



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

# STOCKPORT COLLEGE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

This inspection was carried out by OFSTED under section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It was a joint inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

# **STOCKPORT COLLEGE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT**

**Inspection week: May 21–May 25 2001**

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Reference no. HMI 323

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# Summary

## Part A: Summary

### Information about the College

Stockport, with a population of about 293,000, is a compact and mainly suburban area to the south east of Manchester. In many respects the population is prosperous and unemployment is below both the national and the north west averages, although there are a few areas of the borough where there are high levels of disadvantage. Stockport College is one of the largest colleges of further and higher education in the country. It is the main provider of vocational courses in the metropolitan borough and surrounding area. The college offers around 400 courses. In several of the college's vocational areas it is possible to progress from foundation level through to degree level. There is also substantial work-based provision. The work of the college is concentrated on a single site which is close to the town centre. During 1999/2000 there were 12,805 students at the college, of whom 64 per cent were aged 19 or over, and nine per cent were of minority ethnic origin (compared with less than three per cent in the local population). Eighty-one per cent of students were following further education courses, with 22 per cent of these enrolled on full-time courses and the remaining 78 per cent on part-time courses. The college's higher education courses were not inspected.

### How Effective is the College?

Inspectors judged the overall quality of provision to be inadequate because six out of the 13 curriculum areas were judged to be unsatisfactory and leadership and management were also weak. The college's key strengths and the areas which should be improved are listed below.

#### Key strengths

- the wide range of courses and the opportunities for progression
- effective personal support for students
- the promotion of equal opportunities
- the progress made by adults on access courses
- the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

#### What should be improved

- the effectiveness of leadership and management in:
  - setting a clear direction for the work of the college
  - establishing standards for the improvement of learning
  - assuming detailed oversight of the curriculum
  - managing and monitoring performance at all levels
- pass rates on many courses
- the proportion of students who complete courses
- the quality of teaching and learning in many curriculum areas
- the consistency of the implementation of quality assurance procedures
- the quality of work-based learning
- the effectiveness of provision for Curriculum 2000
- the assessment and teaching of key skills.

# Summary

## The Quality of Provision in Individual Curriculum and Occupational Areas

The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and occupational areas that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Inspectors make judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: outstanding (grade 1), good (grade 2), satisfactory (grade 3), unsatisfactory (grade 4), very weak (grade 5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Mathematics, Science and Sports Science	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> There is a broad and flexible range of provision. Examination pass rates in a few subjects are improving, but there are unsatisfactory retention and pass rates on all general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A-level) courses. Quality assurance and self-assessment procedures lack rigour.
Computing and Information Technology	<b>Satisfactory</b> There are high standards of work on some courses, but under-achievement and poor retention on others. Specialist resources are of very good quality.
Construction	<b>Satisfactory</b> Recent changes to the management of the department have impacted beneficially on the provision. Retention is improving. The overall experience of students has yet to be evaluated rigorously.
Engineering	<b>Satisfactory</b> The provision is broad and there are some excellent resources. Retention rates have decreased and pass rates are mixed. Most of the teaching is at least satisfactory, with a high level of individual support of students. There is insufficient work-based assessment and reviews of apprentices' progress are weak.
Business	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> There are high pass rates and effective teaching on management and professional courses, but too much unsatisfactory teaching on business studies and public services courses. Pass rates are unsatisfactory on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ), GCE A-level and text processing courses and on work-based training programmes.
Hairdressing, Complementary Therapies and Floristry	<b>Good</b> There is good retention on college-based programmes. Students produce good portfolios and achieve high standards of practical work. There are well-managed floristry assessments, but hairdressing in work-based provision is poor.
Health and Social Care	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> There is a broad range of well-resourced programmes in social work, counselling, childcare and health and social care. Retention rates are low and declining on many courses. Pass rates on some courses are also low. Over a quarter of lessons inspected were unsatisfactory. Course reviews lack rigour and pay insufficient attention to retention and pass rates.
Leisure and Tourism	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> Teaching is generally satisfactory, but there is low retention on advanced and intermediate full-time courses and inadequate monitoring of students' progress. Teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory.
Design and Visual Arts	<b>Good</b> The teaching is good, the standard of students' work is high, and pass rates are above the national average.

## Summary

English, Languages & Performing Arts	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> There is too much poor teaching. Retention and pass rates are low on many courses, particularly at advanced level. There is a lack of subject leadership in English and modern foreign languages.
Social Sciences	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> There are very poor retention and pass rates on most GCE A-level courses, but some good pass rates on sociology courses. Teaching is generally satisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements are ineffective and there is insufficient use of target-setting.
Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities	<b>Good</b> The individual needs of a wide and diverse group of students are well met. Teaching is generally good and students achieve well on pre-vocational courses.
Basic Skills	<b>Satisfactory</b> Help with basic skills is provided in a variety of ways. Support for individual students is effective, but there is insufficient focus on the acquisition of basic skills in partnership teaching sessions.

### How Well is the College Led and Managed?

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is unsatisfactory provision in six out of the 13 curriculum areas inspected. Too high a proportion of the teaching is unsatisfactory and overall student retention and pass rates are below the averages for further education (FE) colleges. Management accountability is not well understood. Quality assurance is inadequate, as are curriculum and performance management.

### How Well are Students and Trainees Guided and Supported?

The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance for learners are good. The absence of a centralised admissions system leads to variations in practice and results in some students being placed on inappropriate courses. There are effective induction arrangements for all students, including those who join the college after the start of the academic year. The support arrangements are satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is good, but learning support requires greater cross-college co-ordination. Tutorial practice is inconsistent. On some courses, students' progress is not monitored or reviewed adequately.

### Students' Views of the College

Students' views about the college were taken into account and their main comments are presented below.

#### What students like about the college

- the approachable and friendly teachers
- the personal support
- the good facilities, particularly the library, IT and craft workshops
- the adult environment
- the college's central location
- the range and quality of student services
- the shops on site.

# Summary

## What they felt could be improved

- the quality of some aspects of tutorial support
- the teaching and assessment of key skills
- car parking
- the provision of dedicated base rooms for every course
- social accommodation for students
- the lack of space and poor ventilation in some classrooms.

## Other Information

The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take in response to issues raised in the report. The Governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).



# The College as a Whole

## Part B: The College as a Whole

### Achievement and Standards

#### How well do learners achieve?

1 Inspectors examined the college's retention and pass rates for students aged 16–18 and for those aged 19 or over at level 1 (foundation), level 2 (intermediate) and level 3 (advanced). They compared these rates with national averages for general further education (GFE) colleges. For most categories of students the retention and pass rates were similar to, or below national averages in 1998/99 and 1999/2000. The exceptions were the retention rates for students aged 19 or over on intermediate level courses, which were above average in both years, and the pass rates for students aged 16–18 on intermediate level courses, which were above average in 1999/2000. Overall, the weaknesses in retention and achievement identified in the last inspection report have not been successfully addressed. More information on students' achievements can be found in Part D of the report.

2 Stockport College offers a wide range of vocational qualifications. Of the students who took programmes leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in 1999/2000, 66 per cent of 16–18 year old students completed their course and 75 per cent of these achieved the award. For older students, the respective figures were 60 per cent and 69 per cent. These figures compare with national averages of 77 per cent for retention and 68 per cent for achievement. The figures for students over 19 represent an improvement over the previous 2 years, but those for students aged 16–18 represent a decline. At level 3, the retention rate for both age groups has declined and is significantly below the national average. The pass rate for both age groups is 65 per cent, which is above the national average. The figures

represent an improvement for adult students, but a decline for 16–18 students. On management and marketing programmes, several pass rates are good. On the Certificate and Diploma in Management, pass rates have averaged over 90 per cent in the last three years. However, NVQ courses in management have low levels of retention. At level 1, pass rates for secretarial students on single subject awards are poor. Students on administration programmes make good progress in developing the skills and knowledge required to work in their chosen occupations. Hairdressing students demonstrate high standards of practical skills and graphic design students produce good displays of work. In construction, only 42 per cent of students on craft courses and 32 per cent on level 3 technician courses achieved a qualification by the target date. In the City and Guilds IT courses in programming, the quality of students' work is good and the pass rates are high.

3 Many of the adult students who attend the college have few, if any, prior qualifications. Some, who attend access courses in order to move on to further or higher education, make good progress. For example, science students on access courses produce high quality work, some of which shows well-developed information technology (IT) skills. In modern foreign languages, many adults who enrol for courses do not wish to take the examination and leave the course early. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in developing basic and social skills. Their initial assessment is thorough and the results are used well to monitor their subsequent progress. Most students who attend basic skills programmes make good progress. Many produce good coursework in order to meet the requirements of their main programme of study. They also gain confidence and develop both their personal skills and the ability to work independently. In hairdressing, students' record booklets contain no information on their levels of basic skills and there is no action planning

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to tackle deficiencies in basic skills. Retention rates on courses leading to external awards in basic skills are satisfactory, but some pass rates are poor.

4 The pass rates on GCE A-level courses are generally poor. In 1999/2000 only 33 per cent of students aged 19 or over and 57 per cent of students aged 16–18 passed the examination. These figures compare with a pass rate in similar colleges for students of all ages of 70 per cent. In 2000, the average GCE A-level points score for students at the college taking two or more A levels was 8.6; substantially below both the borough (15.7) and the national (18.5) averages. Retention rates are also poor. In GCE A levels in science, both retention and pass rates have declined in recent years and are particularly poor. Only 38 per cent of students who completed their science GCE A levels passed in 1999/2000. In humanities, although adult students have worked hard and generally stayed the course, pass rates have also been poor. Less than a third of the students who completed their programmes of study in 1999/2000 achieved a pass. Students do not receive adequate advice about the challenges of the course and the options available to them before they enrol. They are then not given sufficient help with study skills and examination technique. In many subjects, the college recruits 16–18-year-old students whose average GCSE points score at entry is above the average for general further education colleges. The subsequent performance of such students at GCE A level suggests that the value added by the college is low. The work seen by inspectors confirmed the view that students were not performing as well as might be expected on the basis of their prior attainments. Retention and pass rates of students taking GCE A level through the college's flexible learning programme are poor, and the data held by the college to monitor progress are unreliable.

5 The college enters a large number of students for GCSE examinations. In 1999/2000, students registered for over

1,100 subject entries. Of those, 68 per cent of students aged 16–18 completed the course, but only 25 per cent obtained passes at the higher grades of A\* to C. This is well below the national average for colleges of 43 per cent. A higher proportion, 47 per cent, of students aged 19 or over obtained passes at the higher grades. The number of students taking general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate level has not varied significantly in the last three years. Most students are 16–18 years old. In 1999/2000, overall pass and retention rates were between four and six per cent below national averages, and both had declined from the previous year. In art and design, despite a decline, the pass rate of 80 per cent was still well above the national rate of 72 per cent. In engineering, the dramatic improvement in the pass rate from 52 per cent in 1999 to 93 per cent in 2000 was accompanied by a decline in retention from 88 per cent to 78 per cent. In health and social care less than half of the students who started the course completed it in 1999/2000, although 79 per cent of those who completed passed.

6 The majority of students who completed a GNVQ programme did so at advanced level. Most were aged 16–18. Although the retention rate on these courses declined markedly in 1999/2000 to 59 per cent, which is well below the national average, the pass rate rose to 80 per cent, which is well above it. In art and design both retention and pass rates have improved and are above national averages. In business, the number enrolling on GNVQ advanced courses has declined markedly and retention rates are well below average. Although the pass rate has improved, it is still well below the national average. In construction, the pass rate rose in 1999/2000 to 87 per cent, well above the national average, but retention declined to well below average. In engineering, both retention and pass rates were poor in 1999/2000, both having declined significantly compared with the previous year. Students taking GNVQ and advanced

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vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses are not routinely given the opportunity to undertake work placements or industrial visits. As a result, many have insufficient awareness of current commercial and industrial practice. Many students' learning skills are poor, and teachers do not do enough to remedy this.

