



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection report
New College Durham

Dates of inspection: 4–8 April 2005

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	New College Durham
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	John Widdowson
Address of college:	Framwellgate Moor Centre Durham DH1 5ES
Telephone number:	0191 375 4000
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Chair of governors:	Philip Holton
Unique reference number:	130659
Name of reporting inspector:	Peter Brook
Dates of inspection:	4–8 April 2005

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

New College Durham is a large, mixed provision general further education (FE) college, offering courses in 13 areas of learning. It has relocated to a single, newly built campus over the past two years. Building work is continuing with final completion expected in autumn 2005. The college serves an area with the highest level of deprivation among the shire counties. The educational achievement of school leavers in County Durham is below the national average. In 2003, 46% of year 11 students gained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above compared with 53% nationally. A larger proportion of school leavers enter employment with training than in any other area of the country. The college has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in travel and tourism services and multi-skilled maintenance engineering. The large community provision, based at 36 venues in the Durham area, was not inspected due to the timing of the inspection. Employment related programmes are provided for Jobcentre Plus and other agencies. In 2003/04, the college had 9,425 Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded FE students, of whom 2,889 were studying full time. Most enrolments are at level 1 although the largest numbers of full-time equivalent students are on courses leading to qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Some 380 learners are on work-based learning programmes in construction, engineering, business administration, hairdressing, catering and health and social care. Around 60% of students are female and 2% belong to minority ethnic groups. There are approximately 1,000 full-time equivalent students on vocational higher education (HE) programmes. The college provides education and training in eight prisons in the North East. There are 420 year 10 and year 11 pupils from 13 schools on vocational courses. The college's mission is to provide first class learning and training for individuals, business and the community.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged the provision to be outstanding in humanities, good in business administration, sport, leisure and tourism, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health and social care, and literacy and numeracy and satisfactory in the other three areas inspected.

Key strengths

- strong leadership
 - good curriculum management
 - outstanding financial management
 - good achievements by students
 - good teaching and learning
-

- high standard of students' written and practical work
- high standard of the new college building
- good general and specialist resources in most areas
- broad range of provision in most areas which meets the needs of students and employers
- strong links with industry and the local community
- very good learning and pastoral support
- effective arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

What should be improved

- the already high standard of teaching and learning
- achievement rates on work-based learning programmes
- success rates on some courses
- key skills provision
- punctuality and attendance on some courses
- effectiveness of progress reviews for apprentices and literacy and numeracy students
- some features of the new accommodation.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Construction	Work-based learning is satisfactory . There is good workplace training and learners develop high levels of skills at college and in the workplace. Resources for teaching and learning are good. There is effective individual support for learners. There are low apprenticeship framework achievement rates. Target setting in learner reviews is inadequate and there is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities.
Engineering	Satisfactory . The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . There are high retention and pass rates on many engineering courses together with good practical skills development and good resources. However, theory lessons are uninspiring and there are low pass rates in motor vehicle at level 1 and on the national diploma. There are good links with schools and employers and support for students is good. There are low achievement rates and inadequate target setting in progress reviews for work-based learning.
Business administration, management and professional	Good . The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . There is a broad range of provision with high retention and pass rates on many courses although achievement is low in work-based learning and on some marketing courses. There is much good teaching and learning, with a high standard of students' work and good support for students. Business links are underdeveloped on full-time business studies courses.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good . There are high pass rates on most courses although they are low on advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) and first diplomas in travel and tourism. Teaching and learning are good in both sport and travel and tourism. There is a wide range of courses and additional qualifications to meet the needs of full-time students. Resources for travel and tourism are excellent.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. There are high pass rates on most courses. Teaching and learning are very good and there is a high standard of accommodation and resources. Support for students and curriculum management are good. There are low retention rates on some courses and low attendance at part-time evening classes and work-based learning sessions.
Care and early years care and education	Good. The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . There are very high pass and retention rates on many courses, but low and declining retention rates on the diploma in childcare and education. Few students achieve their apprenticeship framework. Teaching and learning are good and the plentiful resources are used effectively to support learning. There is good co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learners.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory. There are high retention and pass rates on the diplomas in music practice and performing arts and general certificate in education advanced level (GCE A-level) media. There are low retention rates on many courses in art and design and low pass rates on drama and art and design GCE A-level courses. Teaching in music and media is good and the practical work in music, performing arts and media is of a high standard. However, there is some uninspiring teaching that fails to challenge the learning of students and insufficient development of students' independent learning skills in art and design and performing arts.
Humanities	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are consistently very high in all the humanities subjects with a large proportion of high grade passes. Students' achievements are consistently higher than predicted by prior attainment. Teaching and learning are very good and there is a wide range of enrichment activities. Support for students is good as is leadership and management of the provision.
Literacy and numeracy	Good. Pass rates are high, but the retention rate is low in GCSE mathematics. Teaching and learning are good and support and guidance for individuals are responsive to individual needs. There is insufficient monitoring of individuals' progress in some lessons. Leadership and management are good.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection, the college has significantly improved its financial position, retention and pass rates, accommodation and teaching and learning. Financial management is outstanding. Overall retention and pass rates are high. However, achievement rates in work-based learning and key skills are low. Strategic and operational planning are comprehensive and detailed. However, enrolment and attendance targets have not been achieved in the last two years. Communication of the college's vision and values is clear. Governance is very effective and governors monitor academic and financial performance closely. The new college building provides a good learning environment and is fully compliant with the requirements of disability discrimination legislation. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and child protection legislation. The principal and senior managers lead their staff very effectively. Management of most curriculum areas is good. Teaching and learning grades are well above the national average for similar colleges. Quality assurance systems are effective and inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, the monitoring of performance targets and the analysis of students' data are not well established in several curriculum areas. The college has widened participation by working sensitively with external partners to provide relevant education and training. 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. A diverse range of students attend college courses. Through its community work and work with employers, the college attracts students who are traditionally under-represented in FE. It has developed an effective range of courses to encourage the participation in education of those young people who might not normally continue in education, training or employment. The college is successful in raising the aspirations of its students and in developing their personal, social and employability skills. In particular, students aged 16 to 18 make very good progress when compared with their prior attainment. The provision of courses in basic numeracy and literacy is good. The college has made good progress in fulfilling its duty under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. There are appropriate arrangements for the protection of children. The college has developed its new accommodation carefully to ensure it meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and disability discrimination legislation; it has developed an action plan to improve its accommodation further. The new buildings provide good access for wheelchair users and for those with visual impairments.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support for students in the college and in the workplace is good. Support arrangements are well planned and managed. Students receive impartial initial advice and guidance to help them choose their course. Induction to the college is effective and helps students settle quickly in to their programmes. Initial assessment identifies additional support needs

effectively. Literacy and numeracy support is good and this year there has been a significant increase in the number of students receiving support. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported sensitively. The college has very good counselling and welfare arrangements to support students' personal and social needs. The tutorial system is good and effectively helps students monitor their progress and identify barriers to success. Target setting and recording of achievement in community-based learning are good. However, target setting during the progress reviews of work-based learners is neither specific nor sufficiently challenging. Systems for monitoring students' attendance and punctuality are insufficiently rigorous in a minority of areas. Effective careers guidance is available for all students on progression to employment and HE.

Students' views of the college

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

What students like about the college

- the good range of courses and progression routes available
- being treated like an adult
- good careers advice and support
- very approachable, supportive tutors
- very good support and help with personal issues
- constructive feedback on work
- use of information and learning technology (ILT) in sessions
- good teaching and interesting lessons
- useful tutorials
- the design of the new building and the facilities it offers.

What they feel could be improved

- ventilation in the building
 - the price of food in the cafeteria
 - the main door and the restricted access it creates
 - timetabling and room organisation
-

- key skills
- the number of social areas in the college
- car parking for students
- the range of enrichment activities.

Other information

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

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & 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	75	24	1
19+ and WBL*	80	20	0
Learning 16–18	76	23	1
19+ and WBL*	78	22	0

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. Overall pass and retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults have improved and are high. At most levels they have remained consistently at, or above, the national average, although success rates have fallen below the national average at level 2 for 16 to 18 year olds. Many students aged 16 to 18 achieve grades which are higher than those predicted by their GCSE performance at school. Success rates for adults on higher level professional courses are particularly high. Success rates for female students are higher than for males. The standard of students' work and the development of their skills are good. Inspectors judged attainment to be good or better in over 60% of the lessons observed. In business administration, management and professional and humanities, students produce good written work. In literacy and numeracy, students develop good use of language and number skills. Students of construction, engineering, sport, leisure and tourism, hairdressing and beauty therapy and care and early years develop good practical skills. In visual and performing arts and media, students do not develop sufficient independent creative skills. Work-based learners are given good opportunities to develop their practical skills by supportive employers in good work placements.

2. During the week of the inspection, the average attendance in lessons was 78%, the same as the average observed in general FE colleges in 2004, but above the 76% attendance observed at the previous inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Attendance was low in some lessons for part-time adult students and work-based learners in business administration, hairdressing and beauty therapy and in some care and early years lessons. Punctuality was unsatisfactory in many lessons in business administration, management and professional.

16 to 18 year olds

3. Retention rates are high at levels 1 and 2 and have improved to above the national average. Retention rates at level 3 are satisfactory, but have fallen slightly and are now just below the national average. Retention rates on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and GCE A-level programmes are around the national average. Retention rates on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes at all levels fell below the national average in 2003, but are currently above the national average. Retention rates on work-based learning programmes have been low, but have shown recent significant improvement in all areas. In some construction apprenticeship programmes, there is a 100% retention rate of learners recruited in 2003/04.

