Newcastle-under-Lyme College

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Newcastle-under-Lyme
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	Frances Wittering
Address of college:	Liverpool Road
	Newcastle-under-Lyme
	Staffordshire
	ST5 2DF
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Chair of governors:	George Stonier
Unique reference number:	130812
Name of reporting inspector:	Cathy Morgan HMI

Part A: Summary

Information about the college
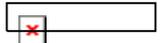
Newcastle-under-Lyme is the second largest district council in Staffordshire and is situated in the north of the county neighbouring the unitary authority of Stoke-on-Trent. Newcastle Borough Council has a population of 123,900 with 53,000 households, which live predominantly in densely populated urban areas, though the borough also has a large rural area. The borough has some serious pockets of deprivation. Two out of the twenty-three wards fall within the top 10% of the most deprived English wards. Unemployment in Newcastle is just over 3%, which is in the mid-range when compared to the rest of the county.

Newcastle-under-Lyme College was formed as a tertiary college in 1986 and is now the only one of its kind in Staffordshire. The college has extended its curriculum provision considerably since that time, adding a wide range of community work, university access programmes, and adult education. The college serves the education and training needs of Newcastle-under-Lyme, the conurbation of Stoke-on-Trent and the Staffordshire Moorlands.

The relative ease with which young people can obtain employment, which is often low skilled and low paid, together with the social and cultural traditions of the area, means that the proportion of 16 year olds staying on in full-time education is low at 67.5%. This is below the average rate of 70% for Staffordshire. However, 85.7% of young people continue with structured learning, including work-based learning, which is higher than both the county rate of 85.5% and the national average of 84.8%. In Newcastle-under-Lyme, 3% of school-leavers go into jobs with no training and 9.4% are recorded as `not settled'.

There is close co-operation between schools and colleges in the area to try to improve the staying-on rate. Newcastle-under-Lyme College works closely with the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and Stoke-on-Trent College in attempting to raise levels of educational achievement. All of these colleges are within four miles of one another. As a result of collaboration, there has been a rationalisation of provision: art and design is offered at Newcastle-under-Lyme College whilst performing arts is offered at Stoke-on-Trent College.

How effective is the college?
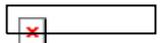
Newcastle-under-Lyme College is effective. It provides a wide range of courses and is responsive and sensitive to the needs of the local community. Students are well motivated and the standard of their behaviour is high. The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievements are good in nine of the thirteen curriculum areas inspected. They are satisfactory in three other areas and unsatisfactory in the remaining one. The work-based learning provision in business, engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy is unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on advanced level courses

- much good teaching

- good specialist resources

- effective monitoring of students' progress

- productive local partnerships

- thorough pre-entry guidance and effective admissions processes

- good personal and tutorial support

- good financial management

- effective leadership and management.

What should be improved

- retention and pass rates on some courses

- co-ordination and provision of literacy and numeracy support

- unsatisfactory accommodation in some areas

- management of work-based learning

- lack of coherence in aspects of college strategic planning.

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
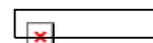
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Mathematics and science	**Good.** The area is effectively managed both at department and faculty level. Teams work well together and are actively involved in the self-assessment and strategic planning process. Pass rates are high. Students are well motivated and produce a high standard of work. In some lessons, however, there is a lack of demanding tasks for more able students.
Engineering	**Good.** There are good retention rates and pass rates and teaching on most college-based courses. Students are well supported. There are effective links with local employers. Specialist resources in electrical and electronic engineering are of a high standard. Management of work-based learning is poor and there is no achievement of frameworks on modern apprenticeship programmes.
Business	**Good.** Pass rates are high on most full-time programmes. Most teaching is good, with effective setting of topics into a current business context. Students and work-based trainees are well supported. The management of work-based learning is ineffective.
Information and communication technology	**Good.** Courses are well managed. Pass and retention rates are high. Students benefit from well-planned programmes that provide good opportunities for progression. Teaching and learning are particularly effective on adult courses taught in the information technology (IT) learning centre.
Sport, leisure and tourism	**Good.** There are good pass rates on many courses. Teaching is purposeful and well planned. Key skills are not sufficiently integrated with vocational programmes. Deficiencies in accommodation affect learning adversely.
Hospitality	**Good.** Teaching is good. Learning programmes are well planned structured and organised. Students receive a high level of support, particularly on level 1 courses. National Vocational Qualification

	(NVQ) assessment procedures are overly complex for learners to use and understand.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	**Satisfactory.** Good pass rates in beauty, but poor retention rates on all hairdressing courses. Key skills are well integrated with the curriculum with effective use of information learning technology (ILT). Students' progress is effectively monitored. There are insufficient clients for work in practical lessons. There is poor management of work-based training.
Health and social care	**Satisfactory.** Pass rates are high. Retention rates are generally in decline. Teaching is well planned, but some is unimaginative. There is too little integration of key skills with vocational programmes.
Humanities	**Good.** The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is strong leadership and management at course level. Data is used effectively to set realistic targets and strategies for improvement. Academic and personal support for students is very effective. Students' progress is successfully monitored through the individual performance review system.
Visual arts and media	**Good.** High pass rates across the wide range of provision. Students receive good support and guidance from specialist teachers. The standard of students' work is high. There is good progression to further or higher level courses.
English and modern foreign languages	**Good.** High retention rates on General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced-level (GCE AS and A-level) courses. High pass rates on advanced level courses. Low retention and pass rates on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) modern languages courses. High-quality learning materials. Effective leadership and management in both areas.
Basic skills: literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	**Unsatisfactory.** There are good retention rates on basic skills courses that take account of individual students' separate special needs. There is low take up of learning support. The co-ordination of learning support across the college is unsatisfactory.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	**Satisfactory.** Students make good progress in developing their personal, social and practical skills. There are excellent pass rates on accredited courses. Targets are not sufficiently specific and too few relate to the improvement of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

How well is the college led and managed?
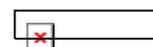
Leadership and management are good. Good progress has been made in addressing most of the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection. There is very good student achievement on level 3 courses and some good achievement at other levels. The quality of teaching is good. Quality assurance procedures are well established and are effective in bringing about improvements in most areas. The self-assessment process is effective and includes all staff in a collaborative and rigorous manner. Financial management is prudent. Governors and managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. The curriculum is generally well managed, but the management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?
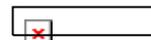
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Regular analysis of information related to gender and ethnicity is used in planning. The college continues to make a substantial contribution to the borough's regeneration plan. It has worked in close partnership with local authorities, community organisations and others to establish a number of successful initiatives to promote participation in learning within local communities. The college effectively uses systems of financial support for students to promote participation and improve retention rates. The number of students from minority ethnic groups matches well the number from such groups in the local communities. Links with the local employers are productive. Teachers take note of the personal and social needs of students. However, issues related to equal opportunities are not well promoted in all areas of the college.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?
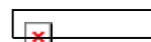
There is good support for students. Arrangements to provide information, advice and guidance to prospective students are effective. Initial assessment of students is inefficient and there is low take-up of the literacy and numeracy support available to full-time students. Induction is effective and thoroughly planned. There are good arrangements for tutors to review and report on students' progress. Good use is made of the innovative system developed by the college to monitor students' progress. Careers education and guidance are good. Individual students receive good specialist support. Full-time students receive very good advice and guidance on progression to higher education (HE) or employment and progression rates are good.

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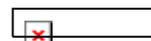
Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

What students like about the college

- quality of teaching

- support from the careers and counselling service

- adult atmosphere

- learning resource centre

- wide range of courses available

- good relationships with staff.

What they feel could be improved

- heat and ventilation in classrooms

- quality of food and facilities in the Trinity building

- availability of parking spaces.

Other information
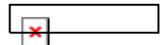
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole
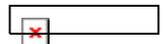
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	64	28	8
19+ and WBL*	83	15	2

Learning 16-18	57	34	9
19+ and WBL*	85	13	2

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
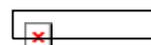
1. In 2001, 52% of all enrolments were for adults, and 90% of all students on part-time courses were aged 19 or over. Adult enrolments on to level 1 courses have almost doubled over a three-year period. A large proportion of adult students are recruited to courses in information and communication technology (ICT) and health and social care. Of students aged 16 to 18, most enrol on courses at levels 2 and 3 and only 14% enrol on courses at level 1. There is a significant amount of work-based learning provision in business, engineering, and hairdressing and beauty. Nearly all learners on work-based programmes are foundation or advanced modern apprentices who are working towards NVQs and certification in key skills.

2. Retention and pass rates have been compared with results for similar colleges. Overall, retention rates have been at, or below, national averages over the last three years. Students aged 16 to 18 have a much better record of success at the college than students aged 19 or over. The college has been successful in raising pass rates at all levels and for all age-groups in 2002. During the inspection, attendance at lessons was 80%, which is above the national average of 76%. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more detail about students' achievement and standards of work on particular courses.

16 to 18 year olds

3. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 are good and are consistently above national averages on courses at levels 2 and 3. The college review of level 2 provision has led to a reduction in the number of GCSE courses offered and an increase in the recruitment of students to vocational courses. The re-organisation of GCSE English and mathematics courses has led to an outstanding improvement in pass rates and the proportion of high grades achieved on these courses in 2002. At level 1, pass rates were below the national average in 2001, but significantly improved to 79% in 2002.

4. Pass rates for students on GCE AS and A-level courses improved significantly in 2002. On GCE A-level courses in the three previous years, pass rates were generally close to the national averages. Pass rates on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses have improved and, in 2002, reached the national average. Retention rates on these courses are generally good. Pass rates on the advanced GNVQ, national diploma and national certificate programmes have increased to above the national average. In-year retention rates on GCE AS courses are good and around national averages.

5. Retention rates at levels 1 and 2 have been below national averages for two years, but have improved in 2002 and are now at, or above, the national average. Retention rates at level 3 improved over the period 1999 to 2002 and are now above the national average.

6. The college has developed its own system for comparing the final examination results students obtain with their attainments on joining the college. Students on advanced courses are set grades to achieve in their final examinations and these are determined on the basis of their GCSE grades and

other previous results. Teachers closely monitor the progress students make towards reaching their grades. Early indications show that the system is working well and is leading to improvements in students' performance.

7. Many full-time students aged 16 to 18 study for key skills qualifications as part of their main programme of study. As acknowledged by the college, the effectiveness of the teaching of key skills varies considerably across curriculum areas. Where opportunities for key skills development are a central part of the main programmes of study, such as on hair and beauty courses, students' key skills attainment is generally better than where key skills development sessions are provided separately. The college recognises that pass rates in key skills are poor.

8. Most work-based learners on modern apprenticeship programmes are aged 16 to 18. Few foundation or advanced modern apprentices achieve a full qualification within the expected time and pass rates are low. Pass rates for learners on work-based NVQs are also low. The teaching and assessment of key skills are unsatisfactory. Retention rates for work-based learners are low. For example, in business administration, retention rates have not exceeded 50% over the last three years and are at 18% for 2001 on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme.

9. Many GCE AS and A-level students perform better than their previous achievements at GCSE would predict. Students on all GCE AS, GCE A-level and access to HE programmes demonstrate good powers of analysis and an ability to construct good evidence-based arguments and to work well on their own and collaboratively. In art, students have a good level of understanding and are able to analyse and understand design concepts. Most students show high levels of skill in analysis and evaluation and participate effectively in class discussion except in health and social care where some students are reluctant to join in whole class discussions. Technical and specialist language is used confidently. Students studying media and film use specialist vocabulary fluently and are confident in expressing evaluative opinions. Much of the students' written work is of a high standard and it is well presented. In engineering, the standard of written work in students' portfolios is particularly high. Work-based trainees in business use their workplace experience effectively to contribute evidence to their portfolios. Students often make confident use of IT to research and present their work. In most lessons, the standard of students' work was appropriate to the course they were on and, in nearly two thirds of lessons, levels of attainment were good or better.