7 A low proportion of foundation modern apprentices (FMAs) complete their training. Of the 121 who started training in 1999 and 2000, only 14 have completed the framework; 66 left early without completing, and 41 are still in training. In complementary therapies, hairdressing and floristry, only two of the 26 trainees who started the programme in 1999 have gained an NVQ at level 2. Sixteen left the programme early, 14 having gained some recognition for their achievement. In business, only one of the 6 FMAs gained an NVQ at level 2. Of the 126 advanced modern apprentices (AMAs) who started in 1999 and 2000, 28 have completed, 62 left without completing and 36 are still in training. In engineering, seven of the 16 trainees starting on the programme in 1999/2000 have gained an NVQ at level 3. In construction, of the 40 trainees who joined other work-based learning programmes in 1998/1999, 12 left with no qualifications, nine obtained an NVQ level 2 and seven an NVQ level 3. Of the eight who joined in 1999/2000, half have left early and none has yet obtained an award. In business, there are poor achievement and pass rates on work-based programmes and little evidence to suggest that the picture is improving.

8 On one of the days during the inspection, teaching was disrupted by industrial action by teachers. This had an adverse impact on attendance figures on that day. The average attendance at the lessons observed by inspectors was 71 per cent, which is below the national average. Attendance was good in lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but was particularly poor in science, mathematics and humanities.

## Attendance in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance
<b>Stockport College</b>	8.5	71%
<b>National average for 1999/2000</b>	10.3	76%

Source: National average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999/2000*: Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) Chief Inspector's Annual Report.

# The College as a Whole

## Quality of Education and Training

### Quality of teaching observed during inspection

Courses	Teaching which was judged to be:			Sessions observed No.
	Good or Better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	55%	29%	16%	119
Level 2 (intermediate)	48%	35%	17%	86
Level 1 (foundation)	57%	33%	10%	21
Other sessions	74%	17%	9%	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>261</b>

Note: More information on the grades awarded by inspectors to teaching, learning and attainment can be found in Part D: College Data

### How effective are teaching, training and learning?

9 In eight of the 13 curriculum areas inspected, at least 12 per cent of teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory. In two areas the figure was over 20 per cent and in one area it was 36 per cent. This high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching requires urgent attention. Adult students benefited from slightly better teaching than did young people aged 16–18. The most consistently good teaching was in design and visual arts and in computing.

10 The majority of teachers demonstrated adequate knowledge of their subject or occupational area and appropriate technical competence, although many would benefit from industrial updating. The best lessons were carefully planned and had appropriate schemes of work. In these lessons, teachers started by explaining to students the aims and objectives for what was to follow and checked subsequently that these had been achieved. When teachers did this, and also undertook regular reviews, as, for example, in targeted work with disaffected young

people or with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the students made good progress. The more effective teachers ensured that their lessons were pitched at an appropriate level and that differentiated tasks were set for students of different ability within the group.

11 Teaching on the small number of level 4 courses funded from the further education budget of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was generally of high quality. Most students on these courses were aged 19 or over. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge, monitored students' performance carefully and regularly and gave constructive feedback.

12 When the inspection took place, much level 3 teaching was focused on examination practice, revision sessions or completion of portfolios for external assessment. Some teachers had gone to considerable efforts to make revision sessions purposeful and interesting. They had planned the learning activities carefully: question and answer sessions, group work, the use of video for recapitulation, the setting and subsequent checking of

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individual tasks and structured discussions on examination techniques. In these lessons, the response from students was good, they made useful contributions, consolidated their learning and articulated their concerns. In contrast, in other revision sessions, students worked through past papers in a mechanistic way with little help from the teacher.

13 On AVCE programmes, students' workplace experience was not always fully utilised and valuable opportunities to relate theory to practice were missed. Students on NVQ level 3 programmes were given helpful advice on how to assemble a portfolio of evidence of their occupational competence.

14 Overall, the teaching on level 2 courses was judged to be slightly better than that on level 3 courses. For example, students working towards an NVQ level 2 in motor cycle engineering benefited from the teacher's clear exposition and breadth of knowledge. They paid careful attention, responded well to the teacher's questioning and took appropriate notes which they filed neatly. Similarly, in a well-managed NVQ level 2 construction practical lesson, the teacher checked students' progress regularly. Students were aware of the assessment requirements and whether they were meeting them.

15 Some students on GNVQ intermediate courses would benefit from additional language support. Teachers acknowledged this but had done nothing about it. Except in engineering and health and social care, teachers rarely help students to improve their key skills or basic skills in a systematic way. Vocational teachers do not generally see learning support of this kind as part of their responsibility.

16 Students of all ages generally make good progress on level 1 and entry level courses. The college introduced a wider range of foundation courses after the last inspection. The provision for disaffected young people and for students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective. Teaching is well planned. Students take part in regular reviews at which realistic short and long term goals are set. At this level there is also a range of introductory vocational courses, often attended by adult students.

17 In six of the 13 curriculum or occupational areas inspected, there is a substantial amount of work-based training, almost all of which is at level 2. In general, off-the-job training in college was satisfactory. In some departments, college staff worked closely with employers and the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training was good. In these departments, the development and assessment of key skills were integrated with other aspects of the vocational curriculum.

18 The quality of placements for work-based trainees is good. However, workplace assessment of competence does not take place often enough. Some records of review meetings between college staff, trainees and employers contained insufficient detail. They did not make clear the progress made by trainees since the last review, or specify what needed to be done before the next one.

19 Relationships between teachers and learners are generally good. Students appreciate the approachability of their teachers and the adult atmosphere of the college. In a number of groups, adults and young people work successfully alongside one another. However, some young full-time students require more structured learning and support than they are currently receiving.

### **How are achievement and learning affected by resources?**

20 Most teachers have appropriate academic or vocational qualifications. Seventy-two per cent have recognised teacher training qualifications. The college makes extensive use of agency staff. Of these, 58 per cent are qualified as teachers.

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Since the last FEFC inspection, there has been a marked improvement in the numbers of staff who have recognised assessor qualifications. This now stands at 80 per cent. There are, however, very few work-based assessors in the firms providing work placement for trainees. The staff development programme is managed by heads of department, who are expected to ensure that each member of staff attends at least two college-organised staff development activities in any one year. This is not always achieved.

21 The college has invested heavily in up-to-date IT equipment. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to personal computers is 6.5 to 1. Technology is being used well to improve communication. Students have access to the Internet, and the college intranet service is available through the learning resource centre.

22 Ninety-seven per cent of the college buildings are accessible to wheelchair users, a very high percentage by national comparisons. An exception is the student union building, which is run independently of the college.

23 There is a high standard of cleanliness throughout the college. Where refurbishment has been undertaken, the accommodation is of a high quality. Teaching areas are well lit and suitably decorated. This is particularly the case in the business school where accommodation is of a very high standard. There are ample resources for teaching, including whiteboards, overhead projectors, and in some cases, video equipment. The new engineering technology centre and motorcycle engineering workshops have good up-to-date resources. In construction the resources have improved considerably since the last inspection and have had a positive impact on the quality of learning.

24 In other curriculum areas, some rooms are too small for the number of students using them, poorly ventilated and noisy when the windows are open. The

conditions are particularly poor in some rooms used for hairdressing and in one of the rooms used for courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is currently no central timetabling system, but a pilot is running this year with a view to its introduction across the college from September 2001. At the last survey, room utilisation was only 15 per cent. Nevertheless, there are too few rooms suitable for tutorials. The large learning resource centre, which incorporates the library, is of good quality. The area is spacious and contains adequate book stocks, CD-ROMs, videos, and a variety of materials for independent study, including commercial software. Recently established departmental learning resource areas are proving to be particularly effective in the areas of childcare and business and information technology. Students appreciate the proximity of these areas to their classrooms and make effective use of them. There are plans for more centres of this kind.

25 The department of student admissions and support is located in an inconvenient position, across the road from the main college campus. Much of the accommodation is barely adequate for its purpose. Access is difficult and the entrance and layout are unwelcoming. The building houses the main careers information library and some of the support services, including counselling and careers guidance. The counselling service is well used and valued by both staff and students, but clients attending for an interview have to walk through a busy office to reach the counselling room, compromising the confidentiality of the service. There are plans to relocate the facilities on the main college site.

26 Good attention is paid to health and safety. The number of access points to the main building has been reduced as a safety precaution. Working in a safe environment is particularly emphasised in construction and engineering. The college travel agency has good links with a local travel agent and

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is used effectively for work placements for travel service students. The location of the floristry shop is far from ideal and the shop is under-utilised.

27 The relocation to one site has improved the accessibility of the college. It is well served by good bus and rail links. A well-equipped nursery is available for the children of students and is well used.

## **How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?**

28 Clear policies and procedures for the assessment and monitoring of students' progress have been produced by a college-wide group. They identify the roles and responsibilities of assessors and the moderators. The extent to which the policies are implemented varies between and within curriculum areas. In some areas, such as construction, health and social care and design and visual arts, assessment is well organised in line with college policies and meets the requirements of awarding bodies. In other curriculum areas, managers fail to implement college policies and the quality of assessment is dependent on individual course teams.

29 Most teachers produce schemes of work for their courses which include the types and timings of assessments that students can expect. Assignment schedules are issued to students in construction and business at the start of their studies. On GNVQ business courses, assessments occur too late. Some course teams produce assignment schedules, but do not adhere to them. Others do not produce schedules.

30 Initial assessments are intended to help teachers plan their schemes of work. Few teachers, however, adjust their schemes of work to reflect the learning needs of individual students as they present themselves. Exceptions include the programmes in basic skills and those for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have individual programmes

of study. The progress of individual students in health and social care is also tracked against their potential as identified through initial assessment.

31 Despite this, assessment on most courses is fair, accurate and carried out regularly. Students in design and visual arts and construction are given clearly written briefs, and guidance on the assessment criteria. In health and social care, students are made aware of what they need to do to gain a high grade in their assignments. Part-time IT students regularly undergo assessments which take account of their individual ability. Timed essays and mock examinations are used effectively in English as part of examination preparation. Teachers of modern foreign languages regularly use homework to identify individual and group weaknesses, but do not provide sufficient assessments for adult students.

32 Assessment of work-based trainees is rarely undertaken in the workplace. This is a major weakness. Instead there is an over-reliance on college-based assessment, even where the college's facilities are not as good as those used by trainees at work. For example, in hairdressing, most students are assessed in the college's salons, instead of commercial salons. In construction, plumbing students use witness testimonies and photographic evidence to cover work they have undertaken in the workplace, but this sensible approach is not used in other construction crafts. Only in floristry are there good opportunities for students to be assessed in the workplace.

33 Many students receive useful feedback following assessments on the standards they are achieving and on how they can improve their work. Most students' work is marked carefully and returned promptly. In the business school, teachers record their comments on homework feedback sheets. The method is effective. Work-based trainees in business get good feedback on their written work, leading to constructive discussions with their teachers. Teachers in social sciences take care to

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correct poor spelling. In engineering, work is returned promptly, but feedback on what to do to improve is often insufficient. Similarly, teachers in social sciences do not always provide students with appropriate feedback. Students on GCSE and GCE A-level science courses do not receive sufficient information to help them improve their grades. In English and modern foreign languages, the lack of a policy on marking and feedback means that there are differences in the thoroughness of marking techniques between teachers. Some do not correct poor work.

34 Most students have regular interviews with their tutors to review their performance. However, students in science are not set clear individual targets for achievement. On college-based engineering programmes, reviews lead to the production of individual student action plans. In construction, reviews undertaken in the workplace for work-based trainees are thorough and involve trainees and employers. In contrast, workplace reviews in engineering lack rigour. In hairdressing, tracking sheets are used to monitor individual students' progress, but they are not effective in ensuring that students complete their practical assignments.

35 The college's quality unit receives all reports from external verifiers and moderators and produces an annual report on the outcomes of actions taken in response to these reports. Course teams are required to produce action plans to tackle identified weaknesses. These are monitored by the appropriate head of department. Where reports raise serious concerns, departments are required to notify the quality unit of progress in responding to the concerns. The college has clear internal verification procedures. On most vocational courses the procedures are carried out effectively.

36 On many courses, attendance rates are low and punctuality is poor. Despite this, there is no college policy on the reporting of students' progress or absence

to parents or employers. Practices vary between and within departments. In engineering, arrangements for reporting absence and student progress to parents and employers are effective, but this is not the case in most other departments.

