



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Bishop Auckland College

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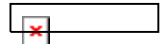
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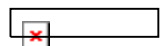
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Basic information about the college

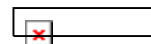


Name of college:	Bishop Auckland College
Type of college:	General further education college
Principal:	Joanna Tait
Address of college:	Woodhouse Lane Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 6JZ
Telephone number:	01388-443000
Fax number:	01388-609294
Chair of governors:	John Moorley
Unique reference number:	130657
Name of reporting inspector:	Dave Collier
Dates of inspection:	24-28 March 2003

Part A: Summary



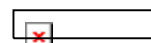
Information about the college



Bishop Auckland College is a medium-sized general further education (FE) college operating across south and west Durham. The college supports a number of sites; there is a major site in Bishop Auckland and outreach provision is offered in over 90 local centres across south-west Durham. The vast majority of learners are recruited from Wear Valley and Teesdale districts and the Borough of Sedgefield. There are over 14,000 students, nearly 1,000 of whom are full-time; approximately 300 of these are work-based. Approximately 7% of the college's provision is franchised out to other providers. In County Durham, there is one other general FE college and two tertiary colleges. In south-west Durham, there are nine 11 to 18 secondary schools. The college's main provision is within the curriculum areas of: information and communication technology (ICT); health, social care and public services; business, administration and management; and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Qualifications are offered in 13 Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas of learning, predominantly at levels 1 and 2. There are extensive school links programmes, a range of higher education (HE) courses, including foundation degrees, and the provision of customised training for local businesses.

During 2001/02, 5% of students were full time and 95% part time. Approximately 7% of students were aged 16 to 18, a further 7% of enrolments were school links students and 86% were aged 19 or over. The proportion of students from a minority ethnic background was 0.05%, and 7.3% of students had learning difficulties or disabilities. The college recruits 35% of its full-time students from areas of deprivation. The overall staying-on rate in full-time education for pupils from south-west Durham schools was approximately 60% in 2002, which is below the County Durham average of 64% and below the national average. However, participation at 16 plus has improved by approximately 10% over the last ten years. A further 10% of school leavers participate in work-based learning. The unemployment rate for County Durham is 5.3%, compared to a national average of 3%. The achievement of school leavers in County Durham schools, 40% of whom gain five or more grades A* to C in the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE), is 10% below the national average. The mission of the college is to promote social inclusion and the development of potential through the provision of quality lifelong learning opportunities to an increasing number of learners.

How effective is the college?



The provision is good in four of the eight areas of learning inspected and satisfactory in the other four. During the past three years, pass rates for adult students have been above the appropriate national average. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been on the national average for level 1 provision but below the national average at levels 2 and 3. Retention rates have been below the national average for all students with the exception of level 3 provision for adults, which has been at or above the national average. There was evidence during the inspection of recent improvement in retention rates. Most learners receive good guidance and support. Curriculum management is either good or satisfactory in all areas.

Key strengths

- a wide range of community provision
- strong commitment to educational and social inclusion

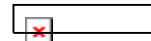
- good pass rates for adults
- very effective differentiated teaching in some lessons
- a wide range of productive partnerships
- good support for students
- good progression by students
- strong tutorial support for full-time students.

What should be improved

- poor and declining retention rates
- poor attendance on some courses
- some dull and uninspiring teaching
- insufficient tutorial support for part-time students
- poor key skills pass rates
- little use of the student intranet in teaching and learning.

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
Construction	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory. There is good teaching, a good standard of students' work and good support from teachers and employers. There is low achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks, particularly for foundation modern apprentices. Key skills are taught well and currently many apprentices have completed their key skills early and have few elements of units to complete for their NVQ.
Automotive engineering	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory. Provision for full-time students is good. Recent improvements for work-based learners have been introduced to address previous weaknesses in work-based assessment and review practices. There is good teaching of ICT and key skills. Learner support and practical activities are good. There is some uninspiring teaching in theory sessions. Resources in motor vehicle workshops and classrooms are poor.
Business	Good. Teaching and the standard of students' work are good. Pass rates are good on most courses. A wide range of additional qualifications are taken by students. There is good pastoral and vocational support. Attendance is poor on some courses.
Information and communications technology	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Overall, there are high pass rates. There is extensive community provision. Students' progression is good. On some courses, there are declining retention rates.
Hospitality and catering	Good. Retention and pass rates were good on all programmes in 2001/02. Students acquire good practical and social skills and knowledge. Staff throughout the college give good support to students, many of whom have learning support needs, and actively promote social inclusion within programmes.
Leisure, sport and tourism	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on the level 1 progression award. Retention and pass rates on some courses are poor. A good range of additional activities and vocational courses develop personal and vocational skills. There is a lack of differentiation in some lessons. Key skills are integrated effectively in lessons.
Health and social care	Good. Teaching is good, with good resources to support learning. Learners are well supported and placements are well managed. Pass rates on most courses are high. There are poor retention rates on some courses and declining pass and retention rates on one course.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. Students are well supported and initial assessment

	across the college is thorough. Most teaching is satisfactory, if unimaginative, and learners are achieving and progressing at the expected rate. Ineffective use is made of individual learning plans, and programmes have little variation in teaching methods. Retention rates are low on some courses. Staff are well qualified and matched to learners' needs.
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How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. The college provides satisfactory value for money. The college is very responsive to local needs and is successful in widening participation. Governance is good. Pass rates for adult students are above the national average for similar colleges. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 are on the national average for level 1 provision but below the national average for levels 2 and 3. The college has had poor retention rates, but these have recently improved. Senior managers provide a clear direction for the work of the college. Students' attendance on some courses is poor. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, and in some areas is good, but in some lessons it is uninspiring. Quality assurance arrangements are thorough. The rigour with which they are implemented varies between curriculum areas. They have led to improvements in the quality of provision in some areas but not in others. The college produced a detailed self-assessment report, but this did not identify some key weaknesses in some curriculum areas.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

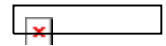
The college's response to education and social inclusion is excellent. Learning opportunities are designed to meet the needs of individual learners, disadvantaged groups, employers and the local community. The college's policy and practice are designed to support and promote widening participation and social inclusion. Progression routes from entry level to level 3 are available in all curriculum areas. Community education is well managed, with over 70 community venues providing a flexible and responsive service which is sensitive to the needs of individuals and local communities. The college has also established a well-organised and successful distance-learning programme. There are extensive and productive partnership arrangements with a number of learning organisations. Partnership activity is a significant aspect of the college's work and includes substantial provision for students aged 14 to 16. The college is responsive to the training needs of employers and has well-established links with industry.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support and guidance for students are good. The support and guidance services encourage widening participation by helping students to overcome obstacles to successful learning. The induction programme provides clear and full information about the college and the range of support and guidance it provides. Students receive clear and impartial advice about options at the college and on careers and progression routes, including to HE. Students with financial or travel difficulties,

immediate practical advice and assistance. The student support and client services teams work in a central, attractive and welcoming environment in the college. Full-time students and some part-time students benefit from a carefully designed tutorial programme with relevant whole-group sessions and regular individual tutorials to review progress and set targets for further development. In most cases, these reviews are very effective and indicate clear measures for improvement. Some lack rigour and result in personal action plans which lack precision and clarity. Many work-based learners and students at outreach centres do not enjoy the same levels of tutorial and personal support as full-time students at the college's main site.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- helpful and supportive staff

- the college's welcoming atmosphere

- good learning facilities

- good access to computers

- good opportunities for further study and progression

- useful course-related visits.

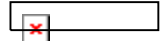
What they feel could be improved

- the overcrowded refectory

- uncomfortable classroom seats

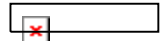
- the narrow range of subjects at some centres.

Other information



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, 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



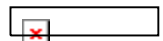
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	65	30	5
19+ and WBL*	65	29	6
Learning 16-18	61	32	7
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. Bishop Auckland College is responsive to the needs of the local community and offers a wide

qualifications. In 2001, aggregated retention rates were mostly just below national benchmarks for similar colleges and they were very similar in 2002. However, the retention rate for adult students at level 1 was 9% below the benchmark in 2001 and remained low in 2002. There was a marked improvement in retention rates for adults on level 3 courses in 2002 to above the national benchmark. Pass rates were above the national average for adults at all levels. At level 3, pass rates for adults were 16% above national benchmarks in 2002. Pass rates at level 3 for students aged 16 to 18 were slightly below the benchmark in 2001 and 2002, but at level 2 they were 15% below the benchmark in 2001. In 2002, there was a marked improvement in pass rates for 16 to 18 year olds at level 2, up to the national benchmark.

2. Retention and pass rates at course level vary. On General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) courses, retention rates are below the national average but pass rates are above the national average. At General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced level, retention and achievement rates in 2000/01 were above the national average. At National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3, retention rates are at the national average, but pass rates are over 20% above national average. There is a mixed picture at level 2. On GCSE courses, retention rates are just below the national average, but pass rates at high grades in 2001 were 16% above national average. GNVQ intermediate and NVQ level 2 courses have above average retention and achievement rates. NVQ level 1 courses had below average retention and achievement rates in 2000/01.

3. The overall figures mask some variations between subjects and courses. Retention and pass rates are generally good on business, health and social care, and some ICT courses, but pass rates on some leisure, sport and tourism courses are low. Attendance and punctuality noted by inspectors was generally satisfactory, but there is poor attendance on some courses. The standard of students' work is mostly good. Many students enter the college with relatively low levels of prior achievement and often make good progress on their courses.

