



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Woodhouse College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the college led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The college as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Science](#)

[Mathematics and computing](#)

[Business](#)

[Visual and performing arts](#)

[Humanities](#)

[English](#)

[Modern foreign languages](#)

[Part D: College data](#)

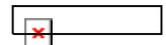
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

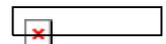
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the college

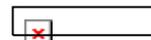


Name of college:	Woodhouse College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Ann Robinson
Address of college:	Woodhouse Road Finchley London N12 9EY
Telephone number:	0208 445 1210
Fax number:	0208 445 5210
Chair of governors:	Ivor Hockman
Unique reference number:	130427
Name of reporting inspector:	Meena Wood HMI
Dates of inspection:	20-24 January 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



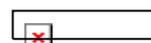
Woodhouse College is a single site sixth form college situated between North Finchley and Friern Barnet on the eastern side of the London Borough of Barnet. The college caters mainly for full-time students aged 16 to 18 whose primary aim is to progress to higher education (HE). The learners it recruits have very good levels of attainment and high aspirations. A significant proportion of students travel from outside the borough of Barnet, from as far as Haringey, Enfield and Harrow to attend the college. The college has three local 11 to 16 partner schools: Christ Church; Friern Barnet; and The Compton, which provide about one-third of its annual student intake. Almost one eighth of its students come from independent schools.

The catchment area for its students is economically mixed and is striking in its diversity of social and racial backgrounds. Barnet, with high employment rates, has accounted for over 70% of net employment growth within North London over the period 1993 to 1998. The borough has well above average educational attainment levels compared with the rest of London. For example, in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications with grades A to C was 57.5%. The proportion of pupils in maintained secondary schools in Barnet for whom English is a second language is 28%. Barnet contains the largest Jewish community in London and a significant Indian community, about 9% of the population in the borough.

In January 2003, there were 926 students on roll. The sixth form curriculum reflects the strong demand for General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and GCE Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. There are two vocational GCE A-level courses, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) (double award) in business and in ICT and one General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate business course. Some 97% of the work of the college is provided for learners at level 3 with around 3% at level 2 and none at level 1. In the 2002/03, 88% of the students are taking GCE AS/A-level courses, 10% AVCEs and 2% intermediate GNVQ.

The college mission aims to 'provide a high quality full-time education for students who seek a structured and supportive environment' and to enable students to progress to HE, further education (FE), or to employment. The college puts emphasis on 'the value added achievement of its students across their range of abilities and aspirations, celebrating the success of every individual.'

How effective is the college?



The quality of education is outstanding in science, visual and performing arts and media, humanities, English and modern foreign languages. It is good in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and satisfactory in business studies.

Key strengths

- very high pass rates

- outstanding retention rates

- much very effective teaching and learning

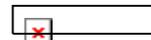
- very good advice and guidance
- highly effective work experience
- excellent support through subject tutorials
- good course management
- thorough monitoring of student progress.

What should be improved

- use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning
- provision of courses at level 2
- diagnosis and assessment and additional support for literacy and numeracy
- faculty management
- implementation and monitoring of agreed departmental action points
- access for students with physical disabilities to languages department
- quality of some of the accommodation.

subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

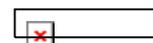


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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 retention rates and high and improving pass rates. Enthusiastic and effective teaching is supported by very good learning materials, but there is little use of IT for learning. Practical tasks challenge students' intellect and they achieve high standards in their work. The laboratory accommodation is excellent. Student progress is rigorously monitored.
Mathematics and information and communication technology	Good. Retention rates are outstanding and pass rates are very good. Teaching in mathematics is good but, on computing and ICT courses, insufficient attention is given to individual students' needs. Students are very well supported and their work is regularly and accurately assessed. There is insufficient use of IT in the teaching of mathematics. Insufficient attention is given to improving teaching and learning in ICT.
Business	Satisfactory. There are high pass and retention rates in all subjects and courses, and good personal support is provided for students. However, given the prior attainment levels of the students, there is low added value in GCE AS business. Insufficient attention has been paid to some aspects of teaching and learning such as poor class management and the failure of teachers to make adequate checks on students' learning.
Visual and performing arts	Outstanding. Retention and pass rates are outstanding across all courses. Teaching challenges each individual and students are encouraged to experiment and research creatively. Students receive effective support from subject tutors. Resources in art and design are very good. Links with employers are productive.
Humanities	Outstanding. Retention rates are outstanding. Excellent pass rates and achievement of high grades have been sustained. Teaching is exciting, stimulating and challenging. However, there is little use of IT in classroom activities. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are very thorough and individual students are provided with comprehensive subject-specific support. Curriculum management is good.
English	Outstanding. Retention rates are outstanding. Pass rates are very good with students achieving an extremely high proportion of high grades. Teaching is often inspirational. Teachers are especially skilful in drawing on the cultural diversity of students' backgrounds to stimulate creative ideas. They specifically address the needs of students of high ability. There is excellent monitoring and marking of students' coursework. The department is well led and works effectively as a team. There is no suitable level 2 English course for English

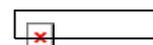
	speakers of other languages (ESOL) students.
Modern foreign languages	Outstanding. Retention rates are outstanding and pass rates are consistently and significantly above national averages with good added value in GCE AS French and Spanish. Constant exposure to the foreign language enables students to become fluent, confident and enthusiastic speakers. Students' progress is assessed and monitored regularly and students are very well supported. Curriculum management is effective. There is no access to the modern foreign languages suite for students with restricted mobility.

How well is the college led and managed?



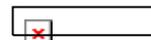
Overall, leadership and management are outstanding. There is a strong commitment to the college's mission from both senior managers and governors. Managers ensure that all aspects of the college's work remain focused on maintaining and improving very high levels of student achievement. Leadership and management styles throughout the college are friendly and consultative. Curriculum management in most departments is very good. Faculty management is not wholly effective. A very effective quality assurance system is supported and well understood by staff, though some departments do not use the lesson observations well to ensure that teaching is uniformly good. The college has made a good response to changes in legislation on equality and diversity. Equal opportunities policies and procedures are well developed and the college vigorously promotes equality of opportunity through effective support for individual students. There is a supportive community ethos and students who come from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds inter-relate well. Financial management is very effective and the college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory within the context of its mission statement, which indicates that it caters predominantly for the needs of students who take advanced level courses and wish to progress to HE. Most of these students complete their college course and pass their examinations, many achieve higher grades than might have been predicted from the grades they achieved at GCSE. Most achieve their aim and go on to university. The ethnic profile of learners in the college, in 2001/02, included half classifying themselves as white, some 29% Indian and other Asian origin, and 7% of Black African and Black Caribbean origin. There are slightly more female students than male. The college has a widening participation factor of 28.4%. The number of learners in the college who classify themselves as of minority ethnic origin is significantly higher than the local population of the borough of Barnet. Only a very small number have been identified as needing ESOL support on level 3 courses, but there are no level 2 classes to support the language needs of such students. Teachers are very sensitive to their learners' needs within specific subjects and provide much effective support for individuals. The college draws on the cultural diversity of its students' backgrounds in planning courses and lessons. It rigorously analyses information on enrolments pertaining to race and gender. The college responds particularly well to individual students with disabilities and ensures that they are very effectively supported in their learning.

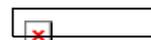
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Advice and guidance given to students about courses are very good. There are comprehensive pre-course advice and guidance for prospective students. A well-planned induction enables them to settle quickly into their studies and life at the college. The tutorial system is well organised and tutors have clear procedures and timely information to address issues of student attendance, punctuality and performance. Academic tutorials are highly effective and contribute to the high retention and pass rates, but the quality of teaching in personal and academic tutorial sessions is less satisfactory in some subject areas.