## How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

37 The college provides a very extensive range of programmes which meet most local and many regional needs. In most curriculum areas, there is a broad range of courses from foundation, and sometimes pre-foundation through to advanced level. This facilitates progression within and beyond the college. On many courses students can attend either full-time or part-time, day or evening, or they can study through the flexible learning centre, according to their personal circumstances and individual needs. Vocational provision is the primary focus of the college, but it also offers many AVCEs and GCE A levels. The college has increased its range of courses at foundation level, but there are some curriculum areas without provision at this level, for example, art and design.

38 The college has not introduced Curriculum 2000 successfully. The lack of a centralised admissions and guidance system, of a manager with specific responsibility for 16–18 year olds, and of a common timetable across departments, means that not all students are able to take advantage of the full range of AVCEs and AS and A levels on offer in the college. In effect, most young people enrol in a specific department, rather than at the college as a whole. Lesson times often differ from one department to another, making it difficult for students to take advantage of the full range of courses available.

39 Arrangements for teaching key skills are unsatisfactory. In a leaflet to year 11 school pupils, the college promises to include key skills in all study programmes for 16–18 year olds. This has not



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happened. Very few students study the wider key skills. There is also a lack of consistency across departments in the way initial assessment is carried out and in how the results are used. Insufficient account is taken of students' prior attainments. For example, some students on a GCE AS-level communications course were inappropriately placed on a level 2 key skills course in communications. They did not find the course useful and many did not attend. In some curriculum areas, such as engineering, key skills are successfully integrated with other aspects of the courses. This good practice occurs in isolation, however, and is not disseminated across the college.

40 Students are not made aware of the college's full range of enrichment options during the induction programmes. Access to enrichment opportunities depends on the department in which students are enrolled. Some departments' timetables restrict opportunities to take part in options such as business and IT. Take up is often poor, even in departments where a good range of activities is on offer, for example leisure and tourism. In some departments, such as art and design, students have a good range of opportunities, including work placements.

41 The flexible learning centre gives some 2000 people each year the opportunity to study outside the main college timetables. The majority of students who take advantage of this provision would otherwise have found it difficult to follow a course of study. Although many learners start with the intention of obtaining accreditation, a high proportion do not complete their awards. The monitoring and management of their staged achievements are insufficiently rigorous.

42 The college is committed to widening participation. The proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds has grown considerably in recent years. Through successful partnerships with a range of agencies, the college has attracted more students from deprived areas. 'Return

to Learn' courses successfully attract adults back into learning and provide progression onto access courses to higher education.

43 The college has established a good schools links scheme. School pupils aged 14-16 can experience a range of vocational options at the college, for example in motor vehicle engineering, hairdressing, construction and floristry. The college also runs summer programmes for disaffected school leavers. Local gifted and talented pupils can gain access to the state-of-the-art computer-aided design equipment to support their work in design and technology at school. These link programmes are proving effective in improving recruitment and easing the transition from school to college.

44 In many curriculum areas, such as art and design, construction, leisure and tourism, engineering, and health and care, there are strong links with employers and industry. In business studies, however, there are no strong links with industry and commerce.

45 Most of the work-based training programmes are not flexible enough to meet learners' needs. Most trainees require their courses to start in September to coincide with the college year. Assignments set for whole groups fail to take account of individual trainees' work experience. Links between on- and off-the-job training are weak.

## How well are learners guided and supported?

46 The college has strengthened its support and guidance services since the last inspection. The department of student admissions and support is responsible for co-ordinating many aspects of these services. A widely-used and highly-valued range of support services is provided by additional learning support workers, counsellors, a mental health support worker, a cultural issues support worker, a dyslexia assessment and resources team, a

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chaplaincy service, youth workers, careers advice and guidance staff, a disability services team, the staff of the college nursery, and a student welfare and international team. The admissions service and tutorial arrangements are managed separately.

47 A good range of market research is undertaken. Labour market information is analysed to identify low recruitment areas and to help planning. The college prospectus, course leaflets and other publicity materials provide clear and appropriate information, which is supplemented by the use of local radio, newsletters and a booklet prepared for adult learners week. Open evenings for school leavers are well-attended and college staff are involved in a number of school liaison activities, including attendance at parents evenings. Whilst there are clear policies and procedures for admissions, there is no central admissions system. Applications are largely dealt with by staff in the various departments. Whilst they have received some training for this role, this has not led to a consistent approach to recruitment.

48 There is a well-structured induction programme for all students, including those who do not join programmes at the start of the academic year. The programme enables students to settle into their courses and to understand their rights and responsibilities. Some younger students feel that there is insufficient pastoral support in the early stages of their courses.

49 Overall, the support arrangements for students are satisfactory, but they have not had a widespread impact on improving retention rates. Full-time 16–18-year-old students are tested to determine whether they need any help with basic skills. Effective additional learning support is provided by the skills development team. They provide help with mathematics, English and study skills from basic level up to support for students completing dissertations for their degrees. At the time of the inspection, students were taking

advantage of help with examination preparation and revision. When additional learning support is taken up, there is evidence that it leads to improvements in retention and pass rates. However, there is insufficient co-operation and communication between the skills development team, personal tutors and subject teachers.

Appropriate support is provided to students with specific learning difficulties and to those with visual or hearing impairments. Financial assistance is available to students through the access fund and the college's student support fund. In appropriate cases, there is some assistance with childcare costs.

50 All students, regardless of their age or mode of attendance, are entitled to tutorial support. The level and quality of what is provided vary widely. Staff in some departments do not implement the college's policy and procedures on tutorial support. Some students have regular group tutorials, some have a mixture of group and individual tutorials and some have tutorials only infrequently. Good tutorials were observed in construction, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, work-based social care, business and engineering. Students in these curriculum areas receive regular and effective reviews, during which clear targets and deadlines are set. In some other areas, reviews are ineffective. In one curriculum area 20 per cent of students at the end of their course in summer 2000 had no recollection of having had an individual tutorial. A tutorial audit conducted by the college in March 2001 reported some non-compliance with the requirements in the tutorial handbook. For example, fewer than two-thirds of the students in the sample had tutorial plans and tutorial records. One department was not using the college tutorial documentation at all. Students were often critical of group tutorials. Only 63 per cent of second year A-level students in the science, adult and general education department said that tutorial sessions had been helpful. There is a need for more effective management and co-ordination of tutorials across the college.

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51 Specialist careers guidance is available from college guidance staff and the external careers service. The refocusing of the work of the careers service has encouraged tutors to take more responsibility for careers education with their tutees. There have been training events for college staff and resource packs are available for use by the central guidance team and by tutors. The guidance team has provided more careers sessions for groups of students. In some departments, there is good careers education and guidance, whilst in others it is insufficient. In questionnaires at the end of their course, around two-thirds of students expressed satisfaction with the guidance and advice on careers and progression which they had received.

## Leadership and Management

### How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

52 College managers have not set a sufficiently clear direction for the work of the college. They have not been successful in overcoming most of the weaknesses identified in the report by inspectors of the Further Education Funding Council in 1996. Provision is unsatisfactory in six of the 13 curriculum areas inspected. Retention and pass rates are below national averages on a high proportion of courses and for the college as a whole. There are no arrangements to enable teachers to update their commercial and industrial experience regularly. The overall quality of teaching and learning has not improved and in some cases has declined since 1996. Centrally held data are unreliable. A new management information system is being purchased, but will not be fully operational until September 2003.

53 There have been some improvements since the last inspection. The college has extended the range of courses available at foundation level. It has provided managers with training to help them carry out their roles. A co-ordinator has been appointed to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the equal opportunities policy. Managers have recently been given access to on-line, centrally held data to help them monitor students' performance. However, not all managers have been trained to use the system and several are unsure about how to gain access to the data at course level.

54 College quality assurance procedures are not consistently or effectively implemented. Staff in most curriculum areas do not rigorously review their courses or compare their performance with national benchmarks. Although targets are set at departmental level, some course teams do not set targets to improve

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retention and pass rates or the quality of teaching and learning at course level. A comprehensive programme of lesson observations has been carried out. Reports from these observations are used during staff appraisal and to identify staff training needs. However, the lesson observation programme has had little overall impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

55 The college has an established self-assessment process that is carried out annually. The process involves staff and governors. The current report contains too little information about strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and retention and pass rates. In some programme areas the information in the self-assessment report is aggregated to such a level that it does not provide a clear picture of the weaknesses which require action. Many of the grades in the self-assessment report are too high in the judgement of inspectors.

56 College managers recognise that the introduction of Curriculum 2000 has been poorly handled. Departmental timetables are not co-ordinated. This has limited the range of courses and enrichment activities available to students. The teaching and assessment of key skills are not co-ordinated effectively across the college. This results in high levels of dissatisfaction among students, not least because some are studying key skills at an inappropriate level.

57 Only a minority of curriculum areas, such as art and design and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well managed. In these areas, course teams meet regularly to review their courses. They monitor retention and pass rates and judge their performance against national benchmarks. In many of the other areas inspected, curriculum management is poor. There is a lack of co-ordination between teachers in different parts of the college who teach the same

subject. They do not share resources or meet to discuss their subject.

58 The monitoring of performance is inadequate. Senior managers recognise that they have not been monitoring performance effectively against strategic objectives. The revision of objectives in April 2001 was a long overdue attempt to produce objectives which contained measurable targets. Staff performance is currently reviewed annually against objectives agreed with managers. The review process lacks rigour. Staff are not being held accountable for their areas of responsibility.

59 Equal opportunities are promoted effectively. The equal opportunities co-ordinator has successfully planned and managed staff and governor training to raise their awareness of issues of equality of opportunity. Over 70 per cent of the staff, and all governors, have attended the training. Governors have a set agenda item at each meeting on monitoring the implementation of the equal opportunities policy. A recently appointed equal opportunities adviser audits learning resources. The college has organised a number of events to celebrate diversity.

60 The number of full-time teachers employed by the college has declined in recent years. The increased use of part-time teachers is not always well managed. Many are unable to attend staff meetings scheduled during the day. Opportunities for sharing resources and good practice within curriculum or occupational areas are missed.

61 Budget holders in curriculum areas are allocated budgets based on student numbers. Income and expenditure are closely monitored and controlled by the director of finance. Financial management is sound.

62 Governors are involved in setting the strategic direction of the college. They have received training in the process of strategic

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planning. They have recently been involved in overseeing the revision of the college's strategic objectives. Governors used recent labour market information, a curriculum audit, an external quality assessment report and the college's self-assessment report when making decisions about proposed amendments to the objectives. Governors operate within a sound framework for governance. They monitor the college's financial performance closely. However, they do not receive regular reports on the quality of teaching and learning and they have not ensured that sufficient action has been taken to tackle the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The governors' monitoring of the college's performance is hampered by unreliable data.

- improve the quality of work-based learning;
- improve the effectiveness of provision for Curriculum 2000;
- improve the teaching and assessment of key skills.

63 The fact that overall retention and pass rates remain stubbornly below average, and that provision is unsatisfactory in a large proportion of curriculum or occupational areas, means that the college is not effective.

## What should the college do to improve further?

64 To raise standards and improve quality, the principal, staff and governors should:

- set a clear direction for the work of the college;
- establish standards for the improvement of learning;
- assume detailed oversight of the curriculum;
- manage and monitor performance at all levels;
- improve pass rates on many courses;
- raise the proportion of students who complete courses;
- improve the quality of teaching and learning in many curriculum areas;
- consistently apply the quality assurance procedures;

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Part C: Curriculum and Occupational Areas

### Mathematics, Science and Sports Science

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

#### Strengths

- broad range of provision
- good pass rates on GCSE science and National Diploma in sports science courses.

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention and pass rates on GCE A-level science courses
- poor pass rates on GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics courses
- poor teaching
- insufficient learning support
- lack of rigour in quality assurance and self-assessment processes.

#### Scope of provision

65 The college provides a broad range of courses in mathematics, science and sports science, including advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) science, GNVQ intermediate, a National Certificate in science, an Access to Higher Education programme, a National Diploma in sports science, GCSE human physiology and health and a full range of GCE A-level subjects. A review of courses in mathematics and science has resulted in programmes that more closely match the needs of students. GCSE dual and single award sciences have been introduced to replace GCSE single science subjects. The college has piloted the use of free-standing qualifications in mathematics. There is little provision at level one, although City and Guilds numeracy level 2 is used as a pre-

cursor to GCSE mathematics. A significant number of students re-sit GCSE mathematics through the college's flexible learning centre.