4. Pass rates were above the national average at all levels in 2004. At level 2, the pass rate improved markedly on the previous year when it was below average. In 2004, pass rates for NVQs at all levels were around the national average. Pass rates in GCE A-level humanities subjects were very high, with a large number of students achieving high grades. In these subjects, many students achieved significantly higher grades than predicted by their GCSE grades. In some art and design subjects, however, GCE A-level students did not reach their expected potential. Overall key skills achievement rates are low, but improving. The pass rates of work-based learners who remain on their programmes are high, although overall success rates remain low, due to previous low rates of retention. Learners currently on programmes are making good progress towards achieving all the components of apprenticeship frameworks. Development of vocational skills and progression to employment are good.

Adult learners

5. The achievement and standards reached by adult students are particularly good. Retention rates were above the national average at all levels between 2001 and 2003. Retention rates have improved further in 2003/04 and are now well above the national average at all levels including higher level professional courses where there are significant numbers of students. In 2004, the retention rate on NVQ programmes at levels 1 and 3 was above the national average and around the national average at level 2. Overall pass rates have improved and have been above the national average at all levels in most years. At level 1 and on higher level courses they are well above the national average. Success rates are very high on all types of level 3 courses and particularly high on long GCE A-level and college-based vocational courses. Success rates on long NVQ courses, many of which are provided for adults in the workplace, are consistently high. Success rates on short courses are also high.

Quality of education and training

6. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 140 lessons and attainment in 138 lessons. Inspectors judged that teaching was good or better in 76% of these, satisfactory in 23% and less than satisfactory in 1%. This represents a much larger proportion of teaching that is good or better and a smaller proportion of satisfactory and unsatisfactory teaching than

that observed by inspectors in general FE colleges in 2004. The majority of lessons are good, rather than very good or outstanding. Teaching is best in humanities, care and early years care and education, and in college-based lessons in construction. In business administration, management and professional; sports, leisure and tourism; hairdressing and beauty therapy and literacy and numeracy the proportion of good teaching is around the college average. There is less good teaching in engineering and visual and performing arts and media although, in both cases, the proportion is around the average observed in general FE colleges in 2004. The percentage of good or better lessons for adults is higher than for students aged 16 to 18 and is also higher for part-time students. Most of the very good or outstanding lessons are for students aged 16 to 18.

7. Lessons and schemes of work are planned carefully and are of a consistently high standard throughout all areas of learning. In most lessons, students work well and participate fully in their learning. In music; care and early years care and education; hairdressing and beauty therapy; sport, leisure and tourism; business administration, management and professional; construction and engineering teaching of practical subjects is good. Theory is linked to practice well and very good use is made of students' and teachers' experience of work to enhance learning in most areas, although insufficient use is made of real business examples in lessons for full-time business students. In literacy and numeracy and humanities, lessons meet the individual learning needs of students particularly successfully. In some art and design and drama lessons, however, students are given insufficient freedom to develop their own ideas. In most areas, theory teaching is of a similar standard to practical teaching but, in some engineering theory lessons, teachers talk too much and do not involve students sufficiently. The use of ILT to support students' learning varies between subject areas. Good use is made of ILT to support learning in literacy and numeracy and in sport, leisure and tourism, but in most other areas inspectors saw little use of ILT in the lessons they observed.

8. Teachers are generally well qualified and experienced. Some 85% hold a teaching qualification and most of the rest are working towards one. Opportunities for professional development are extensive and linked closely to individual needs and college priorities. Part-time staff supplied by a college-run agency are supported well. Sufficient teachers hold assessor and verifier qualifications. Teachers in performing arts and media use their extensive industrial experience well to enhance learning. Not enough teachers in business administration have recent industrial experience.

9. The college has relocated to a new building on one site with final completion on target for autumn 2005. Accommodation is of a high standard and the design enables flexibility of use. For example, the large atrium is used for awards ceremonies, community events, and students' displays. The accommodation is fully accessible to students with restricted mobility and meets the requirements of the SENDA. Classrooms are well equipped. Most contain digital data projectors and some contain interactive whiteboards. The ventilation system is, however, not working effectively and classrooms are too hot. Specialist facilities, particularly in hairdressing and beauty therapy, construction, and in the CoVEs for engineering and travel and tourism are very good. Accommodation for art and design does not enable creative working. There are insufficient social areas for students.

10. The learning resource centre provides a good learning environment. There are an adequate number of areas set aside for silent study and research. Most library stock is up to date and relevant, particularly in hairdressing and beauty therapy and humanities. Good use is made of online resources and students' develop good research skills. There are sufficient computers, although the open access e-learning centre becomes very busy at peak times. The college's virtual learning environment is well used in some subjects, but in most is in the early stages of development.

11. Initial assessment is used well to assess students' suitability for programmes and to plan learning. Literacy and numeracy support needs are assessed thoroughly using a computer programme. In 2003/04, approximately 50% of students identified as needing support took it up. In construction, tests are used to assess manual dexterity. Students complete learning styles questionnaires. This information is used well to plan learning in some subjects, for example, hairdressing and beauty therapy. In business administration, there is ineffective use of initial assessment information to plan learning for some full-time students.

12. Assessment is fair, consistent and rigorous. Work is marked and returned promptly. Written feedback clearly identifies how work can be improved. Self-assessment and students' assessment of each other are used effectively in visual and performing arts and media and care and early years care. Assessment is used constructively in sport to develop students' knowledge and skills. In work-based learning, very good recording systems show a detailed breakdown of completed NVQ and key skills units. In literacy and numeracy, however, students' records do not clearly identify progress made in lessons. Assessment arrangements for students with sensory impairments are good. Internal verification and moderation are rigorous and meet the requirements of awarding bodies. In some areas, key skills assessment is poor and not linked to vocational studies.

13. A broad range of courses meet the diverse needs of students, employers, and the community. Level 1 and level 2 courses recruit students mainly local to the college whilst level 3 courses attract students from all over the county. A large number of adults enrol on level 1 courses, mainly in community venues. HE courses aid progression and include foundation degrees, some developed especially to aid local employers and their employees. Apprenticeships are provided in six areas of learning and the college sub-contracts a substantial amount of apprenticeship training from local and national training providers.

14. Links with local schools are good. Some 420 pupils from 15 schools are studying on vocational courses. Links are particularly good in engineering. Engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy staff regularly visit schools to encourage pupils to follow a vocational career and to progress to level 2 NVQ. In 2003/04, over 80% of pupils on link courses progressed to FE, employment or training.

15. Enrichment programmes are available for students aged 16 to 18. For example, business studies students have a number of guest speakers, and visits to employment tribunals and workplaces. Students attending the sixth form centre are offered a very good range of activities such as visits to concerts, master classes, and visits to waste management and open-

cast mining sites. Equality and diversity have been the focus for the current year's enrichment activities.

16. The overall success rate in key skills has been low, but is improving. Each full-time student studies one key skill each year relevant to their main course at a level appropriate to their ability. The quality of key skills teaching is variable. In some lessons, teachers make good use of vocational examples but, in others, material is not relevant to the students' main course of study; students do not understand the purpose of the work and attendance is low.

17. The many links with employers are used effectively to benefit students and employees. Students benefit from the high-quality specialist resources provided through CoVE funding. Links with a wide range of companies and community organisations support students through provision of modern equipment, work experience placements and visiting speakers. Many courses have been developed to meet industries' and employees' needs. On a programme run with Jobcentre Plus for a major retailer, 250 participants from areas of high deprivation were recruited and trained, and 80% gained employment with the company.

18. There are 99 Jobcentre Plus clients on 11 programmes ranging in length from 2 to 52 weeks. Staff work closely with Jobcentre Plus to arrange interviews and induction to meet clients' needs. A high level of support is provided for clients, including specialist support for those with emotional and motivational difficulties. Retention rates on programmes have improved recently and attendance is high. The college is not yet meeting Jobcentre Plus targets for achievement of job outcomes or action plan targets. On most programmes, achievement rates are improving and some are now close to target.

19. Students receive good advice and guidance to help them choose the right courses. Information events are run at the college and in the local community. Staff interview potential students and ensure they are aware of what the course involves. Induction to college-based courses is comprehensive. However, there is a less systematic approach to induction for students who start courses late. Work-based learners are interviewed by vocational staff to determine their aptitude for apprenticeships. Induction to their course is comprehensive and workplace induction is thorough.

20. The tutorial system provides good support for students. Group tutorials cover a range of topics including access to HE, health education and careers advice. Personal tutors carefully monitor full-time students' progress. Part-time students receive tutorial support from course tutors who review progress regularly. Clear targets are set and reviewed for both accredited and non-accredited learning for community-based students. Target setting is inadequate in engineering, business administration and construction work-based learners' progress reviews. Personal learning coaches have been introduced recently and are successfully supporting students identified as being at risk of poor performance or withdrawing from college.

21. A wide range of support services provides funding and welfare advice, counselling, personal support and careers guidance to all students. Financial help includes free or subsidised transport, free or subsidised meals and assistance with childcare. A youth officer

provides support on personal and health issues. There are appropriate arrangements for the protection of children. There are two designated child protection officers. The child protection policy has been updated to reflect the governors' role in assuring the protection of young people. Very good support is provided for students with physical and specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good additional learning support is provided through drop-in sessions or by in-class support. Progress is monitored systematically and subject tutors are informed regularly of attendance and progress. Careers guidance is comprehensive.

Leadership and management

22. Leadership and management are good. Governors and managers have made considerable progress since the last inspection in 2000. A major new building programme has rationalised college provision on to one site. As a consequence, the learning environment has improved greatly. The financial position of the college has improved. Overall retention and pass rates have improved significantly in the last two years and are in the top quartile compared with similar colleges. However, framework achievements on work-based learning programmes and key skills achievements are both low. The teaching and learning grades profile is well above the average for similar colleges. The college has not met its enrolment and attendance targets in the last two years. Targets for retention rates of students aged 16 to 18 have not been met for the last three years. Student numbers have declined markedly over the last three years. Governance has improved since the last inspection. Quality assurance systems and procedures have improved recently. However, many initiatives are in the early stages of development and it is too soon to judge their full effectiveness.

