



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection report

Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College

Date(s) of inspection: 2–6 December 2002

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Ian Wilson
Address of college:	University Road Leicester LE1 7RJ
Telephone number:	0116 2231900
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Chair of governors:	Professor Richard Card
Unique reference number:	130756
Name of reporting inspector:	Philip Pullen HMI
Date(s) of inspection:	2–6 December 2002

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College is a sixth form college in the city of Leicester. It received sixth form college status in 1974 having previously been a boys' grammar school. The college is located one mile from the city centre and adjacent to the University of Leicester. The city is also served by two other sixth form colleges and a large general further education (FE) college. In addition, there are four schools with sixth forms and an adult education college. Achievement levels in the city are low. The proportion of pupils aged 16 achieving five A to C grades in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations was 13% below the national average in 2000/01.

The college specialises in academic studies, mainly at advanced level. Students can make a choice from 38 General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and GCE Advanced-level (GCE A-level) subjects and four Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) subjects. The college also provides a one-year GCSE programme for students with low entry qualifications who wish to progress to level 3 study. In addition, a substantial number of adult students study part time on information technology (IT) courses at the college's two dedicated IT centres, one on the main campus and one in leased premises in Coalville. In 2001/02, the college enrolled 2,336 students of which some 1,654 were aged 16 to 18. Student numbers are highest in humanities, science, art and design and business. The college is ethnically diverse. Over 70% of the college's students aged 16 to 18 are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The college's mission is 'to provide challenge, encouragement and support for students in order to maximise their achievements.'

How effective is the college?

The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievement are outstanding in four of the nine curriculum areas inspected, good in four other areas and satisfactory in the remaining one. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- consistently high pass and retention rates
- students achieve much higher than predictable from previous attainment
- high standards of students' work
- strong emphasis on learning and on valuing diversity
- good teaching and effective learning
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- excellent attendance
- outstanding support and guidance by teachers and tutors
- extensive enrichment programme
- very good library, private study and IT provision supporting learning.

What should be improved

- sharing of good practice within and across curriculum areas
- retention rates on adult courses
- the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements
- use of IT within curriculum areas
- some accommodation.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Outstanding. There are outstanding achievements by students on all courses. The quality of teaching and students' attainment in lessons are very good. Monitoring and assessment of students' progress are effective. Much of the laboratory accommodation is outdated.
Mathematics	Good. There are high pass rates on most courses. Most teaching is good and enables students to develop good skills in evaluation, research and analysis. Teachers use good assessment practice and provide effective support for students. Pass rates on GCE AS mathematics are low. There is insufficient use of IT in lessons.
Business studies, accounting and economics	Good. Students are well taught and there are high pass and retention rates on most courses. There is extensive use of assessment to support learning and very effective guidance and support for students. Teachers make insufficient use of IT in teaching the curriculum. Noisy and cramped classrooms restrict learning.
Computing and information and communication technology	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on most courses. Although there are examples of good lessons in both computing and information and communication technology (ICT), the overall quality of teaching in computing is less than satisfactory. Provision for adult students is well managed, but retention rates on these courses are low.
Art and design	Outstanding. Pass rates on most courses are outstanding. There are very high standards of students' work. Most teaching is good or very good and stimulates students to learn. Specialist resources and accommodation are poor.
Humanities	Good. There are very good pass and retention rates in most subjects. Teaching in history, law and politics is stimulating and demanding. There is good subject support for students. In some lessons, insufficient attention is paid to individual student needs. There are poor pass rates and attendance rates in GCE AS general studies.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Psychology and sociology	Outstanding. There are outstanding students' achievements on all courses. Teaching is highly effective with a keen focus on examinations that enables students to do well. There is effective management of teaching teams and of student learning.
Modern foreign languages	Good. There are high pass and retention rates in most subjects. Teaching is thorough and enables good development of students' learning skills. Some feedback on students' work is unhelpful. There are deficiencies in the management of the curriculum area.
English	Outstanding. There are outstanding pass rates on all courses. Outstanding teaching inspires students to produce work of a very high standard. There is very good student support.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. There is a strong commitment to the college's mission and all aspects of the college's work are focused on maintaining and improving high levels of student achievement. Senior managers provide teachers with a clear degree of professional autonomy within a central quality assurance framework. This approach is effective in enabling them to achieve high standards of teaching and learning in most subjects. However, it is not entirely effective in identifying and addressing weaknesses in quality, or in promoting improvements in teaching and learning and sharing of good practice between curriculum areas. There are robust policies and procedures to promote equality of opportunity. Enthusiastic and committed governors closely monitor college and student performance. Strategic planning, beyond the annual development objectives, is minimal. Financial management is good. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. The college works hard to ensure equal opportunity and diversity in all aspects of its work. As a result of its reputation for enabling students to achieve good examination results, the college attracts growing numbers of students aged 16 to 18 from within and outside Leicester. The college works within a consortium of schools and other colleges in the city to co-ordinate the progression of young people from school to post-16 education. Through the Excellence Challenge initiative, the college is successfully working with five partner schools to increase participation by students with lower GCSE grade profiles.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

There is outstanding support for students. Information on courses is comprehensive and the criteria for entry to the college are clear. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that students are placed on the most appropriate programme. Induction is carefully planned to help students settle into college life quickly. Academic and personal support is particularly strong. Learning support is well planned and enables students to achieve their full potential. Sensitive and effective additional support is readily available for students with a specific learning difficulty or physical disability. Monitoring and review of students' progress are thorough. Parents or guardians are notified promptly if there are any problems. Guidance and support for students applying to higher education (HE) or seeking employment is excellent. The college is sensitive to the needs of students of different faiths.

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

- its good reputation and examination results
-

- good support from teachers and tutors
- very good teaching
- friendly atmosphere
- enrichment activities and sporting facilities
- the library, study centre and IT facilities
- sensitivity to the needs of students of different faiths
- access to university facilities.

What they feel could be improved

- the price and choice of food in the canteen
- social areas.

Other information

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

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	78	19	3
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0
Learning 16–18	76	20	4
19+ and WBL*	100	0	0

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. The majority of students at the college follow courses leading to GCE A levels with a small percentage studying AVCEs as either single or double awards. A small number of GCSE courses are also offered for students with low entry qualifications who wish to progress to level 3 study. The college also provides courses for adults, predominantly in ICT. While enrolments for students aged 16 to 18 are oversubscribed, enrolments on adult courses declined by 18% in 2001.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 taking GCE A-level and GCSE courses are consistently high and well above national averages for sixth form colleges. In 2002, retention rates on GCE AS and A-level courses were 94% and 97%, respectively; the retention rate on GCSE courses was 93%. Retention rates for the small numbers of students taking AVCE courses declined by 10%, in 2002, to 74%.

3. Pass rates for GCE A-level courses are outstanding and have been maintained at high levels since the last inspection in 1999. In 2002, the overall pass rate for GCE A levels was very high, at 97%. In the same year, 22 out of the 38 subjects offered at GCE A level had pass rates of 100% and only one had a pass rate of less than 90%. The proportion of A to C grades achieved in examinations is also high; in 2002, 64% of students achieved at this level. Pass rates for GCE AS courses are good overall, but declined by 5% in 2002 to 85%, as a result of poor performance in general studies.