Adult learners

10. Pass rates have been consistently below the national averages for adult learners at all levels in 1999 and 2000 with the exception of level 2 programmes in 1999, where pass rates exceeded national averages. As with students aged 16 to 18, pass rates in 2002 demonstrate significant improvement. Pass rates have increased to between 85% and 91%. For example, GNVQ business courses, where two thirds of students are aged 19 or over, have had consistently high pass rates over three years. Retention rates, at all levels, for adult students are below the national average. Some improvement has been made on level 2 and level 3 programmes in 2002, but on level 1 programmes there has been a slight decrease in retention. Retention rates on short course programmes are good and are at 95% in 2002. Pass rates were poor, but showed trends of improvement in 1999 and 2000 and have significantly improved in 2002 to 91%.

11. Enrolments of adult students have significantly increased at all levels with the exception of level 3 where there has been a decrease of approximately 10%. The majority of adult students enrol on qualifications requiring short periods of study. In 2002, this accounted for over 60% of all adult students in the college. Enrolments on GCE AS and A levels are low. Programmes in psychology, French and English literature recruit more significant numbers of adults, but numbers are relatively low when compared with the 16 to 18 age-group. Retention and pass rates are generally low on these programmes. ICT and business administration also recruit significant numbers of adult students. Much ICT short course provision is offered at community sites. Retention and pass rates on many courses are good. For example, on the European computer driving licence (ECDL) courses, both short and one-year courses, retention and pass rates are good.

Quality of education and training
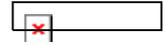
12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 218 sessions. Teaching was judged as at least good in 69% of these, satisfactory in 25% and less than satisfactory in 6%. Teaching is best in humanities, English and modern foreign languages. No teaching was judged as less than satisfactory in humanities, mathematics and science, sport, leisure and tourism and in the provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in 9 of the 13 curriculum areas inspected and only 7% of lessons were excellent.

13. Students studying at level 2 receive better teaching than those on courses at levels 1 and 3. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is at level 1. The few unsatisfactory lessons are on courses for students aged 16 to 18 and spread across curriculum areas. Students learn most effectively on courses at level 3 and in 30% of these lessons students' learning is very good or excellent. Literacy and numeracy provision is more effective for adults than for students aged 16 to 18.

14. Most lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are understood by students. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and most match their teaching methods to the needs of their students. In the most successful lessons, teachers inspire their students and use a variety of well-structured tasks and careful questioning techniques. The teaching is imaginative and students are involved in a range of activities including group and whole-class discussions, individual and group presentations. In all curriculum areas, teaching is closely related to examination requirements and students are shown how to work effectively on their own.

15. Students develop good analytical and communication skills. Theoretical concepts are taught most effectively where up-to-date resources and examples are used, such as electronics. Teachers in all curriculum areas make good use of ILT.

16. Teachers have very good relationships with their students, encouraging them to ask questions and to seek guidance and support, whenever necessary. They provide good assistance and support to students on an individual basis. This is particularly successful in hospitality and visual arts lessons. The majority of whole-class teaching, individual and group work is well managed. Teachers have high expectations of their students in terms of the standards of their work and their ability to cope with demanding tasks in lessons. The standard of students' behaviour is exceptionally high.

17. In a few instances, lessons are not well planned and they lack clear objectives, a sense of purpose and momentum. In these lessons, learning activities are undemanding and narrow in scope. The students become bored and confused, and some become disengaged and learn little. Poor punctuality of students disrupts the start of lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The recent initiative aimed at introducing students to the provision of literacy and numeracy support is unsuccessful. These lessons lack clear objectives and do not provide sufficient opportunities for students of all abilities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills. On-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learning is good and there is frequent liaison between assessors and workplace supervisors in business.

18. In ICT, hospitality, business, English and modern foreign languages, effective use is made of external visits and the involvement of outside speakers and visits to the workplace. Students in hairdressing and beauty therapy also benefit from such activities, but the lack of clients in practical hairdressing lessons prevents them from gaining experience of working in a realistic salon environment.

19. Many students aged 16 to 18 study for key skills qualifications. As the college acknowledges, the development of students' key skills is not effective across all faculties. Where key skills form an integral part of the students' vocational programme of study, as in hairdressing and beauty therapy,

teaching is effective. In other areas, such as visual arts and health and social care, humanities, sport, leisure and tourism, key skills are not always taught as part of the students' main courses. In work-based training programmes, practical work is not used to provide evidence for key skills qualifications.

20. Most staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Some teachers, such as those in visual arts, hairdressing and beauty therapy also work in the industry. Many curriculum teams benefit from the breath of experience of teachers, some of whom are external verifiers and/or examiners for national awarding bodies. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and expertise enhance the quality of teaching and learning in subjects such as engineering, ICT, hospitality, humanities and visual arts and media.

21. Most teachers are qualified; some 82% of full-time and 60% of part-time teachers have a relevant teaching qualification. Staff development is a high priority for the college and good training opportunities exist to enable staff to gain further teaching and other qualifications. Teachers in business have recently benefited from industrial secondments. Teachers observe each other and make effective use of this. Good use is made of advanced practitioners in planning and providing staff development activities.

22. The college has addressed the weaknesses in accommodation identified at the time of the last inspection. Recent key investments include the building of a centre for sixth form studies, an arts centre and a hair and beauty salon in addition to a considerable investment in ILT over the past two years. The main refectory was modernised in summer 1999 and a college shop was opened at the same time. The Trinity Bistro opened in April 2000 and a social area for students was created in the summer of 2001.

23. The college has a newly refurbished learning resources centre that has been merged with the library. These new facilities are well managed and staff work effectively with curriculum teams to provide relevant research sources and materials to assist students in producing their assignment work. This new centre has good access to up-to-date computers, on-line journals, books, videos and CD-ROMs. Students make good use of the quiet study area. There is a second resources centre in the sixth form centre that contains additional computer and study facilities.

24. There are some excellent specialist resources across the college. Local businesses make good use of the industrial-standard equipment in electrical, electronic and process engineering. The high-quality teaching and learning materials used in foreign languages are sold commercially. Facilities available through the national franchise provision with the Lawn Tennis Association are of a very high standard. The arts and media studios are of good quality. There are good resources, including a well-equipped silversmithing workroom, and good resources for literacy and numeracy in community venues.

25. Management of the IT learning centre has recently been transferred to the newly created faculty of external projects. This accommodation in the town centre provides a high-quality learning environment for students studying a range of ICT courses.

26. The college recognises the need to improve the quality of some accommodation that is in poor physical condition and unsuited to purpose. The college sports hall facilities are limited and restrict the range of team sports offered to students. There are drainage problems with the football pitch. The kitchen used by hospitality students is poorly ventilated. The changing rooms in this area are small and contain poor facilities. Some resources in the mechanical engineering workshop are inadequate. The college is aware of the existence of a few areas that present access problems for those with physical disabilities.

27. The new centre for sixth form studies provides high-quality classroom accommodation. Some classrooms used in other areas such as leisure and tourism and visual arts, however, are of poor quality. Although the hairdressing salon is modern and well equipped, its small size limits the range of programmes offered. The area used for additional learning support is noisy and distracting and the careers and counselling centre is too small for group sessions.

28. Assessment of students' work is rigorous and highly effective in all curriculum areas. Students are provided with clear details of assessment tasks and criteria for grading. Students' assessment of each other is used successfully on hair and beauty courses. Teachers set homework regularly and tasks are closely linked to examination requirements. Teachers mark students' work promptly, thoroughly and to awarding body criteria. Assessment requirements on hospitality and courses, however, are too complex and are not understood by students. There is insufficient work-based assessment in engineering.

29. Most teachers provide constructive feedback on the ways in which students can improve their performance and make progress towards achieving their qualifications. Written feedback on student work is thorough and constructive in humanities, business, and visual arts and media. However, it lacks depth in health and social care where inadequate guidance is given to students. Internal verification procedures for each programme area are effective and are further validated by the college internal verification co-ordinator.

30. The monitoring of students' progress is effective. Good use is made of the system developed by the college to compare students' achievements with their previous attainments and to monitor the progress they are making towards reaching the examination grades set as targets. This system has been effectively piloted on GCE AS, GCE A-level and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses to motivate students to improve their performance. The system is also used successfully to identify students who may be at risk of not achieving their potential. The newly introduced system to enable students to record their own progress in a learning diary is not yet used consistently or constructively in most curriculum areas.

31. Initial and pre-course assessments of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are used as a base for individual learning plans. The outcomes of initial assessment are not used effectively and too few specific measurable targets are set to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those students who need to develop other basic skills to improve their performance.

32. Provision of literacy and numeracy support across the college is unsatisfactory. There is too much time taken to respond to the needs of the majority of students identified as in need of support following their initial assessment. Interim measures to introduce the range of support available to students are ineffective and there is poor co-ordination of this provision.

33. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 receive regular reports on their child's progress. Teachers give students excellent academic and personal support. Students and their parents are greatly appreciative of the level of guidance from college staff.

34. Reviews on work-based learning are not well handled. There is insufficient consideration of equal opportunities issues and inadequate review of students' training plans.

35. The college offers courses in 11 of the 14 LSC areas of learning, with qualifications from pre-entry to level 4. The expanding HE programme in the areas of art and design, engineering, teacher training and project management is taught mostly through the Staffordshire University Regional Federation. The college has progressed to the second stage of its bid for centre of vocational excellence status in electrical and electronic engineering. The college also offers a number of courses that are designed to meet specific English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and basic skills needs of groups of learners.

36. Provision of work-based training is monitored by the college business development unit. There are significant enrolments on work-based training in engineering, business administration, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Learners follow advanced or foundation modern apprenticeships that incorporate key skills and NVQ courses. The management of work-based training is unsatisfactory.

37. The college has local and national franchising arrangements with Manchester Metropolitan University, Sportscoach UK and the English Volleyball Association. Courses organised nationally by

the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for their coach education programmes include the NVQ level 2 in coaching teaching and instruction (tennis).

38. The college offers a wide range of courses including a large choice of subjects at GCE AS and A level which are further extended by the collaboration with a local 11 to 18 school. There are good opportunities for students to progress through different levels in many vocational areas. The college has taken positive steps to strengthen its provision at foundation level. Academic and vocational full-time courses are well integrated within a common college timetable. Good use is made of this to enable students to combine advanced vocational courses with GCE AS to extend their vocational studies. A programme of enrichment activities is also available. However, most of these are organised within individual courses and do not add breadth to students' programmes.

39. The college has developed strong partnerships with a wide range of local and community organisations. These have been used effectively to promote participation in learning within disadvantaged and isolated communities. The college was short-listed for a Beacon Award for one such project in partnership with a village community association.

40. The key skills programme is not effectively co-ordinated across the college. Pass rates for key skills qualifications are poor. Very few students have completed portfolios of work that would enable them to obtain external qualifications. The college has identified this weakness and has adopted a new policy designed to bring about an improvement. It states that the integration of key skills within courses is the main route to gaining achievement for students. Some support has been provided to teachers on the concept of integration and a cross-college key skills team has been established. However, no clear strategy for implementing the new policy has been adopted. Timescales and responsibilities for implementation have not been clearly established. Many course teams have made very slow progress. The outcomes have not been properly monitored or evaluated. As a result, students on many courses in different faculties still do not have the opportunity to develop key skills systematically or compile portfolios of evidence to prepare them for obtaining external qualifications.

41. The college provides thorough and effective guidance to prospective students in local schools. A specialist school liaison team visits 11 to 16 schools to talk to pupils from Year 9 onwards. They provide pupils with information and high-quality literature on the courses, support and facilities available. The college is not able to provide this service to pupils in all 11 to 18 schools. Young people also find the college's open evenings very helpful in making their choices. All applications for full-time courses are received by the college's careers co-ordinator. Each one is reviewed to identify the nature of information required by applicants. Once applications are received, there are very good arrangements to provide impartial guidance. Strong links between college guidance staff, course tutors and the Connexions service contribute to the success of this process. Adult applicants also benefit from this service.