4. Key skills pass rates are poor and have declined in 2002, with 16 to 18 year old students having a pass rate of 37% and adults, a pass rate of 22%. Retention rates for adults have improved to 75%, but have declined slightly for 16 to 18 year olds, to 73%. Current attendance is good, at 80%, and the in-year retention rate for both age groups is 87%. The college's key skills policy is monitored through a key skills forum. The college currently expects students to have external assessment in a minimum of one key skills area. All full-time students have a screening assessment of their key skills level at the beginning of their programme and additional support requirements are identified and passed to additional learning support staff. There is discrete provision of all three areas of key skills and in some curriculum areas there is effective integration of key skills into the vocational area.

5. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about students' achievements and the standards reached on particular courses.

16 to 18 year olds

6. Retention and pass rates are generally below national benchmarks for 16 to 18 year olds. In 2001, the retention rate for 16 to 18 year olds at level 1, at 71%, was in the lower quartile. Pass rates on level 1 courses, however, were 5% above the national benchmark, but were in the lower quartile for level 2 courses. Retention and pass rates for 16 to 18 year olds on level 3 courses were slightly below the national average. In 2002, retention rates declined slightly at all levels. Pass rates also declined at level 1, but improved slightly at level 3 and improved significantly at level 2. The attainment of students aged 16 to 18 in key skills is poor.

Adult learners

7. The vast majority of enrolments at the college are of adult students, mainly studying part-time and largely at levels 1 and 2. In 2001, retention rates of adult students were generally at, or slightly below, national benchmarks for similar colleges, with the exception of courses at level 1, where retention was in the lower quartile. Pass rates at all levels were above national benchmarks and were in the upper quartile at levels 1 and 3. In 2002, retention rates declined slightly at levels 1 and

2, but improved to above the national benchmark at level 3. Pass rates in 2002 improved at all levels.

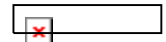
8. There are good pass rates in some curriculum areas, for example, business, health and social care, and hospitality and catering. Pass rates for short courses, mainly undertaken by adult students, are good for all levels.

Work-based learning

9. Work-based learning is well managed. The college provides work-based learning in nine occupational areas. In some areas, the number of learners is very low. The main areas of provision are in construction and motor vehicle. There is a modest amount of provision in business administration and hairdressing and beauty therapy.

10. Achievement on construction and motor vehicle modern apprenticeships is poor. Apprentices currently undertaking these programmes are making good progress with their key skills and NVQ work. In hairdressing, the retention rate for modern apprenticeships at both levels is poor and framework completion is low. Most learners in this area, however, went into employment. Of the 11 learners who started the advanced modern apprenticeship programme in 2000-2001, only one completed the programme. The college has taken actions, which are having a positive effect, to address these weaknesses.

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 108 lessons. Attainment was also graded in 103 of these. Teaching was graded good or better in 65% of lessons, satisfactory in 29.6% and less than satisfactory in 6%. Learning was good or better in 60% of lessons, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 8%. Attainment was good or better in 59.2% of lessons, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 8%. Overall, there is more good or very good teaching for students aged 16 to 18 than for adult students. The teaching in 65% of lessons for 16 to 18 year olds was judged to be good or better, compared with 58% for adults. Teaching is better and students' learning and attainment is higher at level 1 and 2 than on courses at level 3.

12. There were significant differences in the quality of teaching seen in curriculum areas. The best teaching observed was in health and social care. Teaching was also good in construction, business, ICT and hospitality and catering. In contrast, teaching and learning was less effective in literacy and numeracy, in automotive engineering and in leisure, sports and tourism. Attendance during the inspection was 76%. The areas of poor attendance included construction and ICT, where attendance was 71% and 70.3% respectively. The best attendance was in health and social care where it was 85%.

13. Most lessons are well planned and organised, often using the college scheme of work and lesson plan proformas. In many curriculum areas, handouts and other learning materials are well produced and help students' progress and understanding effectively. Individual students are supported well in class. In the best lessons, students are effectively engaged and motivated by stimulating teaching. Key skills are well integrated into the vocational curriculum and attendance is good. Inspectors observed good use of information and learning technology (ILT) in some curriculum areas; in others, such as literacy and numeracy, the use of ILT is limited and unimaginative. The best teaching is effectively differentiated and challenges students so that good progress is made. However, there is also some teaching that is uninspiring, insufficiently stimulating and inadequately differentiated. There are also instances where students are inadequately involved in their learning and do not participate fully in the lessons. There are good working relationships between students and teachers, and in the better lessons students work with enthusiasm and interest.

14. The college's main campus is on the outskirts of Bishop Auckland. In addition the college has a second site, the 'Digital Factory' at Newton Aycliffe, and uses over 70 other venues in the community. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The Digital Factory is well equipped with computers and software and delivers part-time engineering courses and consultancy and training for industry. It is underused. On the main site, accommodation for client services and student support is spacious and well maintained and provides a welcoming environment. Social facilities for students are good and are well managed. There are good displays of students' artwork in public areas around the college. Classrooms in health and social care are of a high standard. In other areas, such as motor vehicle studies, classroom accommodation is poor. The college has a nursery with 100 places.

15. The standard of accommodation in many community venues is good, with good ICT facilities. In other venues, the quality of accommodation is more variable and in some it is poor. Students with restricted mobility can access all parts of the buildings on the main college site and most community venues.

16. In catering, equipment is limited in range and there is no restaurant to provide a realistic work environment. In motor vehicle studies, the vehicles available for students to work on are old. These weaknesses restrict the range of students' experiences and mean that in college they do not get experience in keeping with modern industry practice.

17. Students on the main site have good access to computers and up-to-date software, but there is little use of ILT in most curriculum areas. Many staff have participated in ICT training and a major focus has been the use of modern office software. The student intranet includes job vacancies, information about the college and college news. There are no college-devised learning materials available, but access to national learning materials is provided. There is also access to a large database of newspapers and journals, Infotrac, with a useful search facility. This is beginning to be used as a learning resource and some staff training has taken place. There are also links to websites of general interest.

18. The library book stock is adequate and there are additional resources in many curriculum areas. Learning materials for use in class are well designed and produced. Learning resources at venues other than the main site are more limited. For example, there are few textbooks for engineering students who are taught at the Digital Factory. In other community venues, the availability of learning materials for independent study relies on individual teachers and at some it is poor.

19. Teachers are appropriately qualified. In some curriculum areas, including ICT, literacy and numeracy, and health and social care, teachers have particularly good qualifications. A high proportion of full-time teachers have a teaching qualification and two thirds of part-time teachers have a teaching qualification. Many teachers have relevant industrial experience. However, there are no systematic arrangements for industry updating.

20. Much of the assessment of students' work is careful and thorough. The college has a clear internal verification framework which contributes to accurate and reliable assessment, although in some areas its implementation is not consistent. Students usually receive good feedback after assessment, providing clear indications of the standard reached and possible improvements. The achievements of most students are recorded efficiently, but in some cases the actual accreditation of completed units is too slow. Regular individual reviews of progress are built into the structure of many courses. Some reviews are not thorough enough to give students a full and accurate report of what they have achieved and the next stages of progress required. For most students, the individual reviews are thorough and are valued for contributing significantly to their success.

21. Effective initial assessment ensures that students are placed on appropriate courses in most curriculum areas. Where necessary they receive appropriate extra support, either from their specialist teachers or from the learning support unit, if more numeracy and literacy skills are needed

22. On courses where several tutors teach and assess work, there is effective moderation to ensure that common standards are being used. New tutors receive good guidance from more experienced

members of teams. Most assignments are appropriate, although in some areas external verifiers' reports have indicated that some tasks lacked the rigour specified by awarding bodies. They were too simple or required insufficient research skills. Most external verifiers' reports commend the care and accuracy of assessment.

23. Assessment and review of students' performance are used to evaluate courses and the way they are taught and assessed. External verifiers' reports show that tutors have been responsive to concerns and have implemented effective changes. In some courses, assessments are not spread evenly across the course, and insufficient time is allocated for some key portfolios.

24. The college provides an excellent range of learning opportunities which are designed to meet the needs of individual learners, non-traditional learners, disadvantaged groups, employers and the local community. The college's policies and practice are designed to support and promote widening participation and social inclusion. Most curriculum areas provide a wide range of courses and subjects. Many curriculum areas provide courses from entry level to level 4, and all curriculum areas have courses from entry to level 3. Students' progression is good in many areas, especially in hospitality and catering, business, and health and social care.

25. Community education is well managed and organised. The college provides a flexible and responsive service, sensitive to the needs of individuals and the local community. There are currently 70 community venues providing a variety of courses. There are five full-time community-learning officers who work to identify and respond to learning needs. For example, the college has recently run a 'dads and lads' course to provide ICT and sports skills and target non-traditional learners. Practical help is readily available. Childcare is provided through a portable crèche. The college provides any specialist equipment required such as text screens, keyboard and mouse alternatives, voice-recognition software and hearing induction loops. ICT equipment is available through sets of laptops so that all outreach centres are appropriately provided for. Teaching at community venues is provided by the full-time and part-time staff of the college who have all received training in widening participation and social inclusion. The college has also established a successful and well-managed distance-learning programme. Courses are provided free of charge, and a number of new courses have been established to provide progression to level 2 for learners who have completed short courses at level 1. In 2002, of the 92 distance learners, there was a retention rate of 87% and a pass rate of 100%. Tutors for distance learning receive effective staff training and are regularly observed to ensure the quality of their teaching and assessment.

