africa, India, Japan and Mexico while developing relief prints about 'non-western cultures'.

105. Teaching staff and technicians are well qualified and experienced. Many part-time teachers, especially in performing arts, music technology and journalism, have current industry experience. Resources and accommodation for media and performing arts are very good, with much accommodation being state of the art. Accommodation and resources at community venues are good. A converted church building, for example, is clean, warm, and well lit and provides good accommodation for an evening garment making and pattern cutting class. New electric sewing machines are available for all the 12 students in the class. A successful joint bid with the city council for lottery funds helped provide an excellent theatre, dance studio and rehearsal rooms. The provision is responsive to the needs of students within the curriculum area and other students from across the college. Some 100 students operate the college's WCR radio station, broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Half the students are enrolled on courses in other curriculum areas and

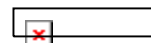
use the opportunities offered to enrich their learning. The Zip Theatre and Foursite Theatre operate from the Newhampton site together with an independent rock school. Two art and design studios at the Valley Park site are unsatisfactory for teaching purposes and there are insufficient resources to support a satisfactory range of three-dimensional design work. Students do not have enough opportunities to work with wood, metal, plastic or stone.

106. Students are provided with clear guidance prior to and on enrolment but links with secondary schools are not well developed. There is good one-to-one and group tutorial provision and students are well supported. Learning support is provided wherever necessary and is effective. On a performing arts course, for example, a hearing impaired student had the support of a sign language assistant to help with the choreography during rehearsals. There are effective procedures for assessment and feedback to students. Students' progress is rigorously monitored and students who are at risk of not completing their course successfully are identified and supported.

Leadership and management

107. Courses are managed through two college schools, and leadership and management are good across both schools and in associated community locations. The provision is responsive to the needs of the local community and the creative industries. Provision is well co-ordinated across the curriculum area and teams of teachers meet regularly to conduct course reviews. Teachers and managers work together effectively and are clear about the priorities for the curriculum area even though provision is dispersed between three main sites and 16 community centres. Progress towards achieving retention, pass and attendance targets is reviewed regularly but there is insufficient monitoring of action points following course reviews. Teaching observation is effective and leads to improvement. Self-assessment is thorough although some weaknesses are not identified. Tutorials are well managed and there is effective learning support. The area has embraced the college's policy for widening participation well.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- improved and now good pass rates in GCE AS and A2 sociology

- consistently good teaching and pass rates on GCE AS/A-level/A2 courses in geography

- very good teaching on courses for adults

- thorough monitoring of students' progress and attendance

- strong individual support provided by subject teachers and personal tutors.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCE AS history and GCE AS/A-level law
- some poorly planned lessons lacking challenge and stimulation
- deficiencies in the arrangements for developing key skills
- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of some aspects of the provision for students aged 16 to 18
- little use made of ICT in lessons.

Scope of provision

108. Most provision in humanities consists of courses at GCE AS and A level. Of approximately 500 enrolments at the time of inspection, two thirds are at GCE AS. Most humanities students are aged 16 to 18. Psychology, sociology and law account for 80% of all enrolments. History, geography, economics and general studies are also provided at GCE AS, with religious studies and politics available by distance learning. Humanities subjects make an important contribution to the curriculum of the Wolverhampton sixth form. The college is successful in meeting the needs and interests of its adult students. Evening classes are offered in field archaeology and ancient and medieval history, in addition to several GCSE and GCE AS/A-level subjects. An access to HE course includes options not only in history and sociology but also in Caribbean history and the sociology of race. Teaching on the access course is provided at times which take account of the circumstances of adult students.

Achievement and standards

109. Between 2001 and 2002, most pass rates at GCSE and GCE AS/A level improved from below average to above average or better, but low pass rates persisted in GCE AS law and history and in GCE A-level law and psychology. The proportion of students gaining high grades at GCE AS in 2002 was well above average in all subjects. In 2001, the proportion had been generally low. Rising levels of students' achievement are clearly evident in GCE AS/A-level sociology between 2001 and 2002, when pass rates increased from below to significantly above average. The achievements of geography students have remained consistently good. In 2002, most geography students at GCE AS and A level achieved higher grades than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Retention rates on humanities courses with larger enrolments were mostly good in 2002, but they were poor on distance learning courses. Students' attainments in lessons are generally good. Many GCE AS students display the ability to apply their growing knowledge and understanding. In a law lesson, students related topical issues in the news to the law they were studying. This elicited a lively