42. Good support is provided in a variety of ways to ensure that students make the most of their opportunities at the college. A thorough induction programme is successful in ensuring that students are well informed and make an efficient start to their courses. In weekly tutorials, full-time students consider a broad range of issues related to citizenship and to improving their study techniques. All faculties have recently adopted a systematic approach to recording and reviewing students' progress that is well co-ordinated by a college tutorial manager. The college has adopted a new approach to supporting students who are identified as being at risk of leaving their courses early. A team of four learner managers work in an informal, but highly focused way to provide support to these and other students and they have been successful in improving retention rates. There is good support for students with hearing or visual impairments and those with specific learning difficulties.

43. Well-qualified careers staff provide good information and advice from a specialist careers centre. Students are thoroughly prepared for making applications to HE institutions. A specialist counselling service is well used and highly valued by students. Schemes of financial support for students have been used effectively to promote participation and improve rates of retention.

44. Staff with responsibility for managing various aspects of student support meet regularly with a college senior manager to review provision and plan co-ordinated improvements. This group does

not, however, include the manager responsible for additional support provision. As a result, additional support provision is insufficiently integrated with other support services.

Leadership and management
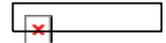
45. Leadership and management are good. There is strong leadership by the principal in both the college and the local community. The aims and mission of the college are well understood by governors, staff, students and parents and are effectively promoted by the senior management team. This team works well together and is well regarded by other college staff.

46. The recent introduction of a directorate structure ensures full inclusion of middle managers in the planning and development process. Communication across the college has improved and is effective. Good use is made of the college intranet to provide a range of access levels for staff and students. Staff have access to college documentation and make effective use of the college quality manual using this system. The provision of a core briefing following weekly management meetings has further improved communication. All staff are aware of new developments and procedures in the college.

47. Most curriculum areas are well led and managed with effective overview by heads of faculties. Courses are well planned and students' progress is carefully monitored. Meetings are productive and actions to address weaknesses are effectively recorded. Roles and responsibilities are clear and there is a strong emphasis on teamwork. Subject teachers work well together in most areas, particularly humanities and in some cases, such as ICT, mathematics and English, across faculties. In some subjects, however, there is insufficient sharing of good practice, as in visual arts and media and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is unsatisfactory co-ordination of work-based learning and of provision of literacy and numeracy support across the college.

48. Good progress has been made in addressing most of the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection. Examples include: the introduction of an effective ILT strategy and the significant improvement in the use of ILT in teaching and learning; greater consistency in the standard of teaching; more varied teaching methods; improved quality assurance procedures and the quality of non-financial information. Students achievements have improved overall and are very good on level 3 courses and good at all other levels. Achievements in work-based learning are unsatisfactory. The pattern of low pass and retention rates in some subjects, identified at the last inspection, still remain despite concerted action by the college to find remedies.

49. The college is strengthening its quality assurance processes. Staff are aware of college procedures and have been fully involved in the development of the quality manual. The manual, accessible through the college intranet, is a set of documents and procedures that are regularly updated. The faculty and support staff away days are very effective ways of including all staff in the planning and review process across the college and leads to a common sense of purpose and a shared agreement about the aims and mission of the college.

50. The college has been successful in achieving and retaining Investor in People status for the last eight years and Charter Mark over the last three years. It is the first United Kingdom college to have achieved the ISO 9001-2000 quality management standard accreditation this year. This external accreditation is an acknowledgement of the rigorous approach adopted by the senior management team in their endeavours to include staff in the quality assurance process. Human resource management is well developed in the college with procedures in place to complete all statutory and legislative requirements under employment law. Professional development is well monitored across the college. Staff are keen to make use of the opportunities offered to enhance their individual skills. However, there is no overall professional development plan cross-referenced to faculty and strategic plans.

51. Staff appraisal procedures have been updated and although there is now an annual cycle, there is a lack of regularity in the timing of some appraisals. Performance is increasingly well managed and includes a schedule of classroom observations. The frequency of observations is not uniform across faculties. Those that adopt a series of regular observations are making significant improvements in a relatively short time. For example, the improvements made in the performance of teachers and the associated student achievement in the faculty for external projects and access and continuing education have been achieved through regular training and supportive ongoing classroom observation. The recent appointment of 12 advanced practitioners to the staff are proving to be effective in sharing good practice and supporting staff in the development of their teaching skills. Students highlight good teaching as a strength of the college.

52. The self-assessment process involves all staff and governors. Good attention is paid to the analyses of teaching and learning and students' achievements and appropriate comparisons are made with national averages. Self-assessment reports are appropriately evaluative, but some of the judgements are unclear and there is a tendency to identify as strengths practices that are in no way exceptional. Too few subject reports fully identify areas of underachievement, particularly in relation to work-based learning, key skills and the provision of literacy and numeracy support.

53. Since the last inspection, the college has replaced and upgraded its management information system. Programme managers receive regular information that they can use for current and future planning. Recent developments have improved access to the system and enable staff to retrieve and amend student data. The monitoring of the data, however, is not thorough or effective. Prompted by inspectors to investigate the high proportion of students identified as continuing, the college discovered that an error had occurred in the transfer of data. The statistics being used by inspectors for the year 2000/01 gave incorrect figures and on many occasions duplicated student information. Statistical information relating to work-based training programmes is disorganised and inaccurate and provides little opportunity for rigorous analysis of the levels of retention and achievement of trainees.

54. There is effective monitoring of the college's performance in achieving the targets for students' achievement, progression and employment. The appointment of learner managers deployed across the college is successful in the identification of students who are at risk of underachievement and in improving their rate of retention.

55. In addition to the scheduled meetings at faculty, team and programme level, senior managers are closely involved in the review of curriculum programmes. Strategic management is now based on the faculty development plans and the outcomes of governor manager residential planning conferences, in addition to the range of strategies implemented by managers and short-term working parties. These include an ILT strategy, an accommodation strategy and a marketing and communications strategy. The co-ordination of these strategies, however, is not effective and does not enable managers and governors to monitor and review whole college planning in a timely and efficient manner. There is very little cross-referencing of the full range of plans to the strategic aims of the college.

56. The college aims and mission statement `Newcastle College aims to enable learners of all ages and backgrounds to fulfil their potential' cover and promote issues related to equality of opportunity. Recent plans to incorporate the aspiration of Newcastle-under-Lyme as a learning town into the mission statement will further extend the aims of the college.

57. The college is updating the current equal opportunities policy to form a race relations and equality policy. The college has been slow to respond to the requirement to prepare written statements, assess the impact of policies and promote race equality by May 2002. The required implementation plan is in draft form. Satisfactory progress has been made on consulting with governors, staff and students, although parents have not been part of the process.

58. Data relating to examination results, retention rates, staffing and students grouping are analysed by gender and racial origin and are widely disseminated within the college. Training is currently underway for staff in relation to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, but the governors' training for this policy is not due until 2003. The college has also been slow in its preparation for the

increased responsibility of governors to have an anticipatory duty for students with disabilities and or difficulties under the SEN Disability Discrimination Act 2000. The college holds the Positive about Disability accreditation and provides good access for those with restricted mobility to most areas whilst recognising that a small number of areas remain inaccessible. Promotion of issues related to disability and discrimination is addressed in tutorials and in the personal support given to students.

59. There are very effective measures to respond to complaints, appeals and bullying or harassment of any nature. The college is regarded by staff, students and parents as very responsive to issues raised through personal referral or through the well-publicised internal procedures. Information received is promptly and effectively analysed and acted upon. An atmosphere of trust and collaboration pervades all levels of the college.

60. Governors are actively and appropriately involved in setting the strategic direction of the college. They are active in their role both within the college and the community. The corporation has its full complement of governors following a recent focused strategy to improve the balance of the skills and knowledge of its membership.

61. There is effective communication between governors and college managers. Governors receive regular updates and informative presentations are given by managers through the Education and Standards Committee. The annual governors and managers residential event and the well-established governor-pairing programme lead to good understanding of curriculum provision by the corporation. Governors acknowledge the lack of coherence in aspects of college strategic planning and are seeking to improve the quality of target setting.

62. The college has very collaborative involvement with a significant number of activities in the local area. The college is part of the North Staffordshire Concordat. It has effective links with local universities, local education authorities, the local LSC, the Connexions service and the Newcastle local strategic partnership. Committee membership and attendance at relevant meetings by the principal, senior managers and the community regeneration manager ensure that good communication exists between the college and key organisations and agencies in the local community. Links with local employers and schools are good and improving. Plans are in place to develop further training opportunities for small businesses and to build on the established good practice of working with local companies in areas such as engineering, ICT and modern languages. The well-established 14 to 16 provision continues to grow and is very successful in meeting the needs of these pupils.

63. The college is now in a strong financial position. The current senior management team inherited a very fragile financial position in 1997 and through prudent and rigorous management has recovered a significant deficit. Budgeting is prudent, careful and thorough. Faculty heads are fully conversant with their individual budgets and understand the implications of overspending on their own area and that of other provision within the college. The deployment of resources is effective and efficient. Teachers' workloads and class sizes are carefully monitored. The financial and support services directorate carefully monitors the efficiency of college services. Financial management is good. The college offers good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

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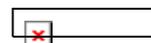
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most courses

- high pass rates in GCSE mathematics

- much good teaching

- rigorous assessment and monitoring of students' progress

- good support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates in human biology

- low pass rates in chemistry

- insufficiently demanding tasks for the most able students.

Scope of provision

64. The college provides a range of GCE AS and A-level programmes including biology, chemistry, environmental science, geology, mathematics and physics. The majority of students are full time and aged between 16 and 18. GCSE human biology is offered as a part-time course in the evening and includes students who are aged under 16. Students whose attainment at GCSE in mathematics is low are able to study a course in the applied use of the subject. There is no vocational science provision.

Achievement and standards

65. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses. The pass rate on the GCSE mathematics course is consistently high and is currently 20% above the national average. Pass rates in GCE AS mathematics are high. The retention and pass rates in environmental science are both significantly

above the national average at 93%. Pass rates are improving on the GCE AS physics course. Retention and pass rates in human biology are significantly below the national average and are declining. Whilst the retention rate remains high, the pass rates in GCE AS and A-level chemistry have declined and are now below the national average. There are good rates of progression for students on to science-related courses in HE. Students are well motivated and produce a high standard of work.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	95	339	262
		% retention	58	58	65
		% pass rate	93	90	96
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	**	54	54
		% retention	**	79	77*
		% pass rate	**	73	73
GCE AS environmental science	3	No. of starts	**	23	16
		% retention	**	96	93*
		% pass rate	**	64	93
GCE AS human biology	3	No. of starts	**	48	61
		% retention	**	88	57*
		% pass rate	**	57	40

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

* in-year retention rate for GCE AS completed in 2002

** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

66. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is good or better in 81% of the lessons and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers employ a wide range of teaching methods and learning resources to good effect. In most lessons, teachers ensure students' understanding by including good references to work previously covered and incorporating effective questioning and discussion techniques. Teachers plan thoroughly to produce comprehensive schemes of work and detailed lesson plans. Practical work is well organised and both teachers and students carefully consider health and safety issues in lessons. Science students use equipment in a safe and competent manner. In one lesson observed, the teacher successfully combined an informative demonstration with a variety of activities to promote a high level discussion of calorific values. A great deal of attention was paid to aspects of safety. Students were actively involved in conducting the experiment and the teacher skilfully used examination questions to extend their understanding of the topic. In some lessons, however, there is a lack of demanding tasks for more able students.