26. The college has well-established partnership arrangements with a number of learning organisations. For example, it plays a leadership role for the County Durham widening participation project; one of the five project centres is situated at the college and works in conjunction with the community education provision. Partnership activity is a significant aspect of the college's work and includes provision for over 500 students aged 14 to 16 both under the increased flexibility project and through provision for disaffected and disengaged young people. There are examples of these young people making successful progression through levels 1 and 2 in curriculum areas such as health and social care and hairdressing and beauty. Another area where partnerships provide increased learning opportunities is ICT, where training is available through learning shops in the community and with externally funded projects in the community.

27. The college is responsive to the training needs of employers and has well-established links with industry through its 'Optimum' organisation. However, a formal employer-liaison group has been recently instituted. Employers are provided with on-site and off-site training tailored to their needs and at times that suit the learners, including those needing late or early provision due to shift patterns. Optimum has provided over 500 individuals with training in CV writing and other skills necessary when companies have made redundancies, and employers recognise Optimum's expertise in supporting and guiding people looking for work and further training. The college's Digital Factory has provided effective support to individuals setting up their own businesses and software-development expertise and research in digital design for large companies.

28. The tutorial programme for full-time students is comprehensive and clear. It provides a range of relevant and interesting topics for group tutorial work. Clear guidance is given to staff on how these sessions should be taught. Alternatively, personal tutors are able to use a specialist team of support

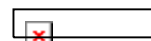
staff to take tutorial sessions which they do not feel confident to deliver themselves; for instance, dealing with health issues or how to cope with stress. Surveys of students indicate high levels of satisfaction with these sessions. There is strong emphasis on providing students with regular opportunities for individual tutorials with their tutors to review progress and set personal targets for further improvement. Most students value this as an extremely important factor in their success at the college. Tutors have been given good guidance material and training for conducting these personal interviews. In some curriculum areas, the targets set for individual students sometimes lack clarity and are not measurable. The tutorial support for part-time students, especially those at other centres operated by the college, varies in effectiveness. On some courses, for instance many modern languages courses, there are personal tutors whom students can access. Some are very proactive and encourage students to contact them for advice. On other courses students are wholly reliant on course teachers, some of whom offer better levels of support than others. Tutorial resources include a computerised system for recording the personal details, course information, attendance and achievements of each student. At the time of the inspection, just over half of the tutors used this system.

29. The college provides a welcoming environment to prospective students. Client services are centrally situated. The college responds quickly and effectively to telephone enquiries. All calls are logged. Potential students are encouraged to participate in summer activities, which include a range of attractive social and recreational options. In 2002, 130 prospective students took part in this programme. Great emphasis is placed on providing impartial advice about initial options at the college and then further opportunities, including HE. Much of this is provided by college guidance staff. The local careers service is successfully incorporated into the range of advice and expertise available to students. There is considerable emphasis on raising awareness of HE options. Applications have doubled over the last three years, and specialist advisers from the support team offer very detailed support to individual applicants.

30. There is a successful induction programme for all new students which clearly conveys all the sources of support within the college. Its main features are incorporated in a students' handbook. Students are aware of the forms of support and guidance they can access. Support staff deal sympathetically with a wide range of requests for guidance on problems. Where more specialist help is needed there is a trained counsellor at the college and access to a range of external support agencies. Providing the support needed to widen participation is a priority. Free transport is provided for those who live at some distance, and the contractor liaises closely with the college to provide an efficient and responsive network of routes. Students with young children benefit from the nursery provision at the main site and also at many of the other centres. If these are full the support services at the college find alternatives. Financial support is available to students who receive income-related benefits. In the current year, 200 students have been supported. Free childcare is also provided where necessary. Course tutors and support staff are particularly helpful to those returning to learning after a long time out of education or those who make late starts on courses. All students are tested on entry to determine their initial learning-support needs. The response to identified needs is swift and effective, and tutors who refer students for extra support receive regular reports on their attendance and progress. The learning support unit also provides course tutors with valuable guidance on dealing with problems such as dyslexia.

31. Members of the student support team take a prominent role in developing the social and recreational activities and facilities in the student common rooms. They mix well with students and develop a relationship with them which gains their confidence and trust. The college offers a small enrichment programme of recreational and sports activities, which is undertaken by full-time students. Student support staff contact students quickly when they are absent to encourage students to maintain contact with college. Attendance rates on some courses are poor but in some areas they are high.

Leadership and management



32. Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior managers have a clear vision and there is a strong commitment by all staff to the college mission to widen participation and promote social inclusion amongst the local community. Since the last inspection, the college has played a leading role in developing cross-county, district and local partnerships, and has been instrumental in the establishment of local learning partnerships in Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley. The college has also established a large network of outreach centres to make learning more accessible to all who wish to benefit from it. There is a common purpose in achieving targets for recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Enrolments of 16 to 18 and adult students have increased significantly over the last two years in line with college targets.

33. The college's strategic aims are reflected in operational and development plans and are linked to the college's continuing professional development plan. Clear targets are set at college, curriculum and support service level and these are understood by staff. The college management structure promotes clear lines of responsibility and effective channels of communication. Staff welcome the college's open and responsive style of management and feel well informed and supported. They are briefed through regular team meetings and briefing papers and through a college bulletin, which is circulated on paper and via the college intranet. There is also a full staff meeting once a term. The management information system (MIS) has been improved since the last inspection. An MIS working group, comprising senior managers, the information-systems officer and the registry manager, monitors progress towards strategic targets, tracks enrolment and achievement data, and provides reports to the corporation and other college groups. A fortnightly data-validation check identifies any anomalies in the data. Managers have access to reliable, up-to-date information and most make appropriate use of the data to track performance against targets. The system incorporates college timetables, enabling room usage to be monitored. A timetabling working party has been convened to evaluate rooming needs following a room utilisation survey in March 2003. There are appropriate arrangements for managing the college's finances, although underlying weaknesses in the college's financial position remain. The college is forecast to break even or have a small deficit at the end of the year. The average class size is below the national average. The college does not undertake value-for-money analysis, but is judged to provide satisfactory value for money.

34. Curriculum management is satisfactory or better in all areas. In well-managed areas, there are regular team meetings involving all full-time and part-time staff, communications are good across the departments and performance is closely monitored. Well-managed curriculum areas include community learning, health and social care, and hospitality and catering. Work-based learning programmes in construction are well managed with thorough internal verification procedures and close monitoring of trainees' progress. In some curriculum areas, for example, leisure, sport and tourism, and automotive engineering, there has been slow progress in using data to set targets and monitor performance, and staff development activity has not been sufficiently focused on addressing weaknesses in teaching and learning or improving retention and pass rates. Management in other curriculum areas is satisfactory.

35. Governors are well informed, and rigorously monitor the educational character, financial management, and academic performance of the college. They are clear about the role of the corporation in setting the strategic direction of the college and work well with senior managers. Strategic planning meetings are held twice a year with the principal and deputy principals attend board meetings, where they are questioned about papers they are presenting. Governors receive regular reports on the college's performance, including academic board meeting minutes, and they receive regular papers on key financial aspects. Committees include a standards committee and a student-council group, which is attended by members of the corporation in the absence of a student representative on the main board of governors. There is an appropriate variety of skills and experience amongst current members. Links with curriculum areas are varied. One governor has close ties with the care team, but links in other areas are weak. A range of training activities and materials is available to new governors and governors can access college staff development activities. However, there is no formal governor induction or training and development programme. This weakness was identified at the last inspection.

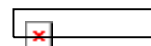
36. Quality assurance procedures are thorough and cover most areas of the college. The process is well established. There are guidelines for the implementation of quality assurance arrangements, for

example, target setting and course review and evaluation. However, the rigour with which course teams monitor and evaluate performance and take steps to secure improvements varies. In some areas, quality assurance is effective and leads to improvement, but in other areas improvements are less clear. All course teams and service teams in the college produce self-assessment reports with strengths and weaknesses mapped against the criteria in the Common Inspection Framework. These reports form the basis of the development plans prepared by all teams in the college. Although some are detailed and rigorous, others are insufficiently self-critical or contain action points which are not quantified. An annual programme of teaching and learning observation is carried out by line managers and peers. In the last year, 254 observations of full-time teachers and 71 observations of part-time teachers were carried out. These observation records did not form the basis of self-assessment reports and development plans, and there are unsatisfactory arrangements for the dissemination of good practice in some areas.

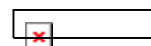
37. An important aspect of the college drive to improve retention and achievement rates is the focus on staff development. A comprehensive programme of continuous professional development activities is organised by the college, and staff can also identify training needs through the appraisal and review process. There is an annual cycle of appraisal for all full-time and fractional staff. In the last year, 254 staff members were eligible for an appraisal, of which 30 are currently outstanding. The formal appraisal process does not extend to part-time staff, although there is an opportunity for progress review, and all probationary teachers have a formal review. In some curriculum areas where there are large numbers of part-time staff, for example ICT and foundation studies, too few members of staff have been included in the observation and appraisal process.

38. Equality of opportunity is an important aspect of the college's mission. The college employs an equal opportunities co-ordinator who reports to an equal opportunities working group. The group, which is chaired by the principal, monitors all aspects of equal opportunities in college publicity, curriculum content and staff employment. The college equal opportunities policy has recently been updated in response to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. The college responds positively by providing regular training events on equality, diversity, disability and racial equality to all staff as part of the continuous personal and professional development programme. The college also works in partnerships with community organisations committed to disability equality, such as the Wear Valley Disability Access Forum and 'Disability North'. The equal opportunities policy has been distributed to all staff via the college bulletin and the principal reports on equal opportunities to the corporate board. The college race equality policy was updated in July 2002 in response to statutory requirements. The college has successfully widened the participation of under-represented groups in FE, for example, through community provision and through specific courses such as 'women into business'. In some curriculum areas, for example, construction and engineering, there is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities issues in the workplace.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Construction



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

Strengths

- good off-the-job teaching

- the good standard of learners' practical work
- good retention rates and high pass rates on NVQ2 wood occupations, plumbing and brickwork
- good support for learners with learning support needs
- well-managed work-based learning programmes.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of frameworks for advanced and foundation modern apprentices
- poor use of MIS data to set targets for retention and achievement rates
- little strategic planning of work-based learning
- no emphasis on equality of opportunity with employers.