debate about sentencing policy and legislation on gun controls. GCE A-level psychology students have developed good critical skills which enable them to evaluate the merits of different theories and research studies. They have also learnt how to work well on their own. The written work of high attaining humanities students is fluently argued and results in carefully balanced conclusions. Some lower attaining students do not have adequate written skills to convey their answers with accuracy and clarity. In history, a few students have difficulty in comprehending the meaning of documentary sources. This clearly inhibits their ability to interpret and compare the information.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	31	15	24
		% retention	65	67	71
		% pass rate	15	20	76
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	*	33	30
		% retention	*	73	77
		% pass rate	*	50	48
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	*	31	53
		% retention	*	87	89
		% pass rate	*	27	49
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	*	41	41
		% retention	*	68	90
		% pass rate	*	57	84
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	59	70
		% retention	*	88	91
		% pass rate	*	59	77
GCE A-level/A2 psychology	3	No. of starts	33	42	53
		% retention	**	52	79
		% pass rate	79	64	67
GCE A-level sociology (one year)	3	No. of starts	44	29	***
		% retention	**	48	***
		% pass rate	51	57	***
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	26	36	20
		% retention	**	67	90
		% pass rate	92	75	94

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*course did not run

**data unreliable

***not applicable

Quality of education and training

110. Adult students are generally very well taught. There is much greater variation in the quality of teaching of students aged 16 to 18. However, in geography and law the teaching is consistently very good. Students make good progress in their learning by taking an active part in discussion. In a sociology lesson, access to HE students presented a theoretical perspective of the family. The students who listened were encouraged to ask questions. Finally, the presenters asked questions to check the understanding of their audience. In less successful lessons, there is insufficient discussion and debate. Teachers ask mainly factual questions. Many students are unresponsive. Students learn well when they are given opportunities to practise their skills. Good use is made of well-structured activities with students working on their own, in pairs or small groups. Students maintain their interest and concentration because the activities are challenging and the teacher provides encouragement and support. Poorly planned lessons rely too much on the teacher talking whilst students copy or make notes. No account is taken of students' different abilities or their preferred methods of learning. The key skills of GCE AS/A-level students are not being developed systematically. Subject teachers are not providing specific opportunities for students to develop and gain accreditation for their key skills.

111. Teachers are suitably qualified and show a commitment to professional development. They have begun to apply good practice identified in subjects other than their own. Students have sufficient books in lessons and to use out of class. The handouts given to psychology students are well devised to promote the development of subject-specific skills. Sufficient up-to-date books are available in the learning resources centres for students' independent work. Access to computers is satisfactory. Teachers make insufficient use of ICT in their lessons. Schemes of work contain few references to the way computers may be used to support teaching and learning. Posters and plenty of students' work have enlivened the appearance of classrooms. In a few instances, teaching and learning were adversely affected by poor soundproofing and inappropriate accommodation.

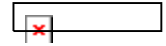
112. Assessment is regular, suitable and in some cases imaginatively conceived. Work is marked conscientiously and generally students are shown how to make improvements. Students are not provided with a schedule of assignments. This hinders their management of time in response to the demands of different subjects. Subject teachers and personal tutors effectively monitor students' progress at monthly intervals. Students who are doing well are commended. Learning support is widely used. Progress reviews take place three times a year. They are thorough and make good use of target grades and action planning. Parents are regularly informed about the progress of students aged 16 to 18.

113. The quality of initial advice and guidance for full-time and part-time students is mostly good. Full-time students receive careful guidance to help them choose GCE AS subjects. A guidance interview is usually required before part-time students begin examination courses. There is insufficient initial guidance or continuing support for the few students who choose distance learning courses. Students' IT skills are not assessed. Full-time humanities students speak well of the individual support they receive from their personal tutors. Students' attendance is thoroughly monitored. Part-time students are particularly well supported in many evening classes. The college's close relationship with the local university facilitates progression to HE for GCE A-level and access students.