The college does not systematically screen all students for literacy, numeracy and language needs when they enter courses. College managers and teachers do not initially know the full extent to which students need extra help in these areas. There is no regular systematic monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the learning support provided. Good impartial and up-to-date careers guidance is provided in partnership with the local Connexions service. Students receive excellent information and guidance on progression to HE, but the range of information available for students on employment opportunities in some curriculum areas is inadequate.

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 atmosphere

- they feel well supported and valued

- staff sensitive to individual needs

- good academic reputation

- hard working ethos

- variety of recreational social and sports facilities

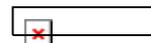
- dedicated approachable teachers

- high standard of teaching
- good multicultural mix
- equal treatment for all irrespective of cultural background
- they are treated as adults in the main
- good access to careers advice
- regular checking of academic progress
- access to computers and good IT facilities
- well-planned work schedule
- subject tutorials
- library and resource centre
- the enrichment programme and work experience
- balance between social and academic activities
- good and comfortable science accommodation.

What they feel could be improved

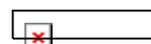
- support for preparing key skills portfolio
- opportunities to see tutor when needed
- aloofness and distance of senior managers
- careers advice is too HE focused
- group tutorials
- the canteen which is too small and food which is too expensive with too little variety
- crowded and inadequate social areas
- study areas where groups can work on projects
- use of target setting
- consultation with student union
- registration at 10.30am which is seen as unnecessary
- discouragement of `political' activity such as anti-war campaign.

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, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, 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

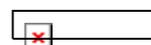


Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

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	82	16	2
Learning 16-18	80	16	4

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).

Achievement and standards



1. Students between the ages of 16 and 18 taking advanced courses (GCE AS/A level) account for about 97% of the provision as measured by full-time equivalent students. Almost all students gain the qualification at which they are aiming. In terms of the college's retention rate and students achieving their qualification aim, it is in the top 10% of sixth form colleges.

2. Pass rates are consistently high and significantly above the national average for sixth form colleges on all courses at level 3. College data for 2001/02 show a pass rate of 97%, more than 10 percentage points above the national average. College data for 2001/02 suggest that pass rates at level 2 also rose from about the national average in 2000/01 to 91%, again significantly above the national average for similar colleges. In modern foreign languages, mathematics and computing, English and humanities the number of high grades achieved (A or B) at both GCE AS and A level is well above national averages. In 2001/02, the last year of the Sixth Term Examination Papers, the results were good, with 91% achieving a pass grade or better. However, overall achievements in the

advanced extension awards are below national averages.

3. Most of the students who enrol at the college complete their course. Very high retention rates are consistently maintained at level 3. For the three years to 2001, it was 95%, some 15 percentage points above the national average for sixth form colleges. College data for 2001/02 indicate a retention rate of 100% at level 3. Retention rates at level 2 have also been consistently above national averages. Retention rates in modern foreign languages, English, mathematics and science, visual and performing arts are all outstanding. There are high rates of progression from GCE AS courses to A level. Progression to HE is consistently good. In 2002, 97% of the students applied to university and, of these, 91% were successful.

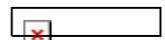
4. Students achieve high standards. In 2001/02, the average point score for students' achievement at GCE AS/A level is 21.7, which is significantly higher than the England average of 17.8 and the local average of 17.1. Of the local providers, the college had the highest number of entrants for GCE AS/A-level examinations at 402 in 2001. The average AVCE point score with 20 entries in 2001 was 15.6, higher than both the England average (10.2) and the local average (10.4). Value added analysis of achievement indicates that learners on level 3 courses do relatively better than prior attainment might suggest. This was particularly the case in GCE AS/A-level French and Spanish and in GCE AS and A-level economics and accounting in 2002. However, in GCE A-level science and art and GCE AS business, over three years, students' progress in relation to students' prior attainment is low.

5. Achievement of key skills level 3 qualifications is good. Of students who completed key skills level 3 courses in 2002, 70% achieved full certification and 87% achieved partial certification. In both 2001 and 2002, over 65% of those students entered for level 2 key skills in ICT achieved full certification and 86% achieved partial certification. Full certification for students taking level 2 key skills communications fell from 59% to 24%, but partial certification remained high, over 80% in both years.

6. Students are confident, express themselves well and show that they are enjoying their learning. Most develop an enquiring approach to the subjects that they are studying. They frequently demonstrate good collaborative and group work skills. In humanities, they develop very effective skills of analysing and evaluating evidence and articulating judgements both in writing and orally. Their oral skills are particularly impressive with students enjoying lively and critical debates. In English literature, even in their first year, students are able to make articulate and informed critical judgements, well supported with precise evidence drawn from the texts. In computing and ICT, students develop good practical skills and are confident in applying them. They work well independently and support each other. Mathematics students develop good standards of evaluation, research and analysis. The listening and speaking skills of students of modern foreign languages are impressive. Most students display a sophisticated use of the foreign language during discussion. Art and design students can confidently analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others. They are fluent in their use of specialist terminology. Theatre studies students display a confident and mature understanding of the theory and the text they are studying and they can apply this to their practical activities very effectively. Business studies students use IT to good effect either for research or assignment presentation. Some of the group work in business studies is unproductive.

7. Overall attendance at the lessons observed during the inspection was 91%, a slight improvement on the attendance recorded during the previous inspection.

Quality of education and training



8. Inspectors graded teaching, learning and attainment in 140 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 82% of the lessons observed and satisfactory in 16%. Learning was good or better in 80% of the

68% of teaching in humanities lessons was graded as very good and outstanding. Much of the teaching and learning has excellent features. Lessons are very well prepared and carefully planned in line with the individual needs of students. Students are stimulated and challenged to work to their full potential in the majority of lessons. There is a strong sense of purpose and enjoyment that is shared by teachers and students. Most teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are skilled in using a combination of whole class teaching, group activities and individual work to maintain high levels of interest and concentration. Students are encouraged to develop their critical skills. They demonstrate a maturity of thought and confidence in their learning. In the best lessons, students participate fully and they work hard with energy and enthusiasm. Students often express their knowledge of the subject in an articulate and analytical manner. For example, in one outstanding history lesson, students displayed an impressive ability to ask searching questions of the teacher and of one another and were able to offer well reasoned and well balanced critiques of the interpretation of political events, as seen on a video clip. The use of IT to enhance learning is generally underdeveloped across the curriculum.

9. In the few instances where lessons or aspects of teaching were unsuccessful, teachers had not managed the timing of the activities effectively. They had made insufficient checks to see if students understood the work, and took insufficient account of the range of students' abilities. They failed to provide opportunities for the less confident students to participate effectively. Only a very small minority of the teaching is unsatisfactory.

10. The campus is spacious and well maintained. There is easy access to over 90% of the accommodation for students with restricted mobility. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Substantial refurbishment of the accommodation has resulted in good specialist and general-purpose teaching and learning accommodation. Most classrooms are enlivened by subject-related displays of students' work and provide a pleasant learning environment. However, there are few displays in common areas. Accommodation is particularly good for mathematics, computing, art and design and business. Science laboratories are very well equipped, but some are too small for practical activities because of large class sizes. Students expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the congested social areas and inadequate canteen facilities. A coherent accommodation strategy is being implemented to address the identified weaknesses.

11. The resource centre is well managed and responsive to the needs of students and staff. It comprises a library, study area and open access IT facility of 40 networked computers with Internet and intranet access and multimedia computers. These are well used and appreciated by students. Effective liaison between library staff and teachers ensures that there are sufficient resources to support all the curriculum areas. The library has a good range of current texts, periodicals and audio materials. Art and design students benefit from a specialist library. The IT resources for science students are excellent. However, there are insufficient allocated areas for small groups of students to work together and discuss collaborative projects.