#### Achievement and standards

66 Retention and pass rates are unsatisfactory in this curriculum area. There was poor retention in all GCE A-level subjects and GNVQ advanced science in 1999/2000. All GCE A-level science subjects, including sports science, had examination pass rates that were below national averages. The pass rates for both GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics are poor. In GNVQ advanced science, the National Diploma in sports science, GCSE science (dual award) and in GCSE human physiology and health, pass rates were above average last year. Over 60 students retook GCSE mathematics in November 2000, having studied in the college's flexible learning centre, and 53 per cent achieved grades A\*-C. Students on an access to higher education programme produced good assignments. Some demonstrated a good use of IT skills. There were many examples of poor levels of attainment in GCE A-level assignments and tests.

#### Quality of education and training

67 In many of the lessons observed, students' learning and attainment were unsatisfactory, particularly in GCE A-level lessons. Students worked conscientiously in lessons, but some, particularly in year 2 groups, had not made sufficient progress to have a reasonable chance of success in the examination. The approach taken to revision, which largely consisted of using examination questions for practice, failed to engage students or to meet their individual needs. A recent survey showed that only 78 per cent of students consider their lessons interesting, one of the lowest proportions for any curriculum area in the college.

68 Staff are well qualified. They have degrees and/or professional qualifications, teaching qualifications and assessor awards

## Curriculum and Occupational Areas

where appropriate. Some have higher degrees. Technical support is good. There has been some recent and appropriate staff development related to lesson preparation that was of benefit to students. A teacher who had attended a conference provided by an awarding body was able to incorporate helpful information relating to marking schemes into a lesson on the following day.

69 The science department has a large range of specialist laboratories located on three floors. Most have old and uncomfortable laboratory furniture. There is little use of display to create subject identity and promote students' work and success. Laboratories contain a good stock of equipment. A small study room adjacent to the laboratories is equipped with networked computers that provide access to the Internet. Teachers make effective use of handouts. The library has a good range of scientific books and a few journals. Until recently there were no appropriate textbooks for GCE AS-level courses and this has disadvantaged students. Sports science has poor quality accommodation and equipment, although good use is made of facilities outside college.

70 Some teachers made good use of assignment feedback sheets, which gave students detailed, individual help and information on how to improve in the future. Other teachers, particularly in GCSE and GCE A-level subjects, returned assignments without appropriate suggestions on how to improve.

71 The teaching in this curriculum area is failing to address the unsatisfactory learning and attainment of a minority of students. These students are unlikely to achieve their learning goals and have not been given sufficient additional learning support. Not enough has been done to remedy students' difficulties with problem solving and scientific terminology. Although teachers run workshops to support weaker students, attendance is voluntary. In many lessons observed there were a number of examples where students did not express

themselves in writing with sufficient clarity. During the inspection there was poor attendance at lessons. A recurring theme at GCE A-level and GCSE team meetings is the non-attendance by students at key skills sessions.

### Leadership and management

72 Quality assurance and self-assessment in this curriculum area lack rigour. Programme reviews are insufficiently critical and information about courses is aggregated to such a level that it does not provide a clear picture of where improvement is required. The minutes of science meetings pay insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and the students' experience. The assignment of responsibilities for action as a result of these meetings is unclear. The college is reviewing its courses in science and mathematics. The need for better co-ordination of science across the college, including what is provided through flexible learning, has been recognised.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Computing and Information Technology

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

### Strengths

- wide range of courses
- good teaching and effective learning on specialist programming courses
- effective monitoring and assessment of students on part-time courses
- good specialist resources.

### Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on some courses
- lack of rigour in course reviews
- insufficient learning support for some full-time students.

### Scope of provision

73 There is a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in computing and information technology (IT) from level 1 to level 4. The majority of courses are the responsibility of the business information technology department, but some courses are provided by the department of science and general education and the department of community and continuing education. Several new GCSE and pre-foundation level courses have been provided this year in response to student demand. Part-time provision caters for a range of students, including those requiring specialist programming courses and those who prefer to attend at times suited to their individual needs. The introduction of the single award for the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) course provides opportunities for part-time students to progress to higher national level within one year. The improved selection procedure for entry on to AVCE information and communication technology (ICT) is

successful in identifying appropriate students.

### Achievement and standards

74 The quality of students' work on the City & Guilds IT courses in programming is consistently good and the pass rate has been consistently above the national average for three years. Students on part-time introductory IT courses achieve well and many progress on to other IT and basic skill courses. The standard of the assignment work of students studying the AVCE single award on a part-time basis is particularly high. The retention rate is high, but the pass rate is below the national average in computer literacy and information technology courses. Retention on intermediate and AVCE programmes is improving but pass rates remain below national averages. Retention and pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are unsatisfactory given students' prior achievement at GCSE and their level of competence in the use of IT as demonstrated in their projects. The number of students attaining high grades on advanced courses is low. A minority of students on GNVQ IT courses have difficulty in managing their study time outside lessons. Those students who need help to develop their study skills are not given sufficient support.

### Quality of education and training

75 The quality of teaching on specialist courses in computer programming is good. Schemes of work are well designed and include challenging programming tasks. All the teaching of computing and IT observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better. Most students received effective guidance from expert teachers who were enthusiastic about their subject, maintained students' interest and helped them to progress. The support given to individual students in practical lessons was good. GNVQ and AVCE assignments were generally well designed and included relevant and up-to-date references to the



# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

use of technology. Students were required to produce the majority of their assignment reports in writing. They would benefit from more opportunities to give oral presentations. Students attending the IT workshop received sensible advice about courses available to them. There was an over-reliance on the use of text books in GCE A and AS-level teaching. Students on these courses lacked motivation and much of their work was of a low standard. Some students, particularly those on GNVQ intermediate programmes, did not fully understand what was required of them, and were unable to obtain sufficient specialist help outside their timetabled lessons to enable them to make progress.

76 The college has good specialist IT resources. New computers have been installed which provide students with access to the college network and Internet. Students are assigned space on the network for storage of their files. All practical teaching rooms are well designed and furnished to a high standard, but ventilation in the computer rooms is poor. The quality of teachers' demonstrations is enhanced by their use of computers linked to multimedia projectors. There are plenty of specialist computing and IT books in the library. Teachers are well qualified. Some have expertise in specialist areas such as multimedia, webpage design and programming.

77 Students on the majority of part-time programmes are monitored closely and receive informative feedback which enables them to improve their performance. Many lesson plans specify that particular attention will be paid to under-performing students. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress on some full-time courses are less effective. This is partly due to poor communication between the departments responsible for these courses.

78 The assignment schedules for advanced and intermediate GNVQ and AVCE do not spread the workload evenly across the whole course and students are

not able to plan their time effectively over three terms. There is too little formal assessment during term one. Changes to the final completion date set by the awarding body have reduced the time available for students to complete their work. There is insufficient formal assessment of students following GCE A-level and GCE AS courses in IT.

79 Students receive informative and impartial advice before enrolling on courses in computing and IT in the business information technology department. Specialist staff and course managers are effectively involved in the interviewing, enrolment and induction processes. Links with industry are not strong, however, and students do not undertake industrial visits.

## Leadership and management

80 Managers have not been successful in raising retention and pass rates in many computing and IT courses. The business information technology department's self-assessment report recognises the weaknesses in retention rates. A more rigorous system for monitoring the attendance of students has been introduced and is beginning to show signs of success. Course teams in this department work well together. Regular meetings are held, action is minuted and, at a procedural level, the department functions efficiently. Course reviews follow the college's quality assurance procedures, but insufficient attention is paid to the quality of teaching and learning and the improvement of pass rates.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Construction

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

### Strengths

- broad range of provision
- good pass rates on crafts courses
- high standard of practical work
- relevant, well-marked assignments
- particularly well-qualified staff
- well-equipped workshops and good levels of technician support.

### Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on technician courses
- poor retention rates
- few craft students progressing to level 3
- insufficient work-based assessment.

### Scope of provision

81 The college provides a broad range of construction courses which meets the needs of industry and students. There are modular programmes designed specifically for students from socially excluded groups. Enrolments on technician courses have declined in recent years. Few craft students progress from level 1 to level 3. Key skills are developed as an integral part of craft courses and this enables students to understand their importance. The department has improved its responsiveness to employers. For example, it successfully provided a multi-craft skills training programme for Manchester Airport Authority.

### Achievement and standards

82 Most students produce practical work of an industrial standard. Particularly high standards are achieved in plumbing. Pass rates are good on all crafts courses. Retention rates have declined in the three years to 2000, however, and are well below

national averages. Overall, the proportion of students starting a course who gain a qualification is unsatisfactory. For example, of the 105 technician students who started a course in 1998/99, only 38 gained the qualification in 2000. Students are not set sufficiently challenging learning goals which take into account their previous experience and achievement. On occasions, students are required to study topics and subjects at a level below that which they have already achieved. Few trainees, other than those in plumbing, are aware that they should be gathering evidence of competences gained in the workplace to contribute to the completion of their portfolios.

### Quality of education and training

83 Teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers pay attention to the individual needs of students when planning lessons and a few are developing ways of using a wider range of learning resources, including IT, to help students develop their vocational knowledge. However, the teaching of theory is often dull and fails to maintain students' interest. Many of the text-based learning materials in carpentry and joinery are of poor quality. They do not provide sufficient guidance to students on other sources of information. Most practical lessons are well organised. Realistic practical projects are set, which require students to work to industry standards. Students are encouraged to observe safe working practices, but this is undermined by the untidy carpentry and joinery workshops and the clutter of equipment stored in the main circulation areas of the painting and decorating workshop.

84 Staff are particularly well qualified. All full-time teachers hold a professional health and safety qualification in addition to their vocational qualifications. There is a good level of technician support in the workshops. The college has recently refurbished most classrooms and has purchased new woodcutting machinery and IT resources. The workshops are well

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

equipped. They provide students with a wide range of realistic training environments. Noise from the wood machining area disrupts the work of students and teachers in the surrounding open-plan workshops.

85 Teachers provide students with good personal support. Specialist equipment and support are available for those with physical disabilities. Most students are kept well aware of their progress. In each practical lesson teachers use a data logger to record the achievements of individual students. This gives teachers and students a useful overview of the quality of students' work and their achievement of the required competences. Assignments are written clearly and marked carefully. Reviews in the workplace are thorough. Trainees and employers discuss each trainee's progress and future options. There is, however, insufficient use of work-based assessment.

## **Leadership and management**

86 The leadership and management of courses are good. Business and operational planning are effective. Communications between managers and staff are good. The self-assessment report did not identify some of the weaknesses in the provision. For example, it understated the poor and declining retention rates on many programmes.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Engineering

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

### Strengths

- good pass rates on NVQs and on City & Guilds courses at level 3
- careful planning of teaching
- good individual learning support
- the wide range of courses and opportunities for progression
- some excellent resources.

### Weaknesses

- low retention rates
- poor pass rates on craft courses at level 2 in work-based training
- insufficient work-based assessment
- weak reviews of apprentices' progress.

### Scope of provision

87 There is a wide range of courses in motor vehicle, motorcycle, electronic, mechanical and manufacturing engineering. The courses range from foundation to degree level, providing opportunities for progression. Learners are able to study full-time, part-time, in the day, or in the evening. Modern apprentices attend college one day each week. There have been several recent changes to the provision to meet local demands and in response to falling enrolments. For example, a pre-apprenticeship course has been established. There are too few opportunities for full-time students to undertake work experience, although many undertake study visits to industry.

88 The department has good links with industry. There is a substantial and developing programme of engineering tuition for school pupils in Years 9 and 10.