67. Learning resources and equipment are of a high standard and used well to promote learning. Worksheets are well written and professionally presented. Wall displays include examples of students' work. The biology and physics laboratories are light and spacious, but the chemistry and environmental science laboratories are out-of-date and uncomfortable for large groups of students. Staff and technicians are well qualified and enthusiastic. A good range of learning material is available on the college intranet that students are able to access from home.

68. Students' progress is thoroughly monitored. The assessment of students' work is thorough. Teachers set demanding weekly homework tasks. Teachers of mathematics and science assess students' homework carefully and their annotations indicate ways in which it can be improved. Students are aware of examination requirements through well-prepared class and homework tasks. Good use is made of the college system for setting achievement targets with students. Their progress is carefully monitored during individual tutorials and review sessions.

69. Teachers provide good support for individual students. Students speak highly of the subject specific and general study skills support that they receive. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully considered. For example, enlarged print and coloured paper are used for partially sighted students and a projector used for showing videos has carefully positioned sound speakers to assist a hearing impaired student.

Leadership and management

70. Mathematics and science courses are effectively managed at both departmental and faculty level. Subject teams meet regularly and there is good communication between them and across the faculty. Mathematics teachers from across the college meet regularly to ensure consistency and coherence in the organisation and quality of courses. Teams are well informed about cross-college initiatives. Course files are well organised and informative. There are good links with local schools, particularly for science at primary level. There are good professional development opportunities for staff and all are involved in the self-assessment process. Targets for recruitment are set annually and they have been consistently met or exceeded.

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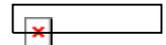
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most college-based courses

- excellent teaching in electronics

- high standard of electrical and electronics resources

- effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress

- highly productive links with employers

- good support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching of theory on level 3 courses

- low retention and pass rates on modern apprenticeship programmes

- poor management of work-based training.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers a broad range of provision in electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering at levels 1 to 4. These include a national certificate in engineering, NVQs in performing manufacturing and engineering operations and engineering manufacture, welding and fabrication, electrical inspection and testing, performing manufacturing operations and engineering production. There are currently 370 students enrolled, of whom 39% are adults. On general engineering and NVQ and modern apprenticeship programmes, students are mainly aged 16 to 18. Most students on institute of electrical engineering (IEE) wiring regulations, CAE and part-time evening classes are adults. There are 25 women attending engineering courses. Some 57 students are following work-based programmes, of which 46 are modern apprentices and 11 are young people following work-based learning NVQ programmes. The college is at the second stage of its application to become a centre of vocational excellence for electrical, electronic and process control engineering.

Achievement and standards

72. Pass rates are very high on the national certificate in engineering and have been consistently above national averages for three years. Retention rates are generally high, but are below national averages on NVQ engineering manufacture and the City and Guilds computer-aided competencies course. There is slow progress towards the achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks. Students who began modern apprenticeship programmes in 1998 have not yet completed their learning plans. Retention rates on these programmes are poor. Key skills are integrated with college-based programmes, but students' progress towards achieving key skills in work-based learning is slow. Pass rates on work-based training are poor.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ in performing manufacturing operations	2	No. of starts	*	39	19
		% retention	*	100	79
		% pass rate	*	100	93
NVQ engineering	2	No. of starts	14	51	29

manufacture foundation 1 and 2 year		% retention	100	73	59
		% pass rate	14	29	18
National certificate in engineering 2 year programme	3	No. of starts	70	46	10
		% retention	79	70	90
		% pass rate	90	100	100
City and Guilds 2301-04 computer-aided engineering competencies	3	No. of starts	19	52	*
		% retention	95	77	*
		% pass rate	72	40	*
City and Guilds 2391 inspection/ test/cert of electrical	3	No. of starts	34	25	18
		% retention	100	100	89
		% pass rate	59	68	56

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

*unreliable data

Quality of education and training

73. The standard of teaching and learning is good and is excellent in electronics and electrical engineering. In most lessons teaching is good or better but there is a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching of theory on courses at level 3. A wide range of specialist teaching resources is used in electronics. In one successful lesson, the teacher made good use of ICT to provide students with an informative introduction to the subject. The lesson was well planned with clear learning objectives. Students demonstrated thorough understanding of a difficult topic and made accurate use of technical language. The teacher effectively linked the theory to practical examples and ensured students completed the task set with high levels of motivation and confidence.

74. In some unsatisfactory lessons, the learning objectives were unclear, the pace of work was slow and the activities were poorly organised. In one lesson there was too little explanation of the topic by the teacher. Some students did not understand the subject material and became disinterested and distracted. Students spent too much time copying poor-quality notes from the whiteboard and there was insufficient checking of students' learning.

75. Students achieve high standards in practical work. Written work in students' portfolios is of a particularly high standard. Assessment is thorough and regular. Students on college-based courses are set clear and achievable targets by tutors and assessors. Few work-based learners have detailed plans for on-the-job training. Where they exist, they are simply lists of tasks to complete and are rarely used to link to NVQ requirements.

76. Assessors visit work-based modern apprentices monthly to review their progress. There is a lack of consistency in the use of procedures and documentation by college staff and sub-contractors. This process lacks rigour and is not well managed.

77. On college-based courses, students' progress is effectively monitored and recorded and they receive good individual support. Tutorials are effective for full-time students, who are encouraged to self-assess, to action plan and to set realistic targets for improvement. Those students with additional learning needs are identified quickly and receive appropriate support. There is particularly good career guidance for students and many progress into employment with high profile organisations.

78. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and hold appropriate vocational and teaching qualifications. Learning resources are of high quality in the electrical and electronics workshops.

There are effective links with external organisations. Local companies use the college facilities to train their employees in the use of new technology that is too expensive for them to purchase. Some equipment in the machine shop is poor. Lathes and milling machines, whilst adequate for level 2 programmes, are not suitable for advanced, industrial standard machining operations. Some tools, equipment and whiteboards are in need of repair.

Leadership and management

79. Curriculum managers set a clear direction and team working is good. Engineering staff meet formally on a monthly basis and students are invited to attend these meetings. This initiative has contributed to the effective communication and good relationships between staff and students. The management of work-based learning is poor. Internal verification systems have recently been improved and are satisfactory. Quality assurance systems, however, are ineffective in monitoring the work-based training provided by sub-contractors. The co-ordination between on-the-job and off-the-job training is poor and there is little promotion of equality of opportunity.

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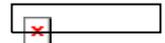
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most full-time courses

- effective teaching

- good support for individual students

- good progression routes for students on vocational programmes

- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on intermediate GNVQ and AVCE business courses

- declining pass rates on the AVCE business course

- poor achievement and low retention rates on modern apprenticeship programmes

- poor management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

80. The college offers full-time courses in business at GCE AS and A levels, GNVQ at foundation and intermediate levels and AVCE and accounting at GCE AS and A level. It also provides certificates in administration courses at levels 1 and 2. Currently, there are 338 full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are 167 adults working towards professional accountancy qualifications at all three levels. Of these, 28 are work-based learners. A further 66 work-based learners are undertaking NVQ or modern apprenticeship training in business administration. The college also provides a foundation level book-keeping programme that has recruited 20 students. There is provision in the management sector for certificates and diplomas of the Chartered Institute of Management and 30 adults are currently undertaking these courses. The college has recruited 13 students to the certificate in team leading for the first time this year.

Achievement and standards

81. There are high pass rates on GCE A-level business studies and accounting and GNVQ intermediate business. Pass rates on the new GCE AS in business and accounting are high. The retention rates for Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) students are above the national averages, but pass rates are declining. In office technology, pass rates are good in secretarial skills. Many students progress to higher level courses. Over 75% of students who completed the AVCE business in 2002 progressed to HE or relevant employment. Pass and retention rates on modern apprenticeship programmes have been poor over the last three years.

82. The standard of students' work on management and business courses is high. A wide variety of skills is demanded of students in completing assignments. Advanced level students are required to research and interpret material, and to produce reasoned reports with effective use of graphs to illustrate complex data. On GNVQ courses and in business administration, much emphasis is placed on developing students' personal and key skills. Office technology students demonstrate good IT skills and are confident in managing a range of office functions. Work-based trainees use their workplace experience effectively to contribute evidence to their portfolios.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Word processing (short)	2	No. of starts	17	50	26
		% retention	100	88	85
		% pass rate	53	61	75
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	58	56	52
		% retention	83	70	71
		% pass rate	73	72	67

GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	9	14	25
		% retention	89	71	72
		% pass rate	88	90	94
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	74	*	65
		% retention	73	*	86
		% pass rate	86	*	89
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	48	47	50
		% retention	81	83	92
		% pass rate	56	44	57

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

83. The majority of teaching and learning is good. The best lessons are well planned, develop students' learning in a logical sequence and encourage them to analyse and apply their subject knowledge. In a successful finance lesson, students were engaged in a lively role-play about the activities of buyers and sellers. In most lessons, teachers draw on students' own experiences of current affairs and business matters. Group work is purposeful, and support from teachers is constructive. In less successful lessons, the learning developed at a slow pace and the teacher failed to consolidate key learning points or check students' understanding. On-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learning is good and there is frequent liaison between assessors and workplace supervisors.

84. Students are set work regularly and it is marked thoroughly. The best pieces of work demonstrate students' good communication skills and competent essay writing techniques. Students undertake thorough research using the Internet, the college intranet and other relevant sources. Written comments on students' work are succinct and feedback from teachers indicates how students can improve their performance. All assessed work is effectively moderated. Staff share materials to ensure that students across the department have the same learning opportunities.

85. Many full-time students take advantage of the flexible timetabling opportunities that enable them to combine GCE AS study with AVCE qualifications. In office technology, adult students can achieve a wide range of secretarial and single-subject qualifications. Work experience is only provided for office technology students. Examples of enrichment activities include residential study visits at home and overseas, visits to companies and the opportunity to hear visiting speakers from industry. Good progression routes exist for students to move from level 1 to level 4 on many college courses.

86. The college's system for setting students' targets and monitoring their progress is well used by teachers. The tutorial programme is effective and students receive high levels of academic and personal support. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of adults and make arrangements that are flexible and accommodate students' family or work commitments. Initial assessment procedures identify those students who can benefit from additional learning support, but arrangements for them to receive support are slow.

Leadership and management

87. The department is well organised and managed. There is a clear and effective departmental structure and clear lines of responsibility. The head of department is an advanced practitioner. Teachers work well in teams. Levels of communication and consultation are high and there is joint planning of many courses. Teachers meet regularly to discuss students' progress, plan schemes of work and prepare learning resources. Course teams manage their programmes effectively. Course files and documentation are well maintained and minutes of meetings show clear action points.

Programme reviews are detailed, but some lack critical analysis and evaluation. Management of work-based learning is poor. Data on retention and pass rates for work-based learners are inaccurate. Quality assurance systems for monitoring subcontractors are not used systematically. There is insufficient reference to equality of opportunity for work-based learners and too little involvement by employers.

Information and communication technology
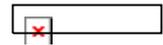
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates

- effective teaching of adult students

- good participation and progression rates on part-time programmes

- effective monitoring of students' progress

- good management of courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on the ECDL course

- poor pass rates in key skills IT.

Scope of provision

88. The college offers a range of programmes through the ICT department within the faculty of engineering and ICT. Part-time courses for adults are offered through the IT learning centre managed by the faculty of external projects. The college offers a range of courses including foundation and intermediate GNVQ in ICT, AVCE ICT, GCE AS and A level in computing and ICT, and the national diploma for IT practitioners. The college offers considerable flexibility to its part-time

students by providing courses throughout the week and of varying duration. The IT learning centre provides part-time City and Guilds diplomas and certificates in computer applications, the ECDL, an entry level certificate in using ICT, and various taster courses. The IT learning centre also provides courses for local employers. The community programme provides classes in the daytime and evening at a variety of schools and community venues. Part-time courses at entry level and at level 1 include the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) qualification. There are good opportunities for progression for both full-time and part-time students. Both the IT learning centre and the adult and community learning programmes are successful in attracting students who would not normally attend college.