12. The college has a floodlight all-weather pitch, but the gym is small and lacking in modern equipment. Local sports facilities have to be used by physical education students and students following enrichment programmes such as squash, tennis and badminton. Barnet LEA's post-16 music centre is located in a dedicated building and benefits the college's music and technology students.

13. Most teachers are well qualified and have a teaching qualification. Many have a relevant masters qualification and are moderators or examiners for their subject. Teachers display extensive subject knowledge and attend external professional updating activities. A programme of internal staff development focusing on weaknesses in teaching is planned. Examples of topics are: differentiation in teaching and learning; using information learning technology (ILT) effectively; and improving tutoring skills.

14. A college assessment policy gives clear guidelines on the use of assessment to identify and support students' learning needs, and on evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum. Subject teachers and personal tutors use information on students' achievements at GCSE to set a target minimum grade for each subject. Monitoring and review of students' progress against their target minimum grade is thorough and supportive. Students who are underachieving are referred to a case

conference where effective strategies on support for improving the student's performance are agreed. Assessment practices in humanities and science are particularly thorough and supportive. Parents receive regular reports on the students' achievement and progress based on the common assessment criteria.

15. All schemes of work are required to include a strategy for assessment. To ensure consistency across associated groups, marked work is internally moderated. The moderation of the marking of English level 3 coursework is outstanding. Samples are used nationally by Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) as exemplars of good practice. The marking and feedback policy ensures consistency in the way students' work is assessed and marked to help them to improve and make progress. The nature of the assessment briefing and feedback sheets varies across courses, but they all provide good guidelines. A 'map' of assessment schedules across the college is effective in preventing work overload. Students are assessed regularly. Feedback is generally clear and often developed from examination board mark schemes. It identifies strengths and weaknesses and recommendations as to how future work might be improved. In mathematics, for example, teachers identify student errors and often provide examples of correct solutions. Foreign language teachers ensure that students are given the appropriate textbook references to revise errors. For GCE AS and A-level students, major assessments are compared with students' target minimum grades and under-performing students receive additional help at subject tutorials. Assessment results are also used to plan students' learning and for teachers and students to agree new learning objectives. In science, assessments are well planned and challenging and take account of the different abilities of students.

16. The college actively collaborates with the Learning and Skills Council London North, Middlesex University, and Barnet Local Education Authority. A contract exists with Middlesex University to assist Woodhouse College students to apply for undergraduate courses. The principal is a member of the local secondary head teachers' group. There is effective liaison with three partner secondary schools to aid the transition of Year 11 pupils to the college. The college does not provide appropriate provision at level 2 and there is a narrow range of level 3 provision for students on science courses. The college does not offer a significant level 1 or adult education provision. The provision of courses at the college for local people is small.

17. Most students complete a well-organised, two-week work experience at the end of their first year. Students and parents report that the placements are interesting and useful. There is a good range of sporting and recreational activities for students to complement their studies. Each year a fun day is organised by sports students, a musical review is directed and performed by students and concerts take place. In 2002, the netball team reached the Middlesex schools senior championship finals and two male students represented Middlesex in football competitions. The college has an active Islamic society and Christian Union. Rooms in the college are allocated for use for Muslim prayer.

18. There is a well-organised and successful key skills programme both at level 2 and level 3. Retention and pass rates in key skills communications and IT are well above the national average. All first-year students prepare for ICT key skills. Portfolio completion for key skills takes place within subjects in most areas through high quality assignments that have been devised by individual subject teams to either level 2 or 3. Key skills integration with art is less effective. There are few opportunities for students to complete application of number at level 3. Fewer students are entered for level 2 key skills. However, those students who do not have GCSE grade C or better in English and mathematics and those students on the GNVQ intermediate programme, are expected to reach level 2 in all three key skills in their first year.

19. Informative and lively leaflets provide impartial guidance on course content and entry requirements. Parents appreciate the efforts of staff in discussing the career implications of subject combinations at enrolment. A valuable programme of information sessions in partner schools is organised each year to help Year 11 pupils choose their courses. Popular and successful 'taster' days are organised for Year 10 pupils in three partner secondary schools. In addition, over 500 Year 11 applicants attend introductory days in the summer term. Inductions are very well organised and informative. All students receive a tutorial and subject induction during the first two weeks of term. There are high levels of reported student satisfaction with the transition arrangements onto courses,

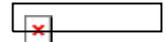
and course transfers are minimal.

20. Personal and pastoral individual support for students are very good. All students receive well-structured weekly academic and personal tutorial support. Through individual progress reviews, students gain a clear idea of their on-going performance against their target minimum grades and action plans. In general, students appreciate the support they receive from tutors. The majority, in particular, those taking science subjects speak very highly of weekly subject tutorials, where they receive additional support for subject specific concerns and areas of weakness. Students are also helped in their preparation for the advanced extension awards. Group tutorials are not uniformly effective. The student support team gives very effective help to students who have been referred with learning difficulties and disabilities such as dyslexia and dyspraxia and visual impairment. A full-time assistant works closely with teachers to produce Braille learning materials of high quality.

21. Well-organised and effective careers information is available through the careers department. Many students make good use of the well-resourced careers library. Subject teachers and personal tutors also provide additional support for the process of application to HE. The careers library was awarded Investors in Careers status and the Careers Library Initiative Award in 2000.

22. An effective electronic system is in place for recording student attendance at class and at course level. The information collected is used to follow up absences and to organise pastoral case conferences for individual students who are giving cause for concern.

Leadership and management



23. Leadership and management are outstanding and effectively focused on the students and the standards that they achieve. The college has been successful in maintaining and improving students' retention and pass rates at level 3. A comparison of these students' achievements with the grades predicted from their entry qualifications indicates that the college performed well in 2000 and 2001 and exceptionally well in 2002. At level 2, students' retention rates have been maintained at a high level and achievements have improved significantly from 44% to 91%.

24. Governors and senior managers have determined the college's mission through extensive consultation with external partners. The mission is very specific, focusing on full-time students aged 16 to 19 who wish to study on GCE A-level courses. It is well understood and supported by all the staff. The strategic plan concentrates on the provision of a full-time advanced level curriculum for those students intending to progress to HE. There are very good links with the local education authority, the local LSC, and a number of external agencies. However, apart from an aim to strengthen further the links with the three partner schools that do not have their own sixth forms most of the other aims are inward looking and relate to internal college activities. The operating plans for the departments and support functions are effectively linked to the strategic plan. These plans are also well informed by the outcomes of self-assessment.

25. Leadership and management styles throughout the college are open, transparent, friendly and consultative. Curriculum management is very good in many departments. Teamwork is often outstanding with much effective co-ordination and sharing of good practice. However, the lack of formal procedures for some management activities reduces their effectiveness. Apart from English, foreign languages and humanities, meetings are not minuted well and action points identified are not followed through to ensure that they have been completed satisfactorily. Heads of faculty give insufficient attention to checking on the effective implementation of departmental operating plans. They do not monitor and review progress against actions identified, systematically or with sufficient rigour.

26. The very effective quality assurance system is based on self-assessment, internal inspection and an extensive lesson observation scheme. It is supported and well understood by staff. A team of

senior managers implements an internal inspection of departments once every two years. The first cycle of these inspections has been completed and the findings accurately identify weaknesses, generate action plans and are a basis for the well-established departmental self-assessment reviews. Self-assessment is extensive and generally thorough. Standards have been maintained or improved. Five out of the seven curriculum areas inspected, were judged by inspectors as outstanding provision. Value added data on students' achievements as compared with their previous attainment is analysed well and used in a sophisticated manner in curriculum self-assessment reports. Achievement data is also compared to national averages for sixth form colleges and the findings used effectively. In addition to the lesson observations carried out by the internal inspection team, observations by line managers are undertaken and used in appraisal interviews. There is also an extensive observation scheme in which teachers observe each other and this is much valued by staff and used to good effect across a large number of departments to share good practice. However, as the self-assessment report identifies, a few departments do not use the information from lesson observations well to ensure that all teaching is of a uniformly high standard. This is particularly the case in business, computing/IT and science.