Leadership and management

114. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Achievement has been successfully raised in some parts of the provision but not in others. The arrangements to support students are working well. Teaching has benefited from staff development and the sharing of good practice but wide variations in quality still remain. Whilst the findings of lesson observations are put to some good use, too few take place. They are not linked to the annual appraisal of teachers. Students' achievements and teaching and learning are not analysed with sufficient thoroughness in the humanities self-assessment report. Important aspects are overlooked. The impact of some strengths and weaknesses is not evaluated. These deficiencies lead to weaknesses in action planning.

English, languages and communications



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

Strengths

- very good pass and retention rates in GCE A2 English language and GCSE Panjabi
- good teaching on level 3 courses in English
- effective speaking in foreign languages in lessons
- regular and effective workshops which support students' learning
- comprehensive self-assessment leading to well-identified priorities.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rate in GCSE English language
- retention below national benchmark on GCE AS English courses
- some unsatisfactory teaching in modern foreign languages
- some inappropriate combination of teaching groups in modern foreign languages.

Scope of provision

115. There is a broad range of provision for students in this curriculum area. In English, a level 1 pre-GCSE course is offered as well as GCSE English language. At level 3, there are courses in GCE AS English and GCE AS English literature, as well as GCE A-level courses in English language and English literature. English literature is also taught on access to HE courses. Modern foreign

language courses are offered at level 1, 2 and 3. These include Arabic, French, German, Greek, Italian, Panjabi, Russian and Spanish. Most courses in the curriculum area are available to full-time day students and part-time evening students. Most students studying modern foreign languages are aged over 19 and are part time. In English, most students are aged 16 to 18 and study full time.

Achievement and standards

116. The standard of students' work in lessons is generally satisfactory and good in almost half of the lessons observed. Pass and retention rates in GCE A2 English language are good and in GCSE Panjabi they exceed the national average. However, the pass rate in GCSE English language is poor and has been declining for three years. Retention in GCE AS English language and GCE AS English literature is below the national average for similar colleges. Curriculum managers have recently introduced a system for determining whether students' achievements reflect their prior attainment but this system had not been fully implemented at the time of the inspection.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communications, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE Panjabi	2	No. of starts	13	21	12
		% retention	100	95	100
		% pass rate	8	35	83
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	146	244	279
		% retention	74	60	74
		% pass rate	59	53	28
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	*	24	40
		% retention	*	71	65
		% pass rate	*	76	77
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	*	37	40
		% retention	*	78	70
		% pass rate	*	93	93
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	*	22	11
		% retention	*	73	82
		% pass rate	*	75	78
GCE A2 English language	3	No. of starts	*	*	16
		% retention	*	*	94
		% pass rate	*	*	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

117. The quality of teaching is good on level 3 courses in English but there is some unsatisfactory teaching at all levels in modern foreign languages. Most teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Most English lessons are well planned though some schemes of work lack detail. The best lessons were well managed and lively, and teachers made effective and appropriate use of

a range of techniques to involve all the students and sustain their interest. In modern foreign languages, the best teaching involves the use of the foreign language for the majority of interactions between teachers and students, a range of well-chosen learning resources, attention to the needs of individuals and a planned balance of skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing. In the modern foreign language lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, there is excessive use of English. Teachers tend to talk about the foreign language in English rather than speak the foreign language itself. These lessons rely on translation or reading aloud, rather than eliciting more authentic language or provide opportunities for silent reading for understanding. When students in such lessons attempt to speak the foreign language, they are often hesitant, sometimes embarrassed. Pronunciation, intonation and syntax are heavily anglicised.

118. Regular workshops, which support students' learning, are a strength of the provision. In modern foreign languages, workshops are staffed by a teacher and sometimes by a foreign language assistant. The workshops provide space in a purposeful working environment for students to study at their own pace, consult a teacher, develop a linguistic interest or simply work at an assignment. English workshops are well resourced and enable students to seek help from teachers with assignments. In lessons, teachers often make good use of a range of learning resources, though some rely too heavily on worksheets and other handouts. When more imaginative approaches are adopted, such as the use of video or audio recordings, pace and variety are more sustained in lessons. In one Greek class, for instance, the teacher set out an imitation market stall, which led to a most effective role play using authentic language.