23. Governance is very effective. Governors have a wide range of appropriate and complementary experience and skills. The independent clerk advises and supports governors well. Agendas and minutes of meetings are clear, appropriate and comprehensive. Governors receive detailed financial statements and explanatory commentaries. The sub-committee structure is strong. The development sub-committee concentrates on the new building programme, while sub-committees for quality and curriculum and students ensure that the corporation continues to focus on education and training. Governors show commitment to improving the learning environment, raising achievement levels of students and widening participation. Governors and senior managers work well and openly together, and governors challenge managers appropriately. However, the membership of the corporation is not representative of the college or the community it serves in terms of gender. The corporation does not have a representative of the black and minority ethnic communities.

24. The college widens participation and promotes inclusion well. Teachers work sensitively and extensively with external agencies to provide learning outside the college for groups of students unlikely to attend. For example, college staff work effectively with an organisation for adults with mental health issues. The college meets the requirements of disability discrimination legislation and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Managers regularly promote good practice in these areas to staff and students. For example, a popular competition on promoting race relations engaged both staff and students and was won by a group of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All staff receive

appropriate training on equal opportunities, racial equality, child protection and disability discrimination. Teachers analyse data on students' retention and pass rates by gender and minority ethnic background. Staff complete individual case studies in order to understand the issues around poor performance and take appropriate action to meet students' needs. The promotion of equal opportunity issues is strong in many areas of the college and much of the students' work on display demonstrates imaginative ways of dealing with racism and disabilities. However, promotion of equality and diversity issues through the curriculum is not well established in engineering, business, hairdressing and beauty therapy and in work-based learning. The principal and senior managers work collaboratively with local, county and regional partners to widen participation. The college has a good reputation in the community.

25. The management of work-based learning is improving. It is a shared responsibility between the relevant heads of school and the work-based learning manager. Communication between managers has improved and the recognition of roles and responsibilities is clear. Work-based learning retention rates, framework achievement rates and key skills pass rates were low in 2003/04. However, retention rates are improving. Initial assessment is more consistent and effective. Quality audits to identify learners at risk of leaving programmes early are rigorous. Previously, work-based learning data were inaccurate and analysed insufficiently. A more rigorous management information system is now in place and is used to track learners' progress accurately. It is too early to judge the impact of recent initiatives on the low framework achievement rates.

26. The principal and senior managers provide very strong leadership. Staff morale is high. Management of the areas of learning is mostly good; management of the humanities area is outstanding, whereas management of engineering, construction and visual and performing arts and media is satisfactory. Features of good curriculum management include clear communication, staff feeling involved, effective use of staff development days and regular meetings. Weaknesses include insufficiently rigorous analysis of students' data and ineffectual setting and monitoring of targets. Leadership and management of the engineering multi-skilling CoVE are good. Management of the CoVE in travel and tourism is satisfactory.

27. Quality assurance systems have improved. The lesson observation system is now more thorough and effective. The appraisal system is well designed, but has not been implemented fully in all areas of the college owing to delays in the lesson observation process. The self-assessment process starts at course team level and builds into area of learning reports and the final self-assessment report which senior managers and the corporation agree. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but graded differently four areas of learning: humanities and sports, travel and leisure were graded one grade higher and engineering and early years and social care one grade lower than the self-assessed grades. Management information reports are now more frequent and accurate. Managers analyse these reports and produce corresponding action plans. Responses from students' questionnaires cannot be compared with those from students in similar colleges. Although responses can be analysed by gender and age group, it is not

possible to analyse the responses by students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Business plans are effective. They are linked to the strategic plan and inform future actions on curriculum, staffing, budget and equal opportunities.

28. Financial management is strong. The college has sustained its financial health category A status throughout the major building programme. The college now out sources five non-core functions: ICT technical support, catering, reprographics, cleaning and plant maintenance. These changes have enabled the college to make savings of £250,000 each year whilst improving the quality of services. Although student numbers and enrolments have declined in the last two years, income to the college has risen due to an increased unit of resource. A central purchasing unit has been set up which sources supplies at best value. The college's reliance on LSC income is very low at about 50%. Learning resources are mainly good. Part-time teachers are now employed by the college's own agency and the savings incurred allow for better conditions of service and staff development. As a result of prudent financial management, improving and high success rates in most areas, a much improved learning environment and high standards of teaching and learning the college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Construction

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

Strengths

- good workplace training
- good skills development
- effective individual support for learners.

Weaknesses

- low apprenticeship framework achievement rates
- inadequate target setting in learners' reviews
- inadequate promotion of equal opportunities in learners' reviews.

Scope of provision

29. The college offers a range of construction provision at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Craft courses are offered in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing and electrical installation. There are 121 apprentices and 28 advanced apprentices on the college's own work-based learning programme, which was the area of work inspected. In addition, there are 114 students on college-based courses. The college provides sub-contracted off-the-job training for 169 learners from local and national training providers. HE courses are offered in construction and civil engineering. There are 120 pupils aged 14 to 16 attending college on a range of construction courses. A number of short courses for industry including skills testing, gas assessment and woodworking machines courses are offered. There are 23 learners attending community-based courses in carpentry and joinery and plumbing.

Achievement and standards

30. Achievement of full apprenticeship frameworks has been low, but current learners are making good progress towards component qualifications. Retention rates have improved steadily over the past four years. For apprentices recruited in 2003/04, 58% have either achieved the full framework or remain in learning, an increase of 16 percentage points on the previous year and well above the average for the sector. There is a 100% retention rate of 2003/04 learners on a work occupation programme. There have been similar improvements in retention rates of advanced apprentices. The majority of learners recruited in 2004/05 remain in learning. Of the 2004/05 cohort of advanced apprentices, 37% have completed

more than 50% of their technical certificate and 58% have completed key skills. Some 66% of apprentices have completed their technical certificate and 65% have completed key skills. Attendance rates have improved and average attendance at construction and key skills lessons is 84% and 78% respectively.

31. Learners develop a good range of skills through the training provided by the college and their employers. A learner has gained experience in laying reclaimed bricks and one learner is working on the replacement of an ornamental timber barge board for a roof. Another is decorating new houses and is sufficiently skilled to work on show homes. The college celebrates learners' success in an annual awards event. Learners are also encouraged to compete in national competitions. One learner in painting and decorating competed at the national final of the Skill Build competition in 2004.

Quality of education and training

32. The quality of teaching and learning in off-the-job training is high. Schemes of work are comprehensive and lesson plans contain clear aims and objectives. Theory lessons are linked effectively to practical examples and practical activities are used to maintain learners' interest. Some teachers have developed creative activities for theory teaching, inspired by material developed by the national Standards Unit. In practical lessons, teachers use demonstrations and questioning to consolidate students' learning. In one wood occupations lesson, learners developed new skills in measuring and setting out rafters and learning to use a roofing square. In plumbing lessons, learners work on pipe boards to bend copper pipe, apply fittings and solder joints. Learners gain good skills in the workplace. One learner is working on the replacement of a boiler and complete heating system in an occupied property. Students aged 14 to 16 gain good basic construction skills and produce work of a high standard.

33. Accommodation is in new spacious and well-equipped, purpose-built workshops. Many have been equipped with new hand tools and all have information technology (IT) workstations. There is sufficient space to enable learners' brickwork projects to remain standing until they attend the following week. In painting and decorating, there are sufficient bays for learners to practice skills and, in plumbing, learners work on boards that can be moved and stored safely until required. All workshops enable learners to gain good experience of working at heights. Teachers have appropriate technical qualifications and experience. Some new teachers recruited direct from industry have still to gain teaching qualifications. They are well supported by a mentor to develop lesson plans, schemes of work and teaching skills. During learners' reviews and work-based assessment, there is good checking to ensure learners observe requirements for personal protective equipment. Work-based assessors and employers reinforce health and safety well.

34. Assessment is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. Workplace assessment is carried out by work-based assessors and teachers. Detailed records are kept showing learners' progress towards their qualifications and are updated regularly. Portfolios of evidence contain a summary sheet to enable learners to follow their progress. Learners have a good understanding of which units they are working on and which they will progress

to. Assessors respond quickly to requests for assessment when an opportunity arises on site to assess a specific task.

35. Apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships are offered in a wide range of construction crafts to meet the needs of learners and large and small employers. The college has good work placements. Employers are visited by staff to ensure they can meet qualification and health and safety requirements. Employers range from multinational companies to small employers with one or two employees. Most learners progress into full-time jobs with their employer on completion of their training. Links with local schools are good. In addition to Increased Flexibility (IF) programmes for 14 to 16 year olds, the college managed a Pathfinder project with five local schools and seven employers; 120 year 10 pupils participated in this programme, 20 of whom were offered apprenticeships.

36. Support for learners at college and in the workplace is effective. Teachers interview all applicants and assess learners' literacy, numeracy and practical skills. All learners have an induction to college and their workplace. Individual learning plans are updated as training needs change. Workplace reviews are carried out regularly. Targets are set, but these are insufficiently detailed to enable learners to make better progress. Equal opportunities are covered during review visits, but this is superficial and there is inadequate promotion of understanding of equality with learners and employers. In between reviews, learners receive continuous support from teachers and assessors. Learners identified as being at risk of not completing are referred to personal learning coaches who have contributed significantly to maintaining improved retention rates. Good support is provided for learners with literacy and numeracy support needs.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management of work-based learning in construction are satisfactory. The head of school provides clear leadership with a focus on improving standards in teaching and learning. Staff have an annual appraisal with clear targets set for developments in teaching and learning skills or updates to professional qualifications such as gas accreditation. Teachers have access to management information which is used well in regular team meetings. There has been a significant restructure in the management of work-based learning. There are now good links between the work-based learning department and construction staff. Monthly curriculum meetings and separate work-based learning meetings have been introduced with a focus on teaching and learners at risk. Course teams contribute effectively to the self-assessment report and actions are followed up at team meetings.