27. Departmental heads, senior managers and governors use management information systematically to very good effect. Access to management information has been much improved since the last inspection. An electronic registration system is used extensively not only to monitor attendance and punctuality, but also in tracking students' progress. Reports from the system ensure that tutors are informed early about any student who is not performing to his or her potential. Specific additional help is then given. This positive intervention contributes to the high success rates. The same information is automatically transferred to reports for parents or carers.

28. Performance management through appraisal is well established. All staff are appraised annually, individual targets are set, and any professional development needs identified. The staff development plan has as its main priorities the development of professional skills. These are associated with teaching and learning and equal opportunities practices leading to effective inclusiveness, and teaching which takes account of students' different abilities and of learning styles. A rolling programme of activities has been put in place. The college is also aware that it needs to improve the use of ILT as a teaching and learning aid.

29. The college has made a good response to the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act (SENDDA). It has amended and re-written its equal opportunities policy and practices documents, which are clear and promoted extensively to college staff. There have been many appropriate staff development activities. For example, a heads of department group considered the new legislation and ways in which good practice could be shared and a meeting of all teaching staff considered the equal opportunities and race equality policies. This was followed by in-service training to assess the impact of these policies on students from different minority ethnic backgrounds. There is an ethos of support and friendship within the college. Students who come from a very wide range of backgrounds inter-relate well. Over 50% of students are from minority ethnic groups. The college analyses thoroughly data on students' and teachers' backgrounds. For example, student applications, enrolments, value added data on students' achievements in relation to their previous attainment and retention and pass rates are all analysed by gender and ethnic background. An interesting survey was carried out of the library borrowing patterns by gender. This identified that males were not borrowing books as frequently as females. Departments were then asked to consider ways of promoting reading and research activities to their male students. There are no newspapers in the library to reflect the students' multi-ethnic languages and backgrounds.

30. Enthusiastic and committed governors believe in the college and are proud of its success. Attendance at governing body meetings and committees is good. Governors are broadly representative of the different communities, groups and external partners that the college serves. They monitor the academic and financial performance of the college effectively, assisted by well organised and clearly presented reports from senior managers. Links between individual governors and different aspects of college life are informal and are not systematically reported to the full board.

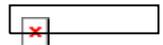
31. Over the last three years the college has grown slightly each year. It has met its funding targets and is in good financial health. Financial, Individual Student Record (ISR) and other returns made to the LSC are always accurate and in advance of deadlines. It received an 'excellent' rating from the

LSC's provider performance review. At the time of the inspection, the college had substantial operating surpluses and sufficient cash in the bank. High retention and pass rates, average class sizes that are five percentage points above the average for the sector and effective use of staff lead to good value for money. However, senior managers do not systematically compare their expenditure against national benchmarking data on similar institutions.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- enthusiastic and effective teaching
- outstanding student retention rates
- high and improving pass rates
- very good learning materials
- excellent laboratory accommodation
- rigorous monitoring of student progress.

Weaknesses

- small range of course provision
- little use of IT for learning.

Scope of provision

32. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics. There are currently 131 biology, 127 chemistry and 84 physics students within the three GCE AS programmes. The range of course provision is small. There are no level 1 or level 2 programmes and no vocational courses.

Achievement and standards

33. Attendance is very high, at 94%. Retention rates are well above the national average for sixth form colleges on all courses. Retention rates have been 100% on all GCE AS courses since the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and were 100% on the three GCE A-level courses in 2002. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses were well above the national average in 2002. For example, in biology, the pass rate was 99% compared to the national average of 90%. The proportion of GCE A-level students achieving A to B grades is higher than the national average in all the three sciences. For example, 57% of biology students and 58% of chemistry students achieved grades A to B compared to the national averages of 39% and 45%, respectively. However, value added for students' achievements on the three GCE A-level courses is less than might be expected from their qualifications on entry over the three-year period. In 2002, a high proportion of GCE A-level students progressed to science-related courses in HE. Students' notes are clear and demonstrate attainment of learning objectives. Written work is well structured and of high quality and most students have well-developed oral skills. They handle calculations expertly and with increasing confidence, for example, to find formulae or concentrations of solutions.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	100	127
		% retention	*	98	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	116	128
		% retention	*	98	100
		% pass rate	*	96	97
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	*	73	72
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	99	94
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	89	88	76
		% retention	98	95	100
		% pass rate	95	89	99
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	90	87	87
		% retention	98	95	100
		% pass rate	95	88	94
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	61	65	51
		% retention	97	89	100
		% pass rate	92	78	96

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

34. Teaching is well planned, enthusiastic and effective. Most of the teaching is either good or very good. Effective questioning helps students to extend their understanding. In the best lessons, teaching activities are suitably varied and students are given numerous opportunities to successfully apply their knowledge. However, in some lessons teachers rely too much on exposition and do not encourage student participation. In all lessons, good relationships between students and teachers contribute positively to their learning and motivate students to work productively. In a few lessons, teachers make insufficient checks on the students' learning and are unable to ensure that all students understand the concepts taught.

35. Practical activities are taught well. Students pursue practical experiments with care and enthusiasm. For example, GCE AS biology students skilfully set up and calibrated bench microscopes and used them to calculate the sizes of cell specimens. Excellent use is made of simple experimental work to consolidate students' understanding of difficult theory and use of complex calculation. For instance, GCE AS students successfully observed and recorded in detail the colour changes in an oxidation-reduction process. They showed good understanding of oxidation processes to explain reactions. Teachers effectively manage large groups undertaking chemistry experiments in which hazardous chemicals are used and ensure that students undertake work safely and competently. In some practical biology lessons, however, the laboratories are too small for the large class sizes, with groups of four learners sharing one set of apparatus. There is little use of IT to help learning. Teachers make good use of new data projectors for activities such as data logging, but insufficient use is made of the other computers in the laboratory. Science technicians have successfully established an intranet web site which is much appreciated by students for their course and project work.

36. Most students' work is marked carefully with constructive comments and helpful feedback. Students' progress is rigorously monitored through regular tests. Assessed work is centrally tracked and contributes to the monitoring of the students' performance relative to their target minimum grade. Assignments are well planned, and lead to productive learning. Students benefit from an effective work experience programme at the end of the first year. Visits to industrial and other relevant sites enhance students' understanding of the world of work.

37. Students speak highly of the individual support they receive. In addition to support through their personal tutor, they are offered informal subject-specific careers guidance and help in preparing for university interviews. Subject tutorials give students valuable opportunities to gain deeper understanding of topics or to receive additional mathematics support.

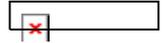
38. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable. The new laboratories are well equipped, with a good combination of fixed benches and matching tables that enable the rooms to be used flexibly. There are stimulating wall displays; for example, diagrams of the shapes of seven simple molecule structures are displayed with named examples. Students benefit from using the high-quality learning materials. A good range of textbooks and laboratory manuals are provided to each student, which is much appreciated.

Leadership and management

39. The large GCE AS/A-level teaching programme is effectively co-ordinated. There is an excellent team spirit. Teachers share good-quality teaching resources. Self-assessment is thorough and identifies points for action. Retention and pass rates are carefully monitored. Curriculum managers meet regularly with students' groups and are responsive to their comments about the standards of teaching. There has been little take up of professional updating activities and these are not linked to the appraisal system. Classroom observations follow different formats and the written feedback is not always sufficiently constructive or helpful. Managers have infrequent meetings with faculty heads

and agreed actions are not always implemented. Development plans focus too much on current programmes with little evaluation of local community needs or the needs of employers. Staff apply their commitment to equality and diversity by promoting engineering and science courses to women students.