Scope of provision

39. The construction area, which is within the school of technology, offers a range of modern apprenticeship programmes at foundation and advanced levels. This constitutes the majority of the provision. These programmes include bricklaying, wood occupations, painting and decorating, and plumbing. There are currently 87 work-based apprentices, who attend college one day a week for their off-the-job training. Many are in employment; some are on work placement and receive a training allowance from the college. There are 32 in wood occupations, 17 in bricklaying, 9 in painting and decorating and 29 in plumbing. There are strong links with local schools and some pupils attend taster courses at the college. In the current year, 55 pupils have attended courses in bricklaying, 120 in joinery, 50 in plumbing and 100 in painting and decorating. There is a joint GNVQ programme with a local school for 12 pupils and a widening participation course for NVQ in joinery with 16 learners. There are also evening foundation courses in joinery for adults and a number of community projects in carpentry and joinery, for example, providing purpose-made seating benches.

Achievement and standards

40. Pass rates for NVQ level 2 in wood occupations, plumbing and brickwork have been above national benchmarks for the previous three years, at 83%, 70%, and 100% respectively in 2001. Retention rates are also good for these programmes, at 100%, 100% and 89% respectively. These programmes represent only 5% of the whole provision. Modern apprenticeships represent approximately 95% of the provision. Achievement of frameworks for these programmes is poor. In 2000/01, 50% of advanced modern apprentices and 29% of foundation modern apprentices achieved their framework. In the previous two years, of the 54 foundation modern apprentices who started, only nine completed their framework. But there were a further 23% who achieved their NVQ and all but one of their key skill elements. In the current year, most apprentices have completed their key skill portfolios early and some have passed or are re-sitting their key skill tests. The remainder should complete their portfolios within their standard length of stay. Most apprentices are making good progress towards the completion of the NVQ element of their framework.

41. Students' practical work is of a good standard and they produce work to industry standards both in college and in the workplace. Most students are able to demonstrate a good level of attainment in their work. Portfolios of evidence are of a good standard, are clearly indexed to units and contain sufficient evidence to support competence. Attendance at college for theory and practical classes is low, at 71%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Basic woodworking skills	1	No. of starts	25	12	*
		% retention	76	75	*
		% pass rate	80	67	*
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	10	12	17
		% retention	70	100	73
		% pass rate	50	83	80

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

42. The quality of teaching is good. All teachers have relevant vocational and assessor qualifications. In two of the better lessons, teachers used ICT-based presentations imaginatively to stimulate students' interest and effectively develop difficult concepts. Through discussion, students demonstrated a good understanding of the concepts. Practical activities are well organised and relate to situations that occur in the workplace. For example, in carpentry and joinery, students work on producing doors, staircases and kitchen units. Emphasis on health and safety is good and signs and clear instructions are posted on the walls of the workshops. Students adhere to safety regulations by using goggles, hard hats and safety footwear as appropriate. Training on woodworking machinery and powered hand tools is given before any student is allowed to use them. Good technician support is available. In many lessons there are mixed-ability groups in which the technician and teacher work closely together to enable the teacher to concentrate on individual support.

43. In the better theory lessons, teachers check students' understanding regularly by good directed questioning. Recording and monitoring of students' progress are good, using comprehensive tracking systems. Construction students are aware of their progress at any time and can readily identify tasks required for achievement. In some of the weaker theory lessons, teachers make insufficient use of differentiated learning materials. In some lessons, classroom exercises are repetitive and teaching is uninspiring.

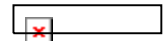
44. Key skills are taught by vocational teachers in a construction context. For example, in a communications lesson, students wrote letters to potential business partners to set up a construction company. All students are initially assessed for basic skills and those identified who need support are offered it, sometimes in the evening. In addition, some support sessions are offered at lunchtime. Students speak highly of their teachers and the support they give.

45. There are good workshop facilities in the college. Two workshops have been refurbished to a high standard; these are for plumbing and electrical installation. There are sufficient industry-standard tools, materials and equipment in all vocational areas. The college library has sufficient up-to-date textbooks and journals and there are similar stocks in the workshops and classrooms for the use of students. In carpentry and joinery, a national manufacturer of powered hand tools is using the college as a test bed for their new range before putting it on sale to industry. Wood machines conform to the latest health and safety regulations. There are good supportive employers. They have a general understanding of the NVQ process and provide good training which enables apprentices to gain practical competences towards their qualification. Employers effectively link the on-the-job learning with what is done at college for the off-the-job element. Most employers, or their site supervisors, act as work-based recorders for the apprentices, signing off evidence sheets for the college assessor. There is some direct assessment in the workplace, but this is infrequent. The standard of work produced by apprentices in the workplace is high. It is often subject to scrutiny by external organisations. Employers are appraised for health and safety before learners are signed up to a modern apprenticeship programme. This is also monitored at review, usually at eight to ten-week intervals in the first year of learning. Those with learning support needs are reviewed every four weeks. Reviews of learners' progress are thorough, setting detailed milestone targets towards their qualification aim. Equality of opportunity issues are also discussed with apprentices but not with the employer or their site supervisor.

Leadership and management

46. The learning programmes are well managed. Apprentices' progress is closely monitored, using the review process and effective tracking. On and off-the-job learning is co-ordinated well by employer liaison officers, one of whom is also employed as a workplace assessor for carpentry and joinery. For other occupations the college tutors visit apprentices in the workplace for assessment purposes. Team meetings are regularly held at school, curriculum area and programme level. The minutes are sufficiently detailed and set actions for improvements. Curriculum managers have confidence in MIS data and reports and find the reports generated to be user-friendly and helpful, but they do not use them to evaluate the performance of programmes against national benchmarks. All staff contribute to the self-assessment of their programme area. The performance of teachers is monitored and reviewed through lesson observation. The strategic plan for work-based learning lacks three-year targets for recruitment, retention, achievement, equal opportunities, marketing and resources.

Automotive engineering



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

Strengths

- good learning opportunities in the workplace

- good teaching in ICT and by learning support staff

- a good range of enrichment activities for full-time students
- effective learning-support arrangements with good access for full-time students
- good pass rates for ABC foundation diploma in motor vehicle studies.

Weaknesses

- slow progress on the NVQ 2 programme
- poor quality progress reviews for work-based learners
- some uninspiring teaching in motor vehicle studies
- poor classroom accommodation
- some poor resources in motor vehicle workshops.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a range of part-time and full-time programmes in motor vehicle studies. Part-time students can follow NVQ level 1 in vehicle fitting, NVQ 2 and 3, and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in vehicle maintenance and repair. A significant proportion of the provision is in training modern apprentices. Full-time students follow the ABC diploma in motor vehicle studies. There are 30 foundation modern apprentices working towards the NVQ level 2 and six students working towards NVQ level 3. Of the six learners at level 3, four are advanced modern apprentices. Nine of the modern apprentices have employed status. There are ten students working towards the ABC diploma in motor vehicle studies and two following the NVQ level one in vehicle fitting. Part-time students attend college on a day-release basis throughout the college year. Assessment and progress reviews are carried out in the workplace. Full-time students attend college for around 20 hours per week. On both programmes, theory and practical training sessions are carried out at the college. There are effective arrangements for providing additional learning support to those learners who require it.

Achievement and standards

48. The number of students on most programmes is generally low. There are at present six students who have just completed their NVQ level 2 programme, but are four to nine months over their intended completion date. The progress of current second year NVQ 2 students is slow. Several students are due to finish their programme shortly, but are unlikely to complete within the planned training period. Current first-year students on the NVQ 2 programme are making satisfactory progress.

49. Retention and pass rates on the ABC diploma were above the national benchmark in 2000/01 and rising. There was a 100% pass rate of those who completed in 2001/02. Of the 17 learners who commenced foundation modern apprenticeship programmes between 1999 and 2001, eight have achieved their full apprenticeship framework, seven have achieved their NVQ level 2 only, and 15 remain in training. Retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship programmes have been satisfactory up to 2001/02. The retention rate on this programme during the current year is poor. Five of the seven learners who started have now left the programme.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
ABC motor vehicle studies foundation	1	No. of starts	14	14	6
		% retention	64	79	83
		% pass rate	56	91	100
NVQ in vehicle mechanical and electronic systems	2	No. of starts	6	17	*
		% retention	50	59	*
		% pass rate	0	100	*

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

50. All of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better. In the better lessons, tutors use a range of vocationally related activities to add interest, promote discussion, and to reinforce learning. Teaching in ICT key skills is good, as is the quality of learning support. Practical classes in motor vehicle studies link theory to practical application well. Following a morning theory lesson on tyre construction, students were involved in a range of practical tyre-related activities including repair and examination of tyre types and checking and adjusting wheel alignment. These practical activities reinforced their theory knowledge. Some theory lessons in motor vehicle studies are uninspiring and fail to maintain learners' interest. Little use is made of appropriate visual aids. Training vehicles are old and do not reflect modern technology and there is a lack of modern reference material. Classrooms are dull, uninspiring and lack identity. The attainment of students was less than satisfactory in a significant minority of sessions observed. No additional qualifications are undertaken by learners. Staff in this area of work are well qualified and have appropriate industrial experience.

