

West Kent College

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- *October 2001 inspection report*
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ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Inspection report

West Kent College

Dates of inspection: 15–19 October 2001

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	West Kent College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Graham Hollands
Address of college:	Brook Street Tonbridge Kent TN9 2PW
Telephone number:	01732 358 101
Fax number:	01732 771 415
Chair of governors:	Valerie Stead
Unique reference number:	130727
Name of reporting inspector:	Kenneth L. Jones
Dates of inspection:	15–19 October 2001

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

West Kent College is located in the town of Tonbridge. The college serves an area that has a large number of small and middle-sized enterprises and few large employers. Most in the area commute to London. Unemployment in West Kent is 1%. School staying-on rates in the area are high and the college operates in a very competitive environment. Some 50% of students are drawn from the West Kent area. The college provides courses in most vocational areas. During 2000/01, there were 2,271 enrolments of full-time students and 12,838 part-time students. Some 58% of full time students are aged 16 to 19 and 98% of part-time students are over the age of 19. Recruitment of full-time students is declining, but part-time enrolments are increasing. Information technology (IT) courses are taken by 5,450 part-time students at centres in the community. There is extensive provision for 900 full-time and part-time students in basic skills and also courses for learners with learning difficulties and learners with disabilities. The mission of the college is 'to meet and encourage the learning needs of our community'.

How effective is the college?

The college provides satisfactory or better teaching and opportunities for learning for most of its students. There is excellent support for learners with disabilities who are on mainstream courses. Provision in two areas is unsatisfactory. Improvements in pass rates are often accompanied by declining enrolments and retention rates. Completion and pass rates for students following work-based learning programmes are low. Guidance and induction procedures are effective and support for most students is good. However, the identification of learners who have basic skills needs is not always effective, and the college has not yet developed effective ways of encouraging learners who have been identified as in need of basic skills support to take up the help which is offered. Basic skills provision for those students who do avail themselves of it is effective. Tutorial support is not always effective. Although part-time enrolments have increased, the college has been unable to prevent the decline in retention rates and enrolments on full-time courses across all areas of learning. Procedures for improving quality are not implemented with sufficient rigour. Aspects of the management of many curriculum areas are unsatisfactory and data for monitoring improvements is unreliable.

Key strengths

- excellent support for learners with disabilities
 - good promotion of social inclusion
 - good access for students with restricted mobility
 - clean, bright and well-maintained premises
-

-
- establishment of learning groups in the community
 - effective guidance, induction and support for most students
 - effective provision for IT training in community centres
 - good industrial standard IT facilities.

What should be improved

- reliability of data and staff use of data for quality improvement
- strategies for addressing patchy and declining retention and recruitment rates
- planning and monitoring of actions to address weaknesses identified through self-assessment
- procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning
- integration of strategic, operational planning and self-assessment
- consistency and rigour of the management of quality improvement at all levels
- student take-up of basic skills support
- the effectiveness of some tutorial support
- key skill development on General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced-level (A-level) courses and in construction.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Action has been taken to improve General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics, but there is inadequate planning to address poor retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses. Unimaginative teaching, lack of agreed marking schemes and poor use of information communication technology (ICT) in teaching adversely effect students' learning. Tutorials are not sufficiently focused on students' individual learning needs.
Construction	Good. Much of the teaching is very good. In most lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching methods and learning resources which motivate students effectively. Pass and retention rates are high and students are well supported. Courses are well organised, but key skills are not fully integrated.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are good. Practical lessons are well taught and students are committed to their studies. Resources are good. Some theory teaching is unsatisfactory. Sufficient attention is not given to planning to remedy weaknesses.
Business administration	Good. Retention and pass rates are good and students develop good personal and occupational skills. There is much good teaching and staff work well as a team. Students make good use of the additional support provided. The area is well managed but accommodation is not always conducive to learning.
Business and professional	Good. Teaching is effective for all age groups and students are provided with good opportunities to progress to higher-level courses. Learners with disabilities are well supported. Recruitment to GCE A-level courses is declining and the retention rate is poor. The area is well managed, but the observation of teaching lacks rigour. Teachers have little confidence in centrally held data.
Computing and IT	Satisfactory. Courses provided at centres in the community are effective and well managed. There are poor retention rates and unsatisfactory teaching on some full-time courses. Full-time courses are not effectively managed. The facilities and classroom support are good throughout. Full-time students do not have effective tutorial support.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Hospitality, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. Pass rates on national diploma programmes and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 in housekeeping are good. Production, service and social skills of hospitality students are good. Teaching in realistic work environments is good. On a number of courses, there are low pass and retention rates. Implementation of systems to raise standards is insufficiently rigorous.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Much teaching on work-based hairdressing is unsatisfactory. The teaching of beauty therapy is mostly good. There are some poor retention rates on full-time hairdressing courses. Beauty therapy is well managed but assessment and the overall management of work-based training in hairdressing is unsatisfactory.
Childcare, health and social care	Good. There is a broad range of provision. Students on most courses achieve good pass rates. Most teaching is good. The best lessons are with adult students. Unsuitable accommodation reduces the effectiveness of learning in some lessons. Support for individual students is excellent. All courses are well managed, but some aspects of quality improvement procedures have limited impact.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Most teaching is good, but retention rates are inconsistent or declining. Strategies for improving pass rates are not sufficiently well developed and management roles lack clarity. There is good progression to higher education (HE).
Media and performing arts	Satisfactory. Most teaching is good, but there is poor classroom management in some cases. Accommodation and equipment is very good. Retention rates are declining on most courses. Although courses are well organised, self-assessment and action planning to bring about improvement are not sufficiently rigorous.
Humanities	Unsatisfactory. Pass and retention rates on most one-year courses are good. There are consistently low retention rates for all two-year GCE A-level courses. The teaching in many lessons is not sufficiently demanding and some teaching is unsatisfactory. Management and some aspects of support for students are poor.
English, languages and communication	Satisfactory. Teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good with some very good teaching of English and English as a foreign language (EFL). The language centre provides good support. There are some poor retention rates and declining enrolments. Self-assessment is ineffective.
Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Students' individual learning needs are identified through initial assessment. Most teaching is good or better and students are well supported. Courses are well planned and documented and the provision is well managed.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Basic skills	<p>Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory and better in the community-based provision than in college-based provision. Support in basic skills for students on vocational courses is not well developed. The management of quality improvement is not sufficiently rigorous.</p>

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Many curriculum areas are not managed effectively and quality assurance procedures are not implemented with sufficient rigour. The college has taken effective action to generate income and improve its overall financial position. Participation has been widened through partnership and franchise arrangements, but it has not developed effective strategies to address low retention rates and falling enrolments on full-time courses on the main site. The college has not placed sufficient emphasis on raising standards. College data on students' retention and pass rates are unreliable.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college provides excellent support for disabled students and has developed effective community-based networks for improving basic skills. A range of entry-level qualifications has been developed and the college actively seeks to help specific groups such as asylum seekers. Opportunities to learn are provided for individuals who have been excluded from other educational establishments. The percentage of students at the college from minority ethnic groups is 7% above the local profile. Equal opportunities is effectively implemented and monitored.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Students are provided with good advice and guidance prior to enrolment and the majority of students receive good or satisfactory induction. Basic skills support is effective, but many students decline the offer of individual support. Some tutorial support is poor and does not focus sufficiently on helping students to improve their performance.

Students' views of the college

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

What students like about the college

- friendly and adult atmosphere
 - location
 - support provided by teachers, tutors and student support services
 - IT facilities
 - the resource centre
 - good teaching
 - the opportunity to learn.
-

What they feel could be improved

- enrichment, sports and recreational facilities
- size and furnishings of some teaching rooms
- scheduling of work and assignments
- timetable management
- canteen facilities.

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 to bring about improvements 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 (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	58	30	12
19+ and WBL*	68	22	10
Learning 16–18	56	34	10
19+ and WBL*	64	30	6

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

** work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. West Kent College offers a wide range of vocational qualifications ranging from further education (FE) entry level to HE degree level, alongside academic programmes which prepare students for GCSE and GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A levels. Work-based learning is offered in six areas of learning.
2. College data are not completely reliable. However, the records suggest that the college has not successfully addressed issues of declining rates of retention and falling enrolments on full-time courses. This issue was highlighted at the last inspection carried out by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1997. Pass rates have improved, particularly on courses for adults, but there is a pattern of these being accompanied by declining enrolments or retention rates. Enrolments have increased substantially on part-time courses at centres in the community, franchised provision and on distance learning programmes.
3. Retention rates for 1999/2000 are slightly above the national averages on level 1 and level 2 long courses, and below on level 3 courses. However, since 1998, on courses at all levels, there has been a decline in rates of retention, the most significant being on level 3 full-time courses and on college part-time courses. Pass rates since 1998, are at, or a few points above, the national averages for similar colleges on level 2 and level 3 courses, but at or below the average for level 1 courses. Data for 2000/01 show these trends continuing. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more detail about achievement and standards for particular courses.

16–18 year olds

4. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses improved from 68% in 1999/2000, to 80% in 2000/01. The college recruits a substantial number of students whose average points score at entry is lower than the local average. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) figures for 2000, show that the average point score for students in the college taking GCE A or AS levels, is 10.9. This is well below the national and local averages of 18.5 and 18.6 respectively. Pass rates in sociology, history and government and politics were good, but poor in science and mathematics. Data on how students' performances compared with that which would be predicted on the basis of their qualifications on enrolment are not used systematically to raise standards. The improvement in overall pass rates has been accompanied by substantially declining enrolments, from 738 to 481 between 1999 and 2000, and a decline in retention rates from 61% in 1999/2000, to 53% in 2000/01.

5. Pass rates on GCSE courses for 1999/2000 were 49%. College figures show these results improved substantially in 2000/01 to 83%. However, this improvement in pass rates was accompanied by a substantial drop in enrolments from 411 in 1999/2000, to 267 in 2000/01 and a similar drop in the retention rate from 81%, to 63% over the same period. There have been improvements in some subjects, such as mathematics, law and psychology, where the number of passes at grades A to C improved, in some cases from below the average to above. However, the mean point score for students' achievements at levels A–C is low at 4.5 and improvement in pass rates has been accompanied by falling recruitment and retention rates.

6. On GNVQ courses, retention rates and pass rates for 1999/2000 were 80% and 81% respectively, but in 2000/01, there was a substantial drop in both, to 70.3% and 78.8% respectively, following an increase in enrolment. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses are above average at 81%. DfES figures for 2000 show that, of the 64 students entered, the average points score was 10.9. This is above the national average of 10.1. On NVQ courses, retention rates declined from 83% in 1999/2000 to 70.6% in 2000/01. Pass rates improved from 88% to 90%. There are good pass rates on engineering and construction courses, and on some courses in health and social care and business administration, but on the GNVQ intermediate course in art and design and in media, they are below average. The success rates of young people on entry-level courses are good. The basic skills support provided for full-time students on vocational courses, enables a high percentage to achieve their primary learning goals. However, only 15% of students identified as requiring support in 1999/2000 received it.

7. In work-based learning, there is low completion of the framework and poor achievement of NVQs on all foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection there were 87 students on these programmes. In some areas, such as engineering and food preparation, no students have completed the framework. Of the 164 foundation modern apprentices who started since 1999 and 2000, 12 have completed the framework and 19 have achieved an NVQ. Twenty-nine are continuing. Of the 76 advanced modern apprentices who started since 1999 and 2000, 3 have completed the framework and 34 gained an NVQ. Twelve are continuing.

Adult learners

8. Retention and pass rates for full-time students over 19 show a clear pattern of declining retention and improving pass rates. GCE A-level enrolments fell from 188 in 1999/2000 to 140 in 2000/01. Retention rates for 1999/2000 were 7% below the national average at 72% and dropped to 57% in 2000/01. Pass rates were 63% in 1999/2000, improving to 88.9 % in 2000/01. Students on access to HE courses perform well.

9. On NVQ and other vocational courses, enrolments and pass rates have increased, but there has been a drop in retention rates by 5%. There is particularly good practice in childcare, health and social care, beauty therapy and business administration. The achievement of adult learners on entry-level and level 1 courses is good, with many achieving their primary learning goals. In basic skills, the retention rate for short programmes is good.

10. The majority of adult learners are on part-time franchised ICT courses, on community ICT courses, or in distance learning provision in health and social care. Work in ICT with adults is good. Pass rates on distance learning courses in childcare, health and social care ranged from 3% on an advanced diploma, to 95% on short courses.

Quality of education and training

11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 282 sessions. They judged that teaching is good or better in 61% of lessons, satisfactory in 28% and less than satisfactory in 11%. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in art and design, English and modern foreign languages, business and professional, and business administration. In all the other areas inspected, there are varying levels of less than satisfactory teaching, for example, 21% in science and mathematics, 9% in health and social care and 5% in performing arts. Separate IT courses for adults at centres in the community are well taught. The teaching of students aged 16 to 18 on the main college site is not always so effective. Aspects of theory teaching in IT are well taught. In the majority of lessons, there is a mixture of younger and older students. Lessons for adults, or predominantly for adults, in childcare, health and social care are more effective than those for students aged 16 to 18. In practically based subjects such as construction and engineering, practical lessons are more effectively taught than theory lessons. In hairdressing, the teaching of work-based trainees is less effective than the teaching of full-time students and the teaching overall is not as good as in beauty therapy. In media and performing arts, a small number of unsatisfactory lessons contrast markedly with what is mostly good or very good teaching.

12. Most teachers are well qualified and have appropriate knowledge of their subjects. Teachers on business and professional courses have particularly good commercial experience which they use effectively in teaching to illustrate the practical relevance of points under discussion. Teachers have opportunities to undertake regular personal development including opportunities to update their commercial or industrial experience. Most lessons are well planned with clear aims that are shared with students. Teachers know their students well and ensure that activities are appropriate for the range of abilities in each class. Students' progress is carefully monitored and support is provided for weaker students when required.

Activities and assignments are carefully planned to motivate students and retain their interest in their chosen subjects. In a construction lesson, for example, students worked well as a team to design foundations and became totally engrossed in their work. Teachers lead discussions skilfully, taking care to target questions and involve all students, building their confidence and developing their social skills. The integration of learners with learning difficulties and learners with disabilities is consistently good across all the areas inspected and classroom support is effective.

13. There is little variation in teaching at different levels, although teaching at levels 1 and 2 is slightly more effective than that at level 3. GCSE mathematics for example, is taught more effectively than GCE A-level mathematics, with significantly more attention being given to the needs of individual students.