## Achievement and standards

89 The standard of work produced by students is generally appropriate. Retention rates have declined recently and, on many courses, they are now below national averages. Pass rates are mixed, with as many course groups having pass rates above national averages as below. Pass rates on NVQ courses at all levels and City & Guilds courses at level 3 are good. Pass rates on other craft courses at level 2 and national certificate courses are consistently below national averages. Some individual courses such as those leading to NVQs in motor vehicle work produce consistently good pass rates. For example, the pass rate on NVQ motor vehicle engineering at level 2 was 84 per cent last year and at NVQ level 3 has averaged 90 per cent over the last three years. The pass rates on modern apprenticeship programmes are poor. The average attendance at sessions observed during the inspection was 76 per cent, which is higher than the average for the college, but similar to the national average for all colleges.

### Quality of education and training

90 Half of the teaching seen was good and most of the rest was satisfactory. Teachers prepare carefully for their lessons. They produce appropriate schemes of work and comprehensive and useful lesson plans. Learning materials such as hand-outs are used appropriately. When learners are working on their own on practical or theory tasks, teachers provide effective support. In many lessons, teachers checked learners' understanding regularly, demonstrated concepts by using engineering components and sub-assemblies, made reference to engineering examples, and integrated practical work with theory. In order to provide added interest, the department is increasing the amount of time spent on extended project work. For example, groups of students on one motor vehicle course have assembled and will shortly test a number of go-karts. These extended projects provide students with opportunities

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to develop key skills. The teaching and assessment of key skills are successfully integrated with other aspects of the vocational teaching and assessment.

91 A minority of lessons were dull and uninspiring. In these lessons, insufficient use was made of questioning to check on learners' understanding, and insufficient use was made of the students' own experience to give added relevance to the topic. Some teachers missed opportunities to introduce practical activities into theory lessons. As a result, students became bored and uninterested, resulting in poor learning.

92 Teachers are technically well qualified and all hold qualifications as teachers and assessors. Some of the engineering equipment is of outstanding quality and all of it is at least adequate to cope with course demands. The college is the only provider of motorcycle engineering courses in the region and the range of equipment to support this work is outstanding. Computer aided design and manufacture equipment are also of a high standard. Much of the teaching accommodation is very good and all is at least satisfactory. That which houses the computer-aided design and manufacture facilities is of a particularly high standard. Library resources are satisfactory. There is a wide range of books but a large number are dated. The motor vehicle section has its own resource centre which has several sets of modern texts, as well as computers, video material and access to the Internet.

93 The assessment programmes are appropriate to the individual course requirements. Assessments are of an appropriate standard, are clearly specified and carry clear grading criteria. They are set at appropriate intervals to ensure that learners have an even workload. On some NVQ courses, formal accreditation of the units of competence is left to the end of the course, resulting in learners receiving insufficient advice on the suitability of the evidence and early leavers being disadvantaged. The overall progress of

students in college is regularly reviewed by their tutors. The quality of many of these reviews is good. The tutors are well informed about their students' progress, meaningful discussions take place and action plans are established to tackle areas of weakness. Not all tutorials are of this quality and a few are not sufficiently rigorous.

94 Work-based trainees receive good practical training when they attend the college, typically for one day each week. The off-the-job training in motorcycle engineering in particular is highly valued by the trainees and employers. College staff work closely with employers and the co-ordination of on- and off-the job training is good. Workplace resources for learners are at least satisfactory and in some cases good. The development and assessment of key skills are an integral part of the vocational curriculum. There is little assessment of competence in the workplace, and on some programmes almost all assessment is undertaken in the college. Reviews of learners' progress are carried out regularly by occupationally competent college staff. Records of review meetings between college staff, trainees and employers contain insufficient detail of trainees' progress and fail to identify what they need to do before the next review.

## Leadership and management

95 Curriculum managers have a clear view of the issues facing the department and are effectively managing improvements. Staff are well aware of the falling enrolments and the low pass rates on some courses. Several measures have been put in place to improve matters. These include the introduction of new courses and extensive staff development.

96 The department has systematic and improving quality assurance arrangements. Teachers and managers meet regularly. Course teams complete termly reviews of their courses' operation, drawing on an appropriate range of evidence. However,

## Curriculum and Occupational Areas

the department has yet to find a remedy for low retention and pass rates. The self-assessment report draws on the annual course reviews and self-assessments of each engineering curriculum area. It does not identify some of the weaknesses in teaching and in learners' achievements found by inspectors.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Business

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**.

### Strengths

- high pass rates on certificate and diploma courses in management
- effective teaching on part-time management and professional courses
- good support for individual students
- flexible framework of qualifications for administration students.

### Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on GNVQ, GCE A level and text processing courses and on work-based training programmes
- some poor levels of retention and attendance
- some poor teaching on business studies and public services courses
- insufficiently rigorous course reviews
- insufficient breadth to the programme of study for full-time business students.

### Scope of provision

97 A total of 2,590 enrolments was recorded for the business programme area during 1999/2000. Provision is wide ranging and delivered through six teaching departments. Programmes include GCE A levels and GNVQs in business; First and National Diplomas in public services; full-time and part-time courses in business administration; and a large number of professional and management courses offered to post-graduate level. Enrolments have been growing on many of the management programmes. By contrast, numbers on administration courses are small and in some cases declining. Various modes of study are available to suit the needs of different students. Most administration programmes can be started at several points in the year and students can choose from a range of specialist

options. Part-time students can study on their own, with the support of tutors, in the business technology workshop. There are foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes, and other work-based training programmes in administration and accounting.

### Achievement and standards

98 Pass rates are high on a number of the management and marketing programmes. On the Certificate and Diploma in Management courses retention rates are good and pass rates have averaged over 90 per cent during the last three years. The pass rates on marketing courses compare favourably with national FE averages. Although the pass rates on marketing courses are lower, they also compare favourably with national FE averages. The certificate in personnel practice, with growing numbers, has had a retention rate of 90 per cent and a pass rate of 100 per cent over the last two years. Students on NVQ programmes in management perform less well.

99 Less satisfactory results have been achieved on GCE A-level and GNVQ courses. Although there has been some improvement at GNVQ intermediate level, pass rates are below FE averages. There have been low retention rates on advanced vocational courses this academic year. Whilst pass rates on the First Diploma in Public Services were good in 2000, only 44 per cent of students on the National Diploma were successful. There have been low retention rates on both these courses during this academic year. NVQ accounting pass rates are close to national averages at level 3, but below average at levels 2 and 4. Text processing courses at level 1 have poor success rates. During the last two years, out of over 1,100 starters, fewer than 25 per cent achieved the qualification. Success rates are significantly better at higher levels. Students' achievements on work-based training programmes are poor. Most trainees make slow progress. Many leave the programmes early without a full

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qualification. Only one in eight trainees achieve a full qualification.

100 The standard of work of students on management and professional courses is good. Students' portfolios are of good quality; some contain detailed pieces of research with a clear analysis of issues and constructive proposals. Teachers monitor students' performance carefully and provide constructive feedback on their assessed work. The standards achieved by GNVQ and AVCE students are lower. Too much of their assignment work is over-reliant on secondary sources of evidence and contains insufficient first-hand research using the local business community as a resource. On the advanced programme there is over-assessment, and too much emphasis is given to business principles at the expense of business practice. In public services and on the GCE A-level business course, students are not always working at a level consistent with the requirements of the course. The more able students are not being stretched. The small number of work-based trainees who complete portfolios do so to a satisfactory standard.

## Quality of education and training

101 Lessons in professional and management programmes are well planned and structured to meet the needs of students. Schemes of work are thorough and meet course requirements. Appropriate teaching methods are used, including the use of case studies and problem-solving activities. In most lessons, use is made of students' own work experience to illustrate concepts and promote group discussion. There is, however, insufficient checking of individual students' learning in some lessons. In a minority of lessons the teacher failed to hold the interest of the students and the teaching was not effective. Students' attainments during lessons are generally satisfactory and appropriate to the level of the course.

102 Teaching and learning on administration programmes, particularly at

higher levels, are good. All students have ready access to past examination papers. Progress in IT is recorded at the end of each lesson on tracking sheets. Constructive comments are added to assessed work by teachers during marking. There is good support for students in the business technology workshop. Teaching is less satisfactory on GNVQ, AVCE, public services and GCE A-level business studies. Many lessons had one or more of the following weaknesses: inadequate planning; excessive copying of notes from the whiteboard or overhead projector; poor attendance; insufficient checks by the teacher on students' understanding; and repetition of work undertaken in a previous lesson. The quality of placements for work-based trainees is good. There are insufficient workplace assessments, but the standard of those that take place is satisfactory.

103 Students are generally well supported in their studies. Regular review meetings are held with individual students where progress towards completing assignments is monitored and clear targets are set. Part-time students in administration have individual tutorial sheets on which the work they have completed and appropriate examination targets are recorded. Workplace reviews are inadequate. They involve insufficient action planning and give perfunctory attention to health and safety.

104 The teaching staff are appropriately qualified, but many of the full-time staff do not have recent commercial experience. This deficiency is partially overcome by the effective use of current practitioners in the business school who act as part-time teachers in subjects such as accounting and marketing. Employer liaison officers and workplace trainees and assessors are well qualified, and have relevant commercial experience. Accommodation in the business school is of good quality. The resource-based learning centre, for example, provides a good range of specialist books, magazines, videos and CD-ROMs, together with a suite of



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computers with access to the Internet. There are sufficient modern, networked computers for administration students, using industry-standard software.

## **Leadership and management**

105 Management and professional courses are well managed. Targets are set at course level for recruitment, retention and achievement. More generally, however, programme reviews lack rigour and do not always provide sufficient evidence that weaknesses are being tackled systematically. This weakness is acknowledged in the business programme self-assessment report. The allocated teaching time for full-time courses is insufficient and extends over only three days of the week. For the AVCE groups this has decreased to two days a week since May. There is insufficient provision of additional studies or enrichment activities.

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## Leisure and Tourism

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

### Strengths

- good range of options for full-time students
- effective links with industry
- good additional learning support in foundation and intermediate lessons
- good teaching on professional courses.

### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GNVQ advanced and intermediate courses
- inadequate monitoring of students' performance
- insufficient checks on students' understanding in lessons
- unsatisfactory accommodation
- small class sizes.

### Scope of provision

106 The provision includes GNVQ leisure and tourism courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The foundation level course was introduced this year. As part of the Curriculum 2000 reforms, the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) in travel and tourism has also been introduced. There are courses leading to professional qualifications including British Airways fares and ticketing level 1 and the Association of British Travel Agents' (ABTA) primary and advanced certificates. These courses have been successfully combined with courses in customer services, Spanish, and key skills to form a cohesive, full-time programme for those who wish to work in the travel industry. Most of the students are adults and the programme is designed to fit in with childcare arrangements. A resort representative course is offered as an additional option to second year GNVQ advanced students.

## Achievement and standards

107 Pass rates on GNVQ leisure and tourism intermediate and advanced courses are broadly similar to the national average. However, retention rates on both courses were well below the national average in 1999/2000. Retention is still poor in 2000/01. At the time of the inspection the retention rate was 46 per cent on the AVCE course, 53 per cent on the GNVQ intermediate course and 46 per cent on the GNVQ foundation course. Of the ten students who transferred from GNVQ intermediate to GNVQ advanced courses this year, only three were still on the course at the time of the inspection. More stringent entry procedures are planned for next year. Retention and pass rates are above the national average on the ABTA certificates, but are below the national average on the British Airways course.

108 All students demonstrate an appropriate level of attainment in their written work and their contributions during lessons. The standard of written work meets course requirements and is thoroughly monitored by internal verifiers. Students make insufficient use of IT to produce assignments. They are acquiring key skills on their vocational courses, but this is not being recognised, and the key skills are not assessed and recorded.

### Quality of education and training

109 Much of the teaching in this curriculum area is satisfactory, and that on the professional courses is good. In effective lessons, schemes of work and lesson plans were detailed and clear. Lesson objectives were explained to students. Teachers successfully drew on students' own experience to illustrate key points. Some imaginative revision techniques such as quizzes were used. Learning support assistants work effectively alongside teachers in GNVQ foundation and intermediate lessons.

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110 The teaching in more than one in seven of the lessons observed was unsatisfactory. In these lessons, the teacher did not maintain students' interest and did not check whether they had grasped the key points. The average size of groups observed during the inspection was seven. Teachers did not adjust their methods to take account of the small group sizes.