51. There are some good coursework files produced by full-time ABC diploma students. The course files of foundation learners are well presented and above the standard normally expected. They contain a range of materials including hand-written notes, diagrams, handouts and a section with evidence of key skills development materials which are work-related. There are simple and comprehensive tracking systems for the full-time ABC group. Tracking documents record progress both in theory tests and in practical training and assessment. Staff are able to issue relevant workshop tasks according to students' needs. Students can, in part, have control over their own learning by choosing the areas of work that they develop. Full-time students have two weeks' work experience in local garage-work placements. Enrichment activities are organised by the college and have included a visit to the Motor Show. Work-based learning portfolios are well constructed and

include a copy of the learner's training plan.

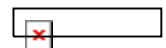
52. Work placements consist of well-established and reputable companies, often with small workforces. There is a mix of specialist fast-fit outlets, general repair workshops, and auto-electrical repairers. The workshop equipment in many of these companies is up-to-date and of current industrial standard. Learners are able to access a wide range of specialist equipment at work, which is needed for the servicing, maintenance and repair of modern vehicles. The standard of practical work achieved in the college and in the workplace is good. Learners make positive comments on the acquisition of their new skills. The majority of assessment is carried out in the workplace.

53. Review practice is poor. The progress reviews for work-based learners are brief and do not adequately focus on setting clear targets against the requirements of the NVQ and key skills. Workplace supervisors usually attend part of the review process but they are not adequately informed about the type and level of work that the apprentices need to complete in the workplace. One workplace supervisor stated that he had no knowledge of the requirements of the NVQ programme. Additionally, the topics of equal opportunities, grievance and harassment had never been discussed with him. Employers also expressed a desire to be informed about the content of the learners' college programme. The records of progress reviews provide very little information on the progress made towards completion of the individual learning plan.

Leadership and management

54. The management of motor vehicle programmes is mostly effective. Managers have identified weaknesses in the provision and have taken effective action to address them, leading to improvement. Although students are offered assessment on demand, many do not appreciate the importance of contacting their assessor when the opportunity for assessment arises. Recent measures introduced to improve slow progress include the appointment of a full-time assessor, more contact with employers and revised review documentation. It is envisaged that these measures will allow better planning and clearer targets to be set for the learner in the workplace, which may speed up the accumulation of evidence. Communications between employers and college staff are improving. Staff meetings are mainly on an informal basis with team briefings being held weekly and more formal meetings each college term. Internal verification is not being carried out on an on-going basis. All staff have contributed to the compilation of the self-assessment report. Staff appraisal is carried out annually. Staff teaching observations are carried out twice a year. Students completing the induction programme also complete a feedback questionnaire to confirm their understanding. A recent equal opportunities updating session planned for students in college did not take place because the lecturer was ill. The college has failed to recruit any women or students of minority ethnic background from its advertising and schools career programmes.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in 2001/02

- a wide range of additional qualifications

- good differentiation in teaching

- good pastoral and vocational support

- good progression into employment and to FE and training.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of action planning

- slow progress towards the achievement of NVQ units

- some poor attendance.

Scope of provision

55. The college offers business courses from foundation level to higher national awards. Professional training is offered in accounting, and management courses include the National Examination Board for Supervisory Management Certificate. Full-time and part-time courses are offered in administration from NVQ level 1 to level 4. There is a specially designed programme of study for women returning to study and a wide range of short courses, including bespoke provision for local companies. Most of the provision offered by the college is based on the main site. Some part-time courses in accounting and administration are offered in community venues. At the time of inspection, there were 105 students between the ages of 16 and 18 following business-related courses at the college, and 198 students over the age of 19.

Achievement and standards

56. There were high pass rates on most courses for 2001/02. These include the full-time administration NVQ levels 1 and 2, the GNVQ foundation course in business and the part-time accounting NVQ level 2 course. The pass rate on GNVQ foundation has been 100% in each of the last two years. Pass rates on the management certificate course have been consistently high for the past three years. On many courses, there is evidence of improving retention rates over the three years 1999/2000 to 2001/02, including the GNVQ foundation programme where retention rates have improved from 56% to 86% over this three-year period.

57. Written work in students' portfolios is of a good standard and students reach a satisfactory level of attainment. However, insufficient use is made of action planning to agree with students target dates for the assessment of NVQ units and elements. There is evidence of slow progress towards the achievement of discrete NVQ units by most full-time students following NVQ courses in administration. Full-time students on NVQ programmes in administration undertake two days' work experience each week for several months, commencing in January. Evidence is gathered by

students but is not assessed to provide students with a measure of their progress towards the target qualification. Students who leave a programme early may not, therefore, receive credit in the form of unit accreditation as a measure of their success. There is some poor attendance and the viability of groups is affected. In one lesson observed, attendance was 22%, making it difficult for the teacher to implement a learning plan building on students' learning from week to week.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ admin	2	No. of starts	31	48	48
		% retention	52	77	77
		% pass rate	69	70	86
NVQ admin	3	No. of starts	91	22	12
		% retention	90	86	100
		% pass rate	75	84	92
Management certificate	3	No. of starts	34	19	41
		% retention	71	95	88
		% pass rate	84	100	83

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

Quality of education and training

58. Most teaching is good and effective in promoting learning. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and in professional courses appropriate use is made of commercial experience to explain and illustrate aspects of the lesson. This is also true of business courses, for example, a lesson on the competitive environment where relevant and appropriate examples were drawn from the experience of the teacher. Teachers are aware of the different learning needs of students within groups and strategies are used to address these needs. In many lessons, teachers differentiate work well to meet the range of students' ability levels. In an administration NVQ lesson, the teacher taught level 2, 3 and 4 students very effectively, meeting individual needs. In one lesson, the teacher made use of learning materials prepared on disc for a level 1 programme. Students using computers were able to work at their own pace and to develop their ICT skills as an additional learning outcome. In a small number of lessons, teachers did not sufficiently challenge students to think about the concepts introduced in the lesson.

59. The majority of teachers have teaching qualifications and those involved with NVQ programmes hold appropriate assessor qualifications. A number of teachers are members of professional bodies, including the Chartered Institute of Bankers, the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Institute of Financial Accountants. Several teachers hold a qualification in counselling. Staff development activities are planned as part of a process of continuous personal development for all staff, and in the year 2001/02 included staff attendance on ICT training, basic counselling and key skills workshops. The training and development needs for teachers are identified through the college appraisal system and are also informed by annual course reviews. Learning resources are satisfactory and include access to current textbooks, periodicals and to ICT, where appropriate, including internet access.

60. Students' work is carefully and accurately marked. Feedback from teachers is constructive and helpful in identifying areas of weakness and pointing out how improvements in performance may be achieved. On NVQ programmes, assessment practice includes regular visits to the workplace by college staff to observe and assess students' performance. The internal verification of NVQ programmes is satisfactory and the role of verifiers is clear; procedures are fully documented. Students benefit from good opportunities for progression both within the college and from college

programmes to HE or into full-time employment. Opportunities in the college include progression from level 1 programmes, such as the foundation in business, to an advanced level 3 programme in the same area. Beyond level 3 there are opportunities to enter HE courses either as full-time or part-time students. Student destination data for the college year 2001/02 shows that 100% of students from the level 1 foundation programme progressed into further training or education. From the level 3 business course, 33% went into HE and a further 33% entered full-time employment. Of ten students who successfully completed the 'women returners' course, seven entered employment.

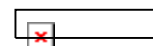
61. Additional qualifications are offered as part of all full-time students' programmes. These qualifications help students to develop employment skills and improve their potential for further study or training. Qualifications include a range of key skills such as ICT, communication and numeracy. Book-keeping and English for business are part of the additional qualifications followed by the 'women returners' course, while level 3 business students work towards a modern foreign language qualification and develop team leadership skills. The school of business, management and professional development has links with the local community. There is provision in two community venues and in partnership with a local university. The school is working to expand the use of ICT among small and medium-sized business enterprises. Short courses developed for local industry include team leadership and first-line management training.

62. Pre-course guidance for students is satisfactory. All full-time students complete an initial assessment in numeracy and literacy and the results are used to inform individual learning plans. Each full-time student has a personal tutorial with a member of staff every four weeks, and this activity is used to monitor the student's progress and identify and agree future targets. The tutorial system is of particular value in providing support for students in need of pastoral advice. The system is also flexible in that students judged by teachers to be in need of more regular support can meet with teachers on a weekly basis. This has contributed to students remaining on programmes who would otherwise have left the college. There are no formal tutorial arrangements for part-time students.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are good. Staff are well informed about developments within the school and across the college and appreciate the weekly briefing meetings held by the head of school for all staff. Each member of the school also has an individual meeting with the head of school every two weeks. The importance of staff involvement in the process of self-assessment is recognised, and this is linked to the annual review of programmes. The importance of key skills for students is accepted and reflected in the additional qualifications taken by students.

Information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- extensive community provision

- high pass rates on many courses

- much effective teaching

- good resources

- good progression.

Weaknesses

- decreasing retention rates on some courses

- inadequate learning materials in some community centres

- poor attendance.