Mathematics and computing



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

Strengths

- outstanding retention rates
- very good pass rates
- achievement of a high proportion of good grades on a significant number of courses
- much good teaching in mathematics
- effective assessment and monitoring
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT in mathematics
- inadequate strategies to meet all computing and ICT students' needs
- insufficient attention to improving teaching and learning in computing and ICT.

Scope of provision

40. The mathematics and computing departments both offer a good range of level 3 courses. The GCE AS and A2 mathematics courses are made up of a combination of pure, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics modules and further mathematics. There are 230 students taking GCE AS courses, 114 are on the GCE A2 programme and 16 students are following the further mathematics option. Thirty-eight students started a GCSE course in September 2002, and most retook the examination early in November 2002. The computing and ICT offer includes GCE AS and A2 options in both subjects and the AVCE ICT. There are 80 students taking GCE AS courses, 70 are on the GCE A2 programme and 21 students are on the AVCE course. Students not following an advanced level computing or ICT course are required to work towards a key skills qualification in IT at levels 2 or 3.

Achievement and standards

41. Overall pass and retention rates in mathematics, computing and ICT are very good. In 2001/02, pass rates were 99% and 100%, respectively, on GCE A2 and further mathematics courses. GCSE mathematics pass rates have remained at least 37% above the national average for the last two years. Pass rates in GCE A-level computing have improved. Pass rates on GCE AS courses in computing and ICT, are well above national averages at 91% and 98%, respectively. Retention rates are outstanding. In 2001/02, all mathematics, computing and ICT courses had a 100% retention rate. The proportion of students achieving high grades is above the national average for most courses. For example, on the GCE AS mathematics and ICT courses, the proportion of students gaining high grades was 41% and 66%, respectively.

42. The grades students achieve on mathematics, computing and ICT courses are generally in line with predictions based on previous GCSE achievements. Most advanced level mathematics students develop good skills of evaluation, research and analysis. The general standard of work is high. On computing and ICT courses, the standard of students' practical skills are good. Most demonstrate good competence, but some apply practical skills with little understanding. The more able students can discuss their work with confidence and explain the underlying principles. Progression to HE is good. Many students take university degrees in related subjects. Students' attendance at lessons, at 89%, 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	25	34	35
		% retention	96	97	100
		% pass rate	**	78	77
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	***	200	190
		% retention	***	99	100
		% pass rate	***	88	86
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	137	156	168*
		% retention	96	93	100*
		% pass rate	93	76	99*
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	13	12	16*
		% retention	100	83	100*
		% pass rate	85	100	100*
GCE AS ICT	3	No. of starts	***	38	58

		% retention	***	95	100
		% pass rate	***	97	98
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	39	39	21*
		% retention	92	90	100*
		% pass rate	64	74	95*

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

* new GCE A2 one-year course

** data unreliable

*** course did not run

Quality of education and training

43. There is much good teaching in mathematics. Schemes of work are comprehensive, and lessons are well planned and effectively managed. In the best lessons, the teaching is imaginative and demanding. Teachers give clear explanations of concepts and use well-chosen examples. Students' progress is carefully checked by the use of searching questions. Students are keen to explore the subject matter in depth. For example, in an introductory lesson on vertical circular motion, students effectively used their previous understanding of potential and kinetic energy to find a logical solution. Most teaching in computing and ICT is satisfactory or better. Lessons are carefully planned and new topics build on previous work. In the better practical lessons, teachers clearly demonstrate software operations and explain their significance. Teachers with recent commercial experience use it effectively in their teaching. Students readily share their own ideas and experiences and are very supportive of each other. Teachers make good use of presentation software and data projectors, for example, to highlight the main points of a topic or demonstrate the techniques of merging two sequential files.

44. Most mathematics lessons follow a similar format. The teacher explains a topic or question on the whiteboard and students then try examples. Some lessons are dull. There is little use of IT, even though schemes of work contain references to IT use. In some computing and ICT lessons, students do not extend their understanding or test ideas. For example, a teacher informed students when a search of a serial file would end rather than allowing students the opportunity to find the solution. In some lessons, teachers do not question students effectively and as a result students are confused and they do not learn as much as they otherwise might. Some teachers take insufficient account of the range of abilities in the class. Class management is sometimes poor. For example, students who lose interest can remain unnoticed for most of a lesson.

45. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. In mathematics, students are assessed regularly, and results are recorded and monitored against the grades set as targets. Homework is set regularly and the marking of students' work is helpful and informative. In computing and ICT, the work is at an appropriate standard. Teachers' comments on marked work are encouraging and include specific examples to improve students' understanding. Particular care is taken when marking the work of dyslexic students.

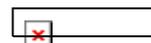
46. Mathematics teachers are well qualified and experienced. The college has had difficulty in appointing qualified and experienced computing and ICT teachers. Rooms used for teaching are of a good standard and decorated with stimulating materials. The new computer suite is well equipped with good workstations, printers and data projectors. The college's learning sites on the intranet are not well established and students make little use of them.

47. Individual guidance and support for students are very good. Subject tutorials are well regarded by students. Careers guidance is good and students receive good support when applying to university. Students' experience at the college is enriched by opportunities to undertake other activities, for example, the advanced extension award and the senior mathematics challenge.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are satisfactory. General communication within the departments is good. In computing and ICT, some weak teaching practice was not identified by self-assessment. Departmental meetings take place but, in computing, there are no formal minutes. Agreed actions are not formally monitored. The system for observing teaching is comprehensive, but good practice is not always shared. Challenging targets for retention and pass rates are set at individual and group level. Student attendance and punctuality is effectively monitored. Teachers work collectively to develop teaching materials. However, few schemes of work include details on methods of teaching.

Business



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- high retention rates

- good personal support for students.

Weaknesses

- lower achievement than might be expected in GCE AS/A-level business

- poor class management

- insufficient attention to improving some poor teaching.

Scope of provision

49. The college provides a good range of full-time subjects and courses: GNVQ intermediate and AVCE business; GCE AS and A-level accounting, business studies and economics. There are 362 students aged 16 to 19 studying for qualifications in business subjects.

Achievement and standards

50. Retention rates were outstanding in 2002 for all subjects and courses. Pass rates, in 2002, in GCE A-level accounting, business studies, economics and GCE AS accounting were also very high.

The proportion of high grades achieved by students exceeded the national average in most subjects. Students' achievement in GCE A-level accounting and economics is well above what might be expected from their previous attainment, but significantly lower in GCE AS business. A high number of students who successfully complete level 3 qualifications progress to HE. The standard of most students' work is satisfactory or better. Many students accurately complete written tasks, answer oral questions confidently and use IT to good effect either for research or assignment presentation. However, some students work unproductively in groups or are not able to meet assignment deadlines. Students' attendance and punctuality in most lessons are very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ in business	2	No. of starts	20	22	17
		% retention	90	100	100
		% pass rate	78	100	94
GNVQ/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	32	20	35
		% retention	94	100	100
		% pass rate	83	100	94
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	*	64	64
		% retention	*	89	100
		% pass rate	*	91	98
GCE A-level/A2 economics	3	No. of starts	58	60	46
		% retention	86	98	100
		% pass rate	90	71	100
GCE AS business management, office studies	3	No. of starts	*	65	68
		% retention	*	94	100
		% pass rate	*	93	88
GCE A-level/A2 business, management, office studies	3	No. of starts	59	68	43
		% retention	98	94	100
		% pass rate	91	88	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

51. Most teaching is at least satisfactory. In the best-planned and taught lessons, students' interest is sustained, their knowledge and skills are extended and their learning confirmed. In a GCE A2 economics lesson on unemployment, students were set a demanding task to apply their learning by using a web site for independent research. A current case study from a recent newspaper article was used effectively in a GCE AS business studies lesson on 'finance and insolvency'. This appropriately illustrated theory taken from the examination syllabus. The text was also used to develop vocabulary skills in preparation for examination questions. However, in a significant number of lessons, teachers fail to use the time appropriately or manage the class effectively. Students are not productively engaged, especially during group discussions, and their learning is not effectively consolidated. Teachers do not ensure that all students get the opportunity to engage in the planned activities so that they can apply and test their knowledge. In one lesson, only two out of four groups were able to make the presentation they had prepared. In another lesson, weaker students whose work was not up to date were inappropriately sent to work without adequate supervision in another

part of the college.