111 Assignments are written in a standard format and are usually returned within two to three weeks, but the teachers' feedback rarely includes advice on how students could improve their work. Students do not always understand the feedback and have to ask the teacher to explain. Students on the AVCE course had difficulty in understanding one of the assignments set. Assessment schedules are not adhered to. Key skills are taught separately from the vocational elements of courses, mainly by part-time staff. Confusion over the submission date of assignments to the awarding body means that some students will have to do key skills assignments in communication next year.

112 There are five full-time and 15 part-time teachers on the leisure and tourism courses. Four of the full-time teachers were appointed recently and are relatively new to teaching. Each full-time teacher is responsible for a particular course. Most of the teachers have travel industry experience which they put to good use in the classroom. Two classrooms are allocated to leisure and tourism. They are small and poorly ventilated. There is no base room in which students can store their portfolios. There is a high level of awareness of equality of opportunity which is reflected in learning materials. The travel shop provides realistic work experience for students. It is linked to a local travel agent and is well stocked with travel literature. Links with industry are good. Travel industry practitioners act as guest speakers and students undertake industrial visits and work experience. The library has a good range of books and other learning materials. Students make good use of the Internet.

## Leadership and management

113 The co-ordinator for leisure and tourism has been in post for one year and is beginning to tackle problems resulting from high staff turnover last year. Students' progress is inadequately monitored. Progress reviews which have been planned at tutorials do not always take place. For example, a third of students on the GNVQ intermediate course had been reviewed only once at the time of inspection. Reviews lack rigour. During reviews, teachers do not explain clearly to students the measures they need to take to improve their performance. Nor do they check subsequently that the actions have been taken. The monitoring of students' attendance is also inadequate. There are a number of students on the register who have been absent for considerable periods, without any action taking place.

114 The staff work well as a team. Course team meetings take place regularly, but minutes do not record the actions agreed or the progress made on actions agreed at previous meetings. The small class sizes do not represent good value for money. No effective strategies have been introduced to tackle low retention rates. The self-assessment report represents an honest attempt to identify strengths and weaknesses. However, it contains insufficient statistical analysis and has underestimated the importance of low retention rates.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Health and Social Care

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**.

### Strengths

- broad range of courses
- well-planned work experience
- effective teaching of key skills
- well-equipped learning resource centres.

### Weaknesses

- poor and declining retention rates
- low pass rates on the Diploma in Childcare and Education and on work-based training programmes
- some poor teaching
- low attendance and poor punctuality in the majority of lessons
- inadequate course reviews and self-assessment.

### Scope of provision

115 The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care, childcare and counselling. Courses in all three areas are available at foundation, intermediate, and advanced level. The college also provides higher education courses in social work, social care and childcare which were not inspected. A GNVQ foundation course in health and social care was introduced recently, but has attracted few students. The college provides courses at suitable times for adults with childcare responsibilities and there is some provision of childcare and playwork courses in the community. The Diploma in Social Work is available on a full-time and part-time basis; students with appropriate previous experience in social work can have their prior learning accredited by completing a portfolio and thereby achieve the qualification in a shorter time.

## Achievement and standards

116 Students' written work usually meets course requirements. Some assignment work is of a high standard and makes relevant links between the course content and the workplace. Many students use their IT skills to good effect in assignments. Students on advanced level courses generally demonstrate appropriate skills of analysis and evaluation. In childcare, some practical displays are poorly presented, lacking in detail and at too low a level for the course being followed. Work produced by social work and counselling students is mature and demonstrates a good understanding of the requirements of the courses. In many lessons, students demonstrate an awareness of the values underlying professional care and the need for commitment and integrity in their work. Counselling students display a mature understanding of the complex demands of work in counselling. They record the work they have done, in college and in practice, in well-written and thoughtful assignments and personal statements.

117 Pass rates for those students who complete their studies are mostly satisfactory, being around the national averages for most courses. However, the pass rate for the Diploma in Childcare and Education has been consistently below the national average during the period 1998 to 2000. Many students on childcare courses and work-based training programmes fail to complete their course or programme within the expected time scale. The retention rates on the majority of courses are poor and, in some cases, declining. For example, the retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate and the National Certificate in Care courses have dropped from over 70 per cent in 1998 to around 50 per cent in 2000. The retention and pass rates for modern apprenticeships are also poor. Over the last three years the pass rate has not been higher than 25 per cent. There is a pattern of low attendance and poor punctuality in lessons. The average attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was 68 per

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cent. In eight of the 23 lessons observed, fewer than 60 per cent of students were present.

## Quality of education and training

118 In the effective lessons, teachers organised appropriate learning activities and made frequent references to professional practice. Most schemes of work and lesson plans were constructed to ensure adequate coverage of course requirements, but some did not contain sufficient detail about learning outcomes or opportunities for assessment. In over a quarter of lessons the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers made poor use of the time available and failed to make sufficient checks on students' understanding. Some activities were insufficiently challenging to maintain the interest of the students and did not help them to make progress.

119 Much of the teaching and assessment of the key skills of information technology and communication is integrated with other aspects of course units. Students understand the relevance of key skills and monitor their own progress carefully. Their performance in the external tests for key skills is generally good. However, the key skills component of the modern apprenticeship programme has not been integrated with the vocational work and has been introduced too late in the programme. Students undertake well-managed and effective work placements during which their work progress is carefully monitored. Work-based trainees have the opportunity to work with a wide age-range of children in nurseries and of adults with a variety of needs in residential homes.

120 Assignments and assessments are carefully designed to cover course requirements. Students' work is generally marked conscientiously and returned promptly, but in some cases the teachers' comments are inadequate to help students improve their performance.

121 All students have a period of induction to introduce them to the college and their course. There are good quality, detailed course handbooks. Tutorial support is good. Group tutorials are used to cover topics such as preparation for work, health issues and applications to higher education. Students' progress is tracked by their tutors, and discussed in individual tutorials which take place at least termly. However, the targets set in tutorials are sometimes vague. Parents of younger students are informed of their progress at an annual parents' evening.

122 Most teachers have relevant vocational qualifications or recent professional experience. The majority of classrooms used for childcare lessons are adequate, although a few are rather small for the size of the groups being taught. There is little use of students' work or relevant posters to enhance the environment for learning. The library has a satisfactory stock of relevant books, video-recordings and journals. Students and staff have access to up-to-date IT equipment. There are excellent learning resource centres for childcare and health and social care students. These are well-stocked with a range of journals, books, workpacks and videos.

## Leadership and management

123 During the current year the provision in health and social care has been reorganised. Many staff have been given new responsibilities. The head of department was appointed in September 2000. There are regular team meetings in all areas of the department's work. Course files are generally comprehensive and well maintained. Increasing emphasis is being given to tracking and monitoring students' performance and reviewing the work of the department as a whole. Course teams generally follow the college's quality assurance procedures, but insufficient attention is paid to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and retention and pass rates in course reviews. Targets for

## **Curriculum and Occupational Areas**

performance are not set at programme or course level. A report is produced of the findings of the college's internal lesson observation programme. It is sometimes discussed at team meetings, but in general, there is insufficient sharing of good practice across the department. The self-assessment process is rudimentary and too little evidence is provided to support the judgements made.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Complementary Therapies, Hairdressing and Floristry

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

### Strengths

- good retention rates on college-based programmes
- good pass rates on sports therapy and beauty therapy level 3 courses
- well-presented, good quality portfolios
- high standards of practical work
- broad range of specialist courses
- effective recording of students' achievements
- well-managed floristry assessments.

### Weaknesses

- poor work-based provision in hairdressing
- declining retention rates in floristry
- some inappropriate accommodation
- insufficient use of work-based evidence for assessment.

### Scope of provision

124 Courses are provided leading to NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1,2 and 3 and in beauty therapy and floristry at levels 2 and 3. The range of complementary therapy and related courses includes holistic therapies, aromatherapy, reflexology, body massage, sports therapy, anatomy and physiology, false nails, manicure, fashion photography and media make-up. There are also work-based foundation modern apprenticeships. Most courses are taught during the day. The college salons are closed at week-ends and during the holiday periods. Most courses start in September each year, although learners can enrol later in the year and work to catch up with the group. Foundation modern apprentices in hairdressing and floristry work towards NVQ level 2 and key skills qualifications. There

are 193 learners on beauty and complementary therapy courses, 164 on college-based hairdressing programmes, 20 learners on floristry programmes and 24 hairdressing foundation modern apprentices.

### Achievement and standards

125 Retention rates on most college-based courses are good. In 1999/2000, the retention rate on the level 2 beauty therapy course was 10 per cent above the national average. The retention rate on the complementary therapies course at level 3 was 12 per cent above average. The exception is floristry, where the retention rate has declined from 100 per cent in 1997 to 59 per cent in 1999/2000. Pass rates on NVQ level 3 beauty therapy and sports therapy courses in 1999/2000 were also above the national average. Retention rates on work-based programmes in hairdressing are poor. For trainees starting in 1997/98 and 1998/99, the retention rates were 28 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. The corresponding pass rates were 25 per cent and 36 per cent. For the 26 foundation modern apprentices who started in 1999, the retention rate was 38 per cent. For the 21 starters in 2000, the retention was significantly better at 76 per cent. Two of the 1999 starters have gained the NVQ level 2 and the appropriate key skills qualification. Through its school link programme, the department recently celebrated the award of an NVQ level 1 to one of the youngest trainees in the country. Learners undertake an initial assessment of their basic skills and additional support is offered if required. The quality of the learners' finished portfolios is good. They contain a wealth of relevant evidence of their competence, including much visual work.

126 There are good standards of practical work. In media make-up, learners produce work of high quality and have won awards in a recent national competition. They also participate in work placements in this country and abroad. On other courses students' skills are enhanced by

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participation on manufacturers' courses organised by the college.

## Quality of education and training

127 Most of the teaching is good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well organised. Students' achievements are recorded using a variety of methods, including wall charts which are liked by learners, entries in learners' assessment record books, and an innovative computerised system which is just being introduced. There are standard forms for action planning but these are not always used effectively.

128 Floristry assessments are well managed both at college and in the workplace. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, opportunities are missed to assess vocational and key skills while learners are at work. Hairdressing trainees on NVQ level 3 programmes, who are senior salon staff, collect insufficient work-based evidence of their competence. Most of their assessment is done at college using simulated activities, which is poor assessment practice.

129 There are insufficient learning materials to encourage students to study on their own. In other respects, however, the library is well resourced. Students have access to the Internet. Some teachers bring their own textbooks into college and use good visual aids to enhance learning. Good use is made of visiting speakers, attendance at competitions and shows and work with community groups.

130 Some lessons take place in inappropriate rooms. For example, some therapy treatments are done in over-crowded, cramped conditions. All the specialist salons and related rooms are on two floors. The hairdressing reception area and dispensary are situated between the two hairdressing salons. The large salon with twenty-two workstations is bright and airy. In contrast, the small, poorly-lit beauty reception area, approached down a narrow, dark corridor, lacks a commercial ambience.

Access to the floristry shop, which is open only three days a week, is through a classroom. Improvements to the accommodation would enhance the students' learning experience and encourage more clients into the college and create more opportunities for assessment under realistic conditions.

## Leadership and management

131 There is good teamwork amongst staff, who share a common purpose and put learners and their achievements first. The whole team contributed to the self-assessment report and many of the strengths they identified were agreed by inspectors. Team meetings are held regularly, but are not always minuted. Some part-time members of staff are not able to attend, but they are always updated subsequently. More attention needs to be given to following the recommendations of internal verifiers and to recording work-based assessment. In hairdressing, some of the individual training plans of work-based learners were incomplete or had inaccurate information in them. Links with employers are generally good.



# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Design and Visual Arts

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

### Strengths

- wide range of courses
- high standard of students' work
- high pass rates
- good progression to higher education
- good teaching
- good support for individual students
- good specialist resources
- effective leadership.

### Weaknesses

- low retention rates on part-time courses
- underdeveloped key skills
- insufficient access to management information.

### Scope of provision

132 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses. The department has just over 1,000 students. Around 800 are studying on further education courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Courses include GNVQ at intermediate level in general art and design and media, and GNVQ at advanced level in general art and design. National diplomas are offered in foundation studies, graphic design, media, communication and broadcasting and textile design. The department is widening access to its provision through part-time courses in foundation studies, photography and interior design. Courses are well structured to meet the needs of individual students and the requirements of higher education and employers. Students progress to other courses within the college, to employment or to higher education. The department has useful links with schools, community groups and employers.