4. The college uses a number of measures to calculate how well students are achieving in their GCE A-level studies, compared with their previous GCSE results. In 2002, students in 32 out of 38 subjects obtained higher grades than those predicted.

5. The overall pass rate for AVCE courses was 93% in 2002, with 100% pass rates achieved on three out of the four courses offered. Of those students completing the course, 67% achieved high grades. Pass rates for the students taking GCSE courses are also high. In 2002, 69% of GCSE students achieved grades A* to C.

6. The majority of students come to the college with the intention of progressing to university and most are successful in achieving this aim. Approximately 90% of students progress to HE each year. Progression from the one-year GCSE programme is good; on average three quarters of the students progress on to level 3 programmes either at the college or at other institutions; other students progress to other courses or training.

7. The standard of students' work was very good. In 73% of lessons, attainment was better than average and in 34% it was very good or excellent. Attainment was highest in English and psychology and sociology and lowest in computing and ICT. Students are highly motivated; they express themselves well and are able to talk confidently about the subjects they are studying. Project work and assignments are often of a very high standard and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding.

8. Attendance during the inspection, which took place towards the end of a busy autumn term, averaged 90% in the lessons observed. This compares well with the average of 84% for sixth form colleges inspected in 1999/2000.

Adult learners

9. Retention rates on level 2 courses are around the national average. However, on level 3 courses they have declined to below the national average. Low retention rates on courses for adult students were identified as a weakness in the previous inspection. Pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 are well above the national average. Adult students on level 3 courses achieve at about the national average.

Quality of education and training

10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 150 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 78% of these, satisfactory in 19% and unsatisfactory in 3%. In a high proportion, 38%, it was very good or excellent. The highest proportion of very good and excellent teaching was seen in science, art and design, psychology and sociology and English. The very small quantity of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in computing and ICT and humanities. Across all other subject areas, the quality of teaching is consistently high. Learning was good or better in 76% of lessons, satisfactory in 20% and unsatisfactory in 4%.

11. The very high proportion of good and better learning is an outcome of a college that places optimising student achievement at the heart of its work. Teaching is one component of this learning. Where teaching is excellent, learners are moved through a carefully structured process which places the right knowledge before students at the right pace and ensures that learning tasks are organised progressively so that students gain a thorough understanding of syllabus requirements along with the skills and knowledge they need to do well in examinations. The routines of learning, assessment, marking and planning, are based on a clear understanding of the learning needs of students. Marking is clear and teachers give developmental feedback that helps students achieve their optimum potential. Assessment is formative. Students move easily from formal teaching towards supported self-study and they become confident independent learners as they reach their advanced level goals.

12. In some very successful lessons, teachers made sure that students' gains in knowledge and understanding were clear and definite. In a GCE AS English lesson the teacher thoughtfully structured questioning enabled students to build a sophisticated understanding and analysis of Ian McEwan's novel, 'Enduring Love'. In an art lesson, the teacher used Sabrina Ward Harrison's collage work to stimulate a creative response from students whose basic knowledge of the formal elements associated with good design was impressive.

13. In the few instances of unsatisfactory teaching, lessons were not well planned and students were passive recipients of a teaching approach that did not meet the needs of individual learners or build effectively on their previous learning. Teachers talked too much and, as a consequence, failed to maintain students' interest and engage them fully in their work.

14. For example, in a practical computing lesson, GCE AS students were to work through instructional materials, developing an understanding of 'Access'. Students were comfortable with the mode of working, but many struggled with aspects of the texts as they either did not understand the underlying principles sufficiently or their electronic files from previous work were not ready for this task. Teachers did not adequately anticipate these problems.

15. Teachers are suitably qualified in the subject they teach. Their experience and subject expertise support students very well in their learning. The college process of professional development reviews, whilst in its infancy, provides a good framework for identifying staff development needs and the provision of in-service training. Newly qualified teachers are given good support in their first two years with lesson observations by fellow teachers providing helpful guidance. Funds for professional development are well used to improve and update the professional skills of staff. Support staff make a very good contribution to the work of the college and effectively support student achievement.

16. The college environment is very pleasant, clean and conducive to concentrated study and application to learning. Most teaching rooms are light and airy and there are good and accessible social and recreational areas. Lack of access to facilities for students with restricted mobility was a criticism in the last inspection report. Much of the college's

accommodation is now accessible to these students, although access to upper floors in some blocks remains restricted. Specialist facilities for students with learning difficulties are good. An outstanding new sports facility and a new ICT and computing building have made a positive contribution to student learning and enrichment. Sites away from the main campus are well maintained, clean and welcoming. The college is planning substantial improvements to teaching facilities in science and art and design. Both are in urgent need of implementation.

17. There are excellent private study facilities with good access to IT. Private study makes a significant contribution to student learning and achievement. Students have easy access to the library, which has a very good range of texts and periodicals. Management of the library and students' study facilities are very good, with care taken to assess students' needs and staff requirements and to act on feedback. Recent investment in IT has been substantial and the ratio of computers to students is high. Students value the college's intranet and the use of IT to support learning has improved since the last inspection.

18. Assessment and coursework is well planned for all subjects. A high priority is placed on preparing students thoroughly for examinations. Students are set challenging targets related to their minimum expected grade. Examination marking schemes are used widely. Class tests are set regularly and often carried out under examination conditions. All students are expected to complete a significant amount of homework. Most teachers return work promptly with appropriate praise and encouragement. Marking of students' work is thorough. Spelling and grammar are routinely corrected and, where there are significant and recurring problems, the student is referred for additional support. Detailed and constructive annotations give students clear direction on what they need to do to improve their performance. In a few instances, there is inconsistency in the marking of students' work within the same subject and a few examples where feedback on homework is insufficiently detailed. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress through regular reports home and a parents' evening.

19. The college offers a wide range of courses mainly at level 3 that effectively meet the needs of school-leavers. Some 38 subjects are offered at GCE AS and A level. A one-year GCSE programme, offering eight subjects, is designed specifically to prepare students for progression to level 3 courses. AVCE programmes are offered as single or double awards in health and social care, art and design, business and travel and tourism, although the number of students on these programmes is low. Timetables are sufficiently flexible to enable students to combine subjects that best meet their needs. The college's provision for adult students is predominately in part-time ICT courses. Programmes are offered at the college and at a venue in Coalville. A foundation course arrangement with the University of Leicester enables mature students with no advanced level qualifications to progress to a degree course.

20. The college offers an impressive range of about 70 enrichment activities. There is a particularly good mix of social, sports and accredited courses. Advanced extension awards are available for the more able students. An increasing number of students are choosing to

study a modern foreign language as part of the enrichment programme. The extensive sporting programme caters effectively for students engaging in sport for recreation or at a competitive level. Students have achieved success in competitions at local, regional and national level. Each year, around 1,100 students are involved in some form of sporting activity. Mentor and buddy schemes form a significant and successful part of enrichment and student support arrangements. Nearly 50 students have been trained in note taking or dyslexia support. After they are trained, they are paired with a student who requires this type of support and accompany them to lessons. They also attend lessons to take notes when a mentee is absent. Enrolment mentors successfully help new students to settle into college life and their studies. These schemes are highly valued by mentors and mentees and they comment positively about the academic and personal benefits from participating in them.