14. On most vocational programmes, key skills are taught effectively and well integrated with courses. Good examples of key skill integration are in childcare, health and social care. In GCE A-level subjects there is not enough integration of key skills. In construction, teachers do not effectively integrate key skills with the work and have not been able to make students see the value of key skills. Where key skills are separately taught, materials are not sufficiently well adapted to the interests of the students.

15. Most work-based training is at level 2 in hairdressing and child and social care. Although liaison with employers is effective, insufficient time is allocated to teachers to provide support and carry out assessments in the work place. Opportunities for students to attend college for training and assessment are limited to term times and this hinders their progress and results in a declining sense of motivation.

16. The accommodation used for teaching is well maintained and most of the teaching rooms are bright and contain adequate furnishings, providing a good learning environment for students. Some rooms, however, are less well cared for, are cluttered, contain broken or dusty furniture and learning aids. Some computer rooms do not have enough space for students to complete writing tasks or to work in groups, and some are inappropriate for lessons which do not require access to computers. A staff room is sometimes used for tutorials with students, and the proceedings are frequently interrupted by staff and other students. Some groups are too large for the classrooms they are taught in. The physics laboratory is in need of updating and some of the engineering teaching rooms are cluttered. In most areas, there are suitable learning resources to help students. The television studio and control room for media students provide a good learning environment, and the equipment for textiles and three-dimensional design and sculpture have been improved since the last inspection. There are good facilities for music and beauty therapy students, and there is a good training office for business administration students. For adult students studying in the college's community centres, the self-study packs are excellent. The college provides good specialist facilities for students with physical impairments. The college does not provide a realistic working environment for leisure and tourism students. The resources centre is bright and well laid out and there are 'satellite' resource centres in three other teaching blocks containing mainly reference materials. These centres are specialist and located in blocks where the specialisms are taught. There are insufficient resources in the main resources

centre for GCSE English students and there are some out-of-date texts and reference materials for hospitality and catering, mathematics, construction and leisure and tourism students.

17. Teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. Staff who teach on work-based and vocational courses are suitably qualified. Some 78% of full-time teachers have a teaching qualification and a further 11% are working towards one. Of the part-time visiting teachers, 39% have a teaching qualification and a further 13% are pursuing one, and 66% of learning support staff have appropriate qualifications. Some teachers, for example in health and care and in business administration, have good commercial experience which benefits students. Only 50% of the engineering teachers have a teaching qualification.

18. The college has 509 computers on site for students' use, giving a good ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:4. In the community centres, the ratio is 1:2.5. There are 133 computers on open access for students, though one room, which has 26 computers, is also timetabled for normal teaching purposes. Students report that they are able to use computers in their own time. Despite the good number of computers available, IT facilities are rarely used as teaching and learning aids in lessons in humanities, English, mathematics and science. In business administration, computers often freeze and this is the cause of much frustration during lessons. The college is working on developing an information learning technology (ILT) strategy. In the meantime, a working group is exploring the possibilities of ILT being used more widely by teachers in lessons.

19. Access for students with restricted mobility has been improved considerably since the last inspection. Numerous ramps and handrails have been installed around the site, and there is now access to every building. Lifts have been installed in all but one teaching block and plans to install the final one are in hand. Teachers and students observe appropriate health and safety regulations in lessons, but occasionally fire extinguishers are removed from their wall mountings and used inappropriately as doorstops.

20. The college has a detailed and thorough assessment policy, which is regularly updated. The policy is flexible, allowing for variations in practice, depending on the requirements of different syllabuses and the needs of learners. The college also has comprehensive internal verification procedures. Staff development days are held to share good practice in assessment and verification. The extent to which the policies are implemented varies across the college, and it is not clear how they are monitored. In some areas of learning, there is a good understanding of the purpose and value of assessment. For example, in business administration, lecturers use initial assessment effectively to inform learning plans. There are regular assessments linked to examinations, work experience and portfolio submission and clear targets are set for students and staff. In engineering, teachers use occupational initial assessment to ensure that students are placed on the right courses. In childcare, health and social care courses, both in college and in work-based learning, teachers use a range of suitable and varied methods of assessment throughout the year. However, there are examples of unsatisfactory assessment. The assessment planning on college ICT courses is inadequate and both assessment and internal verification are unsatisfactory on NVQ courses in catering and hospitality. In humanities, there is insufficient guidance about

assessment criteria in some subjects. In work-based learning in hairdressing and engineering, some apprentices have no work-based assessment.

21. The monitoring and recording of progress and feedback on students' work is good on some courses, but less effective on others. On English courses, teachers provide detailed feedback sheets, but this is not the case in modern foreign languages. Targets at course level are not based on the progress of individual students. Students' work is thoroughly marked and their progress on IT courses in the community is rigorously monitored. In mathematics and science, the marking of students' work is not carried out effectively or uniformly by all teachers. Basic skills students' individual progress is inadequately recorded. In humanities, parents of students aged 16 to 18 are regularly informed about students' progress. In business administration, there is regular feedback to employers about students' progress on college courses.

22. There is good and effective collaboration between the college, the community and employers. The curriculum has been diversified to incorporate community-based learning. There is an appropriate range of IT courses offered for adults at centres in the community. Strategies to increase the number of full-time students, aged 16 to 18, have been largely ineffective, although in business administration and childcare, health and social care, new courses have been successfully introduced. Since 1993, there has been a decline in numbers and in the market share for this group of students. In most areas, the college offers a broad range of courses that meet the needs of current learners. Within the college there are some good progression routes for students to HE. Students who have previously been unsuccessful, or rejected elsewhere, are succeeding at the college. Developments in the full-time and part-time curriculum have largely been in response to changes in qualification requirements rather than to the needs of local students and employers. There are not enough foundation and intermediate-level courses in many subject areas. There has been no development in the work-based learning programmes. Hairdressing courses are over-subscribed, but there has been no review of the salon opening hours which restrict further recruitment on this programme. The college's full-time prospectus contains images of students in traditional stereotypical roles and courses. A web site and a revised prospectus were being developed at the time of the inspection.

23. There are some good enrichment activities for individual subject areas that include external and residential visits, the cross-college enrichment programme has been developed with little consultation with students. Although they are provided with leaflets, many students are unaware of the programme's existence and some are unable to take part because of timetabling clashes. The majority of vocational courses have work experience, however, in construction and engineering there is no relevant work experience.

24. All prospective students receive good advice and guidance prior to enrolment and have opportunities to find out about the college and courses through open days, open evenings, tours, interviews and 'taster days'. Most students receive a good or satisfactory induction. Adults at the community centres benefit from an excellent induction programme which is presented in three phases. There is a thorough initial assessment of students' learning needs, key skills and preferred learning styles which is communicated to students

and tutors. This initial assessment does not successfully identify students with basic skills needs. Students receive good individual support from well-qualified and enthusiastic learning support assistants during lessons and at the learning support centre. However, the college has been slow to develop basic skills support for students on vocational courses. In 1999/2000, 936 students were assessed for basic skills difficulties. Of the 676 identified as in need of support, only 15% received it. This was less than half the number supported in the previous year. In 2000/01, the position was partially redressed: 761 students were assessed, and 254 identified as needing support. Of these, 86% received help. Very few students make use of the study centre. Work-based learners and part-time students are not always able to attend basic skills tuition. There are excellent learning support resources, including base rooms, a quiet area, adapted equipment and specialist computer hardware and software that are regularly used by students. Deaf students and students who are visually impaired or have disabilities, are supported and integrated with mainstream courses. Learners with visual impairments from a partner college are being supported well by West Kent College.

25. All students have a weekly tutorial with a designated tutor, though work-based learners do not benefit from this weekly support. Students greatly appreciate the support and help they receive from their tutors. The process does not always provide effective support, particularly where part-time tutors are used. Some tutorials are well managed and targets and goals are set for students, but this does not happen for all students. In areas such as humanities and science and mathematics, tutorials are not sufficiently focused on improving the performance of individual students. Absences are dealt with promptly and parents of full-time students aged 16 to 18 are informed. The tracking of absence by students over time is not effectively monitored. There is insufficient specialist careers advice for students. There is appropriate advice and guidance for progression within the college and to HE.

26. Some aspects of support for students are well managed, including initial advice and guidance, initial assessment, induction and the learning support centre. Other aspects are not as well managed, including careers advice and the tutorial system. The tutorial and student goal and target-setting system has been recently revised and has not yet been monitored by management.

Leadership and management

27. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The management of aspects of many curriculum areas, for example, science, humanities, engineering, art and design, hairdressing, computing and IT, basic skills and hospitality and catering is unsatisfactory. Weaknesses include a lack of action to improve teaching and raise students' achievements, inadequate monitoring of students' performance, too little staff involvement in target setting, failure to resolve staffing problems, lack of clear responsibilities and insufficient rigor in the implementation of quality assurance procedures. Some curriculum areas are well managed. For example, the teams who teach business administration, health and social care, beauty therapy, business studies and construction work together effectively and staff have appropriate involvement in setting targets for retention and pass rates.

28. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant improvements to its accommodation. In particular, it has replaced dilapidated huts with a new building and improved access for wheelchair users. It has also taken effective action to generate income and widen participation through partnership and franchise arrangements. Two substantial contracts with private sector partners enable the college to provide training in IT and caring skills for a substantial number of students. In addition, there are franchise contracts with partners as far afield as Gateshead. The income generated by these activities more than offsets deficits made on courses at the main site. These franchise and partnership activities are managed effectively by the college.

29. The college operates in an extremely competitive environment. All local schools have sixth forms and there are few young people in the catchment area who are not either in school or full-time employment. In recent years, the number of full-time student enrolments has declined each year. The college has implemented measures to address this. In particular, it has sought collaborative arrangements with schools. Two such arrangements are currently in place. However, the actions taken have not stemmed the downward trend in full-time student enrolments. In particular, the business plans for the four college faculties are an inadequate response to this key issue. They are not linked to strategic objectives and are not sufficiently linked to self-assessment. They contain insufficient analysis of the market and too few measurable objectives.

30. The college has consistently set over-optimistic targets for both full-time and part-time enrolments. In the last three years, the college has been 9%, 7% and 7% respectively, below its enrolment target for full-time FE students. It exceeded its part-time target by 4% in 1998/99, but was 28% and 14% below target in the following two years.

31. College data on students' retention and pass rates are unreliable. The college does not have an accurate overall picture of retention and pass rates. The college recognises the problem and has introduced new procedures. The college is aware that overall retention rates are declining and that there are poor retention rates on some courses. New measures to address this include more rigorous chasing of absent students, changes to the tutorial system and central guidance on actions that lecturers can take to improve retention rates. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures. The need to achieve enrolment targets occasionally conflicts with measures to improve retention rates. For example, students are sometimes enrolled on courses that are not suitable for them and some classes contain students of too widely differing abilities.

32. The college has systematic quality assurance arrangements. Key elements include logbooks for each course, annual self-assessment and lesson observations. The logbooks are based on the headings in the Common Inspection Framework. Staff regard logbooks as useful and most of them are completed. Staff also value the process of self-assessment. However, too much of the report is descriptive rather than evaluative and some of the action plans are not linked to weaknesses. The programme of lesson observations resulted in observation grades significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors. The process is not having sufficient impact on pockets of less than satisfactory teaching.

33. Governors are aware of the difficult issues facing the college. They support the broad mission to meet the learning needs of the community, provided that it is consistent with the continued viability of the college as a whole. They appreciate the need to offer distinctive provision, increase collaboration with schools and improve marketing. They have been instrumental in securing some improvements, for example, by rejecting inadequate marketing plans. The committee structure and reporting schedule provide a good framework for the scrutiny of students' achievements. However, poor quality data and some lack of clarity in reports, detract from the effectiveness of this function. Although governors appreciate and discuss the issues, the college has not developed an effective strategy to address falling enrolments, inaccurate targets, low retention rates and the financial deficit on main site activities.

34. The college implements good equal opportunities practice. It has recruited over 30 visually impaired students and over 30 deaf students. The support for these students is excellent. Some 7% of students come from minority ethnic groups, compared to 1% of the local population. There is an active equal opportunities committee and appropriate policy.

35. Since the previous inspection, the college has improved its systems for managing training. The recruitment, assessment, learner reviews and all the administration and finance are managed by the enterprise unit. The faculties are responsible for teaching the training programmes. This is not effective in all areas. For example, in engineering and hairdressing some apprentices are not receiving any work-based assessment. The revised structure has not yet resulted in improvements in retention and pass rates.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science and mathematics

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

Strengths

- action taken to improve students' performance in GCSE mathematics
- flexible teaching of GCSE mathematics to meet students' needs.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates for GCSE A-level courses
- unimaginative approaches to teaching and learning
- insufficient use of ICT in teaching and learning
- failure to agree and implement a scheme for the marking of students' work
- inadequate action planning to bring about improvement in advanced-level courses.

Scope of provision

36. GCSE mathematics is taken by over 170 students. Over two thirds of students taking GCSE subjects are aged 16 to 18. Recruitment on to GCSE, GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry, human biology, physics and mathematics declined significantly during the three years prior to the inspection and only 55 students, mostly aged 16 to 18, take these subjects. GCE AS-level science for public understanding has been introduced to attract students that would not otherwise consider a science course. There are small numbers of students over the age of 19 taking the access to HE course in science. Students can progress to a Higher National Diploma (HND) science (health studies) course within the college.

Achievement and standards

37. The college has focused on the need to improve pass rates in GCSE mathematics which have increased from 17%, to 38% over a three-year period and are now above the national average for colleges of a similar type. Retention rates have declined, but remain above the national average. Despite this improvement, only about one in four students who start the course gain a grade C or above. Retention and pass rates for GCE A-level courses are poor. In mathematics, the retention rate has declined significantly over a three-year period and is well below the national average. The pass rate has improved but remains below the national average for colleges of a similar type. Both enrolments to science courses and

retention rates have declined significantly over three years. Only 30% of the students enrolled were retained in 2001, which is well below the national average for similar colleges. The overall pass rate for science courses has improved, but less than one in three students who enrol, achieve a pass grade at the end of their course. The college has only recently introduced procedures to compare students' achievement with that which would be predicted on the basis of their achievements at enrolment. The college is not able to systematically assess the extent to which GCE A-level science and mathematics students have progressed relative to their prior attainment.