Achievement and standards

89. Retention and pass rates are high for most courses. Action taken to improve pass rates has been particularly effective on the GCE A-level computing course where retention and pass rates have improved to 94% and 100%, respectively. Pass rates for adult students on the level 1 computer applications course are high. Retention and pass rates on the national diploma in IT have fallen, however, and the retention rate is now below the national average. The retention rate on the ECDL course is also below the national average. Pass rates for IT key skills are poor. In 2000/01, 304 students passed the IT key skills end tests, but only 10 IT portfolios were completed within the year.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 4248 start IT	entry	No. of starts	*	201	410
		% retention	*	95	87
		% pass rate	*	68	88
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	31	37	38
		% retention	77	70	76
		% pass rate	71	54	72
GCE AS IT	3	No. of starts	5	62	50
		% retention	40	74	80**
		% pass rate	100	65	85
National diploma in IT	3	No. of starts	48	100	31
		% retention	83	81	71
		% pass rate	93	92	86
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	34	27	16
		% retention	74	78	94
		% pass rate	63	92	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* unreliable data
** in-year retention rate on GCE AS courses in 2002

Quality of education and training

90. Most teaching is good and is most effective on courses for adult students. In most lessons, teachers explain their aims clearly to students. The working relationships between teachers and students are good and most lessons are well planned. Teachers have extensive and up-to-date knowledge of their subject and make good use of this to extend students' understanding and skills.

Good use is made of visits from external speakers who are successful ICT professionals.

91. In one lesson, the teacher's specialist subject knowledge enabled students to develop high level skills in the use of `expert systems' and understand the importance of designing an effective human-computer interface. Good reference was made to the needs of users with disabilities in this lesson. The teacher was encouraging and enthusiastic and had planned demanding activities to enable all students to extend their understanding of difficult concepts and develop good skills in the use of industrial standard software.

92. In the small number of less successful lessons, poor planning, inefficient time management and the use of inappropriate teaching methods led to students becoming disinterested and failing to extend their learning. In one lesson, a whole-class discussion was badly organised and became dominated by a small group of students. The lesson was not planned effectively to enable all students to participate and many made no contribution at all.

93. Students on courses in the IT learning centre and in the community appreciate the extensive availability of the ICT workshops and the flexible way in which they are organised to suit individual aptitudes and abilities. These students receive good support from tutors and make effective use of good-quality learning materials. In one lesson, the teacher was particularly sensitive to the needs of students with no prior knowledge of ICT. A variety of activities were carefully prepared to engage students and provide an effective introduction to the Internet. The teacher made good use of the multimedia display facility to explain the use of the software which enabled students to complete successfully an on-line survey to determine their own learning styles.

94. Teachers make good use of the college intranet to distribute assessment and learning material to students. Some tutors make effective use of e-mail to provide support for students. There are regular assignments and teachers provide informative written feedback to students, which enables them to improve their work. There are effective systems to compare the grades of students on full-time courses with their agreed targets and to monitor the attendance and progress of students attending the IT learning centre. Students receive good support from teachers and specialist support staff. Initial advice and guidance are informative and taster sessions are used effectively to inform prospective students about course content.

Leadership and management

95. There is effective management of ICT courses. Course reviews are thorough and focus on improving students' retention and pass rates. The evaluation of full-time courses has led to an improvement in the quality of assignments and more effective integration of key skills. Good use is made of feedback from staff and students in the self-assessment process. Good practice is shared and there are regular staff meetings. There is good teamwork and good links both internally between the IT learning centre and the ICT department and externally with industry and another college. Some schemes of work for full-time courses, however, lack detail and do not provide sufficient guidance for teachers who are required to cover for absent colleagues.

Sport, leisure and tourism
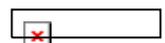
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good retention rates on NVQ courses in sport recreation

- high pass rates

- much good teaching

- effective tutorial support for students

- excellent management of the national franchise provision.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism

- poor teaching accommodation

- insufficient integration of key skills.

Scope of provision

96. The college offers a range of leisure, travel, physical education and sport courses for full-time and part-time students at levels 1 to 3. There are 243 students of whom 197 are full-time students and, of these, 2.5% are adults. All students on vocational courses complete a minimum of one week's work placement at local leisure and recreation facilities. Extra vocational and professionally relevant courses are offered to increase students' employment potential. These include welcome host and a number of NCFE courses for leisure and tourism students, the community sports leader award and Football Association junior team manager award for sports students. There is a schedule of visits to national leisure and tourism centres and residential visits to European countries that are linked to students' additional language studies. The college has a national franchising arrangement with the LTA for their coach education programmes including provision of the NVQ levels 2 and 3 in sport, recreation and allied occupations: coaching teaching and instruction (tennis) and the Tennis Assistant Award. There are local franchising arrangements for a range of coaching qualifications with a local university. Most of the students on these courses are adults. The college is a member of the British Colleges' Sport association and first received the quality mark from the English Football Association in 1998.

Achievement and standards

97. There are high pass rates on many courses. The pass rates at foundation level for GNVQ leisure and tourism, GCE A-level physical education and the national diploma in sports science are well above national averages. These courses recorded 100% pass rates for 2001/02. There are good

retention and pass rates on the NVQ levels 2 and 3 in sport, recreation and allied occupations: coaching, teaching and instruction (tennis) and the Tennis Assistant Award. Retention and pass rates are high on all franchised courses. There are poor retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	No. of starts	12	11	13
		% retention	67	73	77
		% pass rate	100	88	100
Tennis Assistant Award	1	No. of starts	*	215	240
		% retention	*	100	99
		% pass rate	*	100	99
NVQ (sport recreation and allied occupations-tennis)	2	No. of starts	266	297	413
		% retention	97	98	96
		% pass rate	64	78	78
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	22	13	24
		% retention	73	38	50
		% pass rate	75	20	75
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	26	21	7
		% retention	92	100	71
		% pass rate	75	95	100
National diploma sports science	3	No. of starts	19	46	23
		% retention	74	83	65
		% pass rate	91	100	93

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

98. The standard of teaching is good or better in 83% of lessons and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning are particularly effective on level 2 courses. Teachers provide stimulating and well-planned lessons for students. All lessons have clear aims and teachers set demanding lesson objectives that are clearly explained to students. During lessons, teachers check students' understanding before beginning new topics. Students' levels of interest and motivation are high in both theory and practical lessons. Teachers make good use of their own experience and that of their students. In one lesson, the teacher successfully demonstrated the complexity of forming and organising sports leagues and fixtures by dividing students into teams to compete against one another in a ball game. The students quickly developed a spirit of friendly competition and there was a high degree of energy and motivation during the lesson. The teacher used the exercise well to question and challenge students' assumptions. This resulted in good learning and developed the students' skills in dealing with complex information.

99. Standards of teaching and learning are high on the franchised LTA courses. Tutors provide a good range of activities for students of all ages and ability. Relationships between tutors and students are good. Lessons are well planned, have clear objectives, make good use of teaching materials and focus effectively on the role of the tennis coach. In one lesson, the tutor successfully

used racquet and ball technology to demonstrate the level of understanding required by a coach to advise accurately a client about buying a new tennis racquet.

100. Students are encouraged to plan and evaluate their work and develop critical thinking skills. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students' abilities and development needs. Most students demonstrate appropriate standards in their written work. Where written work is good it is well presented and provides evidence of thorough research and good IT skills. There is insufficient integration of key skills during lessons. Key skills objectives are often identified by teachers, but too little guidance is given to enable students to produce appropriate portfolio evidence. The separate communications and IT key skills lessons do not effectively relate to students' vocational assignments.

101. Assignments reflect industrial practice and are set at an appropriate level. Assessment criteria, however, are too complex for students to understand. Students' written work is appropriately marked. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of the feedback given to students; some teachers provide detailed reviews of students' work whilst others do not clearly indicate how students might improve the standard of their work. Students' progress is monitored effectively through a well-established departmental system.

102. Students receive effective and productive support through individual and group tutorials. There is an informative schedule of tutorial activities that includes topics on health and equal opportunity issues. The weekly group tutorials enable students to improve the quality of their assignment work. Students have individual meetings with tutors who monitor their progress effectively and enable them to create action plans with agreed targets. Students understand the purpose of tutorials and value the support that they receive from their tutors.

103. The facilities for the franchised LTA provision are of an excellent standard and provide a full range of resources for coaching all age groups. The accommodation for sport, physical education and leisure on the main college site is of a poor standard. Despite efforts to improve the temporary accommodation, there are few facilities for teaching and learning. There is a lack of space for students, and resources and temperatures vary from room to room. Soundproofing between rooms is inadequate and detracts from teaching and learning. Despite the efforts of staff to overcome these conditions, they remain a hindrance to the creation of a good place in which to learn. There are no travel shop arrangements to help students gain vocational booking experience.

Leadership and management

104. The management of the national LTA franchise provision is excellent. The college sets specific targets for this provision and quality assurance arrangements are effective. The management of courses in sport, leisure and tourism is satisfactory. Communication between staff in course teams is effective. There is a planned schedule of faculty and departmental meetings at which course team targets are set and regularly reviewed. There is a good system for staff development. Internal verification procedures are thorough and have significantly improved the quality assurance process. Course documentation is comprehensive and well organised, and schemes of work are well structured.

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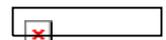
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates

- much good teaching

- well-structured and organised courses

- high level of support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- some poor learning resources and accommodation

- overly complex NVQ assessment procedures

- some inadequate risk assessment of food safety.

Scope of provision

105. The college provides a range of full-time and part-time vocational courses from entry to advanced level. There are 28 full-time and 20 part-time students. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and most part-time students are adults. There are two full-time catering and hospitality programmes at NVQ levels 1 and 2, and a newly implemented full-time AVCE course, which includes an additional NVQ qualification. There are good progression routes for foundation and intermediate students. Part-time programmes include NVQ level 2 and short courses in food safety and hygiene. Currently, there are 12 students on a basic food hygiene course, and in a typical year the programme recruits approximately 135 students. A range of school-link and recreational courses are also offered.

Achievement and standards

106. Retention and pass rates on the NVQ catering and hospitality, food preparation and cooking level 1 programme are outstanding, with 100% retention and pass rates in 2000 and 2001. The retention rate on the NVQ level 1 serving food and drink is outstanding and pass rates are high. Retention rates and particularly pass rates, have improved on NVQ level 2 programmes and the basic food hygiene certificate. All of these programmes are currently performing at or above national averages. Students' work is of a high standard. The progress of students relative to their prior attainment and potential is good.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |

NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	1	No. of starts	7	10	14
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	86	100	100
Basic food hygiene certificate	1	No. of starts	133	136	145
		% retention	98	100	99
		% pass rate	58	88	98
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	2	No. of starts	*	10	7
		% retention	*	30	86
		% pass rate	*	20	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

107. Most teaching is good and is particularly effective on level 1 courses. The standard of teaching is good or better in 80% of lessons. Teachers effectively use a variety of teaching methods to stimulate and motivate students. The use of questioning is particularly effective in practical lessons and teachers use humour sensitively to encourage students and make learning enjoyable. Teachers make effective references to work-related examples in discussion with students. Teaching and training are designed specifically to meet the needs of individual students particularly at level 1. Teachers make excellent use of questioning to guide students in performing practical tasks.

108. In one successful lesson, the teacher made good use of a range of teaching resources and methods during a well-planned lesson in food hygiene. Students actively participated in a group exercise that enabled them to provide a comprehensive response in the subsequent whole-class discussion. Students were well motivated by the enthusiastic, knowledgeable teacher who ensured students gained a good understanding of specific aspects of the examination syllabus.