## Achievement and standards

133 There are high levels of achievement across all areas of the provision. Pass rates are at or above national averages. Pass rates on foundation studies, graphic design, media and some aspects of general art and design are particularly good. Students' work is of a high standard and demonstrates knowledge and skill in a wide range of techniques. Portfolios of work contain evidence of extensive exploratory work, research and finished artwork or design. Theory is effectively related to practical work and students have a good range of underpinning skills including objective drawing, drawing from life, basic design, colour theory and application, and sketchbook work. Students are confident in discussing their work and develop their own ideas and individual styles. They are developing critical skills that enable them to evaluate their own work and the work of others. There is a very good rate of progression to higher education. For example, over 90 per cent of students completing the National Diploma in Foundation Studies and the GNVQ advanced course obtained places at university. Students are also successful in competitions and in completing commercial projects. Retention rates are close to national averages on full-time courses. However, retention rates on some part-time courses are low and declining. Students' key skills, particularly in application of number, are underdeveloped and some students are unclear about how key skills are being introduced into vocational courses and assessed.

### Quality of education and training

134 Much teaching is very good and none was considered to be less than satisfactory. Lesson planning is thorough and related to comprehensive schemes of work. Learning is primarily achieved through the completion of well-designed, challenging assignments and projects. Projects are explained to students and have clear aims and objectives, assessment

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criteria and deadlines for completion. Once students have developed a basic understanding of their subject and have developed the necessary background skills, they are given considerable freedom in the interpretation of ideas and encouraged to explore their own interests. In one art workshop, learners were given a theme to explore in pairs. Each was encouraged to develop an individual style and to experiment with new techniques and materials.

135 Students respond well in discussions. Teachers challenge students and encourage them to articulate and evaluate ideas. For example, in one media lesson, small groups of students had to present a short video they had scripted and produced. All students were given a 'ratings' form that required them to evaluate the presentation under a number of headings. Many teachers use their professional experience as practising artists and designers to motivate students and to keep them informed of artistic and commercial developments. Many students benefit from undertaking assignments and commissioned work for local employers and community groups. These have led to work placements and job opportunities. Assessment is thorough and students' progress is monitored and recorded well. Students speak highly of the way assessments are carried out and the critical and constructive feedback they receive from teachers.

136 There is a good level of support for students. Prior to joining the college, most of the students are interviewed by the head of department and a relevant teacher. Students are given impartial advice about the most appropriate course and know what is expected of them. Students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia are well supported. All full-time and part-time students have tutorials and meet regularly with their personal tutors. Students' attendance is thoroughly monitored. Students receive good careers advice and guidance. Teachers are well qualified and

have a range of specialist expertise. Many are practising artists and designers. Specialist resources and accommodation are good and students also benefit from the use of resources obtained for higher education courses. Specialist equipment is good and portfolios of students' work contain many examples of the effective use of IT. There is a good range of up-to-date computers, printers and scanners and students have access to a wide range of software.

## Leadership and management

137 The programme area is well managed. There is strong leadership within an atmosphere of open and critical debate. There is a commitment to continuous improvement and students' performance is regularly monitored. Communication is good. There are regular meetings at departmental and course team level. Meetings focus on students' progress, attendance, retention and pass rates. The department is effective in sharing good practice and teachers from across the department often come together to discuss projects. A programme of lesson observation has been effective in identifying areas for development. The department has introduced a process of moderation that ensures that assignments are set at the right level and marked consistently. There is limited access to management information for middle managers and teachers. However, information held by the department is reliable, but middle managers and teachers have insufficient access to it.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## English, Communication Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, English as a Foreign Language and Performing Arts

Overall provision in these areas is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**

### Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on some GCSE courses
- good retention rates on modern foreign languages courses
- wide range of courses and modes of study
- good progression to drama school for performing arts students.

### Weaknesses

- poor overall quality of teaching
- poor retention on advanced level courses
- below average pass rates on most advanced level courses
- poor overall achievements of students following flexible learning programmes
- weak leadership and management of subject areas
- poor resources in performing arts and modern foreign languages.

### Scope of provision

138 A wide range of courses is offered in these subjects. The provision in English caters for some 220 mainly full-time students, and a further 300 students enrolled on flexible study programmes. GCE A-level and AS courses are offered in English language, English literature, English language and literature and communication studies. Students on access to humanities courses study a unit in 'exploring writing'. Intermediate level courses include Open College Network (OCN) courses in English language, and GCSE English and English

literature. Approximately 420 students are following courses in modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language (EFL). The courses offered include GCE A level, GCSE and a range of beginners' courses. EFL can be studied at a range of levels. In performing arts, some 50 students are enrolled on intermediate and advanced GNVQ programmes. Various modes of study are available for many courses, including one-year intensive GCE A-level courses and flexible learning. Evening classes are also available in some subjects.

### Achievement and standards

139 The standards achieved in lessons on GCE A-level, AS and GCSE courses in English are satisfactory. On GCE A-level and AS courses, students demonstrate understanding in their written work of literary and linguistic concepts and techniques. They have developed a personal response to the material they have read, although some students' written English is weak in expression and accuracy. Discussion and commentary in lessons were generally at a satisfactory level, although students' answers to teachers' questions were often insufficiently developed. Students demonstrate skills in independent study, encouraged by assignments which require research. Examples were seen of good work, carefully prepared by access students and demonstrating an informed response to literature, and of well-executed projects by students of communication studies in applying theory to practice. In modern foreign languages, those adult students who have continued with courses have made good progress, and work with enthusiasm and interest. Standards are high on courses in EFL; students have made progress in using language in a variety of ways. On performing arts courses, some students make good progress when working independently in small groups. However, students are not developing the self-discipline necessary for further work and training. Students' unwillingness to do sufficient practice or preparation on their

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own hampers their progress. Attendance and punctuality are poor.

140 Completion rates are below average or poor on most GCE A-level courses in English and communication studies; in the current year there has been poor in-year retention on many courses in English, modern foreign languages and performing arts. Pass rates are below average on most GCE A-level courses. Very few students who start flexible learning courses in GCE A-level or GCSE English enter the examination within two years. There have been good retention and pass rates at grades A\*–C in GCSE English literature for the last three years; pass rates are average on full-time GCSE English courses and above average for students entering the examination after studying through flexible learning. Pass rates are good on GCSE modern foreign languages courses, and satisfactory on the courses for beginners.

141 There is no value-added information to assess how students' achievements compare with what might be expected on the basis of their prior qualifications. There is good progression to drama school by performing arts students who have completed the course.

### Quality of education and training

142 Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but the percentage of good or very good lessons observed was below average. In one-fifth of lessons, teaching was less than satisfactory. In English and communication studies, teachers encouraged students to revise and practise examination techniques. Lessons were well planned, with a mixture of whole class discussion, small group work and timed written work. Teachers have produced leaflets advising students how to approach their examination papers. There is little planned use of ICT within the curriculum, although teachers do encourage students to use the Internet. Studies in English have been enriched by a trip to the Globe Theatre in London, and a talk from a university

lecturer. There are no arrangements at present for students' key skills to be developed or assessed through their English studies. Resources for English courses are adequate, but could be improved. The book stock in the college's learning centre is adequate for English, but should be updated and developed to reflect course requirements and to encourage students to read more widely. Teachers are appropriately qualified.

143 Students following English programmes in the flexible learning centre receive a half-hourly tutorial every month to support them in their studies. These tutorials are well-conducted. The tutors are sensitive to the needs of adult students studying in this way, and good materials are provided. Additional support is offered for students through an examination preparation workshop. Most teachers mark students' written work carefully and provide a helpful written commentary. There is no common approach to the marking of GCE AS and GCE A-level English; this results in different practices between teachers.

144 In modern foreign languages, there is well-planned, imaginative teaching which engages learners' interests. A practical focus and references to the relevant country help maintain interest. Some teaching, however, is unsatisfactory. In these lessons, teachers did too much of the speaking, used English too much or tried to cover too much ground, leaving the students confused. Teachers do not share good practice. Some do not hold qualifications in the teaching of a foreign language, and have inadequate understanding of some technical aspects of language teaching. EFL staff all hold relevant specialist qualifications. Most of the resources available for language study are inadequate, and this is reducing the extent to which students are able to study on their own.

145 In performing arts, teachers give good personal attention through individual coaching to students' learning needs. Staff have worked hard to set up the courses and

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give much time and energy to the students. However, there is insufficient rigour in some lessons, where students are not sufficiently challenged for poor punctuality and lack of preparation. The advanced GNVQ course has been well devised to meet the needs of the students who hope to progress to drama school or other higher education institutions. Although teachers have good experience in coaching students for individual examinations in speech and music, their formal qualifications are weak. Few are qualified teachers and a minority have degrees. There is a well-equipped theatre, but a serious lack of other necessary accommodation such as a dance studio, technical workshop or practice rooms.

### Leadership and management

146 Courses are managed by programme area leaders according to the type of course rather than the subject. This means that there are no subject leaders and no formal subject team meetings. In English, this has resulted in a lack of determination to develop many aspects of the provision, including resources, the teaching of key skills, the use of ICT in the curriculum, and the sharing of good practice. Similarly in modern foreign languages there is a need for stronger co-ordination. The review and evaluation of the provision also lack a subject dimension, with the result that there is no clear, common agenda for improvement. There is cross-college co-ordination of the college's GCSE English programme, which ensures that the requirements of the awarding body are met, for instance for internal moderation of students' work. A group has recently begun to meet to consider the future development of GCSE English programmes. EFL teachers have developed a team approach. There has been a lack of stability in the staffing of English courses, particularly over the last year. This has affected the quality of the students' experience in the college. One GCE AS group has had four teachers since September 2000. The use of part-time staff is not well managed.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Social Sciences

Overall provision in these areas is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**

### Strengths

- good pass rates on the access course
- effective support for individual students.

### Weaknesses

- poor and declining retention rates on GCE A-level courses
- poor pass rates on many GCE A-level and GCSE courses
- ineffective quality assurance
- insufficient use of IT
- poor attendance on many courses.

### Scope of provision

147 The department of science, adult and general education offers GCE A-level, AS and GCSE courses in sociology, psychology, law, history and government and politics. There are also an access to higher education course and a return to study course for students who have not studied for some time. No social science subjects are offered in the evenings. Students can study any of the social sciences in their own time, supported by a tutor.

### Achievement and standards

148 The standards achieved by access students are very good. Their coursework is well presented, word processed and of a high standard. GCE A-level and GCSE work is of a satisfactory standard. Students are able to work on their own, encouraged by assignments which require research, although there is little use of IT for this purpose. In a minority of GCSE and GCE A-level lessons, some students were unresponsive to the teachers' questioning. Attendance was occasionally poor. A new procedure for monitoring attendance was

introduced in September 2000 and improvements are now evident on some courses.

149 Pass rates on the access to higher education courses are good. Many of these students progress onto higher education courses. Retention rates are poor on all GCE A-level courses except for those in sociology and law. On GCSE courses, retention rates are around national averages or slightly above. GCSE pass rates are below average, except in sociology. The grades achieved by many GCE A-level students are below what would be expected on the basis of their GCSE achievements. Students choosing to study on their own do not usually achieve a qualification in the agreed time.

### Quality of education and training

150 Most of the teaching was satisfactory or good. Teachers knew their subjects well. They planned and prepared lessons effectively and had a good awareness of students' individual learning needs. In most lessons, teachers organised appropriate learning activities, supported by appropriate learning materials. In several lessons teachers engaged students in group work to consolidate knowledge in preparation for forthcoming examinations. GCSE lessons were lively and teachers constantly reinforced students' learning with targeted questions. A GCE A-level government and politics lesson started with a lively discussion of current events to which all students responded enthusiastically. In a few lessons, teachers failed to involve all students in the work and did not check that students were learning what was expected. There was little use of IT or the Internet to facilitate students' learning. Opportunities to develop students' key skills were missed. Teachers set relevant and appropriate assignments, which encourage students to research, reflect and develop their subject skills. In most cases, they mark students' work carefully and give constructive feedback to show students how to improve

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

their work in the future. However, in a few examples, written feedback was too brief.