Engineering

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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on some engineering programmes in 2003/04
- good practical skills development
- good resources
- particularly good links with schools and employers
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- uninspiring teaching in some theory lessons
- low pass rates in motor vehicle at level 1 and the national diploma courses
- low apprenticeship achievement rates
- inadequate target setting in work-based learners' reviews.

Scope of provision

38. Courses are offered in motor vehicle repair, engineering manufacturing, and electronic engineering. Full-time courses include a certificate in motor vehicle, national certificate in electronics and a national diploma in electrical and electronic engineering. Part-time courses are provided in engineering manufacturing and computer-aided design (CAD). The college has a CoVE in multi-skilled systems maintenance engineering. There are 71 full-time and 106 part-time students. Some 49 apprentices and 35 advanced apprentices are on work-based learning programmes in motor vehicle repair and electrical engineering. There are 90 students and work-based learners aged 16 to 18, with 171 aged over 19. Engineering courses, including a GCSE, are provided for 72 pupils aged 14 to 16.

Achievement and standards

39. Retention and pass rates are high on some engineering courses. For example, in 2003/04, retention rates on the first diploma in operations and maintenance, the NVQ in performing engineering operations and the national certificate in engineering were 100%. Pass rates on level 1 motor vehicle repair and national diploma courses, however, have been consistently below national averages. Retention rates on these courses have improved and

are now close to the average. Apprenticeship framework achievement rates are low. Only 2 advanced apprentices have completed the framework since 2000/01, whilst a number remain in learning. Of the 22 foundation apprentices who started in 2002/03, 10 have completed the framework. The retention rate for apprentices currently in learning has improved significantly. Most are now making good progress towards completing all components of the framework.

40. Competent students develop good practical skills at college and in the workplace, including use of hand and machine tools such as computer numerically controlled (CNC) machines and CAD systems. Some work-based learners take a high level of responsibility early in their programmes. One advanced apprentice carried out major engine and gearbox repairs with minimal supervision. In the college's machine shop, students produce high-quality work, especially on CoVE multi-skill courses. Engineering manufacturing students design and manufacture items using CAD or computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) systems and test and measure components electronically. Overall, the standard of students' projects, portfolios and other written work is satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Motor vehicle repair and maintenance (1 year)	1	No. of starts	22	*	32
		% retention	59	*	75
		% pass rate	77	*	75
First diploma in operations and maintenance (short course)	2	No. of starts	29	15	*
		% retention	100	80	*
		% pass rate	93	50	*
NVQ performing engineering operations (1 year, 2001/02 2 year, 2002/03 to 2003/04)	2	No. of starts	23	22	*
		% retention	57	33	*
		% pass rate	0	0	*
CAD	2/3	No. of starts	27	27	16
		% retention	100	85	81
		% pass rate	78	61	77

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
National certificate in engineering (2 year)	3	No. of starts	60	46	*
		% retention	75	50	*
		% pass rate	29	78	*

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

Quality of education and training

41. Most teaching is good or better, although there is less good teaching than the average for the college as a whole. Most practical teaching is good. In practical lessons, test pieces and projects are wide ranging and involve a variety of skills that challenge student's learning. In a CoVE lesson, a project involving making an air engine involved students demonstrating a variety of skills and working to high standards. In the workplace, apprentices are coached well by employers and develop good skills. There is, however, some uninspiring theory teaching. In less successful lessons, teachers talk too much, make insufficient use of ILT and do not involve the students sufficiently. In the best lessons, teachers have detailed schemes of work and clear lesson plans. Teachers use a range of appropriate teaching methods and take into account students' individual needs. For example, in a CAD lesson, students instructed each other in their own specialism in producing three-dimensional drawings. Average attendance at lessons during inspection was higher than the college and national averages.

42. Resources for practical and theory teaching are good and include the high-quality, purpose-built training centre that supports the CoVE. Accommodation is spacious and has the latest computer-aided machine tools, CAD systems and robotics. The machine shop, fabrication and welding areas are also well equipped. The motor vehicle workshop is spacious and has ramps, traction rollers, test equipment and tooling of industrial standard. A wide range of specialised engineering textbooks, magazines and journals is available in the learning resource centre. Staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Most have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Work-based assessors and verifiers are appropriately qualified.

43. Assessment is satisfactory. College-based assessment is varied and carried out regularly. Constructive comments are given on students' project work and assessed test pieces to help them improve their performance. Assessment in the workplace is satisfactory with detailed recording of observations carried out in the workplace. Initial assessment is satisfactory with adequate testing in basic and key skills to assess levels and additional learning needs.

44. Links with employers and schools are particularly good. Employers are actively involved in CoVE programme reviews and were also involved in the design of the new

engineering accommodation. There are well-established links with local schools where significant support is provided including vocational GCSEs and the use of the CoVE bench fitting and machine shop for practical training. Courses in engineering manufacturing, electronics and motor vehicle repair meet the requirements of students, employers and the local community well. There is, however, little provision in mechanical engineering.

45. Support for students is good. Comprehensive induction includes familiarisation with courses and instruction on health and safety and equal opportunities. Students are given a detailed information booklet with contact details for support and advice outside college hours. Tutorials are used well to support students with personal issues, to review progress and to provide guidance on progression to HE and employment. Progress reviews for work-based learners are conducted regularly. Pastoral support is satisfactory, but target setting is insufficiently specific to help learners make progress with their qualifications. Most employers and their staff act as effective mentors to support work-based learners in the workplace. Good additional learning support is provided, which is valued by students.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Improvements in accommodation and equipment, and establishment of the CoVE, have been managed well. Effective measures have been implemented to raise retention and pass rates on college courses and in work-based learning. Teaching staff have regular lesson observations linked to staff appraisals and development. Good practice is shared through monthly curriculum staff meetings. Quality assurance procedures in the college and internal verification in the workplace are satisfactory with adequate sampling and verification plans in place. Promotion of equal opportunities for work-based learners is adequate through induction and reinforcement on progress reviews.

Business administration, management and professional

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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on many courses
- much good teaching and learning
- high standard of students' work
- broad range of provision with good progression routes
- good support for learners to raise achievement.

Weaknesses

- low work-based learning achievement rates
- low pass rates on the advanced certificate and diploma in marketing
- insufficient business links for full-time business courses.

Scope of provision

47. Courses are offered from entry level to HE in business studies, administration, personnel, accounting, management, and marketing. There are 128 full-time students on courses including AS level, GCE A2, AVCE, first and national awards in business studies, NVQs in administration and accounting, the diploma for medical secretaries and a diploma in medical reception. There are more than 700 part-time students studying programmes including NVQs in accounting and administration, the certificate and diploma in marketing, the certificate in personnel practice and the diploma and executive diploma in management. There are 35 work-based learners, 22 of whom are on an apprenticeship programme in business administration and 13 working towards an NVQ at levels 2, 3, or 4 in accountancy. Work-based learners attend the college one day a week for off-the-job, technical certificate and key skills training.

Achievement and standards

48. Retention and pass rates on many courses are high and above national averages. On several part-time business and management courses, pass rates have improved to very high levels over the past three years. The pass rate on GCE A-level business studies is above the national average, but only 17% of students gain high grades. Pass rates are low and below the national average on the advanced certificate and diploma in marketing. Retention rates

are particularly high on the certificate in personnel practice, the diploma in medical reception and at NVQ level 3 in accounting. The retention rate has been low on the AVCE in business. This course has been replaced by a national diploma and the retention rate for students starting in 2003 has improved significantly.

49. Achievement rates for work-based learners are low. Many new procedures have been introduced recently to improve retention and pass rates. Learners' progress is now monitored effectively through the use of more structured progress reviews. Most learners recruited in 2003/04 and 2004/05 have completed or are still in learning and are making good progress towards achievement of accountancy NVQs and business administration apprenticeships.

50. Students' work is of a high standard. They gain in confidence and can analyse, criticise and present logical arguments with high levels of skill. Good use is made by all students of the extensive computer and library facilities to produce well-researched and presented assignments and portfolios. However, there is insufficient integration of ICT for research or teaching and learning in some lessons. Teachers are increasingly making use of data available on students' progress and prior achievements to set more challenging targets for individuals. Attendance and punctuality at lessons for part-time students and for work-based learning and key skills are low. Late arrivals disrupt or delay the start of lessons. Part-time adult students who miss lessons are, however, supported well by tutors to ensure progress is maintained.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, management and professional, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	39	32	61
		% retention	79	94	92
		% pass rate	81	83	64
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	29	35	15
		% retention	86	83	87
		% pass rate	84	100	77
Diploma in medical reception	2	No. of starts	*	45	20
		% retention	*	93	95
		% pass rate	*	83	95

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AVCE (double award) in business	3	No. of starts	19	25	15
		% retention	47	64	47
		% pass rate	89	94	86
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	49	32	25
		% retention	92	91	92
		% pass rate	71	79	83
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	56	62	71
		% retention	91	90	99
		% pass rate	65	68	69
NVQ administration	3	No. of starts	15	31	28
		% retention	93	90	96
		% pass rate	79	86	89
NVQ accounting	Higher	No. of starts	64	76	23
		% retention	92	87	83
		% pass rate	46	42	89

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

Quality of education and training

51. There is much good teaching and learning, with the standard similar to the average for the college. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching methods including individual and group activities, case studies and discussions. In one management lesson, students shared project proposals with other group members. This led to lively discussion enabling students to learn from each other and develop confidence to start project work. Teachers regularly check students' learning during and at the end of lessons. In work-based learning lessons, teachers support learners well to match workplace evidence to the NVQ. In one tutorial, administration students took part in a range of activities which helped them to consider their anxieties about examinations and develop strategies to overcome them. In part-time management and accounting lessons, good use is made of students' work

experience. Insufficient use is made of real business examples or part-time work experience on full-time business courses. Past examination questions are used to prepare students well for external examinations in professional subjects. In a few lessons, little account is taken of students' different levels of ability, previous experience and knowledge, or preferred learning styles.