21. Arrangements for developing students' key skills are ineffective. Whilst all students have the option of taking at least one key skill at level 3, very few complete the portfolios of work that would enable them to obtain external qualifications. Curriculum areas vary in the extent to which they have identified clear opportunities for students to produce evidence that could be included in their portfolio in order to demonstrate their progress in key skills. In the current year, the college has taken some steps aimed at improving key skills provision, including the allocation of additional time for guidance in completing portfolios and to assist students in preparing for tests. At the time of the inspection, however, it was too early to judge the success of these measures.

22. Pre-entry guidance and advice is good. Information on courses is comprehensive and the criteria for entry to the college are clear. The college is over-subscribed and appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that prospective students are treated fairly. Liaison with partner and feeder schools is good and most interviews are held in the schools. Great care is taken to ensure that students are placed on the most appropriate programme of study and this contributes to high retention rates in the overwhelming majority of subjects. Through the Excellence Challenge initiative, the college works effectively with five schools to increase the proportion of young people staying in education post-16. Six learning mentors who are also tutors have responsibility for supporting the transition of students from these target schools. Student induction is carefully planned and includes the use of student mentors to help students settle into college life quickly. There is helpful guidance for adult students enrolling on IT courses. Individual timetables are negotiated with adults to enable them to attend lessons at times to suit their personal circumstances.

23. Effective procedures are in place to identify the additional support needs of students. There is good staff development to ensure that teachers and tutors are adequately trained to support students. Students are assessed during induction for dyslexia and language skill and results are reported promptly to teachers, tutors and students. Attendance at either individual or group timetabled support sessions is excellent. There is a high level of support and care for students with a physical disability or health problems. Specialist equipment, including laptops, are readily available for their use. The progress of students receiving additional support is carefully monitored and well documented. There is very good specialist support

for dyslexic and hearing impaired students. Overall results for students receiving support are comparable with college averages.

24. Academic and personal support are particularly strong. Specialist tutors meet with their student group twice a week to deal with routine administration, college events and discuss feedback from the student council. In addition, there is a schedule of individual tutorials with students. Tutors vigorously follow-up lack of punctuality and poor attendance at lessons and late submission of homework. Parents or guardians are routinely informed of any significant problems. Cross-college events are used effectively to promote such topics as drug awareness, healthy living and understanding of different religions. Students have easy access to a professional counselling service provided by two counsellors. A substantial number of students are eligible for educational maintenance allowances. The college provides good financial support from the learner support fund for students suffering hardship.

25. Monitoring and review of students' progress is rigorous. Students are set minimum expected grades for each GCE AS and A-level subject based on their prior achievements. Subject teachers regularly monitor students' progress and provide extensive support to students outside formal lessons. Tutors formally monitor students' progress twice a year against their minimum expected grade. Actions are agreed where students are not working to their full potential and additional subject support arranged. Those performing well receive letters of commendation.

26. There is excellent guidance and support for students applying to HE and for the small number of students seeking to go directly into employment. Students have access to two part-time Connexions personal advisers; one provides careers advice and guidance and the other assists students who live independently or are carers. The careers library is comprehensively stocked and extensive careers information is available on the college intranet which is well used by students.

27. The college does not have a service of daily worship, but it does provide prayer rooms for male and female Muslim students and there is an active Christian union in the college. Students speak positively on how the college promotes equality of opportunity and accommodates the diverse needs of a multi-faith student community. Special arrangements are made to ensure that students are able to fulfil their religious obligations. The college celebrates the cultural diversity of students by encouraging cross-college days dedicated to different faiths.

Leadership and management

28. Senior managers and governors have established a clear direction for the college, which is leading to good quality education and outstanding student achievements. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the college's core aims. Managers have developed highly effective structures to support students' learning and optimise their achievement. The college takes the view that its professional teachers should determine for themselves the most effective way to teach their subject in order to maximise students' achievements. Senior managers seek to strike a fine balance between encouraging this degree of autonomy and

providing a strong enough central framework to ensure consistently high standards are being met in all aspects of the provision. This approach places a clear reliance on heads of subject departments to provide curriculum leadership and to ensure effective quality assurance at the localised level. While the majority of subjects are well led and managed, there are deficiencies in the management of some subjects. There is insufficient emphasis on ensuring that teaching is of a high quality.

29. Strategic planning at the college is not yet fully established. There is no current strategic plan, although textual updates of the last plan have continued to be provided to the local LSC. The college therefore lacks the vehicle that promotes coherence and integration between key strategies. Despite this shortcoming, the college has clear strategic aims, and a more broadly based set of corporate objectives has been developed for the current year. Opportunities for all staff to contribute to longer term strategic planning have been few.

30. Targets for the recruitment, attendance, retention and pass rates of students are primarily set and monitored at whole college level. At departmental level, target setting relates largely to examination pass rates, and has not been extended to other measures of quality such as the grades awarded in the college's internal lesson observation process.

31. Quality assurance processes are highly focused on student achievement and take into account internal and external data including data on students' achievements relative to their previous attainment. These data are used very effectively to monitor and measure students' progress. The college has good procedures for obtaining feedback from students. Three carefully constructed and implemented surveys are used each year, the third of these feeding into the course review process. The 'talkback' system provides an on-line and paper-based facility enabling students to give positive feedback or raise issues with college management. When issues are raised, students receive a considered and detailed response from college management. Quality assurance is not fully effective in all subjects. The most effective subject departments effectively combine excellent teaching with the outstanding work ethic of the students and maximise achievement by inspiring students to learn. Other departments place too much reliance on students studying on their own. Insufficiently rigorous internal lesson observations fail to recognise workmanlike but unimaginative teaching. Students in these subject areas fall back on the excellent supported study arrangements and facilities to ensure their outstanding achievements. The college acknowledges, but fails to act on, a tendency for some subjects to overrate the quality of their teaching.

32. There are comprehensive policies and procedures to support equality of opportunity. The college has responded promptly to recent disability and race relations' legislation. A race equality policy has been established and all existing policies are reviewed in the light of new developments. The college is appropriately sensitive to different religious obligations and cultural diversity is celebrated through student activities and in work within the curriculum. There is good monitoring of equal opportunities at a college level and students' achievements are analysed by ethnicity and gender. Surveys indicate that students are satisfied with how fairly and equally they feel treated. At curriculum level, examples of

course reviews or lesson observations identifying or addressing equal opportunity issues or cultural aspects of learning are rare.

33. The college is served by enthusiastic and committed governors, who are passionate about its success. Governors effectively monitor the academic and financial performance of the college, assisted by well organised and clearly presented reports from senior managers. Governors' professional expertise is well deployed across a broad range of committees, which enables thorough exploration of issues before referral to the main board. Attendance levels at corporation meetings are below the college's own target and other performance indicators have yet to be developed. Women and ethnic minorities are under-represented on the corporation. Links between individual governors and different subject and service areas of the college have recently been developed and are helping to increase governors' detailed knowledge about the college.

34. During the current year, a system for professional development review has been extended to teachers and managers, following its introduction for support staff in the previous year. It does not involve appraisal of performance, but promotes a stronger focus on individual development needs.