109. There is a lack of learning material to provide students with clear instructions in the preparation of food. Some handouts and overhead transparencies are poorly printed and difficult to read and understand. The AVCE course has insufficient reference materials and textbooks. Standards of kitchen discipline and skills development are high. Improvements in teaching are implemented quickly in response to feedback from students. The average class size during observation of teaching was low at 7.4 students, and the average attendance was good at 83%.

110. The expansion of courses has been carefully planned to provide good progression opportunities for students. Courses are well designed and structured around the needs of the students. On the NVQ level 1 course, learning support staff are effectively deployed and there is good development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

111. NVQ assessment is good. Assessment of students with written English difficulties is dealt with sensitively and students are able to provide answers orally, using a tape recorder, for use in their portfolios. Teachers make effective use of praise and encouragement to enable students to improve their performance in lessons. The referencing requirements for NVQ assessment are too complex and not clearly understood or used effectively by teachers or students.

112. Good use is made of visits and work experience on the full-time programmes. Students receive good individual support by teachers and from the central college support. Students receive constructive career information and guidance.

113. Most theory lessons take place in poorly furnished and uncomfortable classrooms. Most do not have the facilities to enable teachers to perform appropriate demonstrations to link theory with a

practical application. In the bistro kitchen, the level of ventilation control is often reduced by staff, because of excessive noise. This creates warm and hazardous working conditions. Changing rooms for students are small, poorly secured and lack facilities to store and prepare protective clothing. There is poor risk assessment of potential contamination of food by hair. The college has no clear headwear policy. Many staff and students do not use adequate protective headwear in practical sessions.

Leadership and management

114. Curriculum management is effective. There is an established system of course review meetings, which are instrumental in addressing student needs and improving provision. Teaching and support staff communicate well and work effectively as a team. Staff appraisal is good. Structured staff development opportunities are linked to improving and expanding provision for students. Marketing strategies are not well established, and links with industry are superficial. There is too little promotion of equality of opportunity beyond the students' induction programme.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy
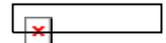
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on beauty therapy courses

- good integration of key skills

- effective monitoring of students' progress

- well-managed, college-based courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on hairdressing courses

- poor retention and pass rates on the modern apprentice programme

- narrow range of courses in beauty therapy

- too few clients for students' practical work

- poor management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

115. The college provides full-time programmes in beauty therapy at level 2 and in hairdressing at levels 1 and 2. There are currently 71 students on full-time programmes and 82 on part-time programmes. The majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18, whilst on part-time courses 70% of students are aged 19 or over. Part-time courses include hairdressing NVQs at levels 1 to 3, the beauty specialist diploma, body massage, theatrical and media make-up, and nail art. There are few progression routes in beauty therapy. The college does not offer a qualification at NVQ level 3 and the range of holistic courses is narrow. There are 39 students on work-based learning programmes. The majority are aged 16 to 18. The college has good links with schools and offers taster and level 1 programmes to school pupils. Taster courses are also offered to prospective students. Weekend courses are available throughout the year.

Achievement and standards

116. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 beauty therapy have been consistently above national averages for three years. Pass rates on part-time course in theatrical and media make-up and body massage are high and, in 2001, were at 100%. Retention rates are low and declining on hairdressing NVQ level 2 and level 3 courses. Retention rates are below the national average for the diploma courses in aromatherapy and theatre and media makeup. Retention and pass rates on the modern apprenticeship programme are poor, with pass rates not exceeding 40%.

117. The quality of students' written work is good. Most portfolios are well presented and contain a wide range of evidence. Students make good use of ICT to produce their assignments. A key skills induction and assessment take place one week prior to the college induction and students receive their assessment results the same day. Students have a clear understanding of key skills that are successfully integrated with schemes of work. Assignments are well designed to enable students to produce key skills portfolio evidence. For example, one placement salon has made good use of the promotion materials produced by a student as part of their key skills assignment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ 2 beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	14	19	24
		% retention	71	89	79
		% pass rate	100	88	100
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	56	48	71
		% retention	64	50	45
		% pass rate	83	93	96

Body massage certificate	3	No. of starts	*	23	18
		% retention	*	96	89
		% pass rate	*	95	100
Aromatherapy diploma	3	No. of starts	12	13	**
		% retention	92	77	**
		% pass rate	91	90	**

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* unreliable data
** course did not run

Quality of education and training

118. The standard of teaching and learning in many lessons is good. Students' levels of interest and motivation are high. In theory lessons, teachers use a range of teaching and learning resources effectively to take account of the different levels of students' ability. In practical lessons, constructive and useful feedback is regularly given to students to enable them to improve their programmes.

119. In the few less successful lessons, student participation is low and there are frequent lapses in their attention. There are too few clients involved in practical hairdressing lessons which reduces assessment opportunities and prevents students from gaining experience of working in a realistic salon environment. In some lessons, students had only one client during a long salon session, whilst others worked on one another which reduced the practice time available to them while they acted as models. Some classes are too large for the size of the practical salon accommodation.

120. Students' progress is effectively monitored. Students make good use of their own recording sheets and diaries to record and refer to targets. Students identified as at risk of leaving their course are closely monitored and given extra support by their teachers. There is good internal verification and one member of staff is an external verifier. In one tutorial session, students took part in successful assessment of each other's portfolios.

121. Full-time students benefit from a wide range of additional training opportunities including additional college courses, manufacturer workshops and visits to external events. Students enter national competitions and participate in a number of community projects to promote the college.

122. There is one hairdressing salon and one beauty salon that are modern, attractive and reflect industrial standards. They are situated on the ground floor of the college and provide good access for people with restricted mobility.

Leadership and management

123. Staff are highly motivated. A temporary team leader has effectively managed long-term staff absences so that they are not detrimental to the quality of provision for students. There are weekly staff meetings during which agreed actions are monitored and recorded. Good practice is shared within staff teams. Teachers have implemented successful initiatives to improve poor retention rates. For example, in one case, students devised a class competition to achieve 100% attendance. There are good training opportunities for staff and a number of staff work in the industry.

124. There is poor management of work-based learning. Links with employers are generally good, but some employers and learners are unaware of the framework they are working towards. College data on work-based learners are unreliable and staff cannot effectively monitor trends in retention and pass rates.

Health and social care
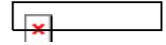
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2

- good progression rates

- good support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates on full-time courses

- insufficient development of key skills

- some unimaginative teaching.

Scope of provision

125. Courses are available in health and social care at levels 1, 2 and 3, and early years at levels 2 and 3. Full-time students have opportunities to take additional qualifications and enrichment activities. The department also offers NVQ early years care and education programmes at levels 2 and 3, both at the main college site and at a number of community venues in the area. The college has recently introduced NVQ care courses at levels 2 and 3. These programmes are designed to meet the needs of part-time adult students and are provided at times and locations that are convenient for them. In 2002, there were 116 full-time enrolments.

Achievement and standards

126. Pass rates on four of the five full-time programmes are very high and at 100% over past three years. Pass rates on level 1 and level 2 full-time programmes are significantly above the national average. Pass rates on level 3 courses have recently declined to slightly below the national average.

127. Retention rates are above the national average, but are declining on the majority of courses and particularly at level 3. The retention rate for the national diploma in early years has declined to 20% below the national average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	33	19	31
		% retention	88	63	77
		% pass rate	72	92	88
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	14	15	22
		% retention	93	87	82
		% pass rate	69	100	94
First diploma in caring	2	No. of starts	12	18	15
		% retention	83	78	73
		% pass rate	100	79	100
GNVQ advanced health and social care/AVCE	3	No. of starts	35	39	20
		% retention	91	82	65
		% pass rate	92	100	77
National diploma childhood studies/early years	3	No. of starts	35	45	30
		% retention	86	93	57
		% pass rate	97	100	88

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

Quality of education and training

128. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but there is a minority of unsatisfactory lessons. All classes have detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Students work effectively in groups, and are supportive of one other. There is reticence by some students to join in whole class discussions in some sessions. There is some excellent teaching where teachers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and have good strategies for managing activities in the classroom. In an AVCE health and social care class, students watched a short video on the transmission of bacteria. The teacher's decision to remove the commentary effectively engaged students and enabled them to form their own judgements about the kinds of activities that could lead to the spread of disease in health and social care settings.

129. In some lessons, the teaching is dull and unimaginative. In these lessons, students are given undemanding tasks to complete such as copying notes from overhead transparencies. Some worksheets are of poor quality, and teachers fail to question students directly to determine their understanding. Little attempt is made to link work placement practice to classroom theory, or to use students' own life experiences in lessons. The department recognises that key skills are poorly developed and there is too little integration with students' vocational subjects.

130. Teachers and students value the recent improvements to the learning resources centre. They have access to, and make good use of, this attractive and well-stocked provision. There is good communication between course teams and the learning resources centre manager to ensure availability of relevant texts for students.

131. Students have a clear understanding of the requirements of awarding bodies for their studies. There is a thorough initial interview and assessment process that effectively leads to students being placed on appropriate courses. Assignment briefs are clear, and specify performance criteria. In an introductory assignment at level 3, students effectively use references to established academic texts to justify their arguments in relation to the nature/nurture debate.

132. Teachers provide prompt written and verbal feedback to students on the quality of their work. In some cases, however, written feedback is cursory, and does not help students to improve their work. Work placement opportunities are available for all students, and staff make regular visits to assess their progress. There is a high rate of progression for students to relevant employment and into HE. Students receive good support from committed and sensitive tutors and from central college support services such as counselling and careers.

Leadership and management

133. Leadership and management are satisfactory at both departmental and course level. All courses are evaluated within the context of the college's review system. There is a thorough internal verification process. However, significant issues relating to staffing, resources and classroom management are not included in the self-assessment action plan. There is a timetabled programme of staff meetings at which minutes are taken and circulated to all full-time and part-time staff. Target setting for retention, achievement and attendance is well developed and understood by staff. Teachers appreciate and take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development.

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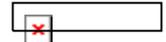
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on access and GCE AS courses

- very good teaching

- wide range of courses

- thorough monitoring of students' progress

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on the GCE AS sociology course

- weak integration of key skills

- some unhelpful assessment practices.

Scope of provision

134. The college offers a broad range of GCE AS and A-level courses for full-time students. A wide choice of subjects can be combined to include law, psychology, sociology, geography, history, government and politics and general studies. Effective collaboration with a local secondary school has further broadened the choice for students enabling them to attend classes in classics, religious studies and music. One-year, intensive study classes are available for advanced level psychology, sociology, law and history students. Part-time classes are available in the evening for GCE AS and A-level psychology. The access provision successfully meets a wide range of students' needs and includes a taster course for those wishing to return to academic study. The access to HE course provides specialist subject options in law, psychology, sociology, education, welfare studies, human physiology and health. There are 730 students enrolled on courses in law, psychology and sociology and 253 students enrolled on courses in history, geography, general studies, government and politics. The largest enrolment is in psychology with 393 enrolments.

Achievement and standards

135. There have been significant improvements in pass rates on GCE AS courses. Pass rates for GCE AS geography are consistently above the national average. For the last two years, there have been 100% pass rates on access programmes. Retention rates are close to, or at, the national average in most subjects. The retention rates for GCE AS sociology and part-time access courses are low.