52. Staff are well qualified and experienced, however, few staff have undertaken recent commercial updating. Learning materials are generally of a high standard. The library is well stocked and has a good range of up-to-date materials, including magazines, videos and study guides. The intranet and other interactive learning materials are being developed and are used increasingly by staff and students. Although equipment is widely available, there is still insufficient use of ILT in some lessons to reinforce learning or encourage independent study. The new accommodation offers a good study environment, but some shared classrooms lack relevant display materials.

53. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Marked work is moderated and returned promptly with constructive feedback and clear guidance on how it can be improved. Assessment of work-based learners is carried out in the workplace and at college. Assessors provide detailed and constructive feedback. Assessment planning is comprehensive. Progress monitoring using systematic assessment progress records is carried out for all full-time students and work-based learners. Progress reviews are less well developed for part-time courses. Individual learning plans are used, but vary in quality and are not always updated. Work-based learners' knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities are adequately checked during progress reviews.

54. There is a broad range of provision including full-time courses aimed mainly at students aged 16 to 18 and part-time courses for adults. There are good progression opportunities to higher level courses or to employment. Full-time students benefit from a variety of enrichment activities including guest speakers and visits. Although full-time administration courses include a period of work experience, this is not yet included on full-time business courses. There is a lack of involvement of external businesses in the design and teaching of full-time courses. All full-time students study key skills, but these are not always taught in a vocational context.

55. Good support is provided for students in lessons, supplemented by regular tutorials and workshops. Part-time adult students are well supported through tutorials arranged as an integral part of lessons. College staff visit work-based learners in the workplace regularly to provide coaching and carry out assessments. Students can approach staff informally and this leads to good motivation and rapport between students and staff. Effective guidance helps students to decide on their particular course of study. There is good access to a range of support services including counselling and careers advice.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are good. There are effective strategies in place to improve the quality of provision with a clear focus on students' experience and performance

monitoring. Management of courses and monitoring of students' progress are well organised and effective. Strong partnerships are maintained with two major employers who provide apprenticeship placements. There are close links between on-the-job and off-the-job learning for work-based learners. Communication between staff is good although formal meetings are infrequent. Targets set at course team meetings are not always reviewed regularly or incorporated into planning. Course reviews are updated every six weeks and contribute to self-assessment. However, in some cases there is little evaluation of the effectiveness of actions taken. There is an appropriate internal verification process in place with a detailed feedback given to assessors. No items for action have been identified in a recent external verifiers' report. Lesson observations are carried out with feedback which is detailed and constructive. Areas for improvement in teachers' performance are identified and targets are set to address these.

Sports, travel and leisure

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- excellent resources for travel and tourism
- wide range of full-time courses and additional qualifications.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in 2003/04 on AVCE and first diploma in travel and tourism.

Scope of provision

57. Full-time courses from levels 1 to 4 are offered in sport, leisure and travel. Sport courses include NVQ level 1 in sport and recreation, first diploma in sport, national diploma in sport and exercise sciences and AS level and GCE A level in sport, games and recreation. Certificate and diploma courses in sport and fitness therapies are offered. Full-time students can gain additional qualifications in sports leadership, exercise studies, resort representatives and tourist guiding. There are 120 sport and 86 travel and tourism full-time students, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. Part-time provision includes a travel agency certificate, diploma in sport therapy massage, certificate in teaching exercise and fitness and basic treatment of sports injuries. A course in travel insurance and related travel services has attracted several hundred students, but the take up of the other short courses has been very low. There are currently 28 part-time students, all adults. GCSE travel and tourism is offered to pupils aged 14 to 16. A football development centre trains 30 male students. The CoVE in travel and tourism services offers an introductory diploma, first diploma, national certificate and diploma in travel and tourism and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in travel services. The CoVE has provided training and assessment for over 470 students from local retail travel agencies leading to a qualification in travel insurance and other travel services.

Achievement and standards

58. There are high pass rates on most courses. The pass rates on NVQ level 1 in sport and recreation and NVQ level 2 in travel services have improved to 100%. The pass rate on the national diploma in sport and exercise sciences has risen to above the national average and, on the diploma in sport therapy, has remained consistently above average. The pass rate on the AVCE in travel and tourism has fallen to below the national average and is also low on the first diploma.

59. Retention rates are similar to the national average on most courses. On the AVCE in travel and tourism and the national diploma in sport and exercise sciences, however, they are low. In 2004, 68% of sport and exercise science students progressed to HE. Attendance is at the national average.

60. Students' attainment in lessons is satisfactory. In sport, students demonstrate appropriate levels of practical skills. Some students in the CoVE produce work of a high standard for the stage of the course. Students' written work is generally satisfactory. In the best examples, students' work is appropriately referenced and well presented.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ sport, recreation and allied occupations	1	No. of starts	68	47	***
		% retention	81	70	***
		% pass rate	84	97	***
First diploma in sport	2	No. of starts	34	17	***
		% retention	82	65	***
		% pass rate	89	91	***
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	20	21	*17
		% retention	85	81	94
		% pass rate	88	94	69
National diploma in sport and exercise sciences	3	No. of starts	52	52	46
		% retention	65	58	57
		% pass rate	91	80	92
Diploma in sport therapy	3	No. of starts	16	25	**16
		% retention	63	72	94
		% pass rate	90	100	93

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AVCE (double award) travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	35	48	28
		% retention	63	65	61
		% pass rate	82	100	71

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

*first diploma travel and tourism

**diploma in sport massage therapy

***fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

61. Teaching and learning are good and in both sport and travel and tourism are close to the college average. Teaching programmes are well planned. Detailed schemes of work and lesson plans include learning objectives to meet the needs of different students, including the more able. Teachers use work in groups and pairs and individual work to good effect. In one sports lesson, a wide range of activities, including group work, was used effectively to revise the previous lesson, followed by the use of a well-prepared workbook for subsequent individual and small group tasks. Handouts and learning materials are well prepared. There is good use of ILT in some lessons although little reference is made to the college's intranet.

62. Relevant industrial and residential visits and work placements are used productively to enrich learning. For example, sports therapy students visited the training ground of a Premiership football club to view the therapy treatment area and listen to a talk from a trained sports therapist. Good use is made of topical issues. In one lesson, diversity was discussed through the theme of racism in sport in which students contributed recent examples from their own experience. In the less successful lessons, teachers do not extend the learning of more able students. In one lesson, a student who had completed the task played a computer game whilst waiting for others to finish.

63. Resources used for CoVE courses are of a very high standard. A large, well-equipped travel agency, an aircraft cabin simulator and several teaching rooms with ICT equipment are used frequently for practical teaching. Students respond well to working and studying in these facilities.

64. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have relevant industrial experience. Several travel and tourism teachers act as awarding body examiners and moderators. In sport, some staff have previous industrial experience in the health and fitness industry. There are insufficient on-site sports facilities. Students currently use an off-site sports hall and classroom. Fitness testing takes place in a temporary classroom. A new sports centre is due to be completed in mid May. The college has a good range of sporting and fitness equipment

for use in learning. Teaching rooms are satisfactory. Students' work and posters relevant to programmes are displayed.

65. Assessment is good. Most assignments are of a high standard and provide varied assessment activities. Students' work is marked promptly and appropriate feedback given. On most work, there are clear written points for improvement but, on some, there is little written feedback. In practical assessments, students are given good verbal and written feedback. Records of students' progress are satisfactory.

66. Support for students is satisfactory. Students benefit from and appreciate the support they receive from tutors. Individual tutorials are used to discuss progress, but are not used effectively to measure progress against targets. Students receive helpful careers advice during their class tutorials.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good communication between staff, which is enhanced by regular meetings. Actions arising from meetings are, however, not monitored consistently. Course quality is monitored through measures including lesson observations and reliable annual self-assessment. Strategies to improve retention rates include changing the level 3 courses offered to match students' needs more closely and the introduction of learning coaches for those requiring additional support. The annual appraisal system identifies training needs of staff, including the need for industrial updating in travel and tourism. There are inconsistencies in monitoring targets for retention and pass rates on some courses. Equality and diversity issues are addressed adequately in lessons. Management of the CoVE is satisfactory. There is satisfactory employer involvement of employers in the design of a range of short courses to meet industry needs.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning in theory and practical lessons
- high standard of accommodation and resources used effectively to promote learning
- effective support for students
- good curriculum management to enhance learning.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- low attendance at part-time evening classes and work-based learning sessions.

Scope of provision

68. There is a range of courses from level 1 to foundation degrees, including full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty, and holistic therapies. These include NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy, a diploma in nail art, a beauty specialist diploma and certificate in body massage. There are 201 full-time and 236 part-time students and 16 work-based hairdressing apprentices. Of these, 154 are aged 16 to 18 and 301 are adults with 3% male and 1% from minority ethnic groups. A range of community-based courses is provided, aiming to widen participation and attract students who do not traditionally enter education. This provision was not inspected. Courses are run for pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend from a number of local schools.

Achievement and standards

69. Pass rates on most courses are high and, in some cases, significantly above the national average. Retention rates on some courses are, however, well below the national average. Action taken this year to address low retention rates includes improved initial assessment resulting in students being placed on appropriate courses. Retention rates have improved significantly on some full-time courses, for example, on NVQ level 1 hairdressing it is currently well above the national average. Retention rates on some part-time evening classes and work-based learning programmes are, however, still low. Attendance was also particularly low in many of these sessions during inspection. Attendance overall is below the college's average. New measures have been introduced recently to follow up absence more systematically.