52. Students benefit from good links to the business world through visits from speakers from national companies, from making visits to large business organisations and by using current real-life case studies. GCE A-level business studies and economics students are offered opportunities to attend national conferences, which enhances their learning.

53. Assessment practice is good. Awarding body criteria are satisfactorily met on GNVQ intermediate and AVCE courses, and students in all subjects are made aware of examination and coursework assessment and grading criteria. A useful progress and achievement tracking sheet has been created for students to keep in their files, and detailed assessment records are maintained by all staff. Students are set target minimum grades and their attendance and academic progress are rigorously monitored throughout the year. Individual student progress is then effectively monitored by tutors during termly reviews. Good support is offered to business studies students in additional examination revision sessions.

54. All teachers are well qualified, and most are knowledgeable about their subjects. A suite of classrooms used by business studies students provides an attractive environment that can be flexibly adapted for group activities or for students to work on their own. Students' work and up-to-date, business-related posters and articles are displayed on classroom walls. Presentation equipment is available, but it is not used to best effect in some lessons. Handouts are generally good and develop students' understanding and learning. There are two well-equipped IT rooms which enable ILT to be effectively integrated into all GNVQ and AVCE courses and most GCE AS and A2 subjects. Students are also encouraged to use the well-equipped open access IT and learning resource centre facilities, which are very good for research and private study. Equality and diversity issues are effectively considered and addressed. Some 77% of the students studying business studies related-subjects are from minority ethnic groups. Team leaders use teaching and learning materials depicting positive images of highly successful minority ethnic people, which students said they much appreciated. Staff are ethnically diverse. Students with disabilities are sensitively and very effectively supported by staff. A lift provides access for students with restricted mobility to the business studies classrooms.

Leadership and management

55. The department is well led. Courses and subjects are managed effectively by their team leaders. Demanding, but realistic, targets for retention and pass rates are set. Course and subject planning and the organisation of documentation, such as schemes of work, are good.

56. Monthly department meetings take place and foster good team working, but actions agreed at meetings are not tabled, nor their implementation monitored. Observation of classroom teaching is not always effective and does not ensure that teaching and learning are uniformly good. Weaknesses in teaching and learning have not been identified in the self- assessment report.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- o outstanding retention rates at GCE AS and A2

- outstanding pass rates at GCE AS and A2

- achievement of high grades achieved in GCE AS theatre studies and GCE AS design and technology

- demanding teaching that takes account of individual needs

- very good resources in art and design

- productive links with employers in design and technology

- effective support for students from subject tutors.

Weaknesses

- insufficient integration of key skills with art.

Scope of provision

57. Students can study GCE AS and A2 art, design and technology and theatre studies. The design and technology course offers pathways in both graphics and resistant materials. Life drawing is offered as an enrichment activity for art students.

Achievement and standards

58. Retention and pass rates in GCE AS and A2 art, design and technology and theatre studies are outstanding. High grade passes, above the national average, are achieved consistently in GCE AS theatre studies and in GCE AS design and technology. Retention rates over the two years 1999/2000 and 2000/01, on the two-year GCE A level, are very good, with pass rates at or above the national average.

59. Art and design and technology students can confidently analyse and evaluate their own work and that of others. They are fluent in their use of specialist terminology and equipment. Theatre studies students display confident and mature understanding of both the analysis and evaluation of the text and the process of translating this into a performance. They then apply this knowledge to enhancing their highly developed practical skills.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS art studies/fine art	3	No. of starts	*	54	65
		% retention	*	96	100
		% pass rate	*	85	98
GCE A2 art and design	3	No. of starts	44	47	30
		% retention	95	91	100
		% pass rate	95	98	100
GCE AS drama	3	No. of starts	*	36	35
		% retention	*	97	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A2 drama/theatre studies	3	No. of starts	*	20	29
		% retention	*	95	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE AS design and technology	3	No. of starts	*	35	28
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	97	100
GCE A2 design and technology	3	No. of starts	26	35	26
		% retention	92	97	100
		% pass rate	92	88	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

60. Most teaching is demanding and teachers recognise and take account of the different abilities of their students. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. The work they set, though exacting, is attainable. In one theatre studies lesson, two groups of students quickly devised interesting and imaginative scenes exploring the loyalty of gang members during a rehearsal of 'West Side Story'. This deepened their understanding of the relationships possible in the situation they had been set. All teachers have high expectations of the work produced by students. Design technology presentation sheets are consistently of a high quality and have been commended by the awarding body. However, theory work in design and technology is not always made interesting and feedback in theatre studies lessons is not always fully effective.

61. Each subject has thorough and helpful assessment procedures which are clearly understood by students. Assessment feedback in design and technology is especially rigorous, with constructive feedback given to students. Verbal feedback to art students is a regular feature of all practical lessons. Theatre studies students receive both group and individual feedback at the end of each unit, with constructive comments on written work. The work of students, however, is not always monitored to ensure that they implement the feedback. Assignment work enables students to fully exploit their chosen themes. For example, one GCE A2 art student had produced a range of self-portraits depicting a range of varied emotions. The teacher had enabled him successfully to achieve this and then referred him to other artists for further research. Students in GCE AS theatre studies devised work on the theme of worship. They chose themes ranging from hero worship to traditional rituals, which formed the basis for stimulating and vigorous group discussion.

62. The courses meet the needs of the students and many are inspired to progress to related subjects in HE. All the courses are enriched by links with their respective industries through visits

and speakers. This is especially the case in design and technology, where students have obtained relevant work placements or support and constructive feedback from local and national design and manufacturing companies.

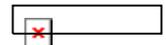
63. All staff are well qualified. The new and purpose-built accommodation in art and design is well equipped and students have access to their own specialist well-stocked library. There are two part-time technicians giving effective support in art and design. Drama classes take place in the hall or in an adjacent classroom, which is also used as a green room.

64. Students benefit from very positive working relationships with their subject tutors, who are supportive, yet firm in their expectations. Lateness and absence are followed up rigorously by the personal tutor. Students are encouraged to use their time purposefully working in studios and are able to book a subject tutorial whenever they need it. All students attend a pastoral tutorial once every week. Theatre studies staff and students use Wednesday afternoons for rehearsal for their production work. There is a lack of key skills portfolio evidence integrated with art.

Leadership and management

65. Heads of department and subject staff have an excellent understanding of the needs and requirements of the curriculum, the examining boards and their students. There is little formal direction or support from the faculty structure. Heads of department meet together no more than twice termly and these meetings have neither an agenda nor minutes and little formal monitoring of agreed action points. Each department produces a self-assessment report, which reflects most strengths and weaknesses. However, the development plan does not identify the long-term priorities of the area.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- outstanding retention and pass rates

- good achievement of high grades

- exciting, stimulating and challenging teaching

- thorough and effective monitoring and assessment of students' progress

- good curriculum leadership and management of curriculum level.

Weaknesses

- little use of IT in classroom teaching.