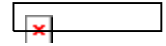
119. Classrooms are airy and light, and well furnished. Most have overhead projectors and television facilities, and SMART boards have recently been installed in most areas. Students have good access to computers but teachers do not make sufficient use of IT resources in lessons. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Teachers use effective assessment procedures based on the requirements of the awarding bodies and students' progress is regularly monitored and reviewed. Teachers mark students' work in detail and provide written comments, which are encouraging and constructive to help them improve. Moderation of students' coursework is thorough and is praised by external moderators. Cover sheets are used for developmental comments on marked work; these are an effective element of assessment practice.

120. The college offers a wide range of courses in this curriculum area at levels 1, 2 and 3, and there is satisfactory progression from each of these levels. Many students who successfully complete a full-time programme at level 3 go on to HE. In 2002/03 the college responded to the declining pass rate on GCSE English language by introducing a level 1 pre-GCSE English course for students who were assessed as requiring additional support and preparation for the GCSE course. Enrolment on level 2 and 3 courses in modern foreign languages is in decline. Some teaching groups in modern foreign languages have been combined as a response to declining numbers. This has not been successful in reconciling the college's organisational needs with the differing learning needs of students aiming for different courses. The average attendance rate of 72% is low and adversely affects students' learning. Guidance and support are satisfactory. All students have the opportunity to attend taster days before enrolling. They take initial diagnostic tests which inform decisions on additional support requirements. This is not fed back to subject tutors. Not all interviews are conducted by subject specialists. There are few subject-specific induction activities.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is comprehensive and thorough and involves all key stakeholders. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Improvements in quality of teaching and learning are a priority for the college and there is evidence of in-house teaching observations of full-time and fractional staff regularly taking place. Not all part-time teachers are observed. Course reviews are thorough and perceptive, and inform decisions made on provision. Staff appraisal is regular and all staff, including part-time staff, are encouraged to participate in professional development.

English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- effective response to meeting the needs of the local community
- good classroom accommodation
- good use of a wide range of enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and punctuality
- inadequate arrangements to monitor progress and achievement of learners
- insufficient development of individual learners' use of language
- narrow range of teaching styles.

Scope of provision

122. The college has effectively responded to meeting the needs of the local community. Staff work well in partnership with community groups to set up provision to meet the needs of the changing population, particularly asylum seekers. ESOL courses are offered at two college centres and in local temples, in housing estates, in health centres and at community centres. There is an increase in provision at the Heath Town area of Wolverhampton and the added opportunity to study ESOL and IT. The number of ESOL students has risen from 532 in 1999/2000 to 1,023 in 2001/02. Part-time ESOL and IT courses are offered at entry and level 1 in the day and evening to adults.

Achievement and standards

123. The standard of students' work observed in lessons is mainly satisfactory. The majority of ESOL courses are not externally accredited. Students are awarded a college certificate. There is good progression within ESOL. Out of the 1,023 starters in 2001/02, 844 progressed within ESOL to

higher levels at entry level 1, 2, 3 or level 1 of the ESOL national curriculum. In addition, 50 progressed to main college programmes. An increasing number of students are entered for the external examinations and pass rates are good. The pass rate for those entered in 2001/02 was 84% at basic level, 92% at elementary level, and 85% at intermediate level. Some 30% of these students achieved a first class pass. Retention rates have declined from 84% in 1999 to 80% in 2002 in the college certificate course. Evidence suggests that there would be a further decline so managers have set improvement targets for each course. Attendance is poor and students are not punctual. They often arrive late and are unchallenged by staff. The attendance rate for lessons observed during inspection was poor at 57.8%, well below a national average of 77%. In five of the observed sessions, students arrived after the first half hour and were not consistently challenged. As a result, they often miss the work covered.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English for speakers of other languages, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
ESOL generic college certificate	E/1	No. of starts	532	787	1,023
		% retention	84	81	80
		% pass rate	79	85	89
Pitmans basic	E	No. of starts	*	*	90
		% retention	*	*	84
		% pass rate	*	*	84
Pitmans elementary	E	No. of starts	*	*	94
		% retention	*	*	92
		% pass rate	*	*	92
Pitmans intermediate	1	No. of starts	*	*	33
		% retention	*	*	85
		% pass rate	*	*	85

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*no enrolments

Quality of education and training

124. Most of the ESOL teaching is satisfactory or better. However, the proportion of good teaching is low and a quarter of the teaching observed was not satisfactory. This is below the national profile for teaching grades in this area.