70. Students develop a very high standard of practical skills across all disciplines. For example, level 1 hairdressing students carry out cutting and blow drying at a high standard and level 2 beauty students perform competent body massages. They are able to relate theory to practice well and demonstrate good commercial awareness.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	1	No. of starts	51	26	**
		% retention	69	65	**
		% pass rate	100	88	**
Hairdressing (1 year)	2	No. of starts	**	45	35
		% retention	**	83	63
		% pass rate	**	95	100
Hairdressing (2 years)	2	No. of starts	84	51	30
		% retention	44	35	50
		% pass rate	92	100	100
Diploma in nail art	2	No. of starts	20	74	43
		% retention	80	73	72
		% pass rate	88	83	81
NVQ beauty therapy (1 year)	2	No. of starts	*	48	46
		% retention	*	73	74
		% pass rate	*	94	97
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	*	31	25
		% retention	*	77	92
		% pass rate	*	96	96

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Beauty specialist diploma (2 years)	3	No. of starts	20	17	31
		% retention	55	59	52
		% pass rate	60	100	94
Certificate in body massage	3	No. of starts	25	24	25
		% retention	80	83	76
		% pass rate	100	100	95

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

*course did not run

**fewer than 15 students

Quality of education and training

71. Teaching and learning are good in both practical and theory lessons. The proportion of good or better lessons is similar to the average for the college. In the best lessons, students are set challenging targets that develop their knowledge and skills effectively. In an anatomy and physiology lesson, students were given descriptors of certain muscles and bones and were asked to identify the correct name. Teachers reinforce theory by relating it to practice. In a very good lesson on colour correction, students used paints to illustrate the theory of neutralising unwanted colour tones in hair. Students were keen to share their own experiences and the teacher was able to use these to illustrate important points. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of underlying theory and current commercial practice. Students work competently and independently showing both initiative and good skills. There are sufficient clients in the salons to enable students to develop a very high standard of professionalism, particularly in beauty therapy. There is an extensive work experience programme for all full-time students.

72. Accommodation and resources for both theory and practical lessons are very good. Salons are decorated and equipped to a high standard and are well stocked with high-quality products and equipment. The training hairdressing salons enable team teaching and sharing of good practice. There is an attractive reception area to service all the salons. A wide range of teaching resources is used to promote learning in the classroom. There is little use of ILT in both practical and theory lessons. Teaching is carried out by eight full-time staff, three part-time staff and seven who are employed through the college’s agency. There is a full-time salon manager, responsible for marketing salon provision to clients, three part-time technicians and a work-based assessor. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.

73. There is satisfactory monitoring of students' assessment and progress. Assessment is well planned throughout the year. Students' individual learning styles are identified in detailed learner profiles, which take into account literacy and numeracy, initial assessment results and any individual learning needs. Internal verification is satisfactory. All full-time and part-time students have a structured induction. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality have been improved recently, but have yet to have a significant impact on attendance.

74. A wide range of courses from level 1 in hairdressing to a foundation degree in beauty and complementary therapies is offered. There is, however, no level 1 provision in beauty and complementary therapy offered at the college's site. There is a wide range of community-based courses in most subjects. Provision for 14 to 16 year olds has been running successfully for some time and pupils on this programme demonstrate a very high standard of practical skills. Progression rates between course levels and into employment are high.

75. Support and guidance for full-time students are effective. Initial assessment is used particularly well in hairdressing to place students on appropriate courses. The results of initial assessment are used to develop individual learning plans for full-time students. Target setting for improvement and achievement are effective. All full-time students and work-based learners have termly reviews with tutors to update individual learning plans. There is effective study support for full-time students. Tutorials are effective and support the learning and personal needs of the students well, however, part-time students do not have structured tutorials.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are good. There is effective and open management and an enthusiastic and motivated team where staff feel valued. All permanent staff have an annual appraisal, which identifies performance and staff development needs. Planning days are used effectively to address curriculum development and retention and pass rate targets. Staff work well as a team across the disciplines. A standard internal verification system is used across all areas. Students complete questionnaires about the quality of their courses and the college's services. Communication is good and staff are kept well informed. Weekly team meetings are minuted with actions recorded and monitored. The self-assessment report is thorough. The tutorial programme develops students' understanding of equality and diversity issues and equality of opportunity is well promoted. All salons have appropriate access for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility.

Health and social care

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

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

Strengths

- high retention rates on many courses
- high pass rates on NVQ level 2 care, certificate in counselling and the introductory diploma in health and social care
- good teaching and learning
- good co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learners
- good range and effective use of teaching and learning resources.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates on the diploma in childcare and education
- low apprenticeship framework achievement rates.

Scope of provision

77. There is a range of full-time and part-time courses in health, care, childcare, counselling, public services and housing from entry level to HE. There are 366 students aged 16 to 18 and 1,876 adults on FE courses. Some 447 students are on full-time courses, including a national diploma in care, certificate and diploma in childcare and education, national certificate in care and introductory diploma in health and social care, while 1,795 part-time students are enrolled on courses including levels 2 to 4 in counselling, Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) courses, first aid, health and safety, infection control and NVQs in care and early years care and education. Courses are located in the college, in community settings and on National Health Service (NHS) premises. There are 18 pupils aged 14 to 16 enrolled on a vocational GCSE in health and social care. Some 26 apprentices and 2 advanced apprentices are on work-based learning programmes in care and early years care and education.

Achievement and standards

78. Pass rates on the NVQ level 2 in care, introductory diploma in health and social care and certificate in counselling are high and consistently higher than the national average. The certificate in counselling has had a 100% pass rate since 2003. Retention rates on the certificate in childcare and education, NVQ level 2 in care, certificate in counselling and the

national certificate in supported housing are significantly higher than the national average. There has been a significant increase in recruitment to the diploma in childcare and education; however, retention rates are low and declining. Retention and framework achievement rates for both early years care and education and care apprentices have been low. In 2003/04, framework achievement was 33% for early years and 40% for care. Retention rates for learners starting since September 2004 have improved considerably and are currently 78% for care and 88% for early years. Some learners recruited recently have completed key skills and technical certificate units and are achieving NVQ units at an appropriate rate. Attendance at some lessons was low during inspection.

79. Students' work is of an appropriate standard. They demonstrate good links between theory and professional practice. In an outstanding childcare and education lesson, students completed artwork in the style of famous painters linked to Key Stage 1 requirements. There was very good sharing of how their ideas could be adapted to childcare and education settings. In most lessons, students learn well and their research and analytical skills are developed effectively. In a few lessons, where more able students completed an activity, additional activities were not provided to extend their learning. Work-based learners develop good practical care skills and portfolios contain a good range of evidence.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) introductory diploma in health and social care	1	No. of starts	21	*	21
		% retention	71	*	77
		% pass rate	93	*	94
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	17	23	32
		% retention	76	87	94
		% pass rate	92	60	87
Certificate in counselling	3	No. of starts	24	23	26
		% retention	92	96	96
		% pass rate	91	100	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	24	34	82
		% retention	83	79	71
		% pass rate	95	89	86
National certificate in supported housing	3	No. of starts	20	21	*
		% retention	95	95	*
		% pass rate	95	100	*

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

*course did not run

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

80. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and follow a detailed scheme of work. A variety of teaching and learning strategies, learning materials and resources are used effectively to develop students’ skills, knowledge and understanding. In one practical lesson in care, studying the development of multi-sensory activities for clients, the teacher worked with individual students to help them identify the suitability of activities for their chosen client. Effective links are made in lessons between theory and practice, and information from the workplace is used well in the lessons.

81. Teachers are vocationally experienced and appropriately qualified. Good opportunities for continuing professional development and technical updating are provided and taken up by teachers. A good range of high-quality resources is used in teaching. These include art and craft materials, virtual babies and a very good range of resources for planning care activities in the workplace. College accommodation is comfortable with good lighting; however, some classrooms are cramped and excessively hot. Each classroom has a computer-linked projector with screen, but opportunities for students to use ILT in lessons are not always taken. For example, during one lesson when the students were developing research skills, access to the Internet using the classroom computer was not included in the research options. A good range of books, journals and learning materials is available. Resources for work-based learning in the workplace are satisfactory. The range of workplace settings is satisfactory and provides learners with opportunities to gather appropriate evidence for their portfolios.

82. Assessment is fair and accurate. Assignment briefs are clear and detailed. However, assignment briefs for higher level courses do not include assessment criteria. Marking and moderation are thorough and grading consistent. Teachers provide constructive feedback for

students on how to improve their grades. NVQ assessment in the workplace is satisfactory and carried out to awarding body requirements. The college plays a strong role in meeting local needs for training in health and social care by providing a range of short courses in response to employers' needs. These include moving and handling, infection control and medicine administration.

83. Induction is satisfactory. Students receive adequate advice and guidance about their intended programme of study. They have good access to appropriate careers information. All students have regular and effective progress reviews and tutorials which include specific targets. Pastoral support for students is good. The newly introduced personal learning coach has been well received by students. Retention rates on courses have improved, but measures to address poor attendance at lessons are not yet fully effective.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are good. Roles and responsibilities within the department are clearly defined and staff work well as a team to develop courses. Staff attend regular meetings which focus on areas such as curriculum management, subject areas, key skills and cross-curricular issues. The management and co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training for work-based learners are good. Significant improvements have been made since the department took over the management of the programmes in September 2004. Quality assurance includes audits of course files, internal verification, the monitoring of meetings and course and lesson evaluation. Equal opportunities practices are incorporated into all aspects of work within the department. Self-assessment is thorough and inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report, although they considered that weaknesses in work-based learning and declining retention rates on some courses were not given sufficient priority.