Scope of provision

66. A good range of courses is provided at GCE AS and A level in geography, government and politics, psychology and sociology, classical civilisation, and history. GCE AS courses are also offered in critical thinking, law and philosophy. Students can select GCE AS and A levels from across the range. At the time of the inspection, 724 students were enrolled on the courses and of these, a significant number, 244, were studying psychology.

Achievement and standards

67. Outstanding retention and pass rates, significantly above national averages, have been maintained over the past four years. The number of students who achieve A or B grades at GCE AS and A level is also significantly above the national average. For example, in GCSE AS law, in 2001, 95% of students gained grades A or B compared with a national average of 32%. In the same year, 84% of GCE AS sociology students gained an A or B grade compared with a national average of 37% and 88% of GCE A-level psychology students gained an A or B grade compared with a national average of 40%.

68. Students are poised and confident and are able to work very well collaboratively and without supervision. Students express themselves articulately and develop high levels of critical and analytical thought in written and oral work. They have great enthusiasm for learning and take pride in their work and achievements. The goal for the vast majority of students is to progress to HE. They are prepared well for degree level work and are very successful in obtaining places in HE. Attendance rates are high and students are punctual.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	65	64	81
		% retention	97	94	100
		% pass rate	97	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	75	84	67
		% retention	97	94	100
		% pass rate	86	94	100
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	52	57	48
		% retention	92	95	100
		% pass rate	100	98	98
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	45	62	37
		% retention	91	98	100
		% pass rate	93	90	97
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	91	137
		% retention	*	98	100

		% pass rate	*	99	100
GCE AS philosophy	3	No. of starts	*	21	21
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	95	95

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. Teaching is both challenging and exciting. Students have numerous opportunities for the writing of imaginative tasks and for critical debate. Teachers prepare lessons well to ensure that there are a range of activities to sustain and stimulate the interest and motivation of students. The needs of a wide range of learners are considered and support is available, particularly when they are engaged in individual or small group work. In one lesson, students in small groups were developing their understanding of the concept of 'reasonable behaviour', through consideration of a number of cases, which the teacher had introduced. The groups were well supervised and guided to think through the implications of their judgements and the guiding principles that informed their arguments. Groups who completed the tasks early and correctly were given more complex cases to resolve. Teachers are highly skilled at judging when to let students take the lead in classroom activities. A very good example of this was in a GCE AS lesson where students were considering the concept of 'global doubt' in the 21st century, they engaged in a vibrant discussion that extended their critical skills. They were able to use philosophical ideas accurately and appropriately. The teacher effectively enabled students to reach a summary of the key issues. Students value the quality of the teaching and the support they receive.

70. Teachers are highly skilled at using a range of informal assessment methods to assess students' learning and progress in class. Assessment schedules are detailed and well planned and there are assessment and homework timetables to help students plan their work effectively. The monitoring of students' progress and review of their progress and achievement are thorough.

71. Teachers are highly qualified. They are helped to undertake professional updating in their subject as well as activities to improve their teaching and tutoring skills. All subjects, apart from one, have their own base room or rooms with good storage and display space. All teaching rooms have good displays of students' work and other visual materials. Teachers produce a good range of high quality teaching materials. They also ensure that the quality and range of materials in the library and learning centre encourage students to develop effective skills for research and private study. Most classrooms have access to a television and video cassette recorder and an overhead projector. Computers are not available. Opportunities for using ILT in classroom teaching are insufficient.

72. Students are enthusiastic about the range of activities provided in the enrichment programme and the work experience programme. This is well managed and offers many imaginative placements including some in the House of Commons, and with political parties and national newspapers.

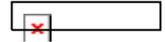
73. The system of support and guidance is well planned. The tutorial programme is well managed. Students receive highly effective support on personal and academic matters and this has helped many students, who have struggled, to achieve their aspirations. Careers guidance is good, but little advice is given about progression routes other than those to HE.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management at course level are very good. Teachers set themselves high standards in their work. Managerial direction about course content and teaching methods is often based on feedback from students' course evaluations, focus groups, feedback from tutorials and the use of learning diaries. Development planning is realistic, prudent and effective. In all subjects there are detailed and comprehensive policies on teaching and learning, assessment, monitoring of

student progress, equal opportunities, and, where appropriate, moderation of work. The policies are understood and willingly supported by teachers who play a strong role in producing and developing the policies.

English



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

Strengths

- outstanding retention rates in all courses
- achievement of high grades at GCE AS and A level
- very good pass rates in GCSE English and GCE AS and A-level English literature courses
- much inspirational teaching
- very good schemes of work linked to assessment criteria
- excellent monitoring and marking of coursework
- good departmental leadership and teamwork.

Weaknesses

- no suitable level 2 English course for ESOL students.

Scope of provision

75. English language and English literature are offered at GCE AS and A level to approximately 323 students aged 16 to 18. The majority study the literature syllabuses. The new advanced extension

award in English was offered in 2002; a more selective entry to the course is planned for 2003. There are two GCSE English courses, but no specific level 2 English course for students whose first language is not English.

Achievement and standards

76. Retention rates are outstanding on all courses. Pass rates are consistently very good. The proportion of high grades attained at GCE AS and A level in both English language and English literature in 2001 and 2002 was significantly above the national average. Pass rates in GCSE English, in the three years prior to 2002, were very high. Students on advanced courses generally achieve grades higher than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Pass rates in the advanced extension award in 2002 were poor, but retention rates were good.

77. Students are highly motivated and demonstrate effort and persistence in their work. On advanced language courses, students successfully employ linguistic concepts to analyse written and spoken language. In English literature, students' attainment is very good particularly in debate, analysis and explanation. Students reach high standards in extended critical writing and make effective use of the language of literary criticism. Most students are able to express sophisticated critical and personal responses to the literature they are studying. They also show good insight into the features of successful writing. Students produce coursework of high quality. For example, over 80% of GCE AS literature projects in 2002 gained A or B grades.

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	21	13	26
		% retention	95	100	100
		% pass rate	85	58	73*
GCE A2 English literature	3	No. of starts	106	110	89
		% retention	92	95	100
		% pass rate	97	97	100
GCE A2 English language	3	No. of starts	41	44	30
		% retention	98	93	100
		% pass rate	85	95	100
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	**	43	46
		% retention	**	98	100
		% pass rate	**	98	100
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	**	117	129
		% retention	**	97	100
		% pass rate	**	97	99

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

* includes November retakes

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

78. There is much inspirational teaching of English. Teachers are experienced and able to get the most out of students who have high levels of ability. Well-structured lessons are based on very good,

detailed schemes of work designed for each text and topic. Work schemes are particularly effective in identifying teaching and learning methods linked into assessment objectives. For example, the work scheme for *Clockwork Orange* effectively combined topics such as dystopia and the use of first person narrative with the relevant assessment objective.

79. Most lessons are stimulating and productive. There is a buzz of interest and intellectual engagement in most lessons. Students of all abilities respond to the teaching with energy and creativity. There is much emphasis on close critical reading and analysis. Students develop the ability to make informed and independent critical judgements, well supported with precise evidence drawn from texts. Teachers are skilled in guiding students to read for underlying psychological and thematic features. They encourage students to develop and express a personal response to literature. For instance, groups of GCE AS students studying various Shakespearean texts were able to successfully identify examples of proleptic irony and to discuss with enthusiasm the dynamics of intercultural behaviour and racism with reference to *As You Like It* and *Othello*. The discussion, held by a multicultural group, offered special insight and drew on the students' own experiences. Teachers also effectively encourage students' use of their cultural backgrounds in their writing of projects. Projects are consistently of a high standard. Investigations in GCE AS language featured such interesting topics as 'code switching within a Greek community'.