Scope of provision

64. The college provides a good range of courses at different levels appropriate to students' prior attainment. Courses include full-time and part-time computing and ICT courses, from introductory to advanced levels. Courses are available over a wide geographical area at a number of venues including the main site, six learning centres and other venues in the community such as schools and village halls. Students attending the learning centres can use these on a drop-in basis. There are 77 students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses including GNVQ intermediate, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and national diploma. There are 73 students aged 16 to 18 on part-time technician courses. Some 2,181 students are undertaking part-time courses leading to modular qualifications in ICT at levels 1, 2, and 3, including Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), integrated business technologies, the European Computer Driving License, City and Guilds ICT User and Open College Network modules in ICT. These courses are provided at the college's main site and in community venues. The majority of students are adults. There are a further 3,088 enrolments at community venues. The majority of students are aged 19 or over. Students on full-time courses can take additional units and qualifications in hardware and software maintenance and support.

Achievement and standards

65. Pass rates for most courses are high. They are consistently high for CLAIT, and City and Guilds 7261 levels 1 and 2. In 2002, the pass rate for GNVQ intermediate was 100%, a significant improvement on the previous year. Pass rates for other level 1 and 2 courses are generally above the national averages. The pass rate for the AVCE course was low at 43% in 2002. Retention rates for many courses are broadly in line with national averages. Retention rates for the level 1 City and Guilds 7261 courses are low, and the retention rate for the short CLAIT courses was low in 2002. Students make good progress in relation to their previous levels of achievement.

66. Students' work demonstrates good understanding of their subject and is generally at the standard expected. Some students produce work of a higher standard. Students are able to work independently and demonstrate good levels of learning. Progression to further courses and employment is good. Attendance at lessons is low, at 70%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	811	606	307
		% retention	85	85	82
		% pass rate	64	80	69
City and Guilds 7261	1	No. of starts	1724	929	756
		% retention	55	56	50
		% pass rate	83	86	85
City and Guilds 7261	2	No. of starts	187	202	232
		% retention	76	73	67
		% pass rate	75	71	87
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	13	17	19
		% retention	69	94	68
		% pass rate	78	56	100
City and Guilds ICT practitioner (system support)	2	No. of starts	*	13	72
		% retention	*	77	78
		% pass rate	*	90	100

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

67. Most teaching is good or better and the remainder is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Courses are well planned and lessons are interesting. Good use is made of practical work which reinforces theory learning. Teachers use a variety of methods to engage students' interest and students are well motivated and actively involved in learning. In one lesson, students practised setting up a network and email accounts, each student using two computers. The teacher encouraged students to discuss results and to solve problems. Students work well individually and with other students. They make good progress towards course objectives. Teachers adapt lesson plans, where appropriate, to meet the needs of different students. Teaching staff have good knowledge of students' personal and learning needs. Regular reviews of students' progress take place at appropriate intervals throughout courses and internal verification is thorough. The average class size is 7.6, compared with a national average of 11.2. Much learning takes place in rural settings and attendance is sometimes poor.

68. Most teaching staff are well qualified and have appropriate teaching qualifications. However, few staff have recently updated industrial experience. Nine of the college's own teaching staff have progressed from ICT courses run by the college and have subsequently gained employment. There are good learning resources. Learning centres in the community are well equipped and staffed. Students are able to vary attendance patterns and work individually at their own pace. At most community venues, there is access to the Internet. Learning materials are good, but at some centres

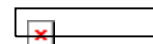
there are insufficient resources for students to undertake independent study. Additional learning resources are available on the main site in the library. There is an adequate supply of ICT-related books in the library and additional texts are held in the curriculum area on the main site. Few textbooks are available at community venues.

69. A range of specialist equipment and resources is available across sites. These include large-print learning materials and large-letter keyboards. There is a range of enrichment activities for full-time students, including visits to large employers and a trip to Disneyland to observe their ICT operations. Adult students particularly value their learning. The skills gained benefit students personally and enable them to participate more effectively in wider community activities, such as charity work, as well as improving their employment opportunities. All students have access to appropriate advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good. Staff roles and responsibilities are clear. A detailed handbook for staff has recently been produced to support good practice in teaching and learning. Courses are managed effectively and efficiently, although the management of some resources at community venues is weaker than at the main site. The quality of teaching by full-time staff is effectively monitored, but observations of the teaching of part-time staff are not carried out consistently. Part-time staff are fully involved in staff development activities. Self-assessment is accurate. Strategies to promote equality of opportunity and widen participation are effective, particularly in the community. There are significant gender imbalances on full-time ICT courses but female participation is increasing.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- good retention and high pass rates on all programmes in 2001/02
- good progression between programmes and into employment
- well-planned and stimulating teaching
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor resources for food service programmes

- o food preparation areas not reflective of industry standards.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers catering and hospitality programmes to both full-time and part-time students from entry level to level 3. NVQ programmes are available in food preparation and cooking at levels 1, 2 and 3. Food service programmes are provided at levels 1 and 2. All students undertake the basic food hygiene programme as an additional qualification, which is also offered at the college by part-time and distance-learning methods of study. At the time of inspection, there were 33 students aged 16 to 18 and 28 adults on full-time programmes. There were 20 students aged 16 to 18 and 15 adults on part-time programmes. There was also one work-based learner on the foundation modern apprenticeship studying food preparation and cooking. Good links exist with seven local schools whose pupils attend college to gain practical experience; some will work towards units of NVQ achievement. This link with schools has extended to the joint delivery of a GNVQ foundation hospitality and catering programme with one school.

Achievement and standards

72. Hospitality and catering programmes have been provided in the college since 1999. Each year this provision has been expanded to provide a wider range. Retention and pass rates are good on all courses. The retention and pass rate in level 1 food preparation and cooking has improved during the period 2000/02 and is now above the national average. In level 1 food and drink service, both retention and pass rates are above the national average. The retention rate in level 2 food preparation is at the national average and the pass rate for this programme has improved to 100%. Level 3 food preparation and cooking has had one group of students complete; although this had recruited small numbers, both retention and pass rates were 100%.

73. Students make good progress on their programmes at college and can achieve NVQ units in food preparation and cooking above the minimum requirement. Many students progress from NVQ level 1 to 3 and the majority of those that leave at the end of each level gain employment within the hospitality industry. Students develop good practical skills within the working environment of the college. Teachers promote team working in both theory and practical areas. Skills are further improved by the students being involved in a variety of work outside the college at various events and functions. The attendance of students during inspection was at the national average and current on-course retention rates are good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ catering and hospitality food preparation (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	21	16
		% retention	*	76	88
		% pass rate	*	94	100
NVQ catering and hospitality food and drink service (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	*	32
		% retention	*	*	82
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NVQ catering and hospitality food preparation (1 year)	2	No. of starts	16	9	17
		% retention	31	100	82
		% pass rate	50	56	100

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

* Course not running

Quality of education and training

74. Teaching is well planned and stimulating. Programmes are detailed and well planned, as are lessons. In the majority of lessons, students are well motivated and challenged to perform well. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for learning and initiate good discussions that require them to formulate their own ideas. During one lesson, the tutor promoted an active discussion with students about a working situation and how it could be improved. This challenged them to analyse the situation and justify any changes they would wish to see made. The result of this was a comprehensive agenda of what could be improved. During another lively lesson, the students had a range of fruits, some of which were new to them, that had been provided by a national supermarket chain for them to taste. They were required to then formulate a dish using some of the items that had been introduced to them. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that students of varying abilities are able to understand and gain from lessons. Teachers have a good understanding of the difficulties of individual students and take great care to ensure their individual needs are met. There is good use by teachers of their own industrial experiences to promote learning and to illustrate the relevance of what students are studying. This is further improved when the students become involved in the several functions that the college provides both within and outside the college. Level 3 students also undertake a period of work placement towards the end of their programme to provide a broader experience of the industry. Students undertake visits while at college to a wide variety of exhibitions and shows as well as hospitality organisations to improve their knowledge and understanding of the industry. During last year, students provided some of the catering at a national party political conference.

75. Students receive a high level of support from the college. Those with identified learning support needs are catered for by both learning support and academic staff and are included in mainstream programmes well. Detailed records are kept of individual students' support needs and of the progress they make on their programme. Potential students can join programmes for a trial period to help them decide if they are suited to study at college. These will often be those individuals who are considering returning to study and are unsure of the commitment required to succeed. Targets for achievement are promptly established at the beginning of programmes and are reviewed and revised as appropriate. There is a good group and individual tutorial system with comprehensive recording of the targets that students are to meet. These targets are both personal and academic. Students speak highly of the support provided by both academic and learning support staff. Students are provided with protective clothing and knives for them to use during their time at college. This helps to lower the initial cost of starting college, which could act as a barrier to access for some. Students receive detailed pre-entry guidance prior to joining college which informs them of the commitment required of them. Students achieve other additional qualifications to enhance their own skills and progression into employment. The level 2 food preparation programme is offered full time, either as a one-year or a two-year course, to accommodate the differing levels of ability of students.

76. Assessments are thorough and used to monitor students' progress. Students are encouraged by staff to negotiate times when they feel competent to be assessed. Students plan well for assessment on standard documents used within the area and they receive good feedback on their performance. Teachers monitor students' written work and provide constructive comments on the standard and content as well as on grammar. Progress reports are sent to parents and guardians and there are open evenings where tutors discuss students' progress.

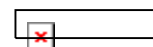
77. Staff within the area have extensive and recent industrial experience which they use well in teaching. They are further supported by professional development activities within the college, although this has yet to extend to industrial updating. Learning materials used within teaching are clear and well presented. The books kept within the learning resource centre are adequate and generally well used by students. Other books and video programmes are located within the teaching area and used by tutors in their teaching. The college intranet has good learning materials that can be accessed by students, but there is little evidence that this is well used. There are poor resources

for food service programmes and those for food preparation are not reflective of industry. Food service activities are centred on the college refectory area. Students provide a counter and take-away service and a variety of other hospitality services throughout the college. Theme luncheons and dinners take place at regular intervals in an area adjacent to the refectory. At present, there is no dedicated restaurant area within the college. Whilst students gain good practical experience in food service both in and outside college, the range that can be offered is limited by the resources available. The college has recently invested in the establishment of a new kitchen. However, this lacks the range of equipment that would be expected to ensure teaching is current and reflective of the range found in industry. Good use is made of the refectory kitchen which contains some additional equipment not found in practice kitchens.