38. Attendance in classes is good at 87%. Lessons start on time and only relatively small numbers of students arrive late.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	193	198	170
		% retention	83	76	71
		% pass rate	17	20	38
GCE A-level sciences	3	No. of starts	78	72	27
		% retention	83	65	30
		% pass rate	46	41	100
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	69	47	37
		% retention	78	60	32
		% pass rate	30	45	50

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

39. A resource-based approach to teaching and learning has been adopted for raising standards in GCSE mathematics. Effective learning workshops have been introduced alongside more formally taught lessons. These workshops are repeated at different times to accommodate students who are following different programmes. Students are given a weekly list of learning activities and teachers provide individuals or groups with support as needed. The workshops are usually staffed by two teachers, which allows one to work with individual students and one with small groups. Teaching and learning in these workshops is good or better. Students are carefully monitored and tested at regular intervals to determine the

progress they are making. A combination of shorter and longer deadlines for completing set work helps to maintain students' motivation for the course. Courses are adapted and good specialist support is provided for students with special needs. The more formal teaching lessons are less successful, but satisfactory overall. Students lose interest quickly when such lessons are dominated by teachers working through examples on the whiteboard.

40. In GCE A-level mathematics, lessons are satisfactory but uninspiring. Teachers rely on using the whiteboard, setting tasks and walking around the room providing support to students. In most lessons, opportunities to engage students in discussion with the teacher or with other students are missed and the teaching is unimaginative. In one mathematics lesson, students plotted graphs of trigonometric functions by hand on graph paper. The work was laborious and most students became bored and restless. In most mathematics lessons, the explanations provided by teachers are clear, but students are not stimulated and encouraged to learn. In a better-planned science class, students discussed different methods of generating electricity, produced a table of advantages and disadvantages and built on their previous learning. There is effective use of videos in some science lessons, but in most lessons there is not enough integration of theory with practical work to stimulate students' interest and opportunities to consolidate their learning are missed.

41. The teaching of key skills is not integrated with students' programmes. Application of number lessons are run for students on courses outside the area, but the materials chosen are not well adapted to the interests of the class being taught.

42. Students have good access to computers, but there is no significant use of IT to help learning in science or mathematics. Graphical calculators are not used in GCE A-level lessons even though a significant proportion of students own them. Students are encouraged to use computers outside lessons, but are not given guidance on how to use them to carry out mathematical or scientific calculations and teachers are insufficiently aware of good practice, in this respect, in other colleges. There is a good range of books and other resources for science but the stock of books for mathematics is very poor.

43. There is no agreed scheme for the setting and marking of students' work. Some teachers set work regularly and make careful and constructive annotations which help students to develop their understanding of different subjects. Students are unclear about when work is set, when marked work will be returned and how they can improve their performance.

44. Students are supported by teachers who generously give up their time outside lessons. Teachers act as tutors and run a centrally planned programme of tutorial activities. Although individual teachers have access to information about individual students' attainment on enrolment, tutorial provision is not sufficiently focused on students' individual learning needs and there is not enough support to help weaker students to improve their performance.

Leadership and management

45. Managers in this area have prioritised GCSE mathematics as a key area for improvement and have made significant steps to improving the quality of provision. For other courses, however, self-assessment lacks rigour and action planning has too many aspirations. There is insufficient emphasis on identifying specific actions for achieving improvements. Staff development activities are not sufficiently focused on developing methods to improve teaching and learning.

Construction

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

Strengths

- high achievement
- effective support for students
- well-planned assessment and verification procedures
- mostly effective teaching
- good course organisation and management.

Weaknesses

- key skills not yet fully integrated
- lack of formalised work experience on full-time courses
- some shabby accommodation and furniture.

Scope of provision

46. The college provides a narrow range of GNVQ intermediate, national diploma and national certificate courses for some 50 full-time and part-time students. Students also study for additional qualifications in areas such as surveying and levelling. Some specialist short courses are offered in areas such as manual handling, risk assessment, health and safety and computer-aided drafting. There are no other construction courses offered in the catchment area of the college. There are good progression opportunities to a wide range of higher-level construction courses within the college.

Achievement and standards

47. Retention rates across all programmes are at the national average. The pass rates on national certificate, diploma and GNVQ programmes are consistently above national average. Students are committed to their work and take pride in producing work of a high standard. Students on the national diploma attain well, both in lessons and in their assessed work. Many students use computers to complete their assignments and in most lessons, students are well motivated and hardworking. They participate well in lessons and speak positively about their work and the personal support received from teachers. National certificate students are able to draw on their work experience to provide practical examples to help them develop their understanding. Teachers have not convinced students of the value of key skills and do not integrate them effectively with the course: some students do not attain a satisfactory level of development across all the skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	6	11	6
		% retention	100	82	83
		% pass rate	83	78	80
National diploma in construction	3	No. of starts	12	13	12
		% retention	75	92	75
		% pass rate	100	100	100
National certificate in construction	3	No. of starts	*	14	16
		% retention	*	79	69
		% pass rate	*	82	100
NEBOSH	3	No. of starts	16	8	17
		% retention	100	100	94
		% pass rate	31	75	31

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

48. Most teaching is good. In the best lessons, teachers display a high level of occupational competence and frequently relate classroom activities to the construction industry. There is, however, no structured work experience programme for full-time students to broaden and enrich their studies. Most lessons are well planned and teachers provide a range of learning activities which are suitable for students with different abilities. In a GNVQ lesson, students of varying abilities worked at their own pace and demonstrated increasing confidence with IT. In a construction technology lesson, students designed foundations to industrial specifications. They worked busily in groups and individually to solve problems concerning foundation failure. They were highly motivated and maintained their interest throughout a 90-minute lesson. In another effective lesson, students carried out a traverse survey of an area. They used theodolites competently and worked enthusiastically and purposefully in small groups to measure, check and record the features on the ground. In both these lessons, students were achieving above the programme's requirements.

49. The minority of weaker lessons was poorly planned, heavy on exposition and provided few opportunities for students to relate to the subject matter. In a lesson on town planning for example, the teacher spoke for an hour and students were given few opportunities to become involved. The lesson wandered with no clear direction. Most students lost interest, but were compliant. The learning that took place was unsatisfactory. In another weak lesson when on the use of the calculator, students were presented with a worksheet and asked to complete the calculations. Some of the group had done similar work previously and others were confused.

50. Students with special learning needs are well supported by specialist staff and play a full part in lessons. In one lesson, a student with a profound hearing impairment made effective use of a learning support assistant to point out a mathematical mistake made on the white board by the teacher.

51. Assignments are effectively designed to reflect industrial standards and assessments are carried out to examination board requirements. There are effective internal verification procedures and students are given written and verbal feedback. They are aware of the progress they are making and how they can improve their performance.

52. Technical support is effective and valued by both teachers and students. High standards of safety are observed at all times and students routinely carry out risk assessments. Health and safety is given a high priority, particularly in materials science and surveying. Students have to carry out risk assessments prior to commencing assignments. Learning resources are generally good. The Marden learning centre has a good supply of relevant reference materials and Internet access. The main college resource centre has a good supply of books, but some of the stock is dated and day-release students cannot gain access after four o'clock on Fridays. Laboratory resources are good and surveying equipment is adequate. Some rooms are too small for the classes that have to be accommodated and are shabbily furnished and in need of re-decoration.

Leadership and management

53. Construction courses are well managed and teachers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the area. Lesson observation procedures are not implemented with sufficient rigour to identify weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.

Engineering

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

Strengths

- consistently high retention rates on most courses
- pass rates at, or significantly above national averages
- good use of initial assessment on motor vehicle
- well-managed practical work.

Weaknesses

- some poor classroom teaching
- inadequate written feedback
- no planned programme of relevant work experience.

Scope of provision

54. The college offers a range of electronic servicing and microcomputer technology courses at foundation and intermediate level. Motor vehicle and engineering courses are also available at an advanced level. The majority of the 190 students are full-time and aged 16 to 18. Approximately 10% of level 2, and up to 50% of level 3 students are aged over 19. NVQs, foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA) and advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA) are also available, but enrolments are low, with only three students following these programmes. All assessment on work-based learning programmes is carried out at the college and students join groups of full-time students to develop their basic knowledge. National diploma students have the opportunity to take additional courses, for example, NVQ fitting units and autocad.

Achievement and standards

55. Students' work is satisfactory or better at all levels. Level 2 students demonstrate basic competencies in operating specialist equipment and are developing appropriate skills. National diploma students for example, successfully investigated various options, and designed and built a motor-controlled door-locking mechanism.

56. Students' pass and retention rates are good across most courses. In 2001, pass rates on level 1 courses were between 90% and 100%. At level 2, pass rates are at least at the national average or above. Level 3 pass rates are well above the national average and are over 90% for the national diploma in engineering. On level 2 and level 3 unit-based craft courses, students have difficulty in completing all of the units within the expected timescale.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds microcomputer technology	1	No. of starts	16	20	15
		% retention	75	90	87
		% pass rate	92	67	100
City and Guilds electronics servicing	1	No. of starts	17	26	15
		% retention	76	85	87
		% pass rate	92	55	92
City and Guilds electronics servicing	2	No. of starts	12	10	15
		% retention	92	80	87
		% pass rate	82	100	90
City and Guilds repair and service of road vehicles	2	No. of starts	*	19	9
		% retention	*	79	89
		% pass rate	*	87	75
City and Guilds repair and service of road vehicles	3	No. of starts	*	15	16
		% retention	*	87	100
		% pass rate	*	85	66
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	69	43	53
		% retention	94	79	85
		% pass rate	81	91	91

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

57. Practical teaching is good. There are well-planned programmes of work with well-written task sheets. Students on the City and Guilds electronics and microcomputer course, progress competently through a series of 16 practical assignments designed by the college to

develop students' skills and knowledge of digital logic circuits and programming. In the best theory lessons, teachers sustain students' interest by following up short introductions with exercises which develop their knowledge. For example, in an electronics lesson on ohms law, the teacher quickly, but thoroughly, introduced the topic and then gave the students a series of graded exercises to complete. The students quickly gained an understanding of the basic concepts and then went on enthusiastically to solve more complex problems. Effective use is made of visual aids to help students' understanding of complex engineering components and principles. For example, motor vehicle students' interest and understanding of the four-stroke petrol engine was greatly enhanced by the use of a cutaway-working model. There are no planned programmes of relevant work experience for full-time engineering students to help them relate their lessons to the industrial context.

58. Despite good retention and pass rates, 22% of lessons were unsatisfactory. In these lessons, students' contributions are often restricted to note taking or copying from the white board and teachers do not give sufficient attention to the ability range of students in the classes or to determining whether students are learning and making appropriate progress. The extensive use of undirected questions does not enable teachers to identify the students who are having difficulty. In an electronics lesson on closed-loop control, for example, the teacher used an overhead transparency of text copied from a book and proceeded to read the text to the students for most of the lesson. Students had a copy of the text which they were expected to follow. Two students sat with their eyes closed for most of the session, and the teacher failed to ask them what they were doing. In another engineering lesson, national diploma students were given an assignment sheet and the teacher spent 50 minutes explaining what the students needed to do. Students listened patiently for 10 to 15 minutes and then gradually lost interest. Students left the session with no information about what they were expected to do.

59. Teachers have appropriate vocational qualifications but not all staff have a teaching qualification. All staff undertake regular personal development which may include a period in industry. There is a good range of specialist equipment appropriate to the level of provision. The curriculum area has its own specialist resource centre where students are able to work on assignments with the aid of relevant materials and IT support.

60. Motor vehicle students have a thorough initial assessment at interview. Students complete diagnostic tests in literacy, numeracy and mechanical aptitude. The results are processed to guide students onto the most appropriate course for them. Teachers provide help for students who need to develop their basic skills but they do not always take up the offer. Good opportunities are provided for learners with disabilities and disaffected students. There is regular assessment throughout the year and students are reminded of deadlines. However, feedback on performance to students does not adequately inform them of how they can improve. Some students' portfolios of work are poorly presented.

Leadership and management

61. Course tutors feel well supported by their immediate managers and staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas. Weaknesses in poor teaching have been

highlighted but there is insufficient evaluation of the adverse effects they have on students. Targets set for improving performance lack precision and teachers are not sufficiently involved in the process. Course tutors record performances on their course in a college logbook but some are unclear about how to calculate pass rates where continuing students are involved. As a result, there is an over reliance on centrally held data which is often unreliable. Sufficient attention is not given to planning the actions required to address weaknesses.

Business administration

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

Strengths

- good pass rates and high retention rates
- good teaching on most courses
- effective team work
- good staff development
- strong links with employers.

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and punctuality at NVQ level 2
- some inadequate accommodation and facilities.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time provision in office and secretarial skills. Courses are available at levels 2 to 4 during the day, with one evening class in shorthand. There is no work-based learning in this area. Courses include administration assistants at NVQ level 2, personal assistants, legal personal assistants, executive personal assistants, Office 2000, shorthand and European business skills. Students work towards certificates and diplomas in administrative and secretarial studies which encompass text processing, data handling, spreadsheets and law. Some of the courses include foreign language skills. There are 124 students in this area, 67 aged 16 to 18 and 57 aged 19 and over. All but eight learners are full-time. There are eight adults on the shorthand course. The inspection covered all full-time courses and the part-time evening course.

Achievement and standards

63. There are good retention and high pass rates on all courses in the area. Achievement by students following the administrative and secretarial procedures diploma, and personal assistants, and legal secretaries courses is particularly good. The numbers on NVQ level 2 business administration courses have decreased due to the termination of franchise arrangements. The standards attained by students in lessons and in their portfolios are mostly satisfactory and some are good. Students produce good work and develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. The self-confidence of students who are returning to study increases significantly during their period of study. One personal assistant won the International College Leaver of the Year Award and two executive personal assistants came second. Out of six countrywide finalists, three came from the college. Attendance overall is

high at 92%, but attendance by students on the NVQ level 2 programme is poor, and students frequently arrive late for lessons. On secretarial courses, 79% of learners progress into related jobs. There are good links with employers.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ business	2	No. of starts	153	150	35
		% retention	90	83	86
		% pass rate	77	45	90
Text processing stage 2	2	No. of starts	94	106	95
		% retention	97	88	87
		% pass rate	80	95	96
Administrative and secretarial procedures certificate	2	No. of starts	*	*	20
		% retention	*	*	85
		% pass rate	*	*	70
Business administration	3	No. of starts	*	77	30
		% retention	*	82	83
		% pass rate	*	67	85
Administrative and secretarial procedures diploma	4	No. of starts	26	11	15
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	65	100	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

64. Teachers are well qualified and some have commercial experience. All but one have a teaching qualification. Most teaching is good; some is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In most lessons, teachers engage students at the start, provide clear instructions and question students carefully to ensure that they understand what is expected of them. In a well-planned NVQ level 2 lesson, students formulated a response to a

memorandum they had received from their teacher concerning attendance. They worked as a team to clarify action points for improving attendance and produced a written response. Lessons include a variety of tasks such as completing workbooks, using office equipment, liaising with other departments, presenting to colleagues, holding formal meetings, contacting employers and operating a reception area. Students are encouraged to help each other in carrying out the tasks set. Students on the executive personal assistant course prepared a brochure for a presentation event. They designed the brochure, checked the information it included for accuracy, scanned a photograph of the guest speaker and liaised with the marketing department to produce enough copies to meet the deadline. In some weaker lessons for level 2 students, the pace of work was too slow and teachers failed to provide enough activities to retain the interest of students.