125. Students participate well in lessons. They appreciate the support that teachers provide. During a good lesson at absolute beginner level, the teacher involved students in learning the sound of the letters of the alphabet through well-designed activities, tasks and materials. In this lesson, students gained confidence and worked well individually or in pairs to complete a variety of tasks, ranging from writing the letters of the alphabet to writing words. New vocabulary was introduced and the teacher used the learners' native language to teach the meaning of words. In a pre-intermediate lesson, the teacher skilfully questioned and elicited information from students about their opinions on imprisonment of first-time offenders. This led to a lively debate with students listening to each other's views well and then, in some instances, changing their opinions because of the strength of the argument.

126. In most lessons a narrow range of teaching styles is used. There is insufficient development of individual learners' use of language. Lessons are teacher led and there is too much whole group activity so students do not practise the use of language. Teaching activities are not tailored at

different levels to challenge and extend some students and support other weaker students. Students are of mixed ability in all language learning skills but there is little recognition of this in teaching styles, selection of materials, tasks and group work. Teaching materials tend to be either textbook or photocopies from books and worksheet exercises. Teaching methods tend to be boardwork, practice of language and then completion of tasks and correction of students' work. There is little pair or small-group work and learners are not encouraged to work independently and with each other. The focus of lessons is on acquisition of language structures rather than functional usage of language. There is insufficient planning to take account of individual learning needs and build on their prior learning.

127. The arrangements to monitor the progress and achievement of learners are inadequate. All students on ESOL courses have an initial assessment at entry which is used as a screening and placement tool. There is no form of diagnostic assessment carried out at the start of programme. All students are issued with ESOL diaries that incorporate outcomes from initial assessment and an individual learning plan. Group targets and outcomes are set but not always on an individual basis and there is inadequate monitoring of individuals' progress and their achievement of targets and goals. Learners are often given homework and work is assessed during lessons, however, teachers keep learners' diaries and students are not encouraged to keep a portfolio of their coursework or assessments. Diaries are not always completed by each learner and they are not always used as intended. They are often used to record work done during lessons. Progress review arrangements are inadequate and not all learners have a formal review.

128. Classroom accommodation at the college and community centres is good. The facilities for students are good and learners comment favourably about accommodation. The classrooms are well equipped and there are good quality displays of work and visual learning aids in all the teaching rooms. The students have access to computers at a number of centres. However, in one observed learning session at Newhampton Centre, the lesson was adversely affected by the number of machines working and the teacher could not carry out the assessment because students' work could not be printed.

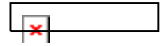
129. ESOL students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, which are used well and are relevant to learners' needs. Students are involved in the design of activities which are wide ranging and funds are made available by the college. Students comment that participation helps to build their confidence. ESOL teachers incorporate planning of enrichment activities in to the learning of language during lessons. In one lesson, students prepared well for a trip to the theatre or pantomime and learned the story about 'Snow White' to develop their comprehension and written language skills.

Leadership and management

130. The management of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The curriculum area of ESOL was created in April 2002 and is going through a period of growth. There is a strong strategic commitment from senior management to this area of work demonstrated by the growth in provision. Self-assessment identifies the strengths and weaknesses confirmed during inspection. Improvement targets for retention and achievement have been set and the impact of these has not yet taken effect.

131. The college has a system for monitoring attendance and teachers follow procedures. A database is maintained for recording reasons for absence. However, this is not yet used effectively. Data are not sufficiently analysed and used for planning purposes. Staff have access to external training and permanent staff discuss their professional development needs at appraisal. Observation of teaching has been introduced recently and all permanent staff together with 50% of part-time staff have been observed. Team meetings are held on a regular basis and staff are well supported by the head of the school. Course reviews and results from student questionnaires contribute to the section's self-assessment report and action plan. Even though the majority of students are awarded a college certificate and make progress, there are no criteria or system of internal moderation for the award of college certificates.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good achievement
- good teaching
- well-designed courses
- wide range and effective use of specialist resources to support learning
- effective leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient independent verification of achievement
- insufficient development of learners' social skills on some courses
- inefficient use of learning support assistants.