Leadership and management

78. Leadership and management are good. Staff have clearly identified roles and communication between them is good. There are weekly meetings for the whole school and for the area of hospitality and catering. These are used as open forums to discuss all aspects of the provision within the area, including the monitoring of students' progress. Student representatives are elected to attend these meetings. Minutes of meetings are well recorded, although actions are not always reviewed at the next meeting. Some use is made by teachers of management information in relation to monitoring the attendance and retention rates of students. There is no attached governor for the area. Senior managers set targets for retention and achievement rates; teachers are fully aware of these and closely monitor them throughout the year. Staff have been involved in the production of the self-assessment report, the second year of production, which is generally accurate.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 1 progression award

- good integration of key skills which reflect industry requirements

- a good range of additional activities which develop personal and vocational skills

- good provision of additional relevant vocational courses taken up by students.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses

- poor attendance on some courses

- insufficient differentiation in many lessons

- ineffective management strategies to improve retention and pass rates.

Scope of provision

79. The college offers full-time courses at levels 1 to 3 in sport and courses in travel and tourism and the outdoor industry. There are 93 full-time students, nine of whom are aged 19 and over. Sports courses include the level 1 and 2 progression awards in sport and recreation, and the national certificate and diploma in sport and exercise science at level 3. The national diploma in applied science (sport) is in its final year. Students can also take a range of additional vocationally-relevant courses such as the community sports leaders award, first aid at work, treatment of sports injuries and national governing body qualifications. An Institute of Football was established last year to provide a high level of coaching to students who are on full-time courses at the college. The NCFE professional development certificate for the outdoor industry provides opportunities for those who wish to become outdoor activity instructors. Students can also gain qualifications in activities such as mountain leadership, canoeing and rock climbing. Travel and tourism courses, offered at level 2 and 3, include the intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism and the AVCE travel and tourism (double award). Additional courses include the Association of British Travel Agents primary certificate and Spanish.

Achievement and standards

80. There are high pass rates and improving retention rates on the level 1 progression award in sport and recreation. There are few consistent trends in retention and pass rates for most other courses. The national diploma in applied science (sport) had low pass and retention rates in 2001, but these improved to well above the national averages in 2002. Pass and retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course were in line with the national average in 2002, an improvement on 2001. The community sports leaders award had good pass and retention rates in 2001 but these fell to well below the national averages in 2002. The current in-year retention rates for the second year national diploma in applied science (sport) and the AVCE travel and tourism courses are low. There is poor attendance on the level 2 progression award and the advanced certificate for the outdoor industry.

81. Students' portfolios are of a high standard and those who attend regularly make good progress. Many students progress into relevant employment or continue with their education at college. Many students on the level 1 progression award have learning difficulties. They successfully develop both personal and vocational skills and improve their self-confidence, both in lessons and through their participation in outdoor activities.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	14	20	18
		% retention	79	65	72
		% pass rate	82	67	69

Community sports leaders award (short)	2	No. of starts	40	5	13
		% retention	38	100	62
		% pass rate	33	66	38
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism/AVCE travel and tourism**	3	No. of starts	10	10	15
		% retention	60	50	79
		% pass rate	83	20	64

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

Quality of education and training

82. The majority of lessons are satisfactory; a minority are unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, differentiated tasks are used effectively. In a lesson about specific points of anatomy, students made excellent use of the college's beauty therapy facilities and, working in pairs, they physically located anatomical features on their partners with the support of well-prepared college learning materials. More able students were able to progress onto more challenging activities, once they could demonstrate successful achievement in initial tasks. In level 1 lessons, activities promote considerable self-confidence, and vocational skills are well developed. In many lessons, however, activities fail to differentiate between learners of different abilities, and too many students are insufficiently challenged. In unsatisfactory lessons, repetitive tasks are set and students lose motivation and learn little. In one lesson, inappropriate behaviour by students was not dealt with satisfactorily. Some level 3 lessons fail to adequately develop analytical skills.

83. Key skills are successfully integrated into lessons and are developed in a vocational context. For example, using information from the internet, students identified and prioritised products and services which would best serve a particular client. Students then wrote and word-processed a letter to the client to advise him accordingly. In another sport lesson, students calculated areas in order to make effective use of space for delivery of an activity lesson. Students have good access to computers both during class time and during study periods. Sports facilities are adequate.

84. Good advice and guidance are provided to students prior to the start of the course. Taster lessons are held to promote courses and the institute of football. A number of students attending the institute of football do not show sufficient commitment to their studies. There are good relationships between staff and students, and staff show a keen interest in students' welfare and progress. Individual tutorials provide individual support with action planning and target setting. Strategies to improve attendance have not been successful. Assessments are made of students' literacy and numeracy skills on entry but the results of these are not used to plan teaching and learning. Learning support is provided for some students who have specific needs and this is effective.

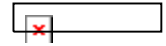
85. Sports students participate in many trips, both in Britain and abroad. For example, in 2001/02, the level 1 students completed a climbing expedition to the Italian Dolomites and also visited the French Pyrenees. Travel and tourism students have good opportunities to travel. For example, the GNVQ intermediate students visited London for two days and many students also visited Majorca to shadow a Thomson's holiday representative. There are good links with employers including the local district council, an airport, a local hotel and travel companies. These are used effectively to enhance the development of vocational skills and lead to employment for some students at the end of their course.

Leadership and management

86. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Inconsistencies in retention and achievement rates have not been addressed successfully. Weaknesses identified during the inspection were not identified through the college's self-assessment process. Sharing of good practice is not effective. Staff have many opportunities to attend training events but there has not been sufficient attention to the need to improve teaching. The new MIS system has only recently been used to supply important

information to curriculum managers and this data is not yet used effectively to inform management decisions. Informal communication amongst teaching staff is good. New staff are effectively mentored and supported. Equal opportunities are actively promoted. The level 1 sports course has been successful in attracting students who might otherwise have been unlikely to continue their education.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass rate on most courses

- very effective, imaginative and well-planned teaching

- good support for learners

- good resources to support learning

- collaborative management of placements.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses

- declining pass and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate health and social care.

Scope of provision

87. A wide range of part-time, full-time and short courses are offered, both at the main site and other sites, to meet the needs of the local community. At the time of the inspection, there were 152 students on care courses; 32 full time and 120 part time, 74 of whom were in community centres. There were 349 students on childcare programmes; 124 full time, and 225 part time, of whom 72 were in community centres. There were also 189 students on counselling skills courses offered at levels 2, 3 and 4. All the counselling courses are part time and most are located on the main site,

with 46 students attending courses at other centres. There are full-time courses at entry level and level 2 and 3 in care and part-time courses at level 2 and 3. Childcare offers a wide range of full-time provision, with courses at entry levels 1 to 3. There are part-time courses for teaching assistants at levels 2 and 3, a certificate course in sessional crèche work, a level 3 professional development in work (special needs) course, and a recently introduced foundation degree in early childhood studies, franchised by the University of Sunderland. Short courses, mainly first aid and basic food handling, are put on frequently throughout the year.

Achievement and Standards

88. There are high pass rates on most courses. In 2001/02, the pass rate was 100% on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) level 2 certificate in childcare and education, the NVQ level 3 care award and AVCE health and social care. Pass rates were 98% and 93% respectively on the NVQ level 2 care award and the CACHE diploma in childcare and education. On some courses, retention rates are poor. In 2001/02, several full-time and substantial part-time courses had retention rates below national averages. The college analyses the reasons for poor performance. Written assignments and portfolios are of good quality with students from entry to degree level producing excellent work. Attendance and punctuality are good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ Care (1 year)	2	No. of starts	14	34	77
		% retention	88	79	88
		% pass rate	100	96	98
GNVQ Intermediate health and Social care	2	No. of starts	11	16	14
		% retention	82	100	64
		% pass rate	89	81	67
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	25	37	22
		% retention	75	62	77
		% pass rate	100	91	100
NCFE training for classroom assistants	2	No. of starts	26	80	64
		% retention	88	65	70
		% pass rate	100	90	89
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	18	28	18
		% retention	94	64	78
		% pass rate	94	100	93
Early childhood studies	3	No. of starts	15	18	18
		% retention	73	78	83
		% pass rate	100	86	80
NVQ care (2 year)	3	No. of starts	11	18	44
		% retention	82	89	98
		% pass rate	100	94	100
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	15	18	19
		% retention	53	56	37
		% pass rate	83	80	100

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

Quality of education and training

89. The standard of teaching is good and sometimes inspiring and stimulating. Preparation is good and teachers use a variety of teaching methods appropriately. Peer observation is well established and regular, and new teachers are well supported. Teachers know their students well. There is good differentiation and teachers usually adapt their planning to cater for the range of ability. Good use is made of student profiles. Students' work is marked promptly and thoroughly. There are good resources to support learning. Classrooms are pleasant and well equipped. The resource centre has books, journals, videos and equipment such as story bags which can be borrowed. Students have access to ICT equipment and many use it effectively. Some community centres are not as well equipped and resourced as the college, but they are accessible.