65. All students undergo a period of induction which emphasises the health and safety aspect of working in an office. Additional learning needs are identified. Results of the initial quickscan and key skills assessment help teachers to plan and review students' learning needs. Students are assessed regularly and feedback is provided to help them improve their performance. Regular tutorials enable tutors to discuss progress and issues of concern with students. There is an effective work experience programme and feedback is gathered systematically from both students and employers. Teachers visit students in the workplace to review performance and develop good working relationships with the employers. Moderation and internal verification is carefully planned and recorded.

66. Students use a well-equipped business centre, but many lessons take place in inappropriate general-purpose computer rooms. Some of the rooms are shabby with noisy computers that emit a lot of heat and break down regularly. Many of the computer rooms do not have document holders and students have to wedge their documents between the keys on the keyboard. Consumption of food and drink by students adds to the unprofessional atmosphere. Students complain about the high temperature in the business and secretarial building; there have been incidences of students fainting.

Leadership and management

67. The area is well managed. Teachers and managers work well together as a team and support each other. Communication is effective and teachers share good practice informally and formally through training sessions. Quality assurance is satisfactory and teachers are fully aware of the destinations of students. Course review and staff development is appropriate. Planning is sound and follows the college-wide procedure. The college business plan is shared with teachers who agree objectives and targets for their area of work. Performance data are reviewed three times a year, but the data do not always agree with central college data. Students are treated with respect and courtesy and equality of opportunity is promoted in lessons and tutorials. Teachers discuss attendance problems with students and their families. A new system to improve retention rates which, involves issuing students with postcards if they are continually late, has been introduced, but it is too early to assess its impact.

Business and professional

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

Strengths

- much good teaching
- good and improving pass rates
- effective short courses for the Trades Union Congress (TUC)
- good progression opportunities
- well-qualified staff with good commercial experience
- good support for learners with difficulties.

Weaknesses

- falling recruitment on GCE A-level courses
- low retention rates on the GCE A-level courses.

Scope of provision

68. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time business studies and professional courses including GCE A-level and AVCE business studies, NVQs in accounting and GNVQ at intermediate level. Few students combine the AVCE programme with GCE AS-level subjects. The provision also includes the certificate and advanced Certificate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the FE teaching certificate. Two years ago, the college introduced a series of TUC courses for 400 trade union and health and safety representatives. The majority of students studying for GCE A-level, GNVQ and AVCE qualifications are aged 16 to 18. Students studying the remaining courses are almost exclusively adults and make up approximately 60% of the total enrolments. The numbers of foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices in the area are small. Many students take advantage of the good opportunities provided by the college to progress to HE courses. The inspection covered all full-time courses and a sample of available part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

69. Enrolments on the GCE A-level programme have fallen over the last two years. GCE A-level accounts was discontinued in 2001. Retention rates have also fallen and the retention rate for students studying the GCE A-level business studies course is below the national average. Pass rates have improved over the same period and are now at, or about, the national average.

70. Both retention rates and pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course have improved over the last two years and both are now above the national average. On the advanced course, the retention rate has fallen to below the national average, while the pass rate has improved and is now well in excess of it. Students on this course also have the opportunity to take additional units and achievement levels for these units are good. Students who are now studying on the AVCE course are performing well. At the end of the first year the retention rate was high and the change of qualification is having a positive impact on standards.

71. Retention rates for all three levels of the AAT accounting courses are at the national average. Pass rates at foundation level are now well in excess of the national average, but at intermediate and technician level, pass rates fell to below the national average in 2000/01. However, the college's results for the central assessment tests at the time of the inspection show students to be performing well.

72. The TUC courses, accredited by the Open College Network, which were first introduced two years ago, have been very popular and have recruited well. Both retention rates and pass rates have been excellent. Students are enthusiastic about their studies and work effectively in class.

73. Students aged 16 to 18 and adults work effectively and display an appropriate level of attainment. Most tackle the tasks set for them with enthusiasm and enjoy their studies. Many are able to apply the experience they have gained in the workplace to their work in the classroom. Written work is satisfactory and appropriate use is made of IT. Attendance during the inspection averaged 80%. Additional support is provided in a number of lessons and students with visual impairment work well as an integral part of the class. Support is provided for students with behavioural problems.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business and professional, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	10	15	13
		% retention	70	73	85
		% pass rate	71	73	82
NVQ accounting AAT foundation	2	No. of starts	22	26	19
		% retention	82	100	79
		% pass rate	67	60	83

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
TUC short courses	2	No. of starts	*	243	394
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	96	96
GCE A-level business and accounting	3	No. of starts	131	102	41
		% retention	82	76	63
		% pass rate	43	54	81
GNVQ advanced business	3	No. of starts	38	49	45
		% retention	71	73	58
		% pass rate	48	76	92
NVQ accounting AAT intermediate	3	No. of starts	32	35	39
		% retention	91	91	85
		% pass rate	75	50	35
NVQ accounting AAT technician	4	No. of starts	16	36	26
		% retention	88	100	88
		% pass rate	69	53	35

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

74. Most of the teaching is good or very good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers explain complicated business concepts clearly. Students are given clear instructions and the pace of work is brisk and retains students’ interest. Students are challenged to justify their answers and explain their reasoning. In one class, the lecturer provoked a lively debate about different learning styles with a group of students studying for the FE teaching certificate. In a foundation-level AAT lesson, the teacher breathed life into the uninspiring topic of ‘filing and maintenance of records’ which resulted in a lively and valuable lesson.

Teachers display a sound knowledge of their subject and in many cases draw on their own experience and that of their students to illustrate points. They teach across a range of courses. Some teachers use humour effectively to hold the students' attention.

75. Assessment is thorough and the feedback provided to students is satisfactory. On occasions, staff fail to provide written advice to clarify what students need to do to achieve higher grades. Teachers are well qualified and have a breadth of experience. Most have teaching qualifications and relevant professional qualifications. They display up-to-date knowledge of commercial practice and students benefit from the day-to-day work experience of visiting lecturers. Most of the classrooms used by business students are satisfactory, although a few are too small for the sizes of the classes being taught.

Leadership and management

76. Courses in the area come under the responsibility of two curriculum leaders. Although both have a heavy teaching load, the provision is managed effectively. Course teams follow the college's quality assurance procedures. Course leaders negotiate improvement targets with the curriculum leader and their performance is monitored. Teaching quality is assessed through observation by fellow teachers, but lacks rigour. The self-assessment report is critical but some of the retention and pass rate data used are incorrect. Teachers have little confidence in centrally produced data.

Computing and IT

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

Strengths

- excellent IT facilities
- good provision at community and franchised centres
- well-managed community centres
- good classroom support.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on AVCE ICT and GCE A-level computing courses
- ineffective teaching on some full-time programmes
- ineffective tutorial system for full-time students
- inadequate course management.

Scope of provision

77. Full-time college based provision includes GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced/AVCE courses in ICT, GCE A and AS-level in computing and the fundamental computing for around 175 students, of whom one third are aged over 19. There are clear progression routes with many students entering at foundation level and achieving advanced level. Community and franchised centres offer part-time modular courses including database, spreadsheets and word processing. Students can gain qualifications in foundation IT at level 1 and 2, or certificates, or diplomas in computer applications. The provision at community centres expanded significantly during the 18 months prior to inspection. The number of part-time students aged over 19 enrolled at community and franchised centres is over 5,000.

78. Centres in the community are open for six days and four evenings all year and are staffed by college employees. The centres were established through a partnership with a private organisation which is responsible for all equipment, learning materials, some of the management systems and course marketing.

Achievement and standards

79. The pass rates are good for GNVQ ICT foundation, City and Guilds 7261 in computer applications and GCE AS-level ICT. Retention rates on AVCE ICT and GCE A-level computing and GNVQ intermediate are below the national average. Attendance and

punctuality are good and all absences are followed up quickly in an effort to improve retention rates.

80. Students at the community and franchised centres are producing work of a good standard. Skills are developed in the use of spreadsheets, databases, computer graphics, electronic mail and the Internet. Full-time students develop good IT and computing skills. The better students make maximum use of the full range of software packages. The Internet is used extensively for research and has improved the quality of information produced in assignment work. Attendance of 77% on college-based courses does not compare favourably with attendance of 99% at the community centres.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and IT, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ ICT foundation	1	No. of starts	10	12	11
		% retention	80	53	73
		% pass rate	88	100	100
City and Guilds IT foundation	1	No. of starts	*	*	620
		% retention	*	*	80
		% pass rate	*	*	65
GNVQ ICT intermediate	2	No. of starts	18	20	34
		% retention	83	90	65
		% pass rate	40	82	59
City and Guilds computer applications	2	No. of starts	*	*	2,490
		% retention	*	*	67
		% pass rate	*	*	91
GNVQ advanced	3	No. of starts	38	19	25
		% retention	65	68	24
		% pass rate	70	86	67

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	38	19	25
		% retention	65	68	24
		% pass rate	70	86	67

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

81. Students attend centres in the community on a roll-on, roll-off basis. Teaching at the centres is based on modules, each covering one area of learning in IT. Students work on one module at a time and students commit themselves to attend for a minimum of two hours a week, but the majority do more. They attend at other times and can book computers if they are free. Franchise centres offer opportunities for adults with mental health disorders to train for computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) certification as part of a personal development programme.

82. Most teaching across the provision for both students aged 16 to 18 and students aged over 19 is good. Where classes are specifically for adults, teachers are sensitive to mature students' lack of confidence with IT and adapt their teaching styles to meet their needs. They avoid using jargon and technical issues are explained clearly. Teachers make good use of technology-based teaching aids such as projectors linked to computers. Previous learning is reinforced throughout lessons. For example, a simple database created previously was built on in subsequent lessons to develop more advanced techniques in database management. Very good learning materials are available for all IT applications to enable students to work on their own and they are also used in class work. One-to-one support is readily available at the community centres and students receive immediate feedback on their progress. Students at these centres have frequent tutorials for each module they take and opportunities to attend formal taught lessons, which they can select to attend according to their needs. New modules are regularly added to the curriculum.

83. Some of the teaching on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers retain students' interest and boost their confidence by dealing with topics in manageable units. They give clear explanations and precise detailed analysis, where necessary. In dealing with the difficult topic of normalisation and floating point numbers, teachers explained clearly how binary numbers can be represented using floating-point notation and then shown in denary. In another effective lesson, the teacher introduced the use of input and output devices in the manufacturing industry and business. This opened a lively and interesting debate during which, students made good use of their experiences of working in different contexts. In some poorer lessons, teachers failed to take into account the different abilities of students. In one lesson, this resulted in inattentive students visiting various web sites and sending text messages. In

another lesson, students spent a considerable time keying in dictated theory notes. Students with good keyboarding skills had to wait for the slower students to catch up and became restless.

84. Students have sufficient access to computers with up-to-date software to meet course requirements. Internet access is available in all the computer rooms. All computer rooms are equipped with projectors. Many of the computers have been adapted to enable learners with disabilities to use them. At the community centres, computer-generated presentations are used to familiarise students with computing techniques.

85. Students with learning difficulties and students with disabilities are very well supported both at the main college site and at community and franchised centres. Initial assessment of needs and a well-planned and comprehensive induction process ensures that students receive the support they require. At the community centres students receive a minimum of three individual tutorials for each module and more if required. There is a high level of one-to-one support. Students at centres in the community also have full access to all college-based support services. There is insufficient support for students following full-time college-based courses. Students do not have enough access to tutors during the week due to over-reliance on part-time teaching staff, and students are unsure about the progress they are making.

Leadership and management

86. The three centres in the community are well managed. Resources are efficiently deployed to maximise opportunities for learning. Teachers have clear aims, are well supported and work well as a team. Communication within and between centres is effective. Recruitment, retention, pass and attendance rates are monitored regularly. Managers use feedback from students to improve facilities for learning. Franchised centres are also well managed and provide environments conducive to learning. The management of full-time courses is unsatisfactory. Expectations of full-time staff teaching on college-based courses are inappropriate. There is an over-reliance on part-time staff with only one full-time teacher taking responsibility for five full-time courses.

Hospitality, leisure and travel

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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates on National diploma programmes and NVQ level 2 housekeeping
- high standards of production, service and social skills of hospitality students
- good teaching in realistic work environments
- effective teaching support for students
- strong and well-established industrial links.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on a number of courses
- unsatisfactory retention rates on some courses
- inadequate written feedback on students' work
- ineffective teaching in some lessons
- lack of rigour in implementing systems to raise standards.

Scope of provision

87. The college offers a range of hospitality, leisure and travel courses for full-time and part-time students at levels 1 to 3, leading to NVQ, AVCE, intermediate GNVQ and national diploma qualifications. There are 150 full-time students, of whom 12% are adults. The number of work based trainees is small. There are seven foundation students and two students aged 16 to 18 on advanced modern apprenticeships. Part-time provision includes NVQ, sugar craft and specialist travel courses. A fast-track programme is available at NVQ level 2 where students can complete an intensive course of study over a shorter period time. Short courses include the national licensees, welcome host and hygiene certificates. The inspection covered full-time and part-time courses and off-the-job work-based training.