35. The management information system developed by the college is reliable. Course, staff and student timetables are available online prior to the first teaching week. These are continually updated throughout the year. College managers receive monthly reports to monitor student retention rates. Financial management is good. The college provides good value for money. It sets and meets demanding targets for student enrolments, retention and pass rates. The average class size is good, at 18. Resources are used effectively, although some accommodation needs upgrading.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science

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

Strengths

- outstanding achievements by students
- very good teaching
- effective monitoring and assessment of students' progress
- good provision of enrichment programmes in science
- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- outdated laboratories.

Scope of provision

36. A broad range of advanced level science courses covering disciplines in biology, chemistry, electronics, geology and physics are provided for over 1,000 students. Biology is also offered as a one-year GCSE course. In addition, the college's well-attended enrichment programme includes many science-based options, including medical laboratory science, space physics and additional mathematics for physics. The programme is highly regarded by students and considerably enhances their experiences of science.

Achievement and standards

37. There are consistently high student achievements on all science courses. Pass and retention rates and the percentage of students achieving higher grades are all consistently above the national average for sixth form colleges. Over the past three years, students taking GCE A-level electronics have achieved 100% pass rates. In GCE A-level biology, chemistry and physics, pass rates regularly exceed 95%. Achievement in GCE AS subjects is also high, although pass rates declined in chemistry and biology in 2002. Students taking GCSE biology achieve high numbers of A to C grades.

38. Students' attainment in lessons is very good. They work with confidence and display keen powers of observation. Practical work is carried out carefully and safely. There is good application of theoretical knowledge in students' experimental work. Attendance at lessons is very high, at 94%, and students are punctual. Students have an excellent record of progression to degree courses in science.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE biology	2	No. of starts	45	49	49
		% retention	98	98	96
		% pass rate	61	75	70
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	200	224	191
		% retention	79	75	99*
		% pass rate	97	94	96
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	159	193	116
		% retention	86	79	100*
		% pass rate	95	93	97
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	75	84	58
		% retention	75	73	100*
		% pass rate	96	98	97
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	**	244	257
		% retention	**	95	93*
		% pass rate	**	96	88
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	**	166	170
		% retention	**	93	95*
		% pass rate	**	88	92

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

39. Much of the teaching is good or very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. They plan their lessons well and pay particularly good attention to the consolidation of students' previous learning through class tests and careful verbal questioning. In the best lessons, teachers use stimulating and varied teaching methods to inspire student learning and to ensure that students play an active part in the lesson. One GCE AS physics lesson began with a lively presentation by students based on their recent visit to the Leicester space centre. The teacher used this very effectively as a basis for introducing students to the kinetic theory of gases. Initial board work, outlining methods of calculation, was followed up with a series of practical exercises completed by students. In all science classes, good use is made of practical demonstrations and laboratory work is carried out safely. Learning resources, such as overhead projectors and video, are used competently. However, there is insufficient use of IT in some science subjects.

40. There is good monitoring and assessing of students' progress. Homework is set at least weekly in each subject and is returned promptly with a clear assessment of its standard and good indications of how students' work may be improved. Several times during the year, there is a more formal monitoring of progress by subject and personal tutors. Each student's performance is compared with the potential standard deduced from previous GCSE grades. Students value these monitoring processes as a guide to their progress.

41. There is a supplementary programme of mathematics. There are daily learner support lessons in science which students can visit for help with their work, as required. Students are also referred to these lessons if their homework record is considered to be unsatisfactory.

42. Much of the laboratory accommodation is outdated and in urgent need of refurbishment, although the skill and dedication of the teaching and support staff ensures that students' work is relatively unaffected. Science equipment for practical work is of good quality. The college intranet has a database for each science subject and is particularly well developed in chemistry.

Leadership and management

43. The science departments are well managed. Schemes of work are planned carefully and show clearly how each department's resources may be used to help learning. However, there are few links between the departments and there is insufficient sharing of good practice across science subjects. Each department operates effective quality assurance procedures through course reviews and annual self-assessment. Heads of department assess each teacher's lessons annually and the weaknesses are aggregated into an action plan for improvement. Not all departments develop students' use of IT effectively.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most mathematics courses
- very high retention rates on all courses
- much good teaching
- good assessment practice
- effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS mathematics courses
- insufficient use of IT.

Scope of provision

44. The mathematics department offers an appropriate range of courses. There are three GCE AS and A-level courses, made up of a combination of pure, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics modules. More able students are encouraged to complete a GCE AS and A-level combination in one year and progress to further mathematics in the second. There are 299 students taking GCE AS courses, 126 are on the GCE A-level programme and 19 students are following the further mathematics option. As a condition of acceptance at the college, students without a GCSE grade C or better are required to re-sit GCSE mathematics.

Achievement and standards

45. Overall, there are very good pass and retention rates in mathematics. In 2001/02, achievements on GCE A-level mathematics and further mathematics courses were excellent, with pass rates of 97% and 100%, respectively. GCSE pass rates have remained at least 20% above the national average for sixth form colleges for the last three years. On GCE AS and A-level courses, the percentage of students gaining high grades is well above the national average. However, the pass rate on the GCE AS course in 2001/02 was poor, at 63%. An analysis of scores shows that, in 2001/02, most students achieved better results than those predicted from their GCSE achievement on all courses except GCE AS.

46. Most advanced level students develop good skills of evaluation, research and analysis. Their ability to work effectively on their own helps to raise their achievement. Students' algebraic skills are particularly well developed. Attendance at lessons, at 93%, is very high. Students' progression on to HE is very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	175	203	188
		% retention	95	92	95
		% pass rate	70	71	60
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	**	267	308
		% retention	**	96	95*
		% pass rate	**	79	63
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	182	261	146
		% retention	69	***	100*
		% pass rate	95	85	97
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	14	16	7
		% retention	64	88	100*
		% pass rate	56	64	100

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

*** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

47. Most teaching is good and none of the lessons observed was less than satisfactory. Teachers are very competent and prepare their lessons well. Schemes of work closely follow the demands of the syllabus. Teachers give clear and thorough explanations of new concepts and ideas. They often go back to first principles and build on students' previous knowledge very effectively. In most lessons, teachers introduce a topic by example on a whiteboard followed by students practising questions alone or in pairs. In a GCE AS revision lesson, students were able to gain confidence in the use of mathematical formulae by displaying them on coloured cards and presenting them to the rest of the group. The teacher's use of carefully directed questions helped to develop students' understanding and they were clearly stimulated by and interested in their work. In some lessons, however, the teaching does not

enthuse students or sufficiently build on their previous learning. Teachers do not always spend sufficient time with students who are having difficulties and the language they use is sometimes unnecessarily complicated. This is particularly true in GCSE mathematics. There is no planned use of IT or the college intranet in lessons.

48. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. The volume of marked work varies, but the standard of marking is consistently high. Assessment is used effectively to monitor students' progress. Students' performance is measured at regular intervals against an agreed minimum expected target grade. Students understand and value the process. The development of advanced level students' key skills is weak. Generally, contact with parents is regular and effective.

49. Staff student relationships are very good. Students speak highly of the wide range of support they receive. Initial guidance is good and induction is effective. Teachers and tutors concentrate on helping students achieve their goals and give generously of their time both inside and outside the classroom. Students in need of extra help can attend one of 14 timetabled support sessions. There are strong and clear links between tutors, careers and other support services. A good range of extension and enrichment activities help to further enhance the students learning.