136. Many GCE AS and A-level students perform better than their previous achievements at GCSE would predict. Students in all GCE AS, A-level and access to HE programmes demonstrate good powers of analysis, and an ability to construct good evidence-based arguments and to work well independently and collaboratively.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	**	79	94
		% retention	**	82	71*
		% pass rate	**	65	93
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	25	174	201
		% retention	76	89	77*
		% pass rate	68	71	99
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	**	92	88
		% retention	**	88	76*
		% pass rate	**	69	78
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	**	33	34
		% retention	**	73	82*
		% pass rate	**	96	96
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	**	49	41

		% retention	**	86	85*
		% pass rate	**	76	89
Access to HE full time	3	No. of starts	43	53	46
		% retention	67	58	75
		% pass rate	86	100	100

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

* in-year retention rate for GCE AS completed in 2002

** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

137. Most teaching is very good and in one quarter of the lessons was judged as excellent. Lessons are well planned and include a range of individual and group work tasks, successfully designed to motivate and sustain the interest of students. Teachers have developed well-designed activity sheets that include interesting reference material and video clips that extend students' learning.

138. In the best lessons, teachers convey much enthusiasm for their subject. In a GCE A-level history class on the constitution of the Second Reich, the teacher used powerful dramatic skills to encourage the students to think like the politicians of the time. Students were gripped and absorbed by the problems they had been set. The whole class discussion was lively and involved students in challenging one another's judgements and those of the teacher. Students demonstrated excellent skills in analysing and evaluating the complexities of the constitution. Most teachers are highly skilled. They use group work and questioning techniques effectively to develop students' knowledge and to check their understanding. Lessons were less successful when teachers did not check the understanding of the students and did not develop the skills of discussion and debate. All lesson plans identify where links can be made with key skills, but these are not fully integrated with students' assignment briefs and are not referred to in written feedback from teachers. Teaching and assessment practices do not effectively support the teaching and achievement of key skills.

139. Teachers are well qualified in their specialist subjects. Many are moderators or examiners and all hold appropriate teaching qualifications. They are strongly committed to developing their skills as teachers and readily share good practice and materials. Teachers value the monitoring and informal appraisal of the teachers that exists in subject areas as well as the very good opportunities offered by the college to update their subject and teaching skills. Two staff are currently studying for postgraduate qualifications in educational management and four are completing a qualification that will enable them to use ILT, more effectively in their teaching. There is a good range of learning resources in the teaching area and central learning resource centre. The GCE AS and A-level teaching takes place in a newly built and highly attractive sixth form centre. Students and teachers make good use of ICT resources.

140. Assessment is well planned to meet the needs of students and the requirements of awarding bodies. Students are given assessment schedules so that they can plan their work effectively and they are well informed about grading criteria. Work is marked and graded accurately and fairly. In most subjects, attention is paid to the correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In some subjects, feedback from teachers is detailed and clear, but, in others, students are not clearly informed about how they could improve the quality of their work. In some subject areas, students are asked to comment critically on their own effort and achievement.

141. There are good support and guidance for students from pre-entry through to the end of their course. The tutorial programme is well structured and the personal tutor system ensures that students receive a high level of personal and learning support. The faculty of sixth form studies has a specially appointed study support tutor who works effectively with staff and students. Subject tutors

are allocated time to provide students with additional subject support. The very effective individual performance review system helps to raise students' aspirations and achievements. Academic and learning support are integral to the access programmes and students value the high level of day-to-day support that the programme provides. Students make good use of the college central support services.

Leadership and management

142. Leadership and management at course level are good. Management data is used to make decisions about improvements and plan changes to provision; this is supplemented by information from course and subject reviews. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and the setting and monitoring of realistic targets. Strategies to improve student achievement and recruitment are effective. At team level, the self-assessment process is focused on improving teaching skills and practices and identifying ways to improve student recruitment, retention and achievement. Teams are successful in developing and sharing imaginative and successful teaching materials and methods and all participate in the observation system.

Visual arts and media
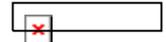
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates

- high standard of students' work

- effective student guidance and support

- wide range of provision

- good course management.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rate on GNVQ intermediate art and design and national diploma in design crafts

- some inadequate resources.

Scope of provision

143. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at all levels in visual arts and media. These include Higher National Diplomas (HND) in fine art and graphic design, a diploma in foundation studies in arts and design and national diplomas in fine art, graphic design and design crafts. Intermediate and foundation GNVQ art and design are also available. At GCE, GCE AS and A-level options include fine art, photography, graphics, design, media and film studies. In addition, there are City and Guilds qualifications in media techniques and a range of Open College Network (OCN) courses in art and crafts. The majority of students who attend full-time courses are aged 16 to 18 and part-time courses recruit mainly adult students.

Achievement and standards

144. Pass rates on many courses are high and above national averages. In 2002, pass rates were at 100% on the national diplomas in fine art, design crafts and design graphics, GCE A-level in art and design and GCE AS in art and design and film/video programmes. The proportion of students who achieve high grades in GCE AS media is excellent at 59%. Retention rates are good and are above, or at, national averages for a number of courses. Retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate, national diploma in design and City and Guilds media techniques programmes has declined and is below the national average. Students successfully progress to other courses within the college, to employment and to HE. The faculty has good links with HE establishments and students are very successful in securing places on degree and HND courses.

145. Students produce work of a high standard. In art, there is some excellent sketchbook work and high-quality design sheets on the advanced courses. Materials are used with imagination and flair. Students have a good level of understanding and an ability to analyse and understand design concepts. Students studying media and film use specialist vocabulary fluently and are confident in expressing evaluative opinions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	30	37	29
		% retention	80	78	72
		% pass rate	88	79	81
Diploma in foundation studies art and design (1 year)	3	No. of starts	102	69	88
		% retention	95	94	98
		% pass rate	98	100	99
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	28	39	41
		% retention	93	72	66
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	*	64	83
		% retention	*	73	84
		% pass rate	*	91	89
National diploma in art	3	No. of starts	45	55	51

and design (fine art)		% retention	82	82	82
		% pass rate	92	100	100
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	28	26	21
		% retention	61	69	81
		% pass rate	75	79	94

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

146. Two thirds of teaching is good or better and is excellent in a small number of lessons. There is unsatisfactory teaching in a small number of lessons. There is good teaching of practical skills and highly effective teaching of individual students. In the most successful lessons, teachers make good links to previous lessons and use an introductory group critique to inspire students to learn. In one art workshop, for example, the teacher successfully used exemplar material from a former student to promote a lively discussion of the definition of fine art. The teacher facilitated the discussion well and the students returned to their own artwork with vigour and fresh ideas. In another successful lesson on film theory, students demonstrated high standards of analytical thinking. The teacher effectively questioned students' ideas and understanding.

147. Students make good use of the studios to continue working in their own time. Practical studio work is of a high standard. Project briefings are detailed and well written. Students are able to develop themes over a period of time and they develop strong observational drawing skills. In a few unsatisfactory lessons, however, the teacher gives insufficient guidance. Students are unclear about the task set and the lack of monitoring by the teacher leads to students making too little progress.

148. In most lessons, however, the monitoring of students' progress is good. Teachers provide regular and clear feedback to students when assessing their work. Informative guidance is given to students to enable them to improve the quality of their work and to develop good practical skills. On some courses, thorough self-evaluation by students is used effectively to improve their achievement. Students receive very good pastoral and tutorial support and action planning is thorough.

149. Teachers prepare students well for progression to other courses, HE and employment. Some 70% of students progress from the intermediate level course on to national diploma courses and many continue on to the HND. There are high rates of progression to HE from all diploma courses and on to the diploma in foundation studies from the GCE A-level course. Enrichment activities are available through a range of course activities, but attendance is poor. Educational visits including visits abroad are well-planned and fully integrated with students' project briefings. Key skills are not effectively integrated with vocational programmes.

150. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects. Many of them are active practitioners in their specialist area. There are good opportunities for industrial and professional updating, which teachers regularly undertake. There are some good practical studios that provide stimulating places for students to learn. There are excellent visual resources, which teachers use effectively, and there is good availability and use of specialist computers. High-quality student work is displayed prominently throughout the college. Specialist silversmith resources in a community centre encourage students to produce work of a good standard. There are some poor resources that impede learning, particularly in graphics and media. There is a lack of technical support for darkroom activities, which leads to students working without supervision at times. The temporary accommodation used to teach students on the GNVQ intermediate course is small and some specialist equipment is poor.

Leadership and management

151. Course management is good. Students' views and feedback are positively sought and acted upon. Students are invited to, and attend, appropriate departmental meetings. There is good support for part-time tutors. Equality of opportunity is promoted through work in the classroom and diversity is actively celebrated. Opportunities to develop and share the good management practice of the art team with the rest of the faculty are missed. Monitoring of students' attendance is poor.

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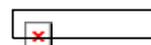
Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on GCE AS and A-level courses

- high percentage of high grades in GCSE English

- very good teaching

- high-quality learning materials

- effective curriculum leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some GCSE modern languages courses

- poor and declining retention rates on GCE AS English literature course.

Scope of provision

152. The college offers GCE A and AS levels in English language, English literature and English language and literature, and GCSE English. The faculty of sixth form studies manages these courses. Some additional GCSE English courses are managed through the faculty of access and continuing education. There is a GCE A-level literature course for adults during the day. The management of the provision in modern foreign languages lies in the faculty of business, health and

professional studies. The college offers GCE A levels in French and German, GCE AS and GCSE in French, German and Spanish; and GCSE Italian. Foreign languages modules are offered on a number of vocational programmes such as AVCE business, travel and tourism, Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national early years and GNVQ intermediate business, and are accredited through EdExcel and the OCN. Part-time courses in foreign languages are offered in a variety of languages, using the Awarding Body Consortium. The college also runs a number of foreign languages courses for local businesses and adult and community courses.

Achievement and standards

153. Levels of achievement on the majority of GCE AS and A-level courses are good. In 2002, there were 100% pass rates on all three English GCE A-level courses and in French, German and Spanish. Retention rates on most GCE AS and A-level English courses have improved and have been above national averages for at least two years, with the exception of GCE AS English literature, where the retention rate is low and declining. There has been an outstanding improvement in students' achievement of grades A to C in English GCSE, rising from 38% in 2000, to 72% in 2002. The initiatives employed by the college to improve low pass rates in GCSE English have been very successful. Retention and pass rates on GCE AS and A-level modern languages courses are mostly above national averages. However, in 2001, pass rates in GCE A-level French and German, were low at 67% and 50%, respectively. Retention rates on some GCSE modern languages and pass rates in French and Spanish in 2002 are low. Retention and pass rates on the vocational languages modules, on the OCN and Awarding Body Consortium languages courses and on the British Sign language courses are good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	158	252	106
		% retention	54	59	77
		% pass rate	38	30	72
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	25	10	21
		% retention	52	50	76
		% pass rate	69	40	11
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	**	33	18
		% retention	**	79	72*
		% pass rate	**	69	77
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	**	69	46
		% retention	**	72	67*
		% pass rate	**	94	103
GCE AS English literature and language	3	No. of starts	**	62	57
		% retention	**	82	88*
		% pass rate	**	100	96

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* in-year retention rate for GCE AS completed in 2002
** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

154. Most teaching and learning is good and is excellent or very good in one third of lessons.

Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. Teachers use a variety of activities to engage the interest of students. For example, in one advanced level English language lesson, students studying child-directed speech were effectively organised into lively group discussions about a recording of a mother and baby conversation. Using previously taught theories and ideas, students worked collaboratively and successfully presented their findings to the rest of the class. In modern language lessons, teachers make effective use of the language being learned, using English where appropriate, while encouraging students to develop their language speaking skills. In one class, the adult students were able to undertake informative conversations about their daily routines in Spanish. In the best lessons, students are set demanding tasks which involve high levels of student participation. Teachers frequently check students' understanding and place much emphasis on improving their examination performance and success. Students are fully aware of the assessment criteria against which their progress is regularly measured and assessed.

155. Resources for both English and foreign languages are of a high standard. Classrooms are modern and well equipped, with good access to audio-visual equipment and attractive and informative wall displays. The language laboratory is well maintained and European broadcasts can be easily recorded. Learning materials in both curriculum areas are of high standard. Language learning materials are of a particularly high standard and have been selected for commercial use by local employers. The stock of books, videos, European magazines and periodicals in the library is good. Teachers are well qualified and several language teachers are native speakers.