Scope of provision

132. The college offers full-time and part-time programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at pre-entry and entry levels and at level 1. Provision is based at two main college sites and at centres in the community. Currently there are 350 students. Some 61 are on full-time programmes and almost all are aged 16 to 18. There are 289 adult students on part-time

programmes, of whom 76 students are on franchised programmes in the community.

Achievement and standards

133. The standard of students' work in lessons is mainly good. Learners are enrolled on College Devised Other Provision. Retention rates are good and above the national average for this type of provision. Pass rates are very high and significantly better than the national average. All learners have detailed individual learning plans and take different options. Students are set challenging personal targets for developing a wide range of essential skills in line with the overall goals of the programme and their individual learning plans. There is very good achievement of programme goals and individual targets. Most students progress to further study or training. Where relevant, students gain externally accredited qualifications through vocational options selected as part of their individual learning plan.

A sample of retention and pass rates in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
College devised other provision	E	No. of starts	297	720	517
		% retention	82	88	81
		% pass rate	61	97	93
Achievement tests - numeracy 1 AEB	E	No. of starts	*	*	12
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	92

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

134. Most teaching is good or very good. There is close attention to individual students' learning targets and support needs. Each learner has individual goals for each lesson. In many classes, groups work well on complementary projects. For example, in a lesson on jewellery design, one group designed jewellery items, another developed a catalogue for selling finished items and a third developed an order form. The task required learners to share information between groups and to be more aware of other people. Very good use is made of students' prior learning and personal achievements when introducing new tasks, and frequent links are made between past, current and future experience. Most lessons incorporate the development of a wide range of essential skills, literacy and numeracy in enjoyable ways that stimulate students' interest. For example, in a community course for young adults, students were required to work quickly using a wide range of essential skills in rapid succession in order to win points for their team in a 'treasure hunt' competition. On some courses, there is insufficient attention to the development of students' social skills. In several lessons, students took little notice of each other and all communication was through the teacher.

135. Students have good access to specialist software both in their base rooms and in the IT suite. Teaching materials, timetables and other documentation are produced using Writing with Symbols software. Some learners tape their own participation in lessons and through the feedback they have a taped record of their achievements. Team teaching is used well to extend the range of learning opportunities and support new staff. In the best lessons, learning support assistants are skilled at supporting individuals and in assisting the teacher to maintain the flow of the lesson by dealing with interruptions. In some lessons, teachers and learning support assistants do not work well together and learners do not receive help when they need it.

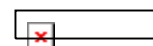
136. There are some good examples of self and peer assessment. In one arts class, learners with severe learning difficulties presented their work in groups or individually, and were questioned about the decisions they had made. Learners with behavioural difficulties on a Skills for Working Life programme receive detailed written feedback from the tutor and from one other student, and also make their own written evaluation of their work. Teaching teams review the achievement of targets every six weeks. Achievements are recorded in individual learning plans and in a summative statement at the end of the programme. Some records include details of the learning support required to achieve a goal. The head of school internally verifies all individual learning plans and summative statements. Target setting and reviews of progress are mostly good, but some teachers set targets that are too general and learners fail to achieve these. Checking of targets is not always sufficiently thorough and there is too little independent verification of students' achievements.

137. The curriculum is very well designed to meet students' interests, requirements and support needs. Learning support, skills development and enrichment activities are integrated well into courses. Part-time students attend for a whole day so that events such as meal times can be used to develop essential skills and to encourage students' full participation in college life. There are very good arrangements to support new students in the transition from school or care centres to college life. A wide range of vocational options has been introduced to improve retention and increase available progression routes. All students have a personal tutor and receive frequent individual and group tutorials. There is insufficient careers education for most part-time students. Programmes are offered for students from under-represented groups such as students with both learning difficulties and mental health problems.