50. Most mathematics teaching takes place in dedicated accommodation. Teaching rooms are in need of refurbishment although they are enlivened by good examples in mathematics of students' work and mathematics-related posters on the walls. The college intranet is underdeveloped; it is mostly used as a signpost to external web sites.

Leadership and management

51. The management of mathematics courses is good. The department is well led and responsibilities are clear. Full team meetings take place at least twice a term. Minutes are well documented, but the achievement of agreed actions is not rigorously monitored. Data are carefully monitored and analysed. This has led to changes in the arrangements to support weaker students. Resources are used effectively. Teachers readily share materials and methods of teaching, although mainly on an informal basis. The department does not formally monitor the consistency of its assessment practice. Opportunities for staff development are good. However, few activities focus on improving teaching and sharing good practice.

Business studies, accounting and economics

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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- extensive use of assessment to support learning
- good curriculum enrichment
- effective guidance and learning support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT in the curriculum
- noisy and cramped classrooms restricting learning.

Scope of provision

52. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in business studies, accounting and economics and an AVCE in business. GCSE business studies is also offered as part of the college's one-year GCSE programme. Recruitment is strong in all subjects except the AVCE, which did not recruit in September 2002. In the current year, there are 765 students on these programmes, all of whom are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

53. Pass and retention rates on most courses have been high over the last three years and are above national averages. In 2001 and 2002, all students completing GCE A-level economics were successful. Pass rates on GCE A-level accounting courses consistently exceed 90%. There have been high pass rates on the AVCE business course, although in the two years prior to 2002 retention rates on this course were poor. GCE AS pass rates are good in business studies, but have declined significantly in accounting from 89% in 2001, to 72% in 2002. Most students achieve significantly higher grades than those predicted from their GCSE performance.

54. Students produce good standards of work and are able to speak confidently about their subjects. They apply their knowledge well to real life situations and are well motivated to achieve their learning goals. Progression to HE is the preferred option for most students and the majority are successful in achieving this aim. The attendance rate for students in lessons observed was very high, at 92%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE business studies	2	No. of starts	20	44	43
		% retention	100	98	100
		% pass rate	35	58	70
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	16	15	25
		% retention	69	67	80*
		% pass rate	91	90	90
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	19	131	104
		% retention	100	97	96*
		% pass rate	53	89	72
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	25	178	199
		% retention	88	98	95*
		% pass rate	82	98	94
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	39	50	43
		% retention	87	94	100*
		% pass rate	91	100	100
GCE A-level accounting	3	No. of starts	36	59	70
		% retention	100	76	100*
		% pass rate	97	98	94

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

* in-year retention

Quality of education and training

55. Most teaching is good or better. None of the lessons observed was less than satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and managed with comprehensive schemes of work closely linked to course objectives. Teachers use a good range of activities to engage and maintain students' interest. Complex concepts are explained clearly and students are set challenging tasks. Good use is made of topical case studies in economics. Interesting and relevant curriculum activities are organised to extend learning. A European study visit is arranged each year and visits to local industries enable students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. In most lessons, teachers monitor learning well to ensure that all students make progress. Regular homework is set and marked promptly. Teachers provide students with constructive feedback on their work to help them improve. In the less successful lessons, there is a lack of variety in the teaching methods used to stimulate students and poor use of visual aids. Although some students are directed to useful Internet sites for their independent study, there is insufficient use of IT in lessons.

56. Student guidance and support are particularly good. Teachers and tutors work closely with students to enable them to achieve their potential. Subject tutorials are offered on a daily basis to provide additional learning support for all students. Personal tutors and subject teachers liaise effectively to ensure that issues concerning attendance or progress are followed up without delay.

57. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic about their subjects. The library has an appropriate stock of relevant books and other learning resources and students also have access to the University of Leicester library. There are no dedicated IT facilities in the teaching area. Classroom furnishing is basic with hard floors that result in high noise levels. Student movement disrupts lessons in adjacent rooms.

Leadership and management

58. The department is competently led and has clear line management roles for the head of department and subject team leaders. Teachers work effectively as a team, but there is little sharing of resources. Informal staff communication is good, but records of staff meetings do not always provide evidence of actions being monitored. Quality assurance procedures are fully implemented in the department and there is evidence of actions resulting in improvements in teaching and learning. All staff participate in the quality assurance process. Feedback from students is closely scrutinised to identify areas for inclusion in the course reviews and to focus on action points for improvement. There is insufficient use of lesson observation analysis in the self-assessment process.

Computing and information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- students' well-developed learning skills
- good resources and accommodation
- good progression to level 2 for adults completing level 1 courses.
- well-managed provision for adult students.

Weaknesses

- very low retention rates on adult courses
- unsatisfactory teaching in computing
- insufficient action to address issues raised in course and annual reviews.

Scope of provision

59. Computing and ICT courses are offered at GCE AS and A level for students aged 16 to 18. A range of level 1 and 2 provision including City and Guilds qualifications, together with client-based bespoke training courses, is offered to adult students through the college's two dedicated IT centres.

Achievement and standards

60. Examination pass rates, the incidence of higher grades and retention rates are high in computing and ICT courses at both GCE AS and A level. Data show that students achieve good results in relation to their prior attainment. Adult students at the two dedicated IT centres also make good progress. Pass rates on adult courses are well above national averages and a good proportion of adults progress from level 1 to level 2. Retention rates on these courses, however, are very low.

61. Students' work at GCE A level demonstrates high standards. They generally have well-developed study skills and use these effectively to complete the tasks they are set. Students are diligent, tenacious and well organised, especially in their approach to coursework. Some project work is outstanding; it reflects students' positive approach to learning and their ability to work effectively on their own. The standard of students' work in lessons is more varied and sometimes does not match that achieved in project and

examination work. Progression to HE is high for students aged 16 to 18. In the last three years, over 60% of adults enrolled on ICT courses have progressed to the next level.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 7261 IT	1	No. of starts	163	311	189
		% retention	51	53	56
		% pass rate	91	83	97
City and Guilds 7261	2	No. of starts	67	78	84
		% retention	58	64	52
		% pass rate	80	78	88
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	**	177	135
		% retention	**	96	99*
		% pass rate	**	80	90
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	**	138	258
		% retention	**	96	95*
		% pass rate	**	99	98
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	123	177	71
		% retention	72	91	99*
		% pass rate	97	96	97

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

62. While there are examples of good lessons in both computing and ICT, the overall quality of teaching in computing is less than satisfactory. The planning of GCE A-level courses ensures good syllabus coverage and helps to maximise students' achievement.

Schemes of work are effective in laying out a timetable for teaching and in providing notes on the approach to each topic. In the best lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively and provide clear explanations and good individual support for students. Elements of the course involving supported self-study mainly work well. Other lessons are not well planned. Although learning objectives are clearly identified, teachers do not always use appropriate methods to achieve them or to engage the students fully with new work. There is little work away from computers. In some lessons, teachers fail to vary activities sufficiently to maintain student interest.