156. The range of courses on offer in both English and modern languages is good, both for 16 to 18 students and adults. There is particularly good support for GCSE English students to enable them to improve their achievement. There are foreign language modules on several vocational courses and the college provides language courses for local companies. There are good links with local secondary schools. Links with Europe are well developed and there is effective collaboration across the college to enable students to participate in European visits. For example, second-year business students joined GCE A-level French students on a visit to Strasbourg and first-year business students visited Bonn with GCE AS German students. The modern languages area of the college recently received a European Award for Languages from the Centre for Information on Language Teaching, for its work in promoting the study of languages for the post 16 age-group through the Staffordshire Languages Group.

157. Teachers mark students' work carefully and provide helpful and informative annotations. Students' progress is monitored and assessed regularly. Students are set appropriate minimum grades for achievement, based on their prior attainment. Initial interviewing, enrolment and induction of students are well organised and effective. Teachers make good use of the computerised record system to inform personal tutors about students' academic progress and achievement. Students identified as at risk of not achieving their expected grades are effectively counselled and supported both by their subject teachers and the college central support staff.

Leadership and management

158. Both curriculum areas are well managed and roles and responsibilities are clear. Teachers work very closely in teams. Communication between team members is effective through almost daily contact and regular meetings. Part-time teachers are well supported. All schemes of work are well developed. Teams place great emphasis on retention and pass rates and making further improvement to the content of courses. All teachers contribute to the production of the self-assessment report. Staff development activities are used effectively and are related to the achievement of college strategic objectives.

Basic skills: literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages
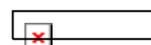
Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

- high retention rates on separate special courses

- good teaching of individuals and small groups.

Weaknesses

- inadequate provision of literacy and numeracy support for full-time students

- low take-up of learning support

- unsatisfactory co-ordination of learning support.

Scope of provision

159. The college offers separate special courses in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Literacy and numeracy classes are provided in six centres in the local community for those who may be unable or reluctant to attend the main college site. The college has developed family literacy classes in the community, and learning workshops for students with mental health and/or head injury difficulties. There is no ESOL provision in community venues. There are 458 part-time students on literacy and numeracy courses and 121 part-time ESOL students. Learning support for students on other courses is also available and all full-time students undertake a diagnostic assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills at the start of their course.

Achievement and standards

160. There are high rates of retention on all the separate special programmes. Most adults take external qualifications and pass rates are high. Pass rates on the achievement tests for literacy are below the national average, but improved significantly in 2002. There is very low take-up of learning support by students on mainstream courses who have been identified as needing support for literacy and/or numeracy.

A sample of retention and pass rates in basic skills: literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
English as an acquired language (pre-foundation/ foundation)	X	No. of starts	38	31	21
		% retention	76	87	58
		% pass rate	0	11	100
Basic skills English	X	No. of starts	*	192	70
		% retention	*	74	84

		% pass rate	*	44	100
Basic skills English for speakers of other languages	X	No. of starts	19	40	31
		% retention	72	77	90
		% pass rate	46	67	75
Achievement tests literacy	1/2/3	No. of starts	130	127	135
		% retention	80	72	87
		% pass rate	63	33	69

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)
* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

161. There is good teaching of individual and small groups of students, but teaching is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. Teachers are responsive to individual students' needs and make good use of questioning in lessons to check their understanding. In a successful adult literacy lesson, the teacher recorded clear aims, objectives and activities for each individual student. The students were highly motivated and actively involved in reviewing and recording their own progress in meeting their objectives. Students make good use of a learning pack for improving their use of punctuation.

162. Students are encouraged to contribute orally in lessons and relationships between staff and students are good. Teachers routinely check students' understanding from previous lessons and there is effective recapping at the end of lessons. Students receive positive and helpful feedback from teachers. Good use is made of external visits and teachers make effective links to subsequent lesson activities. In one lesson, students developed their literacy and communication skills by completing job application forms following a successful visit to a local job centre. Good use was made of computers during the visit.

163. All new students on the discrete courses have an interview with a tutor, which is followed by an initial assessment. Their learning needs are carefully assessed and an individual learning plan is prepared that contains specific targets, which are referenced to the core curricula. These plans are regularly reviewed by teachers but in some cases, insufficient use is made of them in monitoring students' progress. Adult students on these courses also negotiate individual learning programmes that meet their identified needs.

164. Most classrooms provide access to computers and there is good use of ICT to help learning. There is a well-equipped workshop where students can have literacy, numeracy and ESOL support on an individual or small group basis. There is good support for the small number of students who attend. Good use is made of volunteer assistants in ESOL classes.

165. There is inadequate provision of literacy and numeracy support for students on mainstream courses. The college has implemented a new initial assessment system that has led to a delay in some assessments being carried out. At the time of the inspection, 29% of full-time students were identified as needing literacy and/or numeracy support. This includes 71 students who are dyslexic or are awaiting a dyslexia assessment. Only a small proportion of these students is in receipt of support. Of 30 students on hairdressing courses, 12 were identified by the screening process as needing support but, at the time of the inspection, had not received any specific literacy or numeracy support. The strategy to provide three introductory lessons to all students on vocational courses where more than half the group are identified as requiring literacy and/or numeracy support is unsatisfactory. These lessons are poorly planned and do not provide different tasks for students with different needs and abilities, particularly those who do not require literacy and/or numeracy support.

Leadership and management

166. The faculty is new, having been formed in July 2002. The management of discrete courses in the college and the local community is effective. Staff involved in this provision receive good professional development opportunities and are actively involved in the self-assessment process. The co-ordination of learning support across the college, however, is unsatisfactory. The roles and responsibilities of managers in the faculty are unclear. There are serious weaknesses in the quality assurance procedures resulting in a failure to monitor the quality of cross-college support for literacy and numeracy.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
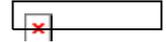
Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates

- wide range of provision

- effective course management.

Weaknesses

- some inappropriate learning activities

- poor punctuality of students

- lack of rigour in target setting for students.

Scope of provision

167. There are two courses at entry level, one for students aged 16 to 21 and the other for students aged over 21. These courses have a framework of eight skills areas that develop independence, including communication, numeracy, personal and social development, relationships, community studies and preparation for work. Skills for Working Life is a vocationally based programme that includes a mixture of core modules and vocational modules plus literacy, numeracy and work experience. This course is for students aged from 16 upwards. A part-time modular leisure programme is offered to students of all ages, The access to further education (FE) programme helps students to develop essential key skills through a range of assignment topics. In addition, workshops

are offered on eight sites in the community for users of the mental health service and other support agencies.

Achievement and standards

168. The majority of students make good progress in developing their personal, social and practical skills. Accredited courses are used at entry level to accredit student achievements. In 2001/02, there were excellent pass rates on accredited courses with 100% gaining accreditation in the Further Education Award, the basic skills module and the preliminary cooking certificate. On the Skills for Working Life programme, 38% of students, in 2000/01, progressed on to a range of mainstream courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Further Education Award (level UP)	X	No. of starts	20	23	37
		% retention	53	76	70
		% pass rate	50	100	100
Basic skills module for students with severe learning difficulties	1	No. of starts	216	267	181
		% retention	83	85	88
		% pass rate	98	91	100
Preliminary cooking	1	No. of starts	21	7	8
		% retention	90	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

Quality of education and training

169. Most teaching is satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan a variety of practical activities that students find interesting and demanding. In one lesson, an autumn project was used effectively to develop students' literacy, numeracy, communication and IT skills using a variety of related tasks. This project was well planned and students' progress was effectively monitored. Most learning plans are detailed and identify appropriate clear objectives and activities. Some lesson activities, however, are inappropriate for students and result in unsatisfactory learning in those lessons. Students' lateness interrupts the start of lessons and hinders their progress.

170. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to develop their communication skills in lessons. Careful planning of one integrated project on the Skills for Working Life programme effectively provides a range of differentiated opportunities for students. Students' progress on this course is well monitored. Opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy on other courses are satisfactory, but are hindered in some instances by the lack of focus on developing these skills in students' individual learning plans

171. There is good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants who are effectively deployed in lessons and provide good support for individual students. Teachers and learning support assistants skilfully question students to reinforce learning or encourage participation. Students' individual learning plans include a core of essential social and behavioural targets, but too few targets relate to the improvement of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Generally, targets are not sufficiently specific and some are written using inappropriate language. A process for monitoring students' progress in each lesson involves recording on a database the written feedback on students' progress towards meeting their targets. The targets and feedback, however, are not

specific in most instances.

172. A wide range of courses meets the needs of students. Full-time students can study vocational subjects while developing their literacy, numeracy, communication and personal skills and some undertake a work experience. There are two courses with an emphasis on students acquiring knowledge and skills for use in everyday life. Another full-time programme prepares students for work through group projects and group work experience in partnership with local employers. A range of modular courses is offered that support personal, social and communication skills development through leisure activities. In addition, learning workshops are provided at eight venues for users of the Mental Health Service and other support agencies.

173. Most resources are satisfactory and are used well. Students make good use of the accommodation provided for the development of skills for life. Most staff have relevant qualifications. There is relevant weekly training for learning support assistants to which visiting speakers are invited. Informative awareness raising sessions are provided on subjects such as autistic spectrum disorder and hearing and visual impairment. Most accommodation is satisfactory although the layout of some rooms restricts some learning activities. Teachers make good use of visits and community settings to develop students' knowledge and skills for use in everyday life. Students have satisfactory access to, and use of, computers in lessons.

Leadership and management

174. Management of the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Lesson observation is used effectively and action has been taken to identify and respond to weaknesses diagnosed. Changes to the staffing structure and the production of detailed action plans have led to improvements. Meetings take place regularly and are informative. There is a well-defined team structure and good communication and teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants. All staff are involved in the production of the self-assessment report. Feedback from students through tutorials and focus groups is well used.

Part D: College data
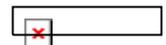
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	13	30
2	39	20
3	38	10
4/5	0	1
Other	10	39
Total	100	100
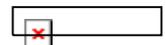
Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Mathematics and science	1,589	940	15
Engineering	199	129	2
Business	570	995	9
Information and communication technology	1,482	2,616	24
Sport, leisure and tourism	450	1,018	8
Hair and beauty	126	102	1
Health and community care	237	592	5
Humanities	851	360	7
Visual arts and media	921	354	7
English and modern foreign languages	1,844	392	13
Basic education	756	896	9
Total	**9,025**	**8,394**	**100**

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Course)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	338	343	958	911	1,329	1,445
	Retention rate (%)	80	71	80	70	73	72
	National average (%)	80	79	*	79	77	*
	Pass rate (%)	71	65	79	60	67	91
	National average (%)	65	69	*	65	68	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,201	1,412	3,437	536	839	1,042
	Retention rate (%)	70	66	73	75	71	72

	National average (%)	77	76	*	79	78	*
	Pass rate (%)	81	81	87	76	68	85
	National average (%)	66	69	*	65	70	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,924	3,970	3,608	856	957	868
	Retention rate (%)	77	82	82	78	68	73
	National average (%)	76	78	**	79	79	**
	Pass rate (%)	80	80	89	55	65	88
	National average (%)	75	77	**	66	70	**
H	Starters excluding transfers	3	0	1	45	49	64
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	100	82	88	100
	National average (%)	80	83	**	80	84	**
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	53	54	*
	National average (%)	65	57	**	57	54	**

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

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

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

3. College Rates for 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.

* data too small to provide a valid calculation
** data unavailable

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	71	21	8	112
Level 2 (intermediate)	72	24	4	46
Level 1 (foundation)	65	26	9	31
Other sessions	55	45	0	29
Totals	**69**	**25**	**6**	**218**

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