Leadership and management

138. Leadership and management of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. The school is mid-way through a five-year strategy for improving the quality of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, focusing on individualised programmes of learning. A wide range of new processes and procedures has been introduced, as well as a new essential skills curriculum and new teaching methods. Staff have received good formal and informal staff development to implement these initiatives. The strategy is working well. Improved target setting has enabled staff and students to recognise achievements more easily. Quality assurance procedures and management data are generally used well to identify areas for improvement. There are very good arrangements for gaining independent feedback from students. These include feedback forms that learners can understand and peer support in completing forms rather than involving teaching staff. The school has a productive relationship with the college's widening participation department. Several new programmes for under-represented groups, such as Asian women with learning difficulties, are being piloted. Franchised arrangements are well managed and the partnership offers benefits to students in college and community provision.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- good individual support for students

- good teaching

- good community-based literacy and numeracy provision

- good use of resources

- flexible timetables that accommodate student need.

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements to verify standards achieved

- insufficiently rigorous completion of records of progress

- insufficient planning of assessment to meet the demands of external accreditation

- inadequate initial assessment on family learning courses

- some poor pass rates.

Scope of provision

139. The college offers full-time courses in literacy and numeracy, together with a range of part-time courses for adults. Courses in dyslexia support are available at the Wellington Road campus. Courses are provided at a range of venues across the city, including community and residential centres. There are 1,231 learners enrolled in the current academic year, most of whom are studying on part-time courses. Some 186 students are following programmes of family learning in community venues. Of the main college students, 1,300 are registered to receive learning support. Support for students on vocational programmes within college is offered both as in-class support and as additional support workshops in one of the colleges study centres. Some 39 students receive support for literacy and numeracy through timetabled classes, which are part of their main programme of study.

Achievement and standards

140. Pass rates are poor. The numbers of students entered for externally accredited awards is low, making a comparison with national pass rates difficult. The majority of students receiving help are not working towards an external literacy or numeracy qualification. Retention and achievement in college-accredited provision are declining. The main aim of students receiving help with literacy and

numeracy, who are also undertaking another main programme, is to succeed on their main programme. The college revised achievement targets for learners following the introduction of the core curriculum, and this has resulted in reduced pass rates for college-certified provision in 2001/02. A minority of students follow programmes leading to external accreditation. There is a high rate of retention and achievement in the employment skills course. The pass rate in a level 1 numeracy qualification in 2002 was only 20%, a significant reduction from the previous year and well below the national average of 60%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy and numeracy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Skills for working life (vocational skills certificate)	entry	No. of starts	30	12	33
		% retention	100	75	52
		% pass rate	87	78	82
College certificate (one year) in literacy		No. of starts	*	780	669
		% retention	*	86	64
		% pass rate	*	98	74
College certificate (one year) in numeracy		No. of starts	*	28	16
		% retention	*	89	71
		% pass rate	*	100	60
College certificate literacy (short course)		No. of starts	*	217	236
		% retention	*	95	81
		% pass rate	*	99	63
College certificate numeracy (short course)		No. of starts	*	25	25
		% retention	*	96	92
		% pass rate	*	100	83
City and Guilds communication skills (1 year)	1	No. of starts	33	*	1
		% retention	73	*	0
		% pass rate	100	*	***
City and Guilds 3750 numeracy stage 1 (1 year)	1	No. of starts	57	26	23
		% retention	67	63	65
		% pass rate	22	60	20
Employment skills	1	No. of starts	*	305	193
		% retention	*	93**	91
		% pass rate	*	41	65

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*course did not run

**course not offered

***not applicable

Quality of education and training

141. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified for the subjects which they teach. Most teaching is well planned, with clear lesson plans and schemes of work and clear references to the basic skills core curriculum. High levels of interest and motivation are shown by both adult students and students aged 16 to 18. Many sessions make use of one or more teaching support workers, and good relationships are maintained between them, tutors, and learners. Overall attendance at classes is high at over 80%, although there are a few classes where attendance is poor. Open workshops make good use of resources in helping students learn. One numeracy workshop had different learners using plastic counters and money. An evening literacy workshop included the use of electronic, speaking, spelling aids, and voice recognition software, as well as more basic equipment such as different coloured pens to highlight component parts of words. One visually impaired student was able to improve his/her literacy skills by the use of a computer adapted to speak the letters and punctuation as it was used, and the use of a keyboard adapted to locate keys by touch rather than sight. Most accommodation, including that used at community venues, is of good quality. A few lessons on the college site suffer noise intrusion from outside or from neighbouring classrooms.