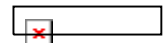
90. Effective assessment procedures are in place. Teachers make good use of learning plans and the tracking of progress is shared by teachers and students. Teachers visit students on placement regularly. The relationship between the college and placements is good. Teachers take students' needs into account in choosing placements. They give clear information about each student's course to the placement provider and produce a newsletter to keep providers informed. Contracts are clear, setting out realistic expectations, and a good rapport between the teachers and the placements. There is a good range of programmes, from entry to degree level, and students take advantage of these opportunities for progression and choice. Initial assessment is good and most students are on an appropriate course. There is an imaginative enrichment programme, with many worthwhile visits and speakers. Students are invited to evaluate their courses and provide useful feedback. Student representatives attend some team meetings.

91. Support for students is good. Teachers are accessible and tutorials, both in small groups and for individuals, whether scheduled or drop-in, are valued by students. Testing on entry often highlights learning needs, which are then addressed. Tutors make time to support students with personal problems and refer them to college pastoral services or other professional support when further help is needed. The atmosphere of politeness and respect supports students.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership and management are good. Communication between staff is well structured and regular meetings are held at all levels. The teaching team is very supportive, especially to new tutors, for whom a mentoring system is in place. There are standardisation meetings to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and assessment. Standardised forms are well designed to support tutors. Equality of opportunity is promoted in many ways and at all levels. Staff appraisal and peer observation are viewed positively and personal and industrial updating is promoted for all staff.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on some accredited courses

- good support for students
- thorough initial assessment of literacy and numeracy support needs.

Weaknesses

- much ineffective use of individual learning plans
- some unimaginative approaches to teaching and learning
- insufficient diversity of courses.

Scope of provision

93. Literacy and numeracy are offered as discrete courses to adults at many community centres as well as the main college site. There are 183 students enrolled on these courses. Literacy and numeracy are included in courses for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are 45 students on full-time courses and 201 students on part-time courses of this type. Literacy and numeracy support is available to students on other courses where specific needs have been identified; 84 students are currently being supported in this way. A course for English for speakers of other languages is taken by 43 students. Teaching staff in the department work closely with key skills staff, and many students on full-time vocational courses study the key skills of communications and application of number.

Achievement and standards

94. From 2001/2, a new qualification framework was introduced nationally. Many students do not follow externally-accredited courses and few courses have been offered over a number of years so little trend data is available. On Wordpower level 1 courses, pass rates are above national averages. At entry level, pass rates for discrete literacy courses are in line with national averages. At both levels pass, rates in 2002 were higher than in 2001. For Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) Numeracy level 1, pass rates are also above national averages, and in 2002 the pass rate was 100%. At entry level, the National Skills Profile numeracy pass rates are in line with national averages. In English for speakers of other languages, pass rates are significantly higher than the national averages, with a 100% pass rate in 2002.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Wordpower	Entry	No. of starts	*	27	4
		% retention	*	93	75
		% pass rate	*	64	67

OCR National Skills Profile numeracy	Entry	No. of starts	*	62	70
		% retention	*	82	79
		% pass rate	*	82	79
Wordpower	1	No. of starts	*	46	19
		% retention	*	72	68
		% pass rate	*	59	62
ESB cert of achievement	*	No. of starts	*	17	10
		% retention	*	94	80
		% pass rate	*	88	100

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

95. The majority of lessons are satisfactory; a minority of lessons are unsatisfactory. All courses are well cross-referenced to the new basic skills curriculum. In the better lessons, good use is made of real materials and situations to make learning more relevant. For example, in one good lesson, the teacher effectively used full-colour transparencies of football season tickets to illustrate ways of saving money. Teachers have good relationships with their students and are supportive of them. Lessons are planned to take into account the individual interests of students, but this is not sufficiently developed. Much teaching is unimaginative and teaching methods lack variety and rely too much on individual worksheets. The pace of some lessons is slow and does not challenge students sufficiently. There is little use of pair work, small-group work or project-based tasks. There is little use of ILT except for word processing and internet research. Interactive software packages are not used effectively in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

96. Individual learning plans are not sufficiently specific and often have wide aims, such as improving spelling or punctuation. The results of initial assessment are not always recorded on individual learning plans so it is not clear how learning has been planned from them. There is little use of short and medium-term goals which are time bound. Individual progress reviews accurately record skills learned and are well linked to the new curriculum, but are not sufficiently focused on targets. Previous targets are often not reviewed. Some teachers keep individual learning plans and students' files, reducing opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently outside lessons.

97. Support for students is good and is valued by them. Teachers and support staff are helpful and knowledgeable about support available, both in the college and by outside agencies. Access to careers guidance is good. Support staff are well trained for the wide range of support needs of the students. There is thorough initial assessment of literacy and numeracy for all full-time and some part-time students. Support is offered either to individuals or to the whole class where this is appropriate. Adult students on discrete literacy and numeracy courses are assessed, but arrangements for the initial assessment of students who start at different times of the year in community venues are not always adequate. Appropriate assessments are carried out for students with specific learning difficulties. Relevant information is obtained from social services, special schools and community partners to ensure that students' needs are accurately identified. Specialist support staff carry out initial dyslexia assessment and, where appropriate, students can be referred to an external agency for a more in-depth assessment. Where whole-class support is provided for vocational students, teaching is vocationally relevant.

98. Staff have a high level of expertise which is relevant to the needs of students. All teaching staff have an appropriate teaching qualification. Many also have assessor awards. Most staff teaching literacy and numeracy have specific qualifications in teaching basic skills to adults. Specialist staff

have appropriate qualifications and experience. For example, a number of staff are trained to assess dyslexia. Staff are knowledgeable about the wider issues of access for students with multiple barriers to learning. Teachers are very supportive of students in lessons and use their skills to help students learn effectively.

99. In general, physical resources are adequate. There are enough textbooks and paper resources. In the adult workshop, there is a well-appointed room with literacy and numeracy resources, including games, weighing and measuring equipment and five computer stations. Some rooms used are inappropriate. In one lesson, the classroom was too small for the number of students. The study support area, where one-to-one support is provided, is inadequate for the numbers of students and teachers using it. It has temporary dividers but these do not adequately protect confidentiality, nor do they reduce noise. The door to the room is often left open. Noise from the corridors is disruptive.

100. There are some good initiatives to widen participation. They are well targeted at learners with barriers to learning. They make effective use of partnerships to support and develop learners. There are such partnerships with a school in an outlying district, and with health workers and community groups in the area. The range of courses offered is not sufficiently broad to meet all needs. There are few short or intensive courses and there is little evening provision. Most courses are offered part time during the day and are designed to enable students to enrol at different times during the year, with an individual learning plan worked out for each student. Some work with employers has been started but this is not planned systematically.

Leadership and management

101. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers, support staff and managers work well together. Managers set clear targets and provide good team leadership. Regular meetings are held. Lesson observations are beginning to be used as a tool to improve the quality of teaching. All staff are involved in quality assurance. There is regular staff development, which is linked to the wider social needs of the learners. There is insufficient co-ordination between the support staff and the vocational teachers for students on vocational courses who require literacy or numeracy support. There are few formal meetings to jointly plan learning. Learning support staff do not attend vocational team meetings or course reviews on a regular basis. Some informal communication does happen on an individual basis but there is no overall co-ordination. Some part-time staff are not fully aware of college procedures, especially those working in the community. In one instance, a tutor was unaware of the resourcing policy for outreach venues.

Part D: College data

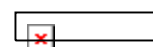
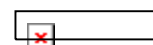


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2001/02

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	44%	47%
2	35%	18%
3	13%	10%
4/5	0%	1%



Other	8%	24%
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2003

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

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	280	963	7%
Land-based provision	21	0	0%
Construction	5	5	0%
Engineering and motor vehicle	95	187	2%
Business	187	1,483	9%
Information and communications technology	512	4,146	25%
Retail, customer service and transport	23	331	2%
Hospitality, leisure, sport and travel	254	494	4%
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	174	297	3%
Health and community care	446	3,429	21%
Art and design	74	351	2%
Humanities	140	256	2%
English, languages and communication	330	299	3%
Basic education	834	2,125	16%
Other	33	710	4%
Total	3,408	15,076	100%

Source: provided by the college in spring 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year			
		16-18		19+	

		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	839	577	772	2,156	2,248	2,193
	Retention rate	71	71	69	62	69	67
	National average	80	79	*	78	78	*
	Pass rate	64	73	67	76	77	80
	National average	65	68	*	66	68	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	518	391	535	836	1,161	1,451
	Retention rate	68	72	70	74	74	71
	National average	76	76	*	79	78	*
	Pass rate	59	54	68	81	76	81
	National average	66	69	*	65	69	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	229	296	339	543	847	1,169
	Retention rate	74	74	71	79	76	81
	National average	76	77	*	78	78	*
	Pass rate	59	73	75	73	79	85
	National average	74	76	*	66	69	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	7	1	0	119	42	116
	Retention rate	86	n/a	n/a	88	79	84
	National average	79	82	*	81	84	*
	Pass rate	100	n/a	n/a	51	65	53
	National average	66	55	*	56	53	*

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

**figures not available*

College rates for 1999-2000 and 2000-01 provided by the learning and skills council based on college ISR returns

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1997-98 to 1999-2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1997-8 to 1998-9: Benchmarking Data 1997-98 to 1999-2000: Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

3. College rates for 2001-2002: as provided by the college in spring 2003.

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)	38.1	47.6	14.3	21
Level 2 (intermediate)	72.9	22.9	4.2	48
Level 1 (foundation)	83.3	16.7	0.0	18
Other sessions	57.1	38.1	4.8	21
Totals	64.8	29.6	5.6	108

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