63. Students receive good feedback on their summative assessments on GCE A-level courses. Although there are regular formative assessment tests, the written feedback does not indicate how students can improve. Students are aware of their minimum expected grades and these are regularly discussed with tutors. Adult students work through self-study materials at the two IT centres and receive very good support from their tutors. The centres have detailed assessment policies and there is effective feedback for students on their pre-assessment practice assignments. Although teachers record coverage of the course, they do not record progress in a way that shows what students have achieved.

64. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. There is good provision of hardware, software and textbooks and students have good access to computers both in and out of lessons. Specialist accommodation is good. Rooms are pleasant and spacious, but there is insufficient space in which students can work away from computers and engage in small group work effectively. The well-equipped IT centres are comfortable, attractive learning areas. Technical problems with the computer network disrupt too many lessons.

Leadership and management

65. Management of the two dedicated IT centres for adult students is effective. There is good liaison between the centres and regular meetings are held to discuss data and progress made towards achieving targets. There is a need to address low retention rates on adult courses. In college-based provision, regular planning meetings are held which concentrate on syllabus and lesson content. There has been insufficient action to address directly issues raised in course reviews and subsequent development planning does not adequately identify how these might be tackled.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates
- high retention rates
- very high standard of students' work
- good learning stimulated by engaging and enjoyable teaching
- very effective assessment and feedback to students
- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- poor specialist resources and accommodation.

Scope of provision

66. The college offers a wide range of courses in art and design. Programmes include GCE A levels in art studies, design technology and graphics, an AVCE in art and design and GCSE art. A comprehensive enrichment programme is also available. There are 416 students currently enrolled on GCE AS and A-level programmes, 19 on the AVCE art and design programme and 16 on the GCSE course.

Achievement and standards

67. Pass rates on most courses are outstanding. In five out of six GCE AS and A-level courses, they are significantly above the national average. In 2001/02, students taking GCE A-level fine art, design technology and design graphics courses all achieved 100% pass rates. The majority of art and design students achieve higher grades than those predicted from their GCSE performance. Retention rates are also high and consistently above national averages.

68. Students' work shows considerable independent thinking and diversity. There is thorough appreciation of the formal elements associated with creative development. Students have particularly well-developed skills in critical analysis and evaluation and exhibit a high degree of motivation to achieve their learning goals. Students on the GCE AS and A-level design programmes have won many national and regional competitions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE art studies/ fine arts	2	No. of starts	25	54	21
		% retention	79	85	86*
		% pass rate	100	44	61
GCE AS art and design	3	No. of starts	**	129	222
		% retention	**	87	83*
		% pass rate	**	73	92
GCE A-level studies/ fine art	3	No. of starts	39	30	53
		% retention	69	77	96*
		% pass rate	100	90	100
GCE A-level design technology	3	No. of starts	25	38	21
		% retention	80	84	100*
		% pass rate	100	94	100
GCE A-level design graphics	3	No. of starts	48	35	53
		% retention	87	83	96*
		% pass rate	100	97	100
GCE A-level fashion/ textiles clothing (craft)	3	No. of starts	14	17	23
		% retention	92	87	96*
		% pass rate	100	100	82

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. Most of the teaching is good or very good. Good learning is stimulated by engaging and enjoyable teaching. Teaching and learning are well managed and are very effectively focused on meeting the curriculum specifications. Teachers successfully use a range of teaching methods to set inspiring and exciting creative tasks for their students. This widens students' experiences and encourages them to explore new areas of creative endeavour and discovery. For example, in a graphics lesson, the students presented an illustrated talk on a selected artist that would form the basis of the design for a music banner. The lesson effectively developed students' skills in analysis, research and presentation. It was video recorded by the students so that it could be used as evidence for key skills in communication. There is a good balance between studio activities that enable students to develop practical skills, and theoretical studies in the history of art and design that are clearly related to contemporary practice.

70. Assessment procedure and criteria are well understood by students. Effective assessment and feedback to students helps them to improve their performance and motivation. Assessments are carefully scheduled throughout the year. Students value the feedback they receive from teachers.

71. Tutorial support and guidance are very thorough. Effective use of cause for concern forms, homework mark sheets and subject reports all contribute to a supportive atmosphere for learning and achieving. Open workshops are available to students outside the normal timetable. The department has an impressive art and design web site that includes a gallery showcase of students' work, lines of communication for students to access and information on current topics of learning.

72. Teachers are well qualified with a broad range of subject specialisms. Several are employed as moderators for examination boards. The accommodation and resources available to art and design are poor. The open plan accommodation has an adverse effect on teaching and learning since it leads to residual noise from adjoining studios. The furniture and specialist equipment for design is poor and the computer-aided design facilities are insufficient to support the programmes being offered.

Leadership and management

73. The art and design department is well managed. Staff concentrate on meeting the needs of the students. There are clear lines of responsibility and the autonomy that exists amongst the team is a major factor in its overall success.

Humanities

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

Strengths

- very good pass and retention rates in most subjects
- students achieve better than predictable from previous attainment
- stimulating and demanding teaching in history, law and politics
- good subject support for students
- supportive and timely assessment of students' work.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates and attendance rates in GCE AS general studies
- insufficient attention in lessons to individual student needs.

Scope of provision

74. The college offers a wide range of humanities subjects at both GCE AS and A level including law, government and politics, geography and four history options (ancient, British, European and American). Since 2001, almost every second-year student in the college has taken GCE AS general studies as part of their programme.

Achievement and standards

75. Pass and retention rates have been high in almost all subjects for the last three years. In GCE AS and A-level history and law, achievement of high grades is significantly above the national average. In 2001/02, there were 100% pass rates in GCE A-level law, geography and government and politics. In all GCE A-level subjects, students achieve results that are better than might be predicted from their previous attainment. However, pass rates in GCE AS general studies are poor. In 2002, only 57% of students achieved the qualification.

76. Students in all subjects other than general studies are well motivated and keen to learn. Their attendance and punctuality are exemplary. Attendance at general studies lessons, however, is poor. In observed lessons it was 73%, significantly lower than the college average.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	**	84	111
		% retention	**	94	91*
		% pass rate	**	90	92
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	**	57	64
		% retention	**	91	97*
		% pass rate	**	100	92
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	**	52	77
		% retention	**	90	91*
		% pass rate	**	100	99
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	36	47	52
		% retention	83	85	100*
		% pass rate	97	92	100
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	45	58	36
		% retention	84	97	100*
		% pass rate	95	79	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	35	50	49
		% retention	89	90	98*
		% pass rate	94	95	100

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

77. Most teaching is good. Teaching is particularly stimulating and demanding in history, law and politics. There is good concentration on skills development in all subjects. For example, in law, teachers place considerable emphasis on enabling students to develop the specialised literacy needed to understand legal material. Government and politics students practise the skills of objective argument, persuasion and negotiation. History lessons emphasise the skills of research and analysis. Geographers are encouraged to develop their IT skills through the discerning use of the Internet, and through the presentation of project work. In the best lessons, teachers make sure that all the students are involved in the work. In a GCE A-level history lesson, students' responses were skilfully used to answer a past examination question on British involvement in the Second World War. A government and politics lesson involved a particularly lively and stimulating group exercise on the comparison between socialist, conservative and liberal views on tradition, history and change; students' views were encouraged and questioned and a difficult topic was made understandable and relevant. In law, group work is frequently used to help students apply their theoretical knowledge to solving scenarios and case studies. Good use is made of the external environment. For example, geographers use fieldwork to investigate coastal management issues and have an annual overseas field visit to Lanzarote. Law students had recently visited the local magistrates' court and the various cases seen were woven into the lessons. In the less successful lessons, teachers make little attempt to introduce different tasks to meet the needs of individual learners or to direct questioning to individual students. As a result, some students are not made to work to the best of their ability while others struggle to understand and do the work. In many general studies lessons, teachers talk too much, students are disinterested and unwilling to participate and the tasks set are not sufficiently demanding.