151 The relationships between students and teachers are good. Students speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers. Students who need additional help generally get it, and in many cases this enables them to continue with their studies. All full-time students are allocated a personal tutor. As well as participating in group tutorials, students regularly meet their tutor to review their progress. Tutors keep good records of these reviews.

152 Humanities subjects are taught by small teams or individuals who are well-qualified and experienced teachers. Accommodation is appropriate, but lacks a subject identity, and there are no displays of students' work in classrooms. There is easy access to video players and other equipment. The humanities area has its own learning resource centre, which is well equipped with computers and staffed by a teacher. Book stocks in the library are adequate, although many popular texts are for reference use only. Full-time students have to buy their own textbooks.

## Leadership and management

153 Curriculum managers are aware of the weaknesses in the humanities provision. The current quality assurance procedures do not adequately address issues at subject level. The self-assessment report and programme reviews are insufficiently self-critical and detailed. Actions to remedy weaknesses have been slow to be implemented. There have been no successful strategies to raise the low achievement levels on GCE A-level courses. Some courses have shown some improvements in retention rates this year. Target-setting is not well developed. Communications are generally good. There are regular programme area meetings, but only informal subject meetings.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

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

### Strengths

- good achievements on pre-vocational courses
- good teaching
- good additional support
- well-qualified teachers and trainers
- good links with a range of external agencies.

### Weaknesses

- ineffective response to the needs of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

### Scope of provision

154 There is a broad range of courses at pre-entry level, entry level and level 1. All courses offer the option to acquire an appropriate external qualification. Students undertake the courses for a variety of reasons: to develop their skills for independent living; to extend their knowledge and understanding through a variety of practical activities; or to enhance their employability by acquiring basic and vocational skills. There are courses designed specifically for those recovering from problems with mental health, and for stroke victims. There is also a pilot foundation course for young people with moderate learning difficulties and for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

### Achievement and standards

155 Most students worked well and responded with enthusiasm and interest to the challenges set by teachers. Retention rates on all courses are high. Attendance and punctuality are sometimes poor,

particularly among the younger age group. Students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties were able to complete a range of tasks unaided or, in some cases, with prompts, and gained appropriate levels of understanding. Students on the pilot foundation programme were developing social and creative skills while improving their literacy and numeracy. Learning plans and other records indicated that most students had made significant progress since embarking on their programme of study. Over 90 per cent of students entered for external qualifications achieve certification. No national data are available for comparison, but the department is now devising internal benchmarks based on last year's results.

### Quality of education and training

156 Teaching was at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons observed. In a very small number of lessons, learning was poorly managed and expectations were low. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They make effective use of additional support staff in the classroom. Teachers know their subject well, set appropriate standards and generally have high expectations of their students and trainees. They successfully use a range of methods to promote both students' independence and the acquisition of essential skills. Each course has a detailed handbook which, supplemented by tutor files and records, ensures consistency of approach.

157 There are well-considered induction programmes for staff and students, including those students who join part-way through the year. All students undertake an initial assessment, which includes an assessment of basic skills and an analysis of preferred learning styles. Based on this, achievable short-term and long-term goals are set for each student. Progress towards short-term goals is monitored and reviewed on a weekly basis; that towards long-term goals is monitored termly. Whilst assessment is



# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

comprehensive, there has been no attempt to develop ways of measuring added value.

158 The vast majority of students enjoy their time in college and appreciate the support they receive. Many progress from course to course over a number of years. They value highly the qualifications they acquire. More work needs to be done on responding effectively to the needs of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is insufficient provision of residential and leisure activities and little to attenuate the disruption of learning during the holiday periods.

159 A successful programme of work-based learning has been well received by students, their parents and employers. Through their placements, students gain valuable experience of the world of work and the skills to move into further training or employment. Good links are maintained with other specialist providers and with schools. Close liaison with social, health and welfare services, as well as with the careers service, ensures that there is a multi-disciplinary response to students' needs. A pilot programme to meet the needs of disaffected young people has had some success and, as a result of the pilot work, is to be redesigned for the forthcoming academic year to include a summer school and residential provision.

160 Staff liaise well with other departments and services within the college and are active in encouraging students to progress into mainstream courses where appropriate. Several of the pre-vocational courses are taught in the mainstream curriculum areas. The accommodation currently used is inadequate for some of the students, particularly those in wheelchairs. More computers are required to meet college targets on access to computers. There is also a shortage of specialist software to meet the particular needs of these students.

## Leadership and management

161 This curriculum area is led and managed well. There is a strong commitment among all staff to build on what has been achieved and to strive for continuous improvement. The curriculum team reviews progress regularly at team meetings and internal verification events. The department makes use of the college-wide programme of classroom observations in its own evaluation.

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

## Basic Skills

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

### Strengths

- a wide range of provision to meet students' needs
- effective individual support for students
- a thorough, systematic approach to initial assessment
- a good range of resources for New Deal clients.

### Weaknesses

- lack of specific targets in students' individual learning plans
- a lack of focus on basic skills in partnership teaching sessions
- some inappropriate learning materials
- insufficient co-ordination of basic skills across the college.

### Scope of provision

162 The inspection of this curriculum area covered: basic skills courses for adults; in-class support for students of all ages through partnership teaching; basic skills support provided in the college's skills development centre; basic skills training for New Deal clients.

163 In 2000/01 there have been 76 adults on basic skills programmes. A further 48 students have attended the skills development centre workshops. Two-hundred-and-sixty-five students are provided with in-class support through partnership teaching. There are currently 26 New Deal clients. There are also a number of adults receiving individual support for basic skills through the college's flexible learning services.

## Achievement and standards

164 Retention rates are satisfactory at around the national average. For many externally accredited awards there are low numbers of students entered, making a comparison of pass rates with national averages difficult. Those on two courses where comparisons are possible are poor. The pass rate for the City & Guilds numeracy stage 2 award is only 41 per cent, compared with the national average of 66 per cent for 1999/2000. Results on the achievement tests in literacy are also eight per cent lower than the national average. The majority of students receiving help with basic skills are not working towards a basic skills qualification. Their aim is to improve their basic skills to enable them to complete their primary qualification successfully.

165 High levels of individual support result in most students making good progress in improving their basic skills and in meeting the requirements of their mainstream programme. This is evident in the students' portfolios of work. The college has attempted to measure the impact of basic skills support on pass and retention rates. For 1999/2000, the retention rate for those receiving support was six per cent higher than the college average, and the pass rate was five per cent higher. Students who receive help with basic skills often improve their personal skills, confidence and ability to work on their own, although this is not always recorded.

### Quality of education and training

166 The college recognises that many students are not prepared to attend additional lessons in order to improve their basic skills. For this reason the college has, over the last three years, developed its partnership teaching scheme, whereby a support teacher joins mainstream lessons where help is needed. In addition, some students receive individual support. Students value the support they receive and its positive impact on their confidence and

# Curriculum and Occupational Areas

abilities. Staff are responsive to their needs, sensitive and approachable.

167 There is a college policy, and a clear procedure exists, for the initial assessment of basic skills. All 16–18-year-old students and all those on foundation and intermediate level courses, including part-time students, are assessed. There is a clear set of guidelines for staff, giving details of the main assessment tools and the contexts and levels at which they are appropriate. The final choice of assessment tool is left to the discretion of the teacher. The skills development team marks the papers and feeds back results to the curriculum team. The initial assessment system is effective in identifying those students who need additional support. During the last year, the college has increased the number of students identified as needing learning support and the take-up rate of support.

168 Most teaching is satisfactory or better. For the adult provision and the group sessions provided by the skills development team, there are well-structured schemes of work and lesson plans. In some partnership teaching sessions there is also a separate lesson plan produced by the support teacher. Support teaching is most effective when students are given constructive feedback on their work and plenty of encouragement.

169 In some lessons, the partnership teacher provides general learning support to enable the student to benefit from the practical or theory lesson being taught, rather than specialist assistance aimed specifically at improving basic skills. Whilst such support enables students to complete tasks and assignment work for their main programme successfully, it does not always help them to develop transferable basic skills. In some sessions there is an over-reliance on worksheets as a teaching aid. Many of the worksheets used to teach basic skills do not set the tasks in an appropriate vocational context.

170 Each student who is receiving basic skills tuition has a separate individual learning plan. The targets and goals contained in the plan are often not specific enough. In some instances, they include vague targets such as 'improve writing'. Achievements in basic skills are not systematically measured or recorded as part of the termly review process. Instead, there is a very general discussion as to how students are progressing.

171 Most teachers who are employed directly by the college are well qualified and have undertaken specialist training in the teaching of basic skills. Some of the part-time agency staff lack such specialist qualifications. Some of the rooms used for teaching are unsuitable, mostly because they are too small. In the skills development centre there are not enough quiet areas for students working on their own or with a tutor. Resources for New Deal clients are good, and include a range of basic skills books and training modules that are related to job seeking. There are sufficient computers, and these are put to good use.

## Leadership and management

172 A new department, with responsibility for co-ordinating basic skills, was created in January 2001. Provision is still fragmented, however, and there is no central resource base. There is insufficient sharing of good practice amongst staff who teach basic skills. Staff meetings are held, but few agency staff attend.

173 The college does not yet have a strategic plan for basic skills, but has set up a strategy group, including the head of department and the principal, to develop a plan by June 2001. In the self-assessment report the college identified many of the weaknesses found by inspectors and has action plans to address them. Progress on these actions is monitored regularly.

# College Data

## Part D: College Data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age, 1999/2000

Level	16–18	19+
1	19%	23%
2	36%	24%
3	32%	26%
4/5	4%	19%
Other	9%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,727</b>	<b>11,752</b>

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001

Table 2: Enrolments by Curriculum Area and Age 1999/2000

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total enrolments %
Science	1,365	2,004	18
Agriculture	8	47	0
Construction	693	630	7
Engineering	633	618	7
Business	561	2,029	14
Hotel & Catering	525	364	5
Health & Community Care	760	2,294	17
Art & Design	792	555	7
Humanities	1,000	2,481	19
Basic Education	390	730	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,727</b>	<b>11,752</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Provided by the College in Spring 2001.

# College Data

Table 3: Retention and achievement

NVQ level (long courses)	Retention & pass rate	16–18			19+		
		1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
1	Starters excluding transfers	768	550	881	1,382	1,184	1,421
	Retention rate (%)	78	73	78	66	69	66
	National average (%)	81	81	N/A	79	78	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	63	58	56	66	64	55
	National average (%)	58	61	N/A	61	62	N/A
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,628	1,491	1,579	1,912	1,699	1,895
	Retention rate (%)	71	75	73	79	81	80
	National average (%)	76	77	N/A	79	79	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	62	65	72	50	63	63
	National average (%)	63	67	N/A	65	66	N/A
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,633	1,444	1,357	1,923	1,872	1,962
	Retention rate (%)	75	74	63	79	78	71
	National average (%)	77	77	N/A	78	79	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	66	68	66	60	61	61
	National average (%)	70	72	N/A	64	66	N/A
H	Starters excluding transfers	42	55	34	987	945	939
	Retention rate (%)	95	87	68	87	85	72
	National average (%)	83	83	N/A	83	84	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	77	88	64	63	71	67
	National average (%)	65	65	N/A	58	62	N/A

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last 3 years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE and tertiary colleges)

Source of information

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 1996/97 to 1988/99: Retention and Pass Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000
2. College rates for 1997/98–1998/99: *Benchmarking Data 1996/97 to 1998/99: Retention and Pass Rates*, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.
3. College rates for 1999/2000: provided by the College in Spring 2001.

## College Data

Table 4: Summary of grades awarded to teaching, learning and attainment 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	50%	32%	18%
19+ and WBL*	61%	28%	11%
Learning 16–18	45%	38%	17%
19+ and WBL	53%	37%	10%
Attainment 16–18	41%	45%	14%
19+ and WBL	53%	33%	14%

Key: Inspectors grade three aspects of lessons: teaching, learning and attainment. The range of grades includes: excellent (grade 1), very good (2), good (3), satisfactory (4), unsatisfactory (5), poor (6) and very poor (7).

\*WBL= work based learning