142. Initial assessment is carried out for all students on literacy and numeracy programmes. For most students this provides a satisfactory basis for identification of need. However, other diagnostic assessments are required for some learners. Some of these, such as for dyslexia, are comprehensive, but others are insufficiently developed. Some learners following family learning programmes at community venues have achieved very good results on the diagnostic test used to identify need. However, they are still following the course with no further adequate diagnostic assessment having been completed to identify accurately their basic skill development need.

143. Some student work is well ordered and clearly referenced to the literacy and numeracy core curriculum. Other work is less well structured and it is unclear which aspects of the curriculum have been successfully completed. Learning plans and subsequent reviews are not always completed rigorously, leading to difficulties in the recording and monitoring of learner progress towards achievement.

144. There is good community-based provision in schools, residential homes, and other venues, and this enables learners who would not normally be able to attend college to benefit from literacy and numeracy training. Timetables accommodate student attendance where ever possible, and at one centre, students may attend at any time of the day using a sign-in and sign-out system to record attendance and hours on the course.

145. Specialist tutors go into vocational classes to provide support to learners. A recent analysis has revealed that of learners receiving learning support, 60% are identified as having support needs in literacy, 28% in numeracy, and 12% in language. Learning support staff have all done the basic skills core curriculum training to increase their understanding. A comprehensive assessment is conducted to assess learners for characteristics of dyslexia, and a detailed report produced which informs the subject tutor regarding teaching and learning strategies which are more likely to be successful with the learner.

Leadership and management

146. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new manager has recently been appointed for foundation programmes, although the post of head of basic skills provision is vacant. Procedures are being implemented to improve retention and pass rates and the recording of students' progress. The self-assessment report and resulting development plan identify, and are starting to address, some of the issues raised during inspection. The number of students taking up learning support is increasing. The college has introduced the core curriculum for literacy and numeracy, and appropriate staff development has been provided. No verification has taken place of the standards achieved on college accredited provision to ensure consistency of assessment and validity of achievement. Plans are in place to introduce external accreditation for current students. However, the planning of assessment is not adequate to ensure all learners who may be able to access the qualification, will be able to do so in the time available. At the time of inspection, no recording documentation specific to achievement of this qualification was in place.

Part D: College data

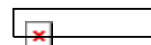
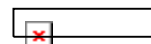


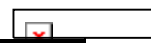
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18	19+
1	30	47
2	40	26
3	24	12
4/5	0	1
Other	6	14
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2001/02



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	678	383	3
Land-based provision	23	259	1
Construction	286	865	4
Engineering, technology and manufacture	382	1,661	7
Business administration, management and professional	596	2,759	11
Information and communications technology	808	5026	19
Retailing, customer service and transportation	21	109	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	547	994	5
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	135	284	1
Health, social care and public services	698	3,932	15
Visual and performing arts and media	399	738	4

Humanities	558	970	5
English, languages and communication	855	856	6
Foundation programmes	878	4,879	19
Total	6,864	23,715	100

Source: Provided by the college in 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	975	693	810	2,459	3,215	3,536
	Retention rate	82	71	68	83	79	74
	National average	78	79	*	77	80	*
	Pass rate	77	64	66	75	79	74
	National average	63	65	*	66	69	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,196	1,491	1,510	2,117	2,688	4,760
	Retention rate	73	69	72	84	80	80
	National average	74	74	*	77	78	*
	Pass rate	59	65	63	67	71	80
	National average	67	67	*	65	65	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	749	1,428	1,312	1,507	2,237	2,144
	Retention rate	90	80	77	83	80	76
	National average	75	74	*	78	77	*
	Pass rate	67	69	73	55	75	75
	National average	68	69	*	64	66	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	6	11	28	216	197	359
	Retention rate	83	100	60	92	81	65
	National average	77	*	*	84	83	*
	Pass rate	20	80	79	35	60	68
	National average	68	*	*	51	48	*

colleges or sixth form colleges).

*data unavailable

Sources of information:

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1999 to 2001: *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)	62	32	6	95
Level 2 (intermediate)	61	34	5	64
Level 1 (foundation)	45	46	9	55
Other sessions	65	24	11	55
Totals	59	34	7	269

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