78. There is a strong emphasis on thorough preparation for examinations. Examination marking schemes are used widely with students during the course so that they understand what is required. Teachers set work frequently. Their accurate and timely marking together with constructive written feedback are valued by students. The assessment and monitoring of student learning is good. Students and teachers value the minimum expected grade target setting process and the regular review of progress made towards achieving these targets. The subject tutorials provide important support for students and are used for activities such as essay development, preparation for university applications, and examination revision.

79. Most subjects are well resourced. Geography has a good range of maps, atlases, computers, textbooks and a large bank of carefully produced shared learning materials. History, law and politics students have access to a good range of textbooks as well as a wide stock in the college library. There are good materials on the college intranet for geography, law and politics students. Accommodation is good, with each subject occupying a suite of rooms.

Leadership and management

80. Teachers are trusted as professionals and in long standing departments, such as geography and history, there is a light touch to management. In newer departments, such as law and politics, there is a firmer central steer from the head of department. Governor contact in law has been helpful in promoting links with external bodies. Actions taken as a result of self-assessment have led to improvements in learning. However, quality assurance in general studies, which has 18 teachers covering 35 classes with a total of 735 students, is not effective. Problems related to the speedy introduction of general studies have been recognised by the college, but at the time of the inspection the action taken to seek to remedy them was not, as yet successful.

Psychology and sociology

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

Strengths

- outstanding students' achievements on all courses
- highly effective teaching
- good subject support for students
- successful emphasis on examination achievements
- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

81. The college provides GCE AS, GCE A-level and GCSE courses in psychology and sociology. Enrolments have doubled since the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and there are now 32 sets in psychology and 13 in sociology. Expansion has chiefly been at GCE AS. Sociology and psychology teachers also contribute to a valuable enrichment programme.

Achievement and standards

82. Pass and retention rates in both psychology and sociology are outstanding. High levels of achievement have been maintained over a period of rapid and significant growth in student enrolments. Over the three-year period between 2000 and 2002, on almost all courses, the percentages of high grades attained significantly exceeded national averages. In 2002, all students completed the GCE A-level sociology course and 99% achieved the qualification. Pass rates of 100% were achieved in this subject over the previous two years. Pass rates in GCE A-level psychology regularly exceed 96% with increasingly high rates of retention.

83. Students are highly committed to learning and to reaching their full potential. There is very effective early learning of specialist terminology and methodology and good understanding of theoretical concepts.

A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology and sociology 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	11	11	40
		% retention	91	100	93
		% pass rate	70	36	78
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	50	67	65
		% retention	98	91	94
		% pass rate	65	61	72
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	43	150	134
		% retention	91	98	86*
		% pass rate	69	90	96
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	47	359	338
		% retention	96	96	95*
		% pass rate	87	90	93
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	68	69	92*
		% retention	78	98	100
		% pass rate	100	100	99
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	207	213	214
		% retention	78	89	99*
		% pass rate	99	99	96

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

* in-year retention

Quality of education and training

84. Teaching in both psychology and sociology is highly effective; most is good or very good and much is outstanding. Many lessons are based on clear skilful exposition supported

by regular questioning to check on students' understanding. Teachers' astute referencing to students' earlier learning helps to establish good retention and recall of information and knowledge. Most lessons entail some well-directed note taking ensuring that the students have good records of what they have learnt. In the best lessons, teachers make sure students play an active part in their learning. For example, in a GCE A-level sociology lesson in which students worked in groups and examined evidence for the demise of the family, they had to match 15 cards expressing 'New Right' attitudes with contrasting liberal/feminist views. The variety of activities sustained the students' interest and the momentum of learning. Appropriate attention and help is given to developing the students' use of specialist language. Teachers are particularly skilled in their treatment of potentially sensitive personal, social and cultural issues. Topics such as gender roles and arranged marriages are skilfully presented and well received by students. In all lessons there is a sharp focus on what the students will need to know to optimise their examination performance. Much accurate advice, preparation and rehearsal of examination technique is provided. Video recordings are used very effectively. Sociology students receive good advice regarding the use of appropriate web sites, but the college intranet site is not well developed in psychology. There is little use of IT in lessons.

85. Staff and student relations are excellent. Teachers and students share a common purpose aimed at optimising students' achievement in their subject. Resources are effectively used. There are some flaws in standardisation of marking, most notably, feedback that some teachers give in marking students' work is not as detailed or helpful as that of others.

86. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Several are examination board markers. There is a good stock of books, journals and audio visual materials both within the department and in the college library. Most classrooms have attractive wall displays of material relevant to the topics taught, students' work is rarely displayed. Some rooms are too small to facilitate small group work.

Leadership and management

87. The management of the teaching teams is good. Teachers' morale is generally high and there is a strong mutually supportive ethos. Management is open, accessible and collaborative. Communication is good. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and there is a clear commitment to the improvement of performance and the eradication of weaknesses. Teachers make good use of the student achievement data they receive to monitor performance. There are, however, some omissions in the quality assurance procedures that impair the sharing of good practice.

Modern foreign languages

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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses
- thorough teaching
- good support for students
- good development of students' learning skills.

Weaknesses

- some unhelpful feedback on students' assessed work
- deficiencies in the management of the curriculum area.

Scope of provision

88. The college offers a good range of courses in modern foreign languages. Students can take GCE AS and A levels in French, German, Spanish, and Italian and the certificate in business language course in Spanish and Italian. Enrolments on most courses are low, although the inclusion of languages in the enrichment programme has improved the overall take-up of languages within the college.

Achievement and standards

89. Pass rates are high overall and 100% in GCE A-level in French and German in 2002. The percentage of high grades achieved on GCE A-level courses considerably exceeds the national average. Pass rates on the RSA business language course in French, however, have declined over the past three years, from 100% in 1999/2000, to 53% in 2001/02. There are high retention rates in all subjects.

90. Students have a mature attitude to work and frequently ask questions to clarify their learning. They provide good support for each other and study on their own effectively. Many students develop very good speaking and writing skills in the target language they are learning.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Certificate in business language (Spanish)	1	No. of starts	12	15	33
		% retention	92	100	91
		% pass rate	100	60	53
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	**	39	41
		% retention	**	95	98*
		% pass rate	**	89	90
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	**	16	10
		% retention	**	88	100*
		% pass rate	**	86	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	21	24	16
		% retention	85	79	100*
		% pass rate	100	89	100

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

91. Most teaching is good or better and all is thorough. Teachers use a variety of activities to develop students' vocabulary and knowledge of language structure and they make constant checks on their learning. Their extensive use of the language being taught in lessons enables students to develop above average speaking skills. For example, in an Italian lesson, students used the language to enthusiastically consider the social position of women in Italy. All students were able to express their opinions with confidence and fluency and gave good support and encouragement to each other. In a GCE AS German lesson, students discussed the approach young people should take towards alcohol and drugs. The teacher took the opportunity to introduce a range of new vocabulary and phrases and skilfully used activities that enabled students to practise their speaking, reading, listening and writing skills. In some lessons, good use is made of IT. Homework is used effectively to develop work covered in lessons.