Visual and performing arts and media

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on national diplomas in music practice and performing arts and GCE A2 media
- good practical work in music, performing arts and media
- much good teaching in music and media
- good community, industrial and international links.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on many courses, particularly art and design
- low pass rates on AS-level drama and GCE A2 art and design courses
- insufficient development of students' independent learning skills in art and design and performing arts diplomas
- some uninspiring and unchallenging teaching.

Scope of provision

85. Some 448 students are studying visual and performing arts and media in the school of creative industries. There are 372 full-time students: 315 aged 16 to 18 and 57 adults. There are 76 part-time students. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are offered in art and design, media, music, drama and theatre, and music technology. Vocational courses include first diplomas in performing arts and design and national diplomas in art and design, graphic design, media and performing arts. There is a post GCE A-level foundation course in art and design. Graphic design students take NVQ level 2 in design as an additional qualification. There is an extensive programme of part-time courses in outreach centres organised by the adult learning department. This work was not included in the inspection.

Achievement and standards

86. There are high retention and pass rates on national diplomas in music practice and performing arts. In GCE A2 media, pass rates have been consistently high with 100% pass rates for three years. There are low retention rates on many courses, particularly in art and design. Rates are below national averages on the first diploma in design, national diploma in art and design, national diploma in foundation studies in art and design, and GCE A2 art and design. The retention rate on AS-level media is well below the national average. Pass rates

on AS-level drama and GCE A2 art and design courses are very low at 25% below the national average.

87. Students produce high standards of practical work in music, performing arts and media. In media, students make videos and sound recordings of a high technical standard. There is good practical instrument work and good knowledge of theory in music. Students are working on a rock concert due to be the first performance at a new venue in Gateshead. Their work shows good understanding of style and students have a strong engagement with the music. In performing arts, students are working on scenes from Ibsen with sustained performances, demonstrating good vocal technique and a well-developed sense of character. Students on the foundation studies in art and design course, however, lack confidence in verbal skills and have poor literacy skills. Performing arts students' written work and evaluation are presented poorly. Students' work in art and design is mainly two dimensional with graphics and computer graphics being the strongest area. There is insufficient exploration of other media and processes. Drawing is underdeveloped. There is little independent learning and students do not research or develop their ideas sufficiently.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
First diploma in performing arts	2	No. of starts	20	31	29
		% retention	55	77	72
		% pass rate	82	71	90
National diploma in art and design	3	No. of starts	32	26	36
		% retention	56	69	58
		% pass rate	83	89	100
National diploma in graphic design	3	No. of starts	22	27	32
		% retention	55	67	69
		% pass rate	100	100	91
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	32	28	24
		% retention	69	71	79
		% pass rate	91	95	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
National diploma in music practice	3	No. of starts	*	20	20
		% retention	*	80	80
		% pass rate	*	94	88
GCE A2 art and design	3	No. of starts	17	17	20
		% retention	65	100	70
		% pass rate	82	94	88
GCE A2 media studies	3	No. of starts	*	17	15
		% retention	*	100	93
		% pass rate	*	100	100
National award in media in print, video, radio	3	No. of starts	21	18	57
		% retention	76	78	81
		% pass rate	100	100	89

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

*fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

88. Most teaching and learning is good and is particularly effective in music and media. Large music lessons are managed well. There is good integration of music theory and practice. In media, staff use their industrial experience well to enhance learning. Teachers use a good range of practical exercises and activities to stimulate learning. In a good music theory lesson, the teacher prepared a set of cards which students matched to provide evidence of their understanding of chord construction. Students were able to relate this knowledge to practical performance.

89. Art and design and performing arts lessons are well planned, but prescriptive and reinforce students' dependence on their teachers. In these lessons, insufficiently challenging targets are set. Second year students in art and design and performing arts are not always encouraged to develop independent learning skills. In a second year national diploma in graphic design lesson, students were asked to explore very simplistic basic design exercises. The work was slow and predictable. In a performing arts lesson, students have been working

on Berkoff's *The Trial* as a piece of unseen theatre. In the final performance, the teacher continued to intervene and give directions, limiting students' ability to make the final creative decisions.

90. Most staff are practitioners working as dramatists, musicians or designers and students appreciate their current industrial expertise. In all areas, the work of technicians is effective and valued by staff and students. The new building has improved resources in most areas, although specialist music areas are not yet completed. There is a good drama and rehearsal studio although the latter is small and limits practical activity. Sound, video recording and editing equipment for media studies are of a high specification. Media teaching rooms are small, reducing the success of practical work. There is no blackout for showing films and videos and no lighting video studio. In art and design, there are no large drawing studios, wet photography workshops or print workshops. Sculpture and ceramics spaces are currently not available. Art and design students do not have a personal work space which limits opportunities for experiments and large-scale extended work.

91. Assessment is thorough. Teachers make good use of written feedback to consolidate their extensive verbal feedback. Students have a good understanding of assessment criteria. The use of individual learning plans is not well established and many are incomplete or contain insufficiently specific learning targets. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory. Initial guidance through open days, interviews and auditions is effective and well received by students.

92. There are good community, industry and international links. In graphic design, students work with London advertising agencies. In media, there are extensive professional radio and television links. At the Waddington Street centre, adults with mental health problems on a programme of art and music lessons produce work of a high quality. The college has links with colleges in Italy and Norway and students have worked together on graphic design projects.

Leadership and management

93. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good communication at course level. Issues arising from course reviews are reported thoroughly, but the development of clear actions to remedy stated weaknesses is less rigorous. There is an effective programme of staff development. Staff absences and the use of agency staff have caused some disruption to students' learning. Strategies to improve retention rates have been successful.

Humanities

Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- very high pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level programmes
- proportion of high grades for AS levels and GCE A levels substantially above national averages
- students' achievements consistently much better than predicted by prior attainment
- outstanding teaching and learning
- wide range of enrichment provision in humanities
- very good personal and academic support
- very good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified.

Scope of provision

94. There is AS-level and GCE A-level provision in history, geography, law, psychology, religious studies and sociology. Small numbers are enrolled on GCSE courses in psychology and sociology. Some 74 adult students are on an access to HE programme which includes courses in social welfare, psychology, sociology and humanities and is supported by work on study skills, communication and research. Of 308 students, 130 are enrolled on psychology courses and 90 on sociology courses, with smaller numbers on law, history, religious studies and geography courses. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and the majority are female. There is a range of community-based courses, including local history, genealogy, religion and ethics as well as GCSE and AS-level psychology, which were not inspected.

Achievement and standards

95. There are very high pass rates in most AS-level and GCE A-level subjects. The proportion of high grades is well above the national average in most subjects and particularly high in psychology and sociology. In several years, there have been 100% pass rates in GCE A2 courses in geography and psychology, with a 100% retention rate in geography over the last three years. Pass rates on GCSE courses are generally satisfactory, however, retention rates are low. Pass rates on the access to HE programmes are very high. Progression rates to HE and success rates of students entering HE are high. Students' achievements are

consistently much better than might be predicted from their prior attainment and there has been a year-on-year increase in value added scores over the last four years.

96. Students learn good verbal and discursive skills in humanities subjects. Encouraged by teachers, they support each other and explore concepts and ideas with an increasing level of sophistication. This includes taking part in simulations in psychology and evaluating each other's presentations in religious studies. In many lessons, females outnumber males greatly, but both perform equally well. Group work, debate and discussion feature in many lessons and students are thoughtful and articulate in dealing with a range of difficult issues including situational ethics, the distinction between Stalinism and Leninism and the impact of industrial-scale agriculture on the ecosphere. Written work is of a high standard. Law coursework demonstrates students' good knowledge and understanding of key defining cases in common law, and of significant acts of parliament. On the access course, a presentation on legal, ethical and personal issues in adoption was discussed with great insight and sensitivity by adult students.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	41	36	33
		% retention	59	85	64
		% pass rate	58	85	76
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	124	113	100
		% retention	76	78	75
		% pass rate	94	98	87
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	56	81	72
		% retention	86	81	72
		% pass rate	96	97	92
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	42	53	45
		% retention	98	91	98
		% pass rate	100	96	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	71	55	60
		% retention	65	76	73
		% pass rate	87	76	89

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

Quality of education and training

97. The quality of teaching and learning is very high and better than the college's average, with most lessons being very good or outstanding. Careful planning and stimulating and inventive teaching are backed up by excellent personal relationships and students are challenged and supported to achieve high standards. In academic subjects, teachers are scholarly in their approach and share their passion for their subject. Teaching methods are well selected and time is used very productively for independent and collaborative work, and paired or joint teaching. Skilled questioning creates opportunities for students to express themselves and articulate complex ideas. Teachers are skilled at matching questions to individuals and ensuring that all students contribute to the level of their ability. Close attention is paid to the needs of individuals, matched by scrupulous adherence to coursework deadlines.

98. Difficult ideas and concepts are taught in a challenging and effective way in lessons in all subjects. In one lesson in religious studies, students were challenged to examine the different ethical models and the rationale for decisions on relative value. Adult students in an evening psychology class were drawn into evaluating the symptoms of autism through a number of video clips and simulations of key experiments.

99. Achievement and learning are supported by the commitment and expertise of staff. Staff are well qualified and many hold post-graduate qualifications. Teachers appointed recently are enthusiastic, skilled and well supported by long-established staff who demonstrate a passion for the college and their subject. The high-quality new accommodation is used well for learning. Dedicated subject rooms are decorated with high-quality, relevant wall displays, much of which is witty and striking. Other classrooms and corridors are well decorated with material relevant to subjects and career progression. There is a wide range of other good learning resources used, including those devised by the teachers. There is a satisfactory range of relevant resources for independent study in the learning resource centre.

100. Thorough assessment and helpful feedback are related to clear attainment objectives. There is careful marking of students' work with detailed indication of how improvements may be made. Some staff also act as external moderators or examiners and use this expertise to ensure the rigour and appropriateness of assessment.