Achievement and standards

88. There is little difference between the pass and retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Pass rates for the national diploma and the NVQ in housekeeping are outstanding. Pass rates for the GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism are mostly good. At advanced level, pass rates have been poor, apart from 2000/01 when they were

outstanding. Pass rates on the NVQ food preparation and cooking course at level 2 are below the national average. The pass rates for NVQ service of food and drink at level 2 have remained low for the last three years. Retention rates for this qualification and for NVQ food preparation and cooking at level 2 declined in 2000/01. Retention rates for the GNVQ intermediate have improved significantly over the last three years. Retention rates on the GNVQ advanced have remained at an unsatisfactory level for the last three years. National diploma retention rates are below the national average. The low pass rates for NVQ and GNVQ are mainly because students do not complete their portfolios of evidence by the end of their programme of study. Pass and retention rates on most short courses are good. The numbers of trainees who have completed a modern apprenticeship in hospitality are low and none have achieved the framework.

89. Most hospitality students achieve high standards of production, service and social skills. They work effectively to prepare, cook and serve dishes and beverages to customers in the college restaurant and coffee shop. Leisure and travel students make good use of ICT in lessons. There is little evidence of the use of ICT in the written work of NVQ hospitality students. Some hospitality students lack basic knowledge and some of their vocational skills are not sufficiently well developed. In a lesson on basic white sauces, students were unclear about the types of roux used for thickening.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, leisure and travel, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ in catering and hospitality (housekeeping) one year	2	No. of starts	14	15	11
		% retention	78	60	73
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ in catering and hospitality (service of food and drink)	2	No. of starts	19	14	15
		% retention	89	78	60
		% pass rate	47	45	55
NVQ in catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	2	No. of starts	19	55	59
		% retention	89	84	73
		% pass rate	65	61	64

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	22	13	18
		% retention	72	76	88
		% pass rate	81	70	81
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	56	37	49
		% retention	44	59	57
		% pass rate	36	90	53
National diploma in hotel and catering operations	3	No. of starts	20	11	14
		% retention	85	64	71
		% pass rate	100	100	80

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

90. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, whether for students aged 16 to 18, or adult students, and most lessons are well planned. In lessons on the production and serving of food and drink in the college restaurant and coffee shop, menus are designed to encompass both modern and traditional culinary approaches and provide students with learning opportunities which reflect well the needs of the hospitality industry. In most effective lessons, teachers use a variety of suitable teaching methods and make good use of their vocational experience to provide relevance to the topics being discussed.

91. Most practical teaching in the college restaurant, coffee shop, production kitchens and some theory lessons are of a high standard. Teachers know their students well. They are familiar with each student's level of knowledge and skill and take careful account of students' individual learning needs. Briefings for assignments, both written and oral, are clear and precise. Teachers carefully evaluate each student's performance. Where appropriate, good additional assistance is provided in the classroom for students requiring further support. In most cases, however, written comments by teachers on students' work are not sufficient to help students to improve their performance. Only on occasions are spelling and grammatical mistakes corrected. In some unsatisfactory lessons, teachers did not use a range of teaching methods to retain students' interest.

92. Most teachers hold appropriate professional qualifications and training and assessor awards, and have relevant experience of the hotel, leisure and travel industries. The range of specialist accommodation and equipment is satisfactory in hospitality. Teaching

accommodation is adequate but some white boards are dirty and difficult to read. Library provision is satisfactory but some books require updating. The college does not have travel agency facilities which limits teaching opportunities.

93. Assessment and verification procedures in leisure and travel are effective. Assignment briefs are good and there are clear links to grading criteria. Arrangements for NVQ assessment and verification have been unsatisfactory. All assessments take place at the end of courses. Internal verification systems did not identify this weakness. New arrangements for monitoring students' progress, assessment and internal verification have been established, but it is too early to judge whether these arrangements are effective.

94. All full-time students have work experience which helps them to understand the industrial relevance of their programme of study. There are established links with industry. Active advisory committees keep staff informed about developments in hospitality, leisure and travel and help to develop and maintain strong relationships with local industry. Staff speak highly of the support that these committees provide for them.

95. Students value the assistance and help that they receive from their tutors and punctuality and attendance is good. Absence is dealt with promptly. Students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are well supported in lessons through additional staff and appropriate learning materials and resources. Students receive careers education, including guidance on applying for HE courses. Employers provide talks on local employment opportunities. Employers in the leisure and travel industry conduct mock interviews for students at their own premises to help them secure employment.

Leadership and management

96. Systems for raising standards are not implemented with sufficient rigour. Arrangements for setting targets for improving retention and pass rates are underdeveloped and teachers are not sufficiently involved in the process. Teachers have little awareness of national benchmarking data on performance. There are no clear strategies for raising standards; monitoring of academic performance in the area is minimal. Meetings focus on operational matters rather than on the performance of courses and individual students. For example, minutes of a meeting indicate that more time is devoted to the operation of the college restaurant than academic matters. Part-time staff in leisure and travel are not able to attend team meetings. The self-assessment report for hospitality, leisure and travel identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. It did not, however, fully recognise the inadequacy of arrangements for raising achievements and improving retention rates.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates in beauty therapy
- well-developed learning materials for beauty therapy
- effective management in beauty therapy
- wide range of provision for additional qualifications
- effective professional development for staff.

Weaknesses

- poorly structured training for some level 2 and 3 hairdressing programmes
- low retention and pass rates for work-based learning
- underdeveloped formative assessment procedures in hairdressing
- ineffective use of salon resources in hairdressing.

Scope of provision

97. Full-time, part-time and work-based programmes are available in hairdressing and beauty therapy leading to NVQ qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 and a City and Guilds progression award in beauty therapy. There is also a range of qualifications in complementary therapies, which include Indian head massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and electrolysis. There are 72 full-time college-based students and 46 work-based students in hairdressing and 79 part-time and 84 full-time students in beauty. The majority of hairdressing students are over the age of 19 and attend college for up to three days a week. Sixty adult students follow the adult fast-track programme which has a timetable that allows them to attend college at times compatible with their family commitments. Work-based trainees either attend college for one day a week for training and assessment, or are visited in the work place. There are few opportunities for students to attend classes in the evening.

Achievement and standards

98. The pass rates for college based NVQ hairdressing courses at level 1 and 2 are at, or above, national averages. Retention rates are above the national average for NVQ level 2, but below for level 1.

99. Retention and pass rates for beauty therapy are above the national average. There are very low retention and pass rates on the work-based training programme in hairdressing.

100. Beauty therapy and full-time hairdressing students reach a good standard of commercial competence. Students' work is well organised and good standards of portfolio building are evident. Students make good use of the extensive enrichment programme on offer to gain additional qualifications. Students whose first language is not English make good progress towards their qualifications.

101. Average overall attendance for the lessons observed, is low at 70% and attendance is not effectively monitored. Attendance for beauty therapy courses is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	*	38	27
		% retention	*	71	74
		% pass rate	*	93	100
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	112	79	49
		% retention	75	54	61
		% pass rate	71	94	63
NVQ foundation modern apprenticeship	2	No. of starts	***	30	**
		% retention	***	20	**
		% pass rate	***	25	**
City and Guilds progression award in beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	**	*	45
		% retention	*	*	89
		% pass rate	*	*	100
NVQ in beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	42	27	21
		% retention	88	77	81
		% pass rate	88	100	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001). *data unreliable. ** data unavailable. *** course did not run

Quality of education and training

102. There is much unsatisfactory teaching on work-based training in hairdressing. The standard of teaching in beauty therapy is mostly good or better. The best lessons in both hair and beauty are well planned and well structured. In the more successful practical lessons, teachers use a range of effective teaching and learning methods. Students work confidently and competently in a busy commercial salon. The teaching is challenging and teachers set well-timed activities which motivate students and retain their interest. Competent demonstrations of hair and beauty therapy techniques develop students' awareness of the standards required by the industry. Students' progress is checked and assessed at frequent intervals. One effective practical beauty therapy lesson on facial cleansing, commenced with an expert demonstration by the teacher, who then gave students precise instructions. Students worked at their own pace in a relaxed, purposeful and confident manner. Their work was carefully monitored by the teacher who provided advice and encouragement. Teaching materials for beauty therapy are good and have clear illustrations. Handouts in practical lessons are easy to read and provide clear, precise instructions. In some weaker beauty therapy lessons, teachers fail to pay enough attention to the range of students' abilities. The fast pace of the work results in some students being unable to keep up and missing out on some learning.

103. The college has adopted a flexible approach to teaching hairdressing. Students agree the times at which they will be attending theory and practical sessions in the salon with their teachers. Sometimes, because of the clients using the salon, teachers are not able to ensure that the learning and assessment needs of students are fully met. In a practical lesson where work-based trainees were working with full-time students, there were not enough clients available for the size of the class and the treatments required by the clients were insufficiently demanding for second-year students. Students became distracted and showed little enthusiasm for their work. The design of the hairdressing salon is not conducive to teaching more than one group at a time. For example, in one session, students carried out practical activities with one teacher while another teacher demonstrated colouring techniques to another group. Neither group could concentrate on what was being taught because of the interference of conflicting dialogue. Sufficient regard is not given to the needs of work-based trainees when practical sessions in the hairdressing salon are planned and organised. Practical activities provided for work-based trainees are not sufficiently well integrated with their theory lessons.

104. Procedures for assessing prior learning are in place for hairdressing students but the procedures are not implemented systematically. Students taking hair and beauty courses are assessed for learning support needs during their induction to the college. Support is given in theory lessons, but it is not effective. Key skills development is partly integrated with full-time and part-time programmes. However, students do not get sufficient experience of the use of IT when they are undertaking reception duties which are mostly carried out by a member of staff. The reception area is also shared with catering and hospitality students. Tutorial support is effective but insufficient attention is given to identifying short-term and long-term objectives to help students organise their work and assessment requirements.

There are not enough opportunities for work-based trainees to obtain guidance to help them to progress effectively through their programme.

105. Teachers are experienced and appropriately qualified and have good opportunities to update their commercial experience. The hairdressing salons are badly designed for accommodating more than one group of students. There is much wasted space and the layout of furniture and equipment makes it difficult for both teachers and students to circulate and work effectively. There is insufficient sterilising equipment for students to use and good practice procedures are not followed.

Leadership and management

106. Beauty therapy is well managed. Teachers work well as a team and are involved in setting demanding targets for raising retention and pass rates. Academic standards are carefully monitored. The co-ordination of activities across the hairdressing area is inadequate and there is insufficient integration of college courses with work-based training. Students' attendance and progress are not sufficiently well monitored. Centrally held and some locally held management information data is unreliable, particularly for hairdressing courses. Self-assessment of hairdressing courses did not detect significant weaknesses in teaching and learning.

107. The college's policy on inclusion is effectively promoted and the needs of a wide range of students are catered for, including young people who have previously been excluded from school and young mothers.

Childcare, health and social care

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

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on full-time courses
- good pass rates on courses in counselling
- good teaching on courses for adults
- rigorous procedures for assessment
- broad range of provision
- excellent support for individual students
- effective course management.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on the advanced diploma in childcare and education
- some poorly planned teaching
- unsuitable accommodation.

Scope of provision

108. There is a broad range of courses for full-time and part-time students in childcare, health and social care. There are 144 students aged 16 to 18 following full-time courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels which offer awards of GNVQ, national diploma, Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate, diploma, and caring for young children. There is also a small number of adults enrolled on these courses. There are 230 adult students following part-time courses of whom 104 are enrolled on counselling courses at certificate to advanced diploma levels. NVQs in early years and direct care at levels 2 and 3 are available as flexible programmes for students who are employed in the care sector. Distance learning programmes cover a broad range of subjects in childcare, health and social care and public services. In 2000/01, 3,000 students enrolled on short courses that were part of the college's distance learning provision. At the time of the inspection, 18 adults were enrolled as modern apprentices on training programmes in childcare and health care. The inspection covered all full-time courses, a range of part-time courses, and the modern apprenticeships.

Achievement and standards

109. There are good pass rates on most courses for adults. Counselling courses all record pass rates above the national average, and in 2000/01 there was a 95% success rate on the short course distance learning programmes. However, on the advanced diploma in childcare and education distance learning programme, there were very poor retention and pass rates in the two years that it has been offered. NVQ pass rates at levels 2 and 3 are above the national average.

110. There are good retention and pass rates on full-time courses. For example, in 2000/01, all students passed the GNVQ advanced course in health and social care, the national diploma courses in caring services (nursery nursing), and caring for young children, while retention rates were at, or above, the national average. Most students aged 16 to 18 achieve results that are in line with the expectations based on their previous GCSE scores. GNVQ advanced and intermediate students perform better than their previous achievements predict. The attainment of most students aged 16 to 18, in lessons and in assessed work, was most satisfactory. They are able to draw extensively from their work placement experience to provide practical examples from different care settings that help them to develop their understanding. However, the attainment of the national diploma in caring services (nursery nursing) second-year students was unsatisfactory. They were unsure of the basic concepts of child education and learning despite having had much experience of work placement in schools. Most students have reached an appropriate level in the development of their key skills. The use of computers for research and for the presentation of work is particularly well developed amongst learners aged 16 to 18. The attendance rate, at 88%, is high, and students are punctual at lessons. Progression rates between courses and to HE are good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in childcare, health and social care, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Caring for young children	1	No. of starts	*	12	13
		% retention	*	100	77
		% pass rate	*	83	100
Certificate in basic counselling	2	No. of starts	114	102	60
		% retention	98	94	92
		% pass rate	93	93	**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	13	12	15
		% retention	85	100	83
		% pass rate	73	83	79
National diploma in caring services (nursery nursing)	3	No. of starts	45	21	20
		% retention	91	88	87
		% pass rate	90	100	100
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	65	24	23
		% retention	91	88	87
		% pass rate	41	90	100
Certificate in counselling	3	No. of starts	36	61	49
		% retention	94	95	90
		% pass rate	94	100	**
Advanced modern apprenticeships in care	3	No. of starts	*	4	**
		% retention	*	25	**
		% pass rate	*	25	**
Advanced diploma in childcare and education (distance learning)	H	No. of starts	*	19	30
		% retention	*	100	60
		% pass rate	*	0	3

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

* data not available

Quality of education and training

111. Most teaching is good. Teaching for adult students is most effective. In many of the best lessons, current care practitioners are able to share their expertise with students. Teaching for students aged 16 to 18 is not always effective. The best lessons are carefully

planned to provide a range of learning activities that are appropriate to students of different abilities and preferred learning styles. In these lessons, the acquisition of key skills is carefully integrated with the development of care practice, so that students learn and develop the ability to express their new skills and knowledge fluently. However, many lessons are poorly planned. In a lesson on child development on the caring for young children course, students spent a considerable amount of time copying notes from the whiteboard that they did not understand. Teachers often set group work activities which are not suitable for all the students in the class. For example, in a lesson on equal opportunities, students on the national diploma course were asked to form groups to discuss the significance of equal opportunities. They had covered the topic before and were not given new materials to develop their understanding further. There is excellent provision of learning support for students who have hearing or visual impairments. This has helped these students to participate fully and successfully in their lessons.

112. Work placement is carefully organised and monitored by course teachers. Good links with the community and employers enable the provision of placements where good practice can be assured. Students see this as the most valuable and rewarding part of their courses. However, opportunities for childcare students to develop their practical caring skills in the college are few. Modern apprentices are placed in a variety of appropriate work placements. They attend a supported workshop at the college each week to supplement their off-the-job training. Attendance levels are good and trainees speak highly of the help that they get.

113. Most of the classroom and specialist accommodation is satisfactory, but the poor choice of location for many lessons has an adverse effect on the learning of students. For example, counselling courses are taught in classrooms that are unsuitable. Some groups are too large for the classrooms allocated to them. Teachers are well qualified and experienced.

114. Assessment of students' work is thorough. Students receive helpful comments on their written work that suggests ways in which it can be improved. Internal verification systems are good and include the internal verification of assessor practice.

115. Students are well informed about their choice of course before they join the college. Information and 'taster' sessions in schools, at the college, and in the community provide valuable guidance for prospective students. Individual learning needs are identified at entry and the subsequent support that is provided is good. The provision of learning support for students on distance learning programmes is a strong feature and has contributed to the good pass rates on the majority of these programmes. Students diagnosed as requiring additional support generally take advantage of it to achieve their learning goals. Tutorials for full-time and part-time students are well organised. They successfully provide for the monitoring of students' progress and put students in contact with the college's personal support services, if required.

Leadership and management

116. The number of courses offered has been increased in accordance with the strategic aims of the college and has been well planned. Most of the new courses demonstrate good pass rates. Course management, including that for distance learning programmes, is good. There are regular meetings of course teams that fully involve part-time staff. Good practice is shared between the course teams in childcare and health and social care. Some aspects of the college's quality assurance mechanisms have had little effect. Target-setting procedures for raising retention and pass rates are not effective. The lesson observation scheme has been conducted on too small a sample and has produced an unrealistically high assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in the curriculum area.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- broad range of provision
- good teaching
- good progression opportunities.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates on most courses
- some deficiencies in curriculum management.

Scope of provision

117. The college offers a range of specialist and diagnostic courses for full-time and part-time students in art and design. There are 130 students, mainly aged 16 to 18, following full-time national diplomas in fine art and graphic design and the GNVQ intermediate art and design. Thirty adult students follow the diploma in foundation studies courses. Students, mainly aged 16 to 18, based in other curriculum areas in the college, follow GCE A and AS-level courses for textiles, fine art and graphic design. GCSE art is no longer offered. The inspection sampled all aspects of provision.

Achievement and standards

118. There are good pass rates on some higher-level courses. In 2001, the foundation diploma in art and design and the national diploma in general art and design recorded 100% pass rates, showing consistent improvement over three years. However, pass rates are below the national average for the GNVQ intermediate in art and design, showing a substantial drop over three years from 91% to 63%. Pass rates have improved slightly overall on the GCE A-level courses. Enrolments in 2000 show a decline on all courses apart from the foundation diploma in art and design. Retention rates are not satisfactory. Rates fluctuate, but show an overall decline across all areas, except the foundation diploma in art and design course, where there is improvement. On some courses, such as GNVQ intermediate in art and design and GCE A-level graphic design retention rates are below national averages.

119. Much of the work being produced, especially in printmaking, is of a high standard and students produce a good standard of materials. The standard of work on linoleum printing is excellent. Students acquire good two and three-dimensional skills, which are seen as being fundamental to the development of learning in art and design. Students apply these skills with confidence. External verifiers, and examiners' reports confirmed that the work produced is of a high standard. Attainment of students in lessons observed during the

inspection was satisfactory or better, as was attendance and punctuality. Opportunities exist for students to progress from level 2 programmes to level 4 within the college. The progression to HE institutes, mainly from the pre-degree foundation programme, is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in art and design, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Foundation diploma in art and design	1	No. of starts	20	25	30
		% retention	90	92	97
		% pass rate	94	100	100
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	26	17	21
		% retention	85	88	76
		% pass rate	91	67	63
Advanced fine arts	3	No. of starts	97	57	39
		% retention	81	54	41
		% pass rate	88	82	88
Advanced graphic design	3	No. of starts	27	29	22
		% retention	85	66	50
		% pass rate	63	93	82
National diploma in general art and design	3	No. of starts	64	36	34
		% retention	84	72	82
		% pass rate	77	96	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

120. Most of the teaching is good. At the time of the inspection teachers were monitoring individual work, as students completed their first term assignments in preparation for assessment. Assignment briefs are clearly explained, the necessary resources identified and deadlines for the submission of assignments made clear. Generic criteria are used for assignments. These criteria are not specifically related to the assignments and are not

sufficiently detailed. However, teachers have effectively introduced students to the principles of group criticisms as an appropriate form of assessment. The difference in the level of study skills required between intermediate and national diplomas is evident, with more emphasis on independent research at the advanced level. Students are introduced to various research methodologies, but some students need more help in discriminating between the types and quality of resources found on the Internet. Students are helped to develop their key skills.

121. Teaching methods encourage enquiry and the development of the essential skills needed in art and design. Students following a graphic design course were required to investigate the historical influence of William Morris. They produced interesting contemporary comparisons, although they did not always recognise the philosophic aspect of his work. Level 2 students expressed delight at developing their own photographic prints for the first time. In class discussions, all students are expected to contribute and teachers question students' preconceptions in contextual studies. Fine art students are able to use a variety of materials and the use of reference books in the studios assists their visual conceptions. The stained glass by Marc Chagall in a local church is regularly used as a stimulus for advanced textile students. Students display good study techniques and automatically take notes where appropriate, although there is some inconsistency regarding the quality and filing of such information. Continual emphasis is placed on the value of sketchbooks, as a basis for learning. In most cases, teachers set students demanding tasks.

122. All teachers have good relationships with students, who speak highly of the support they receive. There is excellent support for students who are deaf or have some hearing loss. Extra-curricular enrichment activities are arranged, which include visits to recommended exhibitions and overseas cultural trips to Vienna, Barcelona and Amsterdam. The accommodation is generally of a high standard, as are the equipment and fixtures. However, some of the classes in specialist areas such as photography, textiles and painting are allocated to rooms that are too small. Although the building is new, there is no water supply in either the textiles or graphics areas and the facilities for ceramics are few. There is not enough technician support. There is ready access to good ICT provision and up-to-date software. The three-dimensional workshop is well equipped. The resource centre has a plentiful stock of books and journals. Teachers are mainly well qualified and those without teaching certificates are encouraged, through staff development initiatives, to acquire appropriate qualifications.

Leadership and management

123. A new curriculum area leader started in September of the inspection year. It is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of the new arrangements. The different levels of management are not fully understood by all the staff, who feel that they are not always consulted sufficiently with regard to self-assessment and other issues. Lesson observation has caused some resentment among teachers. The curriculum leader has a substantial teaching load as well as a course leadership role. Course management is mainly effective, but good practice is not always shared. Decisions tend to be made individually, and at course level rather than curriculum area level. Sufficient attention is not given to resolving weaknesses in recruitment, retention and pass rates. Appraisal has not been carried out

regularly and staff development is not linked to individual staff needs. There is little understanding of value added information and its application.

Media and performing arts

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

Strengths

- good or very good teaching in most lessons
- excellent accommodation and equipment
- good course organisation
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- declining retention and pass rates on most courses
- poor classroom management in some lessons
- unacceptable levels of student lateness
- insufficiently critical self-assessment.

Scope of provision

124. The area offers a wide range of provision in performing arts and media studies. There are 300 full-time students of whom most are aged 16 to 18. In performing arts courses, there are first and national diplomas, and a range of GCE A and AS-level courses. There are GNVQ intermediate and national diplomas in media, a GCE A level course in communication media and a GCE AS-level course in film video and media studies. The college also offers a national diploma in music technology and popular music. The inspection covered the full range of courses.

Achievement and standards

125. Pass rates are above the national average on the first and national diplomas in performing arts. However, no one completed the intermediate GNVQ in media in 2001, because of poor preparation by the teacher. Pass rates on the national diploma in music technology dropped from 100% in 1999/2000, to 63% in 2000/01. There has been a significant decline in enrolments on some courses since 1998/1999. Enrolments on GCE A-level courses and the national diploma in performing arts declined by over 50% over three years. Retention rates have also declined significantly overall. On some courses, for example the national diploma in music technology and GCE A level, retention rates have declined by almost 50%.

126. The standards attained by most students in lessons, and in their files, videos and compact discs are satisfactory and much of the work is good or very good. Most first-year students at level 2 and level 3 are competent and confident when using the highly technical equipment. They engage in group discussion and activities with confidence. In a few lessons, student attainment was less good because teachers failed to give enough attention to individual students.

127. Students are able to progress from level 2 courses. Of 33 level 2 students who completed in 2001, 14 progressed to the national diploma at the college, 1 to a foundation course and 5 to employment. Support for learners with disabilities is good. A student who joined at level 2 from a 'special school', progressed over several years to a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in television production technology, before moving on to a degree course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in media and performing arts, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate media	2	No. of starts	26	7	20
		% retention	65	86	55
		% pass rate	76	83	**
BTEC first diploma performing arts	2	No. of starts	11	12	13
		% retention	73	83	85
		% pass rate	88	90	100
National diploma performing arts	3	No. of starts	65	31	28
		% retention	86	68	79
		% pass rate	100	95	100
National diploma music technology	3	No. of starts	29	17	19
		% retention	79	53	37
		% pass rate	91	100	63
National diploma media	3	No. of starts	*	33	38
		% retention	*	49	63
		% pass rate	*	63	71

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A levels	3	No. of starts	158	80	67
		% retention	88	45	46
		% pass rate	93	83	87

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

** all students continuing

Quality of education and training

128. Across the area, most teaching is good. Many of the teachers are specialists in their own fields and work well with other team members to give coherence to the programmes as a whole. The lessons are well planned and prepare students effectively for the requirements of the course and for future employment. In the best lessons, the specialist knowledge of the teachers and the demanding tasks which they set inspire the students. Many students practise or rehearse together in their own time and in additional sessions.

129. In one good lesson, effective use was made of simple materials. Performing arts students were learning about different types of stage, including proscenium, thrust, and in the round. After an interesting discussion about the problems each type of stage presented for staging and acting, students worked in small groups using cut-out cardboard boxes, building blocks, paper and spills. Their task was to build a set and 'people' it using the materials provided. The groups were absorbed in the problem for the allotted time. There were animated discussions about different solutions.

130. In some less effective lessons, there were weaknesses in planning and classroom management. Students were left to their own devices while the teacher concentrated on a few students. In some cases, there was too much concentration on technical practice, with insufficient opportunity for learners to explore creative possibilities. In some lessons, students' punctuality was poor. In a media lesson where students were to be sent out to do 'pop-vox' interviews in the local community, the teacher had to deal with several late students, and obtain extra seats for them, and the lesson re-started after each interruption.

131. Students are well supported. 'Taster' days, workshops, and interviews are effective. Interviews are used to confirm students' course choice or to redirect them to a more appropriate course, if necessary. Students receive suitable induction which helps them to settle quickly at college and an early assessment for any learning needs.

132. Assessment is thorough, and there is a good standard of written and oral feedback from teachers to students. Students develop their own critical skills from group activities. For example, in a popular music lesson, eight second-year students, ably supported by two from the first year of the same course, rehearsed songs that they were to perform on an open

evening in the college. They responded well to suggestions from the teacher and each other and altered their performance accordingly. The exception to the generally effective assessment practice is the GNVQ intermediate in media, which had no final portfolio assessment in 2001.

133. The accommodation is of a very high standard. There is a new art block for media and music and a new and spacious dance studio. Throughout, the accommodation is well equipped. Of particular note is an industrial standard television studio and control room, editing suites for music and video, IT, and a main hall with a lighting rig and sound equipment.

Leadership and management

134. Most courses are well organised, with full documentation for both staff and students. Course teams are committed to promoting the success of their students. However, quality assurance procedures are not implemented with sufficient rigour and sufficient attention is not given to determining why some courses are under-performing. Self-assessment is not sufficiently critical and insufficient attention is given to identifying and implementing actions to bring about systematic improvement.

Humanities

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

Strengths

- above average pass and retention rates on most one-year courses
- good progression from the access to HE programme
- effective teaching and learning in psychology and government and politics.

Weaknesses

- consistently poor retention rates on two-year GCE A-level courses
- poor teaching in some lessons
- unsatisfactory monitoring of students' progress
- insufficient sharing of good practise
- unsatisfactory curriculum leadership and management.

Scope of provision

135. Provision in humanities is offered at GCE AS and A level in history, geography, law, sociology, psychology and government and politics, and at GCE AS level in general studies. Most students are aged 16 to 18, but a significant minority of slightly older students study GCE A levels in one year. A selection of humanities subjects is offered in the access to HE programme. In response to declining recruitment, the college has reduced the range of humanities provision at GCSE level while maintaining it at level 3. There is very little humanities provision in the evenings.