92. Assessment of students' progress is satisfactory overall. Students appreciate the very prompt return of marked work in some subjects. However, there is no common departmental marking policy and the very good marking techniques, which some teachers use to encourage the self-correction of errors in one subject, are not shared across the others. In addition, some marking of student work is unhelpful; it gives no indication of how the students can improve. Some schemes of work are insufficiently detailed.

93. There is good guidance and support for students. Effective arrangements are in place to recruit students to modern foreign language courses and substantial support is offered to students whilst they are studying. Students value the additional help teachers readily provide when requested. Teachers make good use of the analysis of data on students' previous attainment to set grades to improve students' achievements. Students are aware of their target minimum grades and teachers and students monitor improvement regularly.

94. Teachers are well qualified. A wide range of foreign language assistants provide good support in the development of students' speaking skills. Overall, resources in the department are good and include video, satellite TV, and a wide range of IT and paper-based materials. At the time of the inspection the college had recently acquired a new computer-based language laboratory. Accommodation for language teaching is satisfactory and classrooms are decorated with suitable material to promote learning.

Leadership and management

95. The college works hard to maintain the provision of four languages. At the time of the inspection, leadership of the newly combined departments of French, German, Spanish and Italian was not yet fully effective. The team respects each other's professional abilities, but there is little sharing of good practice. Quality assurance arrangements are mostly in place, but some actions identified in the previous year's self-assessment report have yet to be implemented.

English

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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates on all courses
- very good retention rates
- students achieving beyond expectations
- well-motivated students producing work of a high standard
- outstanding teaching
- very good levels of student support.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

96. There is an appropriate range of courses in English at GCE AS and A level and GCSE. The advanced level courses are attracting growing numbers of students. At the time of the inspection, 170 students were enrolled on GCE AS English language and 169 on GCE AS English literature. There were 97 students enrolled on GCE A-level English language and 92 on English literature. Student numbers on GCSE English language have fallen from 115 in 2001, to 79 in the current year.

Achievement and standards

97. There are outstanding pass rates on all courses. At both GCE AS and A level, pass rates are above national averages and have improved over the last two years. There is above average achievement at higher grades on advanced level courses. In GCSE English, 89% of students passed at grades A to C in 2001, compared to 45% nationally. The higher grade pass rate on GCE AS English language, however, is below average. The college's analysis of data shows that students are achieving beyond expectations. Retention rates are also very good on all courses.

98. Purposeful and ambitious students are deeply involved with their studies and grow into confident, articulate learners. They enjoy their studies and display high levels of concentration. In both language and literature, students' written work is thorough and detailed. GCE A-level literature students make good use of quotation and textual knowledge in their responses. GCE A-level language projects are original in conception and demonstrate

detailed linguistic analysis on a wide range of interesting topics ranging from the lyrics of punk rock and English hymns to ‘book blurbs’ and bilingualism.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	113	123	115
		% retention	95	96	95
		% pass rate	79	58	89
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	**	134	151
		% retention	**	93	90*
		% pass rate	**	91	96
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	**	151	159
		% retention	**	91	94*
		% pass rate	**	94	96
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	54	72	80
		% retention	83	93	99*
		% pass rate	96	97	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	128	109	89
		% retention	82	91	98*
		% pass rate	93	92	100

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

* in-year retention

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

99. Most teaching is very good and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of students and students respond with great commitment. Lessons are carefully and imaginatively structured to ensure that students learn effectively. There is a close concentration on written and spoken language across all subjects, encouraging students to

analyse how language choices create meaning for the reader and listener. In many lessons, students and teachers are immersed in lively discussion and debate or in the close analysis of the texts being studied. For example, one lesson began with students singing 'Living Doll' in three different dialects, before going on to analyse the linguistic features of 'The Prodigal Son' as rendered in a Yorkshire dialect.

100. Teachers clearly communicate high expectations through their marking. Students receive detailed, thorough and constructive feedback on their written work. It gives appropriate praise and encouragement and also a clear direction to the students as to what they need to do to improve. The curriculum area is strong in providing enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Creative writing is proving an increasingly popular option for students. There are frequent theatre visits and organised trips and visiting speakers are invited to the department. There is, however, little provision for the development of students' key skills.

101. There is effective support for students. Clear procedures are in place for diagnosing and meeting individual student needs. Regular individual reviews use data related to students' previous attainment to help set students' targets. Subject tutorials for English provide specific support for both individuals and for groups tackling particular assignments. Marking, particularly in language courses, also concentrates on helping students improve their phrasing and grammar.

102. English teachers are the students' most valuable resource. They are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, well qualified and give generously of their time. Classrooms provide an attractive environment that fosters learning. Key technical and grammatical terms are displayed on the walls to help students in their analysis of new material. Prominent posters in all rooms remind students of submission deadlines. The library has a good range of subject resources, although the stock of modern fiction is poor. A good start has been made in providing English resources on the colleges intranet. There is, however, little use of IT in classroom teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

103. The department is well led. There is a strong departmental ethos and staff agree about priorities for the future. There are clearly defined responsibilities for departmental and course management. Departmental communication is good. There are effective mechanisms for feeding recommendations from the academic board through to course teams. The professional development review system is used well to evaluate the impact of staff development on teaching and learning. Formal systems for assuring quality and taking forward departmental priorities are not well established.

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

Level	16–18	19+
1	0	62
2	6	19
3	54	10
4/5	0	0
Other	40	9
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments
Science	3,000	816	28
Agriculture	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	92	0	1
Business	599	0	4
Hotel and catering	43	0	0
Health and childcare	30	0	0
Art and design	779	10	6
Humanities	8,048	42	60
Basic education	0	0	0
Total	12,591	868	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	191	169	65	227	412	447
	Retention rate	82	75	66	64	72	53
	National average	80	81	83	70	74	74
	Pass rate	90	98	79	94	93	86
	National average	62	70	66	61	65	66
2	Starters excluding transfers	935	2,943	1,592	331	247	106
	Retention rate	90	95	95	77	77	72
	National average	80	81	81	71	75	74
	Pass rate	98	100	99	85	79	76
	National average	81	79	83	68	68	67
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,568	2,686	5,902	44	79	68
	Retention rate	91	84	92	68	72	66
	National average	78	80	84	65	70	71
	Pass rate	92	95	92	67	68	66
	National average	85	85	85	61	63	66
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	0	0	0	11	0	0
	Retention rate	*	*	*	82	*	*
	National average	*	*	*	72	*	*
	Pass rate	*	*	*	67	*	*
	National average	*	*	*	50	*	*

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, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.*
 - 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 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.*
- * not applicable*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	78	18	4	132
Level 2 (intermediate)	67	33	0	12
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	3
Other sessions	100	0	0	3
Totals	78	19	3	150