101. A wide range of humanities subjects is provided at the college campus at AS level and GCE A2. The college has maintained subjects that recruit relatively small numbers of students to maintain a broad curriculum. There is extensive community-based provision. The access to HE course is successful in preparing adult students for HE. There are good links in place with local universities which provide progression opportunities. Full-time students aged 16 to 18 take part in a wide range of enrichment activities such as visits to concerts, master classes, and visits to waste management and open-cast mining sites. Equality and diversity have been the focus for the current year's enrichment activities.

102. Tutorial support is very effective. Students are given a high level of individual support to help them achieve high standards. Students on the access course receive very good guidance on study skills, essay writing, time management and use and acknowledgement of evidence sources. Support for students with disabilities is very good and has created opportunities for a number of students, including two who are profoundly deaf and work with sign language interpreters.

Leadership and management

103. Leadership and management are very good, with a strong focus on the quality of teaching, learning and attainment and the appropriate deployment of resources. Schemes of work and shared resources are particularly good, with well-developed systems for monitoring progress and attendance and maintaining students' profiles. A robust self-assessment process identifies key issues for improvement which are built into development plans with clear, measurable objectives and success criteria. The self-assessment report is comprehensive, rigorous, analytical and makes good use of data. The development plan identifies actions to meet the issues raised. Staff work closely and share good practice, both informally and formally, through a regular agenda item in meetings. There are thorough and strong quality assurance procedures with effective peer review and cross monitoring of teaching which contribute to maintaining consistent high quality across all subjects.

Literacy and numeracy

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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- good teaching and learning
- extensive provision to meet the needs of a wide range of students
- responsive support and guidance for individuals
- good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate on GCSE mathematics
- insufficiently evaluative monitoring of individual progress in lessons.

Scope of provision

104. Literacy and numeracy courses are offered from pre-entry to level 2 in foundation studies, skills for life, entry to employment (E2E) and Jobcentre Plus programmes. Some 29, students aged 16 to 18 are following a Pathways programme which includes life skills, literacy and numeracy, IT and vocational options. There are 85 adult students following a 'living in the community' programme which offers a range of short and modular courses leading to college certificates and externally accredited modules. There are 30 learners following the E2E programme. In total, 225 students are on literacy and numeracy programmes. There are 59 students on GCSE English and 174 on GCSE mathematics courses. Courses are offered during the day and evening and through part-time, full-time or distance learning options.

Achievement and standards

105. Pass rates are high on literacy and numeracy courses and on GCSE English and mathematics. Most are consistently above national averages. In entry level literacy, there were 100% pass rates in 2003 and 2004. On the level 1 certificate in adult numeracy, pass rates in 2003 and 2004 were well above the national average. Students on Pathways programmes consistently achieve their individual learning goals. Students following the living in the community programme achieve externally accredited certificates successfully. Retention rates are high on literacy and numeracy programmes and satisfactory in GCSE English. However, the retention rate in GCSE mathematics has been below the national average for two consecutive years. In-year retention rates on both GCSE programmes in the current year have improved to well above average. Overall attendance is satisfactory.

106. Work produced in lessons and in written assignments is of a high standard. Students communicate increasingly well in speech and writing. In a literacy lesson, one student who passed the level 1 test in December is now close to achieving level 2 which will enable her to take a teaching assistant qualification. Foundation students successfully completed an assignment showing their understanding of the basic principles of Indian head massage. Others demonstrated good practical skills by producing an example of textured embroidery. Students taking a series of externally accredited mathematics units recently achieved very high grades in the managing money unit.

A sample of retention and pass rates in literacy and numeracy, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Basic literacy	Entry	No. of starts	*	161	103
		% retention	*	94	94
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Profile of achievement	1	No. of starts	197	306	245
		% retention	80	94	97
		% pass rate	98	92	92
Certificate in adult literacy	1	No. of starts	*	57	32
		% retention	*	80	100
		% pass rate	*	90	89
Certificate in adult numeracy	1	No. of starts	*	85	20
		% retention	*	91	90
		% pass rate	*	90	89
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	114	81	60
		% retention	69	63	72
		% pass rate	58	67	84

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	216	159	150
		% retention	70	60	65
		% pass rate	45	49	48

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

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

107. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are similar to the average for the college, although there is no very good or outstanding teaching. Planning is thorough and takes account of the needs of individual students. In a literacy lesson on giving and receiving instructions, tasks were planned to enable students with hearing impairments to participate fully. They communicated effectively using British sign language and demonstrated their ability to follow instructions sufficiently well to construct a small car from building blocks. Teachers have high expectations and encourage students to succeed. This raises motivation and improves performance. In a GCSE mathematics lesson, students demonstrated good learning through their accurate use of trigonometry. Learning activities are sequenced carefully to build knowledge and understanding. In a literacy lesson, students demonstrated their ability to recognise and use adjectives appropriately. This knowledge was extended skilfully through writing an advertisement for 'exquisitely tasty sweets'. GCSE English students develop appropriate literary criticism skills. Analysis of poems from different cultures and traditions demonstrates their increasing ability to identify and interpret linguistic devices used by authors. Effective learning is taking place through practical activities. In an E2E session, students aspiring to work in painting, decorating and construction industries successfully practised weighing and measuring skills, using imperial, metric and non-standard measurements.

108. Resources are good on literacy, numeracy and GCSE courses. Staff are well qualified in their specialist areas. They have a strong commitment to continuous professional development. Students benefit significantly from their specialist knowledge and expertise in general and specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning is supported by high-quality teaching and practice materials which are used well to develop essential skills in literacy and numeracy. Teachers produce highly effective learning materials, presented in a variety of formats to meet individual needs. Classroom accommodation is new, spacious and decorated with colourful learning materials. Computers are readily available and students make significant use of ICT to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

109. Assessment procedures and practices are rigorous. Students' levels of literacy and numeracy are assessed systematically on entry to the college. Their learning needs are identified and targets set to improve specific skills. Progress monitoring is regular and

continuous. However, monitoring and recording of progress made in lessons is not sufficiently evaluative. Students' records do not adequately show what students have and have not achieved compared with the objectives set in the lesson. In GCSE English, written feedback on some assignments is not detailed sufficiently to guide students on how to improve their work. In literacy and numeracy, students work at their own pace and take the national tests when they are ready to achieve the next level. Internal verification is thorough and assessment is well organised, which is confirmed by external verification.

110. An extensive range of provision is offered to meet the needs of a wide range of students. These include young people and adults with a wide range of individual learning needs in addition to the need to develop literacy and numeracy skills. Provision includes day, evening, part-time, full-time and distance learning options. Literacy and numeracy learning is also provided for work-based learners and Jobcentre Plus clients.

111. Support for students is good and effectively meets individual needs. Learning support assistants are allocated quickly to students identified as a result of diagnostic testing. Students can also attend regular drop-in workshops. There is a good balance of teacher-directed support and self-referral to workshops. Students' progress is monitored carefully in the workshops and curriculum teachers notified of progress. A full range of college and external agency support is made available to students. College staff act as the intermediary in obtaining specialist or specific support required by individuals. Support also takes the form of flexible timetabling of lessons and study support tutorials to fit around students' work or domestic arrangements.

Leadership and management

112. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear commitment to continuous improvement, underpinned by sound strategic planning. Management is collaborative and consultative. Staff are involved fully in the decision making process. There is a strong focus on raising standards and meeting the needs of individual students. Quality assurance is rigorous. Course reviews are thorough and searching. Areas for development are identified and followed up with action. There is effective sharing of good practice and supportive mentoring of new staff. Although most teaching is of a consistent high standard, there is insufficient teaching that is very good. Liaison with employers on the E2E programme is good. Good communication with partner schools greatly facilitates the transition from school to college of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	31	67
2	32	14
3	35	12
4/5	0	4
Other	2	3
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

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

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	262	484	5
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	83	113	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	139	131	2
Business administration, management and professional	278	1,134	10
Information and communication technology	353	1,282	12
Retailing, customer service and transportation	14	8	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	822	778	12
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	294	407	5
Health, social care and public services	687	2,120	20
Visual and performing arts and media	710	1,088	13
Humanities	421	340	6
English, languages and communication	201	659	6

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Foundation programmes	153	777	7
Total	4,417	9,321	100*

Source: provided by the college in spring 2005

* figures are rounded and do not total 100

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	868	1,327	1,124	602	537	740
	Retention rate %	74	78	79	76	73	79
	National average %	75	75	76	70	70	71
	Pass rate %	81	59	76	68	61	78
	National average %	67	69	73	68	70	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,669	1,936	1,524	1,610	1,248	1,066
	Retention rate %	75	75	67	82	76	74
	National average %	70	70	71	68	68	67
	Pass rate %	75	69	71	76	75	77
	National average %	68	70	73	67	71	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,246	2,150	1,762	1,432	1,333	1,100
	Retention rate %	74	77	76	80	77	77
	National average %	70	70	77	68	70	69
	Pass rate %	79	79	84	69	72	78
	National average %	75	77	80	68	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	64	*	*	373	317	359
	Retention rate %	83	*	*	78	75	81
	National average %	73	**	**	67	68	69
	Pass rate %	87	*	*	55	59	67
	National average %	54	**	**	54	54	58

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). Where applicable, the national rates used in the table are for GFE colleges which are grouped in the LSC benchmarking data as colleges with a high widening participation factor.

Sources of information:

1. *National averages: Benchmarking Data 2001 to 2003: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.*

2. *College rates for 2000/01 to 2002/03: College ISR*

** fewer than 15 students enrolled*

*** 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)	78	21	1	71
Level 2 (intermediate)	78	22	0	45
Level 1 (foundation)	69	31	0	16
Other sessions	75	25	0	8
Totals	76	23	1	140

Notes