Achievement and standards

136. The standard of most students' work is satisfactory, but some students are not making the progress expected of them. Unresponsive students fail to develop oral skills. Written work is sometimes superficial. The lack of competence in study skills inhibits some students' learning. However, social science students develop good research skills through coursework. In 2000, pass rates on the two-year GCE A-level courses taken mainly by students aged 16 to 18 were below the national average, whereas in 2001, most pass rates improved to match or exceed it. However, retention rates on two-year GCE A-level courses have remained consistently low. This means that more than half of those who began a GCE A-level humanities course in 1999, failed to gain their qualification. High pass rates in GCE AS-level sociology, history, and government and politics were accompanied by poor retention rates of 61%, 69% and 71%, respectively. The pass and retention rates in GCE AS-

level general studies were low at 53%. In contrast, slightly older students on the one-year GCE A-level course achieve mostly above average pass and retention rates. The college is unable to demonstrate whether students' achievements at GCE AS/A-level are higher or lower than predictions based on their GCSE results. On GCSE courses, there are high retention rates. Pass rates were low in 2000, but above average in 2001. Access to HE students are successful in gaining places on a wide variety of degree courses mostly throughout southern England. However, about three out of ten students fail to complete their access course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE law	2	No. of starts	*	16	15
		% retention	*	100	87
		% pass rate	*	31	46
GCE A-level psychology (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	33	18
		% retention	*	88	83
		% pass rate	*	69	73
GCE A-level psychology (two year)	3	No. of starts	*	28	28
		% retention	*	54	57
		% pass rate	*	67	75
GCE A-level history (two year)	3	No. of starts	*	12	24
		% retention	*	67	50
		% pass rate	*	29	75
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	*	45	31
		% retention	*	73	65
		% pass rate	*	79	85

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

137. Much teaching is satisfactory but some is unsatisfactory or poor. Some teachers adopted too narrow a range of teaching methods. In some lessons, teachers carefully explained their subjects while students took notes and occasionally answered questions but a significant number of students took no active part in the lesson. Teachers did not adapt their methods sufficiently to provide students with more demanding activities. Nor did they plan their work to meet the full range of age and abilities in the class. Of the lessons observed, 40% were good or better. There was much effective teaching in psychology and government and politics. Lessons were stimulating and teachers used interesting materials to help students recall previous learning. In a GCSE psychology class, the teacher reviewed previous learning with a summarised handout, diagrams and mnemonics. Students are encouraged to develop their ability to apply knowledge and evaluate it. In general studies and geography, good use is made of video. Though the college has a good stock of computers, humanities teachers do not make appropriate use of IT in lessons. Most teachers are appropriately qualified. Many part-time members of staff have not yet received an appraisal. The colleges' programme of lesson observations has no obvious effect on the improvement of teaching and learning. There is no formal opportunity for staff to share good practice about teaching and learning.

138. In most humanities subjects, teachers use a variety of suitable ways to assess students' work. In some areas, students are not given explicit enough criteria about how their work will be assessed, nor about how they can improve their performance. GCE AS/A-level students find 'mock' examinations helpful. Many students identified as needing learning support do not take up the offer of help. Students with a visual impairment are effectively supported in mainstream classes. The college enables all new students to discover their preferred style of learning. This information is passed to teachers but it is too early to judge its impact. GCE AS/A-level students are not usually taught by their personal tutor. New arrangements have been made to improve the monitoring of students' progress. They are not sufficiently thorough to ensure effective checking of academic progress and attendance. Some students do not consider that good use is made of tutorial time. In contrast, access to HE students are given effective tutorial guidance. There is good guidance to help students apply to HE. Parents receive regular reports on the progress of students aged 16 to 18.

Leadership and management

139. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of clarity about the role of middle managers. They do not receive sufficiently accurate and reliable data to help them improve teaching and learning and deal with poor retention rates amongst younger students. Regular meetings of the GCE A-level course team deal mainly with operational matters, though part of each meeting is used to identify students at risk or deserving of commendation. Good informal communication is encouraged by the sharing of a large workroom. The arrangements for assuring quality are not sufficiently strong to lead to improvements. There is no discernible direction for the humanities during a period of falling enrolments.

English, languages and communication

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on some EFL and modern language courses
- high proportion of very good teaching in EFL and English
- good language centre resources
- wide range of levels and courses in modern languages and EFL.

Weaknesses

- very poor and declining retention rates in English and communication
- overuse of English and unproductive tasks in some modern language lessons
- insufficient sharing of good practice in modern languages
- ineffective self-assessment.

Scope of provision

140. The college offers English, EFL and modern languages at several levels. There are 225 students following English and communication courses at the college. These students are predominantly aged 16 to 18. A further 108 are taking EFL courses. The majority of these learners are young adults. Some 80 students, mostly adults, are studying a modern foreign language. Students of English study GCSE English language and GCE A levels in English literature, English language and the combined language and literature GCE A level. GCE A-level communications has not been offered this year. EFL students can study at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. Courses are also offered in French, German, Spanish and Italian leading to GCSE, GCE A level, and certification at a lower level for less advanced students. Some students also opt to study for qualifications in 'business language'. Students on other full-time courses can also study a foreign language or EFL. The inspection included all types of courses.

Achievement and standards

141. Pass rates have steadily improved on all English courses and are above the national average. However, the number of enrolments on English courses has declined significantly as have retention rates. Retention rates in 2001, for students of English and communications, were well below the national average. For example, only a third of those who started the GCE A-level communications course completed it.

142. The examination performance of most EFL students is satisfactory and, in some cases, very good. Intermediate EFL students perform particularly well with 87% gaining their qualifications. Adults learning to be teachers of EFL are also very successful. Performance in other EFL examinations is broadly in line with national trends.

143. In modern foreign languages, the GCSE pass rate has risen steadily and all students passed in 2001. The number of students choosing to study GCSE, however, has fallen in recent years by 50%. Students studying a language at a level below GCSE also do well, although last year the retention rate was low. Performance in GCE A level is broadly in line with the national average.

144. The level of attainment in lessons and students' files is, on the whole, at least satisfactory and much of it is good. Many students following GCE AS and A-level English and communications courses display good critical and analytical skills. The better students are articulate and confident. They have well-developed research skills and are good at learning on their own.

145. Most EFL and modern language students have an appropriate vocabulary, grasp of language structures and, at higher levels, knowledge of idioms. Most EFL students show good comprehension skills of speech delivered at a normal speed. In a German lesson, students ably explained their personal response to a medieval poem. They used complex and abstract language to discuss whether the language of the German poem or that of Chaucer would be more accessible to young readers of today. The attainment of students in this class was exceptional.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communication, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
First certificate in English	2	No. of starts	139	77	69
		% retention	98	88	70
		% pass rate	50	58	65
GCSE modern languages	2	No. of starts	49	54	24
		% retention	79	92	79
		% pass rate	61	74	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	150	131	65
		% retention	86	85	58
		% pass rate	45	49	65
GCSE A-level communications	3	No. of starts	30	17	16
		% retention	83	76	31
		% pass rate	*	83	80
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	118	96	45
		% retention	73	57	62
		% pass rate	*	84	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	104	71	23
		% retention	81	*	57
		% pass rate	72	73	100
GCE A-level modern languages	3	No. of starts	51	14	22
		% retention	66	64	73
		% pass rate	44	77	69

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

146. All teaching was at least satisfactory, much of it was good and there was a high proportion of outstanding teaching in English and EFL. The teachers' enthusiasm clearly inspires the students and they learn more as a result. For example, in an English literature lesson, students worked together with great enthusiasm to analyse Shakespearean characters, backing up their views with direct reference to the text and sharing their ideas with fellow students on a flipchart. In a significant minority of lessons, however, the teacher did not make sure that all students participated actively. In a relatively small GCSE English class, five students sat silently for much of the lesson and little attempt was made to involve them.

147. In EFL lessons, students learn a lot in the time available. Within the first ten minutes of one lesson, students had discussed their views of films, revised recently learned adjectives, practised pronunciation drills, identified different registers of language and played a language game to practise grammar. Teachers are rigorous and demand a lot of their students, who rise to the challenge. Lessons are without exception engaging and usually fun. There is always a clear focus on learning and teachers are careful to involve all students. In one lesson, students had to walk around the classroom to undertake a survey using the appropriate tense. A blind student was the first to stand up, walk around the class, unaided, to question his fellow classmates. In another lesson, students played the role of examiner and candidate and discussed, with irony, whether it would be permissible to call the examiner 'baby' or perhaps 'honey', thus showing cultural and linguistic awareness.

148. In modern languages, all lessons were at least satisfactory. In some lessons, however, teachers and students use English too much and students have too few opportunities to practise using and understanding the language they are learning. In other lessons, some activities are mechanical, undemanding or unrealistic. Nevertheless all lessons had redeeming features and many were good. In one French lesson, discussion about transport and its problems was animated by the arrival of a student who was a Eurostar driver.

149. Most work is marked appropriately. In English, the feedback is usually helpful in showing students how to improve their work. However, there is no agreement in modern foreign language courses on how to mark work. Some teachers use students' errors to plan following lessons, but others do not. Target setting at course level is underdeveloped.

150. The language centre offers students a good range of resources and the chance to work independently on their skills, grammar and examination preparation. These resources support a range of flexible courses in modern languages. Library books for GCE A-level English are plentiful, though on occasions outdated, but there are insufficient library resources for the GCSE English course. Students on English courses receive a helpful handbook and specialist tutorials provide sensitive, but demanding support. Great care is taken to place EFL students on the right course. In addition, EFL students identify their own priorities for the course, which helps teachers plan.

Leadership and management

151. At the time of the inspection a new curriculum leader had just been appointed and a new management structure for the area introduced. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these changes. In modern languages, however, staff have historically lacked clear direction and part-time modern languages staff are not successfully integrated with the modern languages team. There is insufficient sharing of good practice within and across languages and between modern languages and EFL. Resources are not systematically shared in modern languages or EFL. In English, however, staff share resources and teaching methods effectively. Self-assessment is ineffective. Points for action do not clearly address weaknesses. There have been very few lesson observations to inform judgements on teaching and learning. Data on which judgements are based are inaccurate and some key strengths and weaknesses are not identified.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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

Strengths

- good standard of teaching
- wide range of learning opportunities
- effective course team
- good classroom support
- good resources.

Weaknesses

- some poorly planned teaching
- inappropriate timetables for some sessions.

Scope of provision

152. The college offers a wide range of part-time and full-time courses for students with learning difficulties and learners with disabilities. There are currently 68 students, mainly aged 16 to 18, following full-time courses. There are 62 students on various part-time courses, which include links with local SLDD schools, residential homes and community centres. Students from residential homes and community centres are adults. Students undertake the courses for a variety of reasons, including the development of their skills for independent living and further development of their skills for employment or FE. All courses offer students, where appropriate, the opportunity to achieve an external qualification. Work experience is an integral part of courses for those with moderate learning difficulties. Students also have the opportunity to attend mainstream college provision.

Achievement and standards

153. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and are successful in achieving their learning goals. Retention and pass rates are generally high and in line with national trends. The retention rate in 2000/01 was 91% and 58% of students achieved a recognised national award. Tutors enter students for national awards where appropriate. Work experience placements are arranged for approximately 86% of students with moderate learning difficulties. Students are able to choose from a range of placements including charity shops, a pet food shop, a local supermarket and a care home. Tutors visit students at their placements to monitor their progress and ensure continuing suitability of the placement. Work experience placements are formally reviewed, the results documented and action taken if it is felt necessary by the student and/or the employer.

154. Tutors recognise the importance of work experience as a possible progression route and actively encourage students to take part. Many students have gained employment as a result of this initiative and currently many students are employed on a part-time basis. Some students are able to progress to FE at foundation level while others use the skills gained during the course to assist their transition to independent living.

A sample of retention and pass rates in students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
ASDAN towards independence	pre-entry	No. of starts	11	18	20
		% retention	100	83	95
		% pass rate	91	53	52
City and Guilds preliminary cookery	entry	No. of starts	8	1	24
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	62	100	100
ASDAN award	entry level 1	No. of starts	29	44	47
		% retention	86	90	91
		% pass rate	62	74	51
ASDAN community awards	entry level 1	No. of starts	*	16	16
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
English speaking oral skills	various	No. of starts	78	46	78
		% retention	96	100	87
		% pass rate	69	95	43

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* data not available

Quality of education and training

155. All students take part in a comprehensive induction programme which includes initial assessment and the identification of specific individual needs. Students' assessments are reviewed several times during the first few weeks of the course to ensure the appropriateness of the individual learning plans. Learning plans are modified following reviews, if necessary. Students are also referred for specialist assessment, if required. Courses are well planned and documented. All lesson plans specify the learning needs of individual students to enable the preparation of specialist aids.

156. Most teaching on the courses is good or better. The best lessons are well planned, and designed to help students to achieve their learning goals. There is a strong emphasis on practical activity. Most lessons are lively and maintain the interest and concentration of students. Most teachers effectively involve all students. In one lesson about the world of work, for example, students used photography as a way of making a task more memorable. They photographed and interviewed various members of college staff while they were carrying out their work on campus. The students were able to identify the members of staff and their job roles from the developed photographs. In another lesson, a group of students interviewed the local manager of a national supermarket chain. Questions had been prepared with a tutor in a previous lesson. During the session students demonstrated a good understanding of the way in which the supermarket worked and were able to ask additional questions with confidence. The session was lively and involved all students. In the best lessons, resources are carefully prepared and adapted for individual students. There is good use of large print handouts and pictures to describe activities. At one session at a centre in the community, the tutor used large pictures to help students follow instructions for making emergency telephone calls.

157. In a few weaker lessons, there was poor planning to meet the individual needs of students. In these lessons, some activities were unsuitable for the students, who did not have the literacy skills required to complete the tasks, and were left waiting for long periods while the teacher helped them individually. Resources were not well prepared and the teachers had not anticipated the difficulties students might face in completing a conceptual task without practical applications. For example, in one lesson about the world of work, students were asked to list their likes and dislikes. There were no examples available in words or pictures to prompt the students, who found the task too difficult.

158. There is a good individual and group tutorial system for all students. They discuss freely, or confidentially, any concerns that they may have either about their college course or their personal lives. Outcomes of individual tutorials are recorded, agreed and signed by the tutor and student. Outcomes of tutorials are also used to up-date individual learning plans where appropriate. Where applicable a support assistant may also take part in the tutorials. Tutors are also able to use the wide range of contacts with external organisations to help students, if it is appropriate. There is a high level of support for students in the classroom. Individual students identified with specific learning difficulties have support assistants in all

lessons. Support assistants actively take part in the lessons and offer support to other students, where appropriate.

159. There is an unacceptable level of student lateness in some lessons, mainly those that start at nine o'clock. Many students are reliant on others for travel to college and may have to use either taxis or residential homes' transport. Students said they felt uncomfortable entering lessons that had already started. The teachers had to repeat work covered earlier. The college is aware of the problem, but has not explored sufficiently a more flexible approach to early morning lessons.

160. All teaching takes place in good accommodation within a main teaching block. Classrooms are of adequate size, and are well decorated with up-to-date examples of students' work on display. There is a dedicated ICT suite and a fully equipped kitchen. Students also have the use of a detached house within the grounds of a local residential centre, which is used to develop their independent living skills. Students with restricted mobility are able to gain access to most areas of the college campus.

Leadership and management

161. There is an effective course team managed by a curriculum co-ordinator. Tutors meet regularly, both formally and informally. Formal meetings have an agenda and are documented. General issues concerning the management of courses are discussed, as are any current issues that affect individual students. The results of discussions are recorded and strategies are agreed for dealing with identified issues. There is an SLDD advisory board which meets each term, reviews current provision and assists in the planning of future provision. The self-assessment process is thorough and identifies strengths and weaknesses in all key question areas.

Basic skills

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

Strengths

- wide range of community initiatives
- considerable success in motivating first-time adult learners
- good achievement of vocational students receiving basic skills support.

Weaknesses

- slow development of basic skills support for students on vocational courses
- insufficient use of contextually related learning resources
- insufficiently rigorous quality assurance management.

Scope of provision

162. The college offers a variety of basic skills provision. Project funding and networking with local agencies has been used effectively to develop courses for specific groups of learners in community settings as well as at the main college site. Community initiatives include family learning activities at five local primary schools, a personal development programme for young women at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), personal effectiveness programmes for care workers and factory workers and a group for young mothers with children at risk. Groups of learners using the college facilities include people with mental health difficulties, older people learning to use computers and an adult dyslexia support group. There is also a full-time course for young refugees. The college also provides basic skills support for students on vocational courses. Students may either refer themselves or be referred by their tutor to the study centre where they may receive personal tuition or, in the case of numeracy, take part in workshop activities. In some cases, basic skills teachers contribute to vocational activities in other parts of the college. Often, they do this in key skills lessons taught by vocational staff. At the time of the inspection, there were 158 enrolments on part-time adult basic education programmes, and 108 vocational students receiving basic skills support. Some 91 of the vocational students were receiving assistance on-programme, while 17 were using the study centre. There were eight asylum seekers. In 2000/01, there were approximately 503 enrolments on part-time courses, while 220 vocational students received support.

Achievement and standards

163. Community learning groups are established on the basis of an identified common interest or set of circumstances. This then shapes the collective learning programme, with individual interests being pursued within that context. Some courses, for example, for young

women interested in living independently, and for care workers wishing to be more effective team leaders, have been thoughtfully designed. Many of the learning goals set are personal and social ones; these often involve the development of basic skills. Initial assessment is usually conducted informally, through discussion. Where appropriate, students have individual learning plans and discuss their progress regularly with their tutor. More recent learning plans are expressed in terms of the national adult basic skills curriculum at the expense of the expressed needs and aspirations of adult learners.

164. Where evaluative evidence is available, it shows a high level of student satisfaction. Students spoken to were able to point to gains in self-esteem, greater independence, greater confidence in helping their child with school work, the ability to apply newly acquired learning strategies to tackle unfamiliar situations and an interest in further learning. In 2000/01, 251 adult learners received a college award for the advances they had made in basic literacy, while 110 received one for progress in basic numeracy. The retention rate for these short programmes is very good, well over 90%. Repeat or development programmes are often requested by employers, by agencies who can see that their clients are benefiting, or by learners themselves. Some students progress on to college courses. However, progression data is not analysed.

165. Students on full-time and substantial part-time vocational courses undergo a key skills builder assessment at the start of their course. This gives some indication of those who are experiencing basic skills difficulties. However, there is no sign that the information provided by the assessment is used in developing individual learning plans, and confusion about whether or not it should be. The key skills results sheet, which some students have in their folders, is too difficult for them to interpret. Good work has been done to develop vocationally relevant assessments, but these have not been in use for some time.

166. Despite these flawed arrangements, in 2000/01, 84% of vocational students in receipt of learning support were successful in achieving their primary learning goal.

Quality of education and training

167. Most lessons are satisfactory or better. Staff are well motivated and suitably qualified, but, above all, they have the interpersonal skills to be able to deal effectively with people who are feeling vulnerable. Lesson plans are often very simple, but are successful because of the dynamics of the classes to which they are taught. In one adult learning class where students had had lifelong anxieties about their problems with dyslexia, the good humour of the tutor created an environment where the students' questions were more challenging than her own. In a one-to-one situation, the tutor was relaxed and patient with a student who had become obsessed about a difficulty he was having with pronouns. In a vocational key skills session, a tutor working with students with basic skills difficulties asked them focused questions to remind them of previous learning about bar charts so that they could then construct their own. Students value the level of individual support they receive from tutors, the opportunity to work at their own pace and the support they receive from other students in the class.

168. Some joint teaching sessions are not effectively planned, and the expertise of basic skills teachers is not fully used. In some lessons, there is little opportunity for students to learn as opposed to completing tasks under supervision. In a number of cases, opportunities are missed to promote learning through using resources that relate directly to the interests of students. Most learning materials used with vocational students are generic rather than occupationally specific, and show little sign of innovation. Some lessons took place in accommodation which made it difficult for students to listen, concentrate, or sit properly.

Leadership and management

169. Informal communication within the basic skills team is good, but management systems, especially those for improving quality, lack rigour. Although data is available, it is not used to analyse performance. Lesson observations are carried out, but the grading is over generous and the exercise has made little impact on the development of practice. At the time of inspection there were no recent staff appraisals. The scheme makes no explicit use of performance targets or standards. The standard college quality assurance documentation is not appropriate for this provision and in a number of cases it is not used. No suitable alternatives have been developed.

170. Teaching partnerships between vocational and basic skills colleagues are intended to increase the support available to students in lessons. Although there are partnerships across all the faculties, some of these are new and the partnership arrangement is not well conceived, with the basic skills colleagues operating very much as the junior partners. The potential contribution of basic skills staff in the development of key skills is not being fully realised. Some, but by no means all, of these weaknesses are being addressed through the college's basic skills quality initiative action plan.

171. The 13.75 full-time equivalent staff responsible for basic skills tuition constitute one of the college's learner services teams. Informal communication within the team is good, but management systems, especially for the improvement of quality, lack rigour. Although data is available, it is not used to analyse performance. Lesson observations have been carried out, but the grades are over-generous and the exercise has made little impact on the development of practice. Staff appraisal has not been carried out recently. The scheme makes no explicit use of performance targets or standards. The standard college quality assurance documentation is not appropriate for this provision and in a number of cases it is not used. No suitable alternatives have been developed.

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

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	12	24.4
2	30.1	20.0
3	38.3	9.0
4/5	0.4	1.9
Other	19.2	44.7
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in 2001.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	1,470	9,806	42.5
Agriculture	0	0	0
Construction	97	102	0.75
Engineering	152	287	1.65
Business	849	2,252	11.7
Hotel and catering	339	514	3.2
Health and community care	605	2,916	13.3
Art and design	584	424	3.7
Humanities	3,363	1,499	18.3
Basic education	282	1,008	4.9
Total	7,741	18,808	100

Source: Provided by the college in 2001.

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 00	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 00
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,054	598	770	934	588	717
	Retention rate (%)	83	90	83	73	91	84
	National average (%)	81	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	76	69	62	78	65	69
	National average (%)	59	62	66	62	63	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,596	1,335	1,279	1,466	1,197	1,095
	Retention rate (%)	78	85	83	78	87	82
	National average (%)	76	76	77	79	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	76	66	70	83	70	67
	National average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,711	2,225	1,640	1,468	1,071	1,001
	Retention rate (%)	77	85	74	80	89	78
	National average (%)	77	77	77	79	79	70
	Pass rate (%)	75	73	75	80	69	73
	National average (%)	71	72	73	64	65	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	5	36	11	291	352	248
	Retention rate (%)	80	97	91	88	93	85
	National average (%)	93	94	80	84	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	75	61	80	76	73	41
	National average (%)	64	65	70	58	61	60

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

Sources of information:

- 1. National averages: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
- 2. College rates for 1997/98 – 1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
- 3. College rates for (1999/00): provided by the college in spring 2001.*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	57	33	10	134
Level 2 (intermediate)	62	26	12	91
Level 1 (foundation)	62	23	15	34
Other sessions	82	9	9	23
Totals	61	28	11	282

MONITORING INSPECTION OF WEST KENT COLLEGE

Published October 2002

Outcome of monitoring inspection

The overall provision in the curriculum areas of **science and mathematics and humanities** is now **satisfactory**.

Background

OFSTED and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, OFSTED or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the OFSTED website alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. OFSTED will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Dates of monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of West Kent College took place on 13-14 June 2002 and 24-25 September 2002.

Science and mathematics

In the October 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- *Action taken to improve students' performance in GCSE mathematics*
- *Flexible teaching of GCSE mathematics to meet students' needs.*

Weaknesses

- *Poor retention and pass rates for GCE A-level courses*
- *Unimaginative approaches to teaching and learning*
- *Insufficient use of ICT in teaching and learning*
- *Failure to agree and implement a scheme for the marking of students' work*
- *Inadequate action planning to bring about improvement in advanced-level courses.*

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision in the curriculum area of science and mathematics is now **satisfactory**. Retention and pass rates for most GCE AS and A2 courses, are now at or above national averages. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics are particularly good. Most lessons are satisfactory or better. Teachers are increasingly sharing good practice and are now adopting more imaginative approaches to teaching and learning. A

current project aims to raise their awareness to the potential use of ILT, but few schemes of work identify opportunities to use ILT to help learning in science or mathematics. The teaching of key skills is not integrated with students' programmes. A scheme for the marking of students' work is effectively implemented. Effective action planning is improving the quality of advanced-level courses. Self evaluation at individual course level, however, remains underdeveloped.

Humanities

In the October 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- *Above average pass and retention rates on most one-year courses*
- *Good progression from the access to HE programme*
- *Effective teaching and learning in psychology and government and politics.*

Weaknesses

- *Consistently poor retention rates on two-year GCE A-level courses*
- *Poor teaching in some lessons*
- *Unsatisfactory monitoring of students' progress*
- *Insufficient sharing of good practice*
- *Unsatisfactory curriculum leadership and management.*

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision in the curriculum area of humanities is now **satisfactory**. There were significant improvements in retention rates on most GCE AS and A2 level courses in 2001/02 and the majority are now above national averages. Pass rates on most GCE AS and A2 level courses are good. Teaching is at least satisfactory. It is good in psychology. However, some teaching is still dull or unimaginative and there is not enough sharing of good practice. There are clear procedures for feedback to students on their marked work. The leadership and management of humanities are now satisfactory. Students' attendance and progress are carefully monitored. Enrolments to GCE AS/A2 humanities subjects have increased. There is a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The quality assurance procedures, however, are not rigorously implemented.

The monitoring inspection of leadership and management and work-based learning hairdressing and beauty therapy is incomplete and an overall **judgement** stating that it is now satisfactory or better **cannot be given**.

MONITORING INSPECTION OF WEST KENT COLLEGE

Published March 2003

Outcome of monitoring inspection

Leadership and management are now **satisfactory**.

Background

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area(s), or leadership and management are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted website alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Dates of monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of West Kent College took place on 13 and 14 June 2002, 24 and 25 September 2002 and 25 and 26 February 2003. Another re-inspection monitoring visit will take place on 25 and 26 March 2003 to look at WBL hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Leadership and management

Inspectors made the following judgement of leadership and management in the October 2001 inspection, which is recorded in Part A of the 2001 inspection report.

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Many curriculum areas are not managed effectively and quality assurance procedures are not implemented with sufficient rigour. The college has taken effective action to generate income and improve its overall financial position. Participation has been widened through partnership and franchise arrangements, but it has not developed effective strategies to address low retention rates and falling enrolments on full-time courses on the main site. The college has not placed sufficient

emphasis on raising standards. College data on students' retention and pass rates are unreliable.

During the monitoring visits in 2002 - 2003, inspectors have assessed progress made in addressing the weaknesses in leadership and management. The overall evaluation by inspectors is that the college has taken appropriate action to address the weaknesses and that leadership and management are now **satisfactory**. The accuracy of data on students' achievements has improved. Strategies to improve patchy and declining retention and recruitment rates have been effective: most retention and pass rates are above sector averages and recruitment targets have been met. Strategic and operational planning and self-assessment are now closely linked: governors are actively involved in strategic planning and closely monitor progress against the strategic plan. The management of quality improvement is rigorous: there has been much effective staff development on all aspects of quality assurance, including assessment; the quality of course logbooks is carefully monitored and many provide good evidence for self-assessment; the self-assessment process is thorough and senior managers and governors carefully monitor progress against actions in the post inspection action plan. Procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning are effective: internal lesson observation grades are moderated externally; teachers whose teaching is less than satisfactory are mentored; observation includes key skills lessons and tutorials and there are effective arrangements for the sharing of good practice. Curriculum areas are managed effectively: curriculum managers and teachers make good use of data on students' achievements to monitor student punctuality, attendance, retention, and achievement and to provide appropriate support for individual students when needed; the roles and responsibilities of curriculum leaders and co-ordinators have been clarified; new managers are well supported by mentors and managers at all levels have undertaken a wide range of training.

The monitoring inspection of work-based learning hairdressing and beauty therapy is incomplete and an overall **judgement** stating that it is now satisfactory or better **cannot be given**. This area will be inspected on 25 and 26 March 2003.

MONITORING INSPECTION OF WEST KENT COLLEGE

Published April 2003

Outcome of monitoring inspection

The provision of work-based-learning in the curriculum area of **hairdressing and beauty therapy** is now **satisfactory**.

Background

The Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted web site alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Dates of monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of West Kent College took place on 13 and 14 June 2002, 24 and 25 September 2002, and 25 and 26 March 2003.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

In the October 2001 inspection, the quality of work-based-learning in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates in beauty therapy
- well-developed learning materials for beauty therapy
- effective management in beauty therapy
- wide range of provision for additional qualifications
- effective professional development for staff.

Weaknesses

- poorly structured training for some level 2 and 3 hairdressing programmes
- low retention and pass rates for work-based-learning
- underdeveloped formative assessment procedures in hairdressing
- ineffective use of salon resources in hairdressing.

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that work-based-learning in the curriculum area of hairdressing and beauty therapy is now **satisfactory**. There is well-structured training for level 2 and 3 hairdressing programmes. Teachers and trainers regularly share good practice. The appointment of an additional member of staff has led to an increase in the amount of training delivered in the workplace. Learners can now attend college to develop their skills in a particular technique, such as perming, if they are unable to practise them in the workplace. Links with employers have improved. Changes have been made to timetables, new evening classes have been introduced, and the reception reorganised. A new hairdressing salon, which is of commercial standard, has increased the space and range of resources available to students. The new assessment procedures are effective. Learners have a good understanding of the assessment requirements. During regular visits to the workplace, the trainer, learner and employer identify opportunities for assessment. The number of assessments carried out in the workplace has increased. Although the retention and pass rates for work-based-learning shown in historical data remain poor, data supplied by the college to inspectors show that a higher proportion of those who started foundation modern apprenticeships now remain in learning compared with previous years.