80. Teaching of the semantic development of the English language is impressive. In one particularly effective literature lesson, students considered the graphology and lexis in Chaucer's writing and were able to successfully explore the derivation of many words and their meanings. Students considered the impact of the printing press on the significance of Tyndale's *Bible*. Using examples from subsequent translations, the teacher introduced the students to semantic changes, such as the retention of 'thee' and 'thou' forms in the authorised version of the Bible. In all level 3 English language lessons, students showed a good understanding of complex Halliday's taxonomy and Dore's functions.

81. A particular feature of the effective GCSE language teaching is that the teacher presents the students with short logical tasks that build on one another to consolidate their understanding and confidence. The GCSE course is, however, unsuitable for students for whom English is not their first language and such students are not given adequate additional support to develop the necessary language skills.

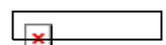
82. Video recordings enliven teaching and consolidate students' learning. Supplementary materials such as handouts extend and confirm their learning. Teachers address the individual abilities of their students in the organisation of group tasks and in selective questioning. There are a few instances, however, of students losing concentration during group work activities that are too long.

83. Students benefit from the quality and consistency of the marking of their written work. In particular, the focus on assessment objectives makes clear to students the exact standard they have reached in relation to examination criteria. All marking culminates not in one grading but in six scores which indicate their performance against each of the six assessment objectives identified in the unit specification.

Leadership and management

84. Department management is consultative and participative. Teamwork is very strong. The staff co-operate well and good practice is shared. Staff are effectively deployed to make best use of their particular talents. There is excellent leadership regarding the major task of marking and moderating the considerable quantities of coursework in all courses. In 2002, AQA used several college scripts as exemplars of accurate marking at national standardisation meetings.

Modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- outstanding retention rates

- high overall, and higher grade, pass rates

- good achievement at GCE AS in French and Spanish

- confident enjoyable use of the foreign language by students

- careful monitoring and rigorous assessment

- efficient departmental management.

Weaknesses

- no access to modern foreign language suite for student with restricted mobility.

Scope of provision

85. There are 127 students currently studying French, German and Spanish at GCE AS and A level. The college offers foreign languages at work at level 2 and GCSE and GCE AS Italian as part of its voluntary enrichment programme. Numbers opting for these courses have fluctuated in recent years and the current uptake of nine students is very low.

Achievement and standards

86. Retention rates are outstanding and have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Overall pass rates are high. Higher grade pass rates have comfortably exceeded national averages in the last three years, both at GCE AS and A level, with the exception of French and German at GCE A level in 2001. Students achieve grades much higher than might be expected from their previous attainment in French and Spanish at GCE AS.

87. Students' listening and speaking skills are particularly impressive. They are constantly encouraged to use the foreign language in lessons. Students really enjoy speaking and they are confident in discussions and in their ability to convey their views and opinions successfully in the foreign language. Pronunciation and intonation are good. Written work is also of a high standard and

demonstrates the ability to use complex and sophisticated language to construct a well-argued case. Progression to related courses in HE is very good.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	43	36	27
		% retention	91	86	100
		% pass rate	90	90	100
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	9	10	14
		% retention	100	90	100
		% pass rate	100	89	100
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	18	19	12
		% retention	94	95	100
		% pass rate	100	94	100
GCE AS French	3	No. of starts	*	42	61
		% retention	*	95	100
		% pass rate	*	93	97
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	*	16	15
		% retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	93
GCE AS Spanish	3	No. of starts	*	17	18
		% retention	*	94	100
		% pass rate	*	94	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

88. Most teaching is very good. Some is outstanding. Extensive use of the foreign language in class ensures students develop very good listening skills. Students' willingness and ability to ask questions or discuss topics in the foreign language is outstandingly good. The three foreign language assistants play a significant role in refining these oral skills. Teachers support their students fully in every way and students recognise and value their efforts. Teachers plan a rich and varied range of tasks and activities that encourage students to acquire and practise language skills to a high level. Lessons are lively and students are motivated through humour and genuine enjoyment of learning the language. This is also evident in oral activities where students working in pairs help and encourage each other and do not often resort to speaking in English. The pace of work in lessons is very demanding and teachers use a wide variety of tightly timed activities. High expectations encourage students to give of their best and there is a constant emphasis on improvement through learning from past mistakes. Learning and progress are actively monitored. Students' individual needs are mostly met, but a small minority of less confident and lower ability students needs to be concentrated on more specifically by teachers to ensure their participation. Occasionally, teachers fail to help individuals in lessons and rely on subject tutorials to give the necessary extra help. All lessons have clear aims and finish by establishing firmly what the students have learnt.

89. Learning materials are very good. Good use is made of video and the Internet. In one German lesson the topic of drugs was memorably contextualised through extracts from a celebrated German

film, *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*. In a French lesson, students gave admirable presentations on world religions in which conflict between faiths was a recurrent theme. The teacher took the opportunity to present a topical article from the French journal *Le Figaro* concerning an incident which had just taken place in the Finsbury mosque located near to the college. Given the diverse backgrounds of the group of students they were given worthwhile opportunities to explore the multicultural aspects of this in French. Worksheets and textual materials are usually from authentic foreign sources, and often imaginative and informative. They make a valuable resource for revision. Very good use is made of the language laboratory. Students have been helped to listen selectively and to develop effective skills for understanding complex tapes and texts. There is no access to the modern languages department for students with restricted mobility.

90. Formal and informal assessment are regular and rigorous. The quality of oral feedback is good. Students are particularly well supported through careful monitoring of work in pairs and groups. Teachers mark written work extremely thoroughly and comment in great detail, sometimes even with page references to textbooks. The grades and comments show clearly the standard being attained and areas for improvement.

91. A relatively small number of students participate in visits abroad organised through the college's recent successful initiative to establish an exchange programme. This has resulted in raising significantly students' oral competence and confidence and their knowledge of contemporary culture and society.

92. The subject tutorials are highly valued by students. They provide a very worthwhile opportunity for individuals and small groups to consolidate and extend their learning. In one session, the tutor very skilfully worked with two students to practise aspects of complex French grammar and with two students to improve their use of idiomatic German to a more sophisticated level. Excellent support was being given to a visually impaired student taking French and Spanish who has made very good progress.

Leadership and management

93. Departmental management is effective and efficient. The quality assurance file is well organised and informative. Detailed record keeping is very good. The department runs smoothly. Shared methodology and the consistent high quality of learning materials is an excellent feature of the teamwork. A rigorous programme of lesson observations has also contributed substantially to maintaining high teaching standards. The strengths and weaknesses of the department were identified in the self-assessment report.

Part D: College data

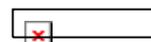
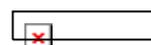


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	0
2	5	20
3	95	80
4/5	0	0



Other	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments
Science and mathematics	986	4	32
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	59	0	2
Business administration, management and professional	347	1	11
Information and communication technology	138	0	4
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	110	0	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	0	0	0
Visual and performing arts and media	196	0	6
Humanities	758	0	25
English, languages and communication	488	0	16
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Total	3,082	5	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+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding	255	*	*	*	*	*

	transfers						
	Retention rate	97	*	*	*	*	*
	National average	81	83	**	74	74	**
	Pass rate	52	*	*	*	*	*
	National average	70	66	**	65	66	**
2	Starters excluding transfers	151	158	141	*	*	*
	Retention rate	97	91	89	*	*	*
	National average	81	81	**	75	74	**
	Pass rate	44	84	91	*	*	*
	National average	79	83	**	68	67	**
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,647	3,260	2,816	*	*	3
	Retention rate	95	95	100	*	*	100
	National average	80	84	**	70	71	**
	Pass rate	89	91	97	*	*	67
	National average	85	85	**	63	66	**

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 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1999 to 2002: College ISR.

** too few students to provide a valid calculation*

*** data unavailable*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	83	15	2	130
Level 2 (intermediate)	57	29	14	7
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	1
Other sessions	50	50	0	2

Totals	82	16